

## **Public Art Promotes Drive for Human Creativity**

Paris has the Eiffel Tower, Chicago has “The Bean,” and Hong Kong has Tian Tan Buddha. Art installations on a large scale can become iconic symbols of communities and culture. Public art at any scale, concluded John McCarthy in the *Journal of Urban Design*, can contribute to a type of placemaking that will grow a creative element, attract investment, cultivate social unity and enhance the quality of residents’ lives. New public art installations are drawing from their local communities and delivering meaning in vibrant, long-lasting ways.

“Public art relates to city life in many deep ways, ways that call out to meaning, memory, social empowerment, the intangible and ever-present drive for human creativity that may or may not be immediately visible at street level,” wrote Pamela Jo Landi for ScholarWorks @ UMass Amherst.

### **Minnesota Library: *Sectio Aurea***

In a bustling suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota, the Hennepin County Library System uses public art as a powerful promotion of discovery and learning. As part of a new building, the library invited artists to create an interactive, panoramic mural that would both mirror people walking in and out of the library and invite them to interact with the learning in the pages of the library’s books.

The lenticular mural, *Sectio Aurea*, allows viewers to discover two pieces of interactive artwork. Each of the 331 unique, digitally imaged a3™ CeramicSteel panels unfolds like an accordion. Walk through the space in one direction, and the images seen are global – fingerprints, world art, ancient fossils and spiraling galaxies. Turn around and walk back the other way, and the topics are local – indigenous plants, Hmong embroidery, biomedical imaging and Mississippi River eddy currents. The experience is like walking past shelves of colorful book spines, their pages inside full of knowledge.

RE:site, a Houston-based studio creating artwork within the context of public space, designed the piece by working with PolyVision CeramicSteel, and Designtex, both Steelcase companies, as well as Metalab, a public art project management studio. The artists chose to work with CeramicSteel because they know that the durable material’s UV-resistant surface and specialized printing process will keep their work vivid and long-lasting. Designtex used their expertise to ensure the artwork printed successfully on PolyVision’s state of the art printer in Belgium and Metalab handled installation. The resulting mural is a metaphor for discovery and learning, each panel a subject to discover, just as a book opens to rich learning.

“This large piece of art uses movement to connect local and global, past and present,” says Norman Lee, artist and co-founder of RE:site.

## **Tampa Riverwalk: *Woven Waves***

RE:site, PolyVision, Designtex and Metalab teamed up on another project in Tampa, Florida. In an effort to transform its popular waterfront into a more active and pedestrian friendly area, the City of Tampa commissioned art along its riverwalk. Inspired by the water current of the river and the rich history of the area, *Woven Waves* evokes a “crazy quilt” that “stitches” together Tampa’s various multicultural communities.

## **Colorado Rail Station: *Chromatic Harvest***

*Chromatic Harvest* is another partnership between RE:Site and PolyVision. It’s slated for installation at the Arvada Ridge Commuter Rail Station in Colorado in spring 2017.

More public art projects are underway already. *Chromatic Harvest* is slated for installation in spring 2017 to bring art to patrons of the Arvada Ridge Commuter Rail Station in a suburb of Denver, Colorado. RE:Site describes the artwork as connecting the region’s past with the present and future using themes of agriculture and movement. PolyVision’s “folded” a<sup>3</sup> CeramicSteel panels will be integrated into the rail station to allow the viewer’s own movement to become part of how they experience the work. It’s all part of Denver’s Regional Transportation District’s *Art-n-Transit* program which includes an array of public art at more than 45 rail stations and bus terminals throughout the Denver metro area.

Because public art exists in the public realm, the artist has to take into consideration the physical or environmental parameters as it relates to public safety and structural integrity. This means working closely with the architects, landscape architects, engineers, and general contractors. This is one reason RE:Site, PolyVision, Designtex and Metalab have worked on a number of successful projects together.

“Public art is about connecting people with their surroundings or community in a meaningful way,” says Lee. “It creates a sense of discovery because people come across it when they’re not expecting to. I believe public art has the power to get people to pause during their busy lives and live in the now, really connecting with their surroundings.”

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### **Rebecca Charbauski** **Senior Communications Specialist**

Rebecca, an Emmy-winning journalist, reports on global research impacting the places where people work, learn and heal. Over her career, Rebecca spent 17 years covering local and national news events on television and a variety of digital platforms. She directed a digital news group in Kansas City for three years before becoming news director in Grand Rapids, Michigan for more than five years. Prior to Steelcase, Rebecca worked with one of the four largest media groups in the United States to coordinate news coverage among 48 newsrooms from the east to west coast.

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