

New Public Art to be Unveiled in Washougal

Washougal, WA – October 17, 2016 - Art lovers and the entire community are invited to help welcome the newest piece of public art in Washougal. “FIRE” created by the husband and wife artist team, Jennifer Corio and Dave Frei, will be unveiled at a reception on Saturday Oct 29 at 1 p.m. at Steamboat Landing (Hwy 14 and Washougal River Road, Washougal) hosted by Washougal Arts and Culture Alliance.

The metal sculpture was inspired by smoke stacks of old steam ships like those that docked at that very location at Washougal’s Steamboat Landing Park in years past. FIRE was made possible through a generous donation by Washougal resident Molly Coston as a tribute to her late husband, Phil Harris, Executive Director of the Two Rivers Heritage Museum, in recognition of his love of the rich history of the local area.

FIRE is a part of the four part ELEMENTS series of artwork (Earth, Wind, Water and Fire) created by the four artists of ‘Women Who Weld.’ Corio found ideas for this work in the images of old steam ships. “FIRE was the perfect element to artistically represent those ships from Washougal’s history,” she said. “The steam stacks I looked at were works of art in and of themselves.” FIRE is also a nod to the volcanic activity that has shaped much of the landscape of the Columbia River Gorge.

The ELEMENTS project began several years ago when Suzanne Grover and Janice Ferguson approached Women Who Weld to create an art piece at Steamboat Landing Park. “We came up with the idea of the four elements where each artist would create an artistic representation of one of the elements,” Corio explained. Originally the plan was for each Element to sit atop the tall pilings of the Steamboat Landing Park dock, but after a flood occurred that would have placed the art located there in danger, it was decided that the Elements would be located around town; separated by distance, a one-mile loop, but linked by a common theme.

“This project has been an opportunity to understand the creative process and see a concept take form,” said Janice Ferguson, WACA president and member of the Clark County Arts Commission. “It’s been a privilege to get to know these artists, to visit their studios and watch the pieces come to life. These elements illustrate what Washougal means to me.”

“I am so glad to be able to sponsor an enduring piece of wonderful public art that will be enjoyed by many generations of Washouglans,” said Coston. “And I hope that this can inspire others to sponsor even more public art, which enriches the entire community.”

EARTH was installed in September of 2013 at the entrance to the Pedestrian Tunnel under Hwy 14 and was sponsored by Shirley Scott. WIND was sponsored by a collaboration of Washougal residents and the Dick Beaver family and was installed in Beaver Park in April 2015. The final piece, WATER, will be set at the corner of Main and Pendleton Way in 2017, thanks to a donation from Kind Heart Free Spirit Foundation.

“I hope people feel connected to their community through the entire ELEMENTS series of public art,” Corio said. “It says a lot about a community when they invest in art as a way to make their town unique, beautiful and culturally meaningful.”

Corio incorporated bright colors in her design to give the piece a fiery look. The smoke plume will rotate with the wind like a weathervane. “I hope FIRE provides a playful link to Washougal’s past from both a cultural perspective, with old steamships, and a geological perspective, such as volcanic events. But equally as important I hope it is a bright spot that catches people by surprise and makes people smile. I love the fact that people will see FIRE from the highway, from the park and from the river,” she said.

The next public art to be placed in Washougal later this fall near Washougal Library. Proceeds from the successful Washougal Art Festival in August 2016 raised the funds for that work. For more information about WACA and their efforts to bring public art to Washougal visit their website at www.washougalarts.org.

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