



# Spring 2009 Newsletter

Public Art Saint Paul • Creating and Caring for Art in Saint Paul's Civic Realm

## COMING ATTRACTION!

### The Western Sculpture Park Art Tent

To gleeful fanfare, Public Art Saint Paul's Art Tent will first appear in Western Sculpture Park in June. Ten times during the summer this whimsical magical art shop will visit and call out to the neighborhood... "the center for imagination and creativity is open and the artists are in!"

Artists, performers and craftspeople will lead innovative and interactive workshops for children and families. Surrounded and inspired by the park's exhibition of sculpture, they will explore their own ideas for creative expression. Their work will be grounded in

CONTINUED



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Artist Wing Young Huie  
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## COMING ATTRACTIONS!

# The Western Park Art Tent

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sustainable environmental practices, utilizing recycled materials to make art.

The Art Tent itself will be a mobile artwork, commissioned from sculptor and theater artist Christopher Lutter-Gardella, whose puppets, theatrical accessories, and contraptions are produced from waste stream materials. Public Art Saint Paul board member and architect Peter Kramer is caught up in fashioning the tent's whimsical transport and assembly system. The tent plan is spinning merrily along, enchanting all at Public Art Saint Paul in its sensational web! No previews – you will have to await its June emergence. Only one hint: the Art Tent will not be itsy bitsy!

Textile artist and educator Pat Black leads the Art Tent program team, assisted by PASP's Education Coordinator, Ashley Hanson. Programs will offer a range of art media and draw upon diverse cultural traditions. Each 4-hour Art Tent workshop will be a whole activity on the day it is produced: no need to commit to multiple sessions, just drop in for a day and leave with your artwork! Learn a little about the sculptures you see in the park as you look out your window, walk through the neighborhood, and drive along Marion Street!

The Art Tent is being promoted to residents throughout this neighborhood just west of the Minnesota Capitol through community organizations, childcare providers, and housing developments. With the help of The Summit University Planning Council and Rondo Library, community volunteers are being recruited to offer their skills and talents.



Public Art Saint Paul's education programs promote citizenship through awareness and stewardship of public art and individual creative expression. The Art Tent is a crucial component of our ongoing commitment to building public places as the vessels of our shared civic life. Keep your eye out for the Art Tent scurrying along to Western Sculpture Park and join in the artful festivities! Watch Public Art Saint Paul's web site for hatching news!

Photos by Andy King



## ARTIST HIGHLIGHT

## Mary Johnson

Mary Johnson's work is known to anyone who has visited the Minnesota State Fair. *Morph The Transforming Frog*, commissioned by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for its Minnesota Get Together booth was created out of rubbish collected in the Mississippi River bed. Her Lizard Lounge at Franconia Sculpture Park recalls vintage toys and roadside attractions and was made from found wood covered with stucco. In all of her work, she combines past and present by re-viving found objects and recycled materials to shape fantastical sculptures.

Public Art Saint Paul has commissioned Mary to create for Western Sculpture Park a 14-foot tall *Rabbit* from recycled and found objects. Community members will participate in gathering materials and embedding them in the rabbit's concrete hide. This summer it will alight at the Eastern edge of the park... poised to hop across Marion to nibble at Sears or to stare into the windows of State government.

Animals are a recurring theme in

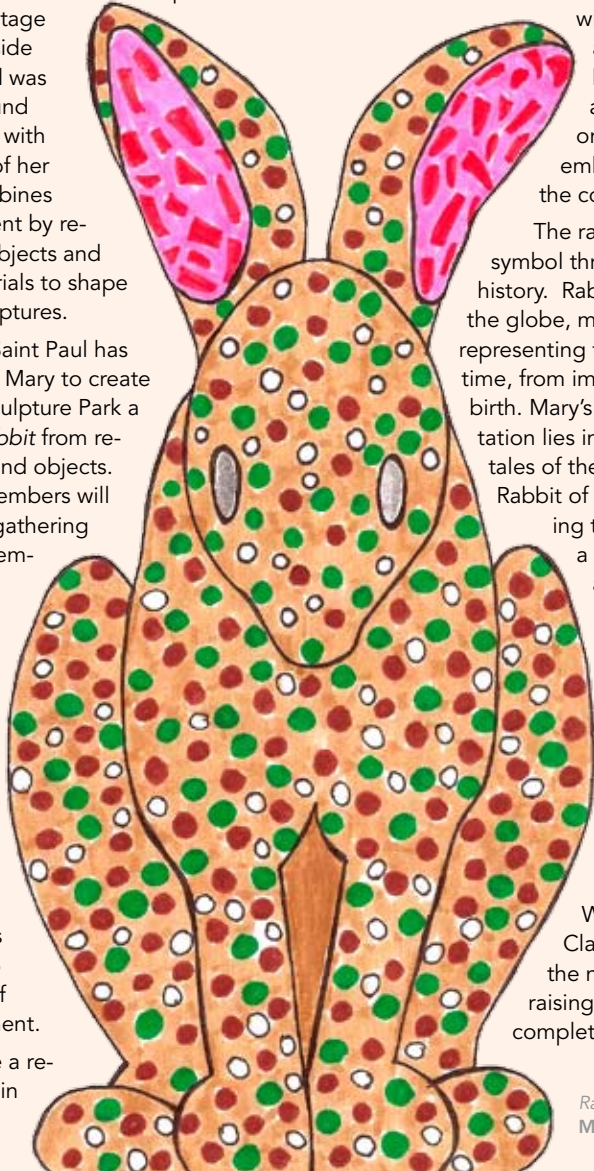
Mary's work. Her art is grounded in stories in which they are pivotal characters. Whether her whimsical sculptures evoke childhood memories of fairytales or legendary family pets, or whether they are allegories for human sagas, Mary's art invites viewers to relate and share their own personal stories. She believes that each of us has a story and

when our stories are ascribed to one of her sculptures, the art begins to take on a life of its own, embedding it into the community.

The rabbit is a rich symbol throughout human history. Rabbit folklore spans the globe, most commonly representing the passage of time, from immortality to rebirth. Mary's favorite representation lies in the East Asian tales of the Jade Rabbit or Rabbit of the Moon, pounding the elixir of life in a mortar. The image of pounding and the moral of the eternal passage of time are inherent in Mary's own art.

After earning a B. A. in Drawing and Printmaking from the University of Wisconsin in Eau Claire, Mary spent the next twenty years raising children and completing her M. A. in

*Rabbit Rendering by Mary Johnson*



sculpture at the University of Minnesota. Along the way, she discovered the art of recycling, gathering materials for her work from found objects at home, thrift stores, and...the trash can!

Recycled materials capture and inspire stories; as she uses these objects from the past and transforms them into a new function in the present. Each object is refreshed, reminding us that we too could change and create a better place.

Community members assisting in finishing the *Rabbit* and installing it in Western Sculpture Park symbolize the area's rebirth through community-based initiatives. It was the initiative of neighborhood resident Dan Fix and the Fuller Aurora Block Club in the 1990's that gave new birth to this long forgotten park.

"Working with the community creates a synergy that fosters pride and ownership in the art, which becomes the tangible evidence of community engagement and imagination."

Creation of Mary Johnson's *Rabbit* is being supported by the Summit University Planning Council, Fuller Aurora Block Club, Eureka Recycling and the Bricklayers and Allied Trades of Minnesota, and young people of the Western Park neighborhood. It is funded by the Elmer and Eleanor Andersen Foundation, the Constance Otis Fund of the Saint Paul Foundation, the R. C. Lilly Foundation and contributors to Public Art Saint Paul's 20th Anniversary program fund.



*Morph The Transforming Frog by Mary Johnson*

## ART IN THE CITY

## Western Avenue

“The design and condition of Western Avenue...can facilitate or thwart connection, it can promote or jeopardize public safety, it can manifest or contradict a positive community identity.”

Western Park Neighborhood Assessment  
Vision for Western Avenue: Connecting Selby to University

A highly used but little heralded life line, Western Avenue seems from atop the hill a great roller coaster as it runs south to north, from Summit over the freeway to University and beyond to Minnehaha. Western Avenue is vital to the function of the Central Corridor Light Rail system.

Improvement to Western from Selby to University is the subject of a \$2 million Capital Improvement

Budget proposal to the City from Public Art Saint Paul, Summit University Planning Council, Selby Avenue Community Development Corporation, Aurora St. Anoth Neighborhood Development Corporation and the College of Visual Arts.

From 2003-2006, Public Art Saint Paul led a comprehensive assessment of the conditions and capacities of the neighborhood surrounding Western Sculpture Park. Residents, community organizations, colleges, and public agencies undertook this study to build the case for action that would promote the neighborhood's stability and quality of life. In the process, this long ignored, underserved and proud neighborhood was revealed.



Western Avenue at University

Urban Planner Ken Ford noted: “Just over three thousand folks live in the Western Park Neighborhood west of the capitol area at the heart of Saint Paul. The neighborhood is divided east and west by Western Avenue.” He highlighted the need and opportunity for mending those two neighborhood pieces together and weaving them back into the fabric of the

Summit University neighborhood that had been torn by freeway so many years ago. He pointed to Western Avenue as the seam.

A Municipal State Route with 4 lanes of traffic, Western crosses and is an informal route to I-94 with associated high speeds and unsafe conditions for many children en route to the Rondo Education Center and the Martin Luther King Center. North of the freeway, no improvements have been made since the early 1980's. The streetscape is barren, unsafe, and ugly with cracked sidewalks, minimal green edging, and streetlights/poles canted in a jumble. It conveys a negative message to low income neighborhood residents about their worth as citizens. It thwarts community building and economic development.

Ford urged: “Make Western Avenue from University Avenue to Selby Avenue a beautiful and inviting route for pedestrians, cyclists and cars with good safety for crossings. The neighborhood's vision for Western Avenue would reduce the isolation of the neighborhood, strengthen connections to many destinations. The neighborhood would be safer.”

Public Art Saint Paul and our community partners have acted. Together we submitted a proposal to the City for capital funding. Saint Paul Public Works and the CIB committee are evaluating our proposal. PASP will contribute to the project's art works and amenities through our 20th Anniversary fund. Decisions on our request will go from the CIB committee to the City Council and Mayor in the months ahead.

Demand on Western Avenue will increase with advent of the Central Corridor. Proposed as an additional stop on the line, Western in its current design and condition is ill suited to maxi-

Connecting citizens across  
the great divide



View from atop Western Avenue

mal function as a Central Corridor feeder, particularly for pedestrians coming from a densely populated neighborhood served by mass transit.

Most of the project budget will be consumed with work below the surface, improving the structure of the street and mitigating the city's costs for maintenance over time.

But, ah!...for that *modest* portion of the budget expended above ground, the street will include art and green amenities; possibilities include sculpture and poetry, rain

gardens and plantings, welcoming signs and traffic calming measures.

In March, artist Peter Morales began meeting with a group of high school students at the Martin Luther King Center. Working from his model of the streetscape, they are creating a temporary installation for 2009 that will express the community's pride and hope for the Avenue's future, connecting citizens across the great divide.

## OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER

### Andy King, Photographer

A frequent visitor at Public Art Saint Paul events, Andy King can usually be seen with a camera around his neck, or up to his eye, photographing the intersection between people and art.

King is a talented photographer working in the journalism, industry, sports, commercial and art field. His work has been included in USA Today, the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and StarTribune, and almost every Public Art Saint Paul publication. Andy King donates his services, time and artistic excellence to Public Art Saint Paul because the events and programs he photographs are not only artistically satisfying, but are also “just so fun.”

Andy loved photographing Minnesota Rocks! in 2006 and Western Park educational programs. He is captivated by photos from Minnesota Rocks!, fascinated to watch the sculptures emerge. Two of his favorite photographs are from Minnesota Rocks! as Lazarus Takawira chiseled out a face, allowing *Inside My Head* to emerge from Min-



Andy King

nesota limestone and as Atsuo Okamoto celebrated his sculpture's dedication in Boyd Park, with his face reflected in water sitting atop the ancient remnant rock of *Distant Memory*.

Public Art Saint Paul couldn't survive without the dedication and skill of all its volunteers. Thank you to all who have helped, and a special thank you to Andy King for his dedication. Take a moment to thank him yourself, the next time you see him hovering around a PASP event, camera in hand...



Minnesota Rocks!  
2006 by Andy  
King, published  
in the *Wall Street  
Journal*

## PUBLIC ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROJECT

## Sidewalk Poetry 2009, Marcus Young

"Sidewalks are the blank pages of our city as a book."

Marcus Young

Marcus Young's cubicle home in Saint Paul Public Works is in the midst of the Sidewalk Division. By way of introduction as the Public Artist in Residence he asked those around him about their work and went on tours with them. He learned that 10 of the City's 1,000 miles of sidewalk are replaced each summer.

"It is obvious that sidewalks are important to our city. We use them, repair them, and want them to be smooth. Not always obvious is how poetry is just as essential... We live both in the physical world and in the world of metaphors and dreams. We should use poems more often, repair them when they are not smooth, and delight in them when they serve us well."

By the end of the 2008 sidewalk repair season, Saint Paul had 100 poems in service.

20 winning poems, selected from 2000 contest entries, were translated into large stamps and pressed into the concrete. Everyday Poems for City Sidewalk were the talk of the town, in cafes and churches in poetry readings and bookstores. The project generated press worldwide, including



wonderful mini-documentaries by the City of Saint Paul and WCCO and a feature in the Christian Science Monitor. Saint Paul Public Works and Public Art Saint Paul are fielding calls from as far away as New Zealand asking for guidance in creating such a project in more cities. Public Works received the equivalent of love letters from citizens, expressing thanks and pride in this creative initiative...and questions – "when can I have one on my street?"

Yes, there will be more poems coming in 2009. Young and the Public Works Sidewalk Division will build on the good work established in the project's first year—addressing a few glitches and exploring a few new ideas. The hope is to create a reliable system that is even more integrated into the sidewalk maintenance program, maximizing investment of time and resources.

Poems are stamped only where the Sidewalk Maintenance program is scheduled each year. Poems have not yet reached large expanses of the City and special efforts will be made to serve those areas in 2009.

All project costs will be paid by Public Art Saint Paul. A hand-bound book *Everyday Poems for City Sidewalk* includes 34 poems (20 winners and 14 honorable mentions), designed by Aki Shibata and Marcus Young and is available through Public Art Saint Paul.



## PUBLIC ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROJECT

## The Art of Traffic Calming, Steven Woodward

Joyous, iconic, ironic traffic signs first appeared last summer in streetscapes along Thomas and Hamline Avenues in the Hamline Midway neighborhood. By fall they had decamped to the West Side along George Street.

Why art signs?

To calm traffic along streets that carry thousands of cars each day and whose documented high speeds are of concern



in residential neighborhoods. Created by artist Steven Woodward based upon insights gleaned in his term as the City's Artist in Residence, the 37 signs are an experiment in the traffic calming strategy of "Mental Speed Bumps" advocated by David Engwicht, artist, author and one of the world's most innovative thinkers in transport and urban design.

Woodward hoped that 37 signs appearing along one side of the street would be surprise enough to impact driver behavior. After that initial impact, they were switched to the other side of the street. Then they disappeared altogether to repeat their performance in another neighborhood.

Their bright and witty presence made people wonder...Who is that guy shaking his chastising finger toward motorists?...Why is there a picture of a cat under the heading "bird?" Some signs look like ancient

cave wall scrawls, others portraying mothers holding children seem like Byzantine icons. Leaning out her upstairs window as signs were being installed, one older resident exclaimed to Woodward and the Public Works crew "those are just beautiful!"

Alas, from Public Works traffic data, it was apparent that the signs had no significant impact on traffic speeds in either location... only a very slight downward blip in one direction, nothing more. The 2008 experience did send the message that Saint Paul Public Works takes this public safety issue seriously and is seeking creative solutions. The signs garnered expansive and favorable publicity locally and even nationally. Compliments were many, complaints were few.

In 2009 Woodward, traffic engineers and Public Art Saint Paul are adjusting the strategy, seeing the Art Sign not as a lone traffic calming solution, but as one tool in an expansive and coordinated program of public information and action. City neighborhoods have been invited to propose traffic calming plans that utilize and strategically deploy the Art Signs. New city streetscapes will be selected for Art Sign visitations. The program's cost will be paid by Public Art Saint Paul with facilitation by Saint Paul Public Works.



Photos by Steven Woodward

## BEYOND GREEN

### Intense investigation and passionate creating

In 2008, Public Art Saint Paul awarded Sustainable Art-making Fellowships to support the research of 4 artists in their own practice, with an eye to sustainability. The performance team Olive Bieringa and Otto Ramstad; sculptor Aaron Dysart; theatre artist Christopher Lutter-Gardella; and ceramist Janna Schneider have spent the past year in this intense investigation, with their work video-documented for broadcast on SPNN later this year.

During the **Saint Paul Art Crawl April 24-26** their work will be shown in Public Art Saint Paul's Gallery and on the streets of Lowertown. Their final roundtable will be held at in the Davis Lecture Hall of Macalester College's Campus Center on April 27.

**Public Art in the Watershed Lecture May 19.** Watersheds are much in the news and on our minds in this season of flood. Here in Saint Paul, we watch as the waters of the Mississippi creep up the Harriet Island stairs. Harriet Island is in the Capital Region District, one of Minnesota's 45 Watershed Districts. In addition to the Capital Region, the City of St. Paul is also served by the Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District.

Over the past year, Public Art Saint Paul and these districts have discussed the exciting work of cities worldwide to engage artists in creative watershed planning, capital projects, and public education efforts. Artist and Capital Region board member Seitu Jones has been the driving force behind these discussions.

At a luncheon on Wednesday, May 19 Cliff Garten will present his work in developing a Public Art Master Plan for the Utilities



In the Capital Region Watershed

and Environmental Protection Department (UEP) in Calgary, Canada. Garten is sculptor and landscape architect based in Venice, California. He began his public art career in Saint Paul in the 1980's while a Professor of Art at Hamline University. Here he collaborated in design of Kellogg Mall Park and created the *Saint Paul Cultural Garden*. With simultaneous Bush Foundation Artist and Leadership Fellowships and a Travelers Foundation Leadership Award, Garten went on to Harvard's Graduate School of Design, emerging as a Master of Landscape Architecture with Distinction. Ever since he has been one of America's most celebrated public artists, creating sculptural beacons, courtyards, gardens, seating, entryways, arbors, and memorials in cities nationwide.

In 2006, Garten led an effort with Via Partnership to create for Calgary *A Public Art Plan for the Expressive Potential of Utility Infrastructure*, a title that heralded Garten's groundbreaking approach.

A workshop in June will consider the Management Plans of the Capitol Region and Ramsey Washington Watershed Districts and their 10-year capital project plans, with an eye to how artists can further water quality and public awareness goals.

Watch Public Art Saint Paul's website for program details and reservations.

## THE UNIVERSITY AVENUE PROJECT

### Artist Wing Young Huie



Photo by Wing Young Huie

"For the most part I've always tried to photograph without preconception, reacting intuitively to what I saw through the viewfinder. I've always thought that the best photos look as though they took themselves. But when I photographed the students and staff at Hubbs Center, a school for adults on University Avenue, I decided on a more conceptual idea.

I thought it would be interesting to ask each of the participants to respond to a few questions. I then chose what I thought was the most interesting answer and asked them to write it on a blackboard I made. Like

messages in a bottle they bubbled up a wealth of emotions and needs, prosaic and philosophical wishes, daytime and nighttime fears." -Wing Young Huie

Wing Young Huie's University Avenue Project will open in storefront windows and public places along the Avenue in 2010. This 4-mile, 6 1/2 month public exhibition is produced and funded by Public Art Saint Paul with support from the Joyce Foundation and contributors to our 20th Anniversary Program Fund.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### Wishes for the Sky

Enjoy an enchanted Earth Day! Make wishes and fly kites at an annual day of wishing!

*Free event*

Sunday, April 19  
10:30am-4:30pm

Harriet Island, St. Paul

Rain or Shine

[www.wishesforthesky.org](http://www.wishesforthesky.org)



Janna Schnider

### Spring Saint Paul Art Crawl

Stop by our gallery in the Jax Building for our exhibit featuring Environmental Sustainability fellows.

April 24 6-10pm and

April 25 12-8pm

[www.stpaulartcrawl.org](http://www.stpaulartcrawl.org)



### Readings by Writers Series

Gather every third Tuesday at 7:30pm at the University Club of Saint Paul to hear poets read their works. Curated by Saint Paul's Poet Laureate Carol Connolly. Proceeds benefit PASP's Sidewalk Poetry Project.



### PASP Website

Visit our website for information and news. We now have an online store and can accept online donations. Get your PASP gear, donate, and read more at

[www.publicartstpaul.org](http://www.publicartstpaul.org)



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