

Artist Selected for Canada 150 Legacy Public Art

Conference at the Council House - Artist Statement

Hadley Howes & Maxwell Stephens (Studio of Received Ideas)

Conference at the Council House will stand at the entry to the Central Library and Mississauga Celebration Square as a monument to remind the local community of the rich history and diversity of this particular site. Thirty birds confer on and around a white square tower and cupola that is an artistic replica of the tower that tops the historic Council House built 132 years ago on the New Credit reserve in Hagersville – the land the Mississauga people moved to in 1847 from their ancestral home on the Credit River in what is now known as the city of Mississauga.

Perched on and around the tower sit thirty birds, cast in bronze and painted in vivid colours. The birds are portraits of avian citizens in the region, both local and migratory – interpretations of drawings done by local residents and members of the New Credit First Nation community, of actual birds seen in backyards, parks and walkways within the community. Spreading the invitation to the diverse local community to give special attention to the wildlife that share the living space of the city is a method of passing on aboriginal concepts of philosophy, respect and living in balance with all of creation.

The process of gathering and interpreting these portraits will involve the active engagement of the communities through an outreach program including educational programming from local conservationists and Indigenous Elders, fostering a sense of responsibility and care for the environment and the living beings with whom we share the land. Along with sharing the values of stewardship and care, outreach to the community will include education on how to find and attract birds, how to protect birds in urban environments, the significance of birds to our cultural history and what we can learn from them.

The artistic reproduction of the Council House tower and cupola poses the questions: what if the Treaties of 1805, 1818 and 1820 regarding the lands around the Credit River had never been negotiated and the Mississaugas continued to make their home by the Credit River? What if the Mississaugas had not left their home by the Credit River, and instead built their Council House in 1882 on the land where Celebration Square now sits?

The tower stands as a dream figure, an image of what might have been, and a reminder that we are standing on the Traditional Land of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. The community of birds flocked around the Council House tower is a representation of the diverse community that populates this land today, bearing witness to this historical alternative and to the possibility of a future of peaceful, thriving, diversity and mutual care.

Art Selection Committee Members (Listed in alphabetical order)

Bonnie Devine – Artist/Curator, Professor, OCAD University

Lina Jabra – Executive Director, Royal Canadian Painting Association

Suelyn Knight – Artist/Curator, Black Experience Project

Kris Noakes – Executive Director, Peel Aboriginal Network

Matthew Ryan Smith, Ph.D., – Sessional Lecturer of Indigenous Art, University of Toronto (Mississauga)

Christine Vozoris – Architect, CS&P Architects

City of Mississauga thanks all participating artists for contributing their time to submit an application for this public art opportunity as well as the Art Selection Committee for their expertise in the selection process.