

Ana-Teresa Fernández

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Four finalists chose for Napa roundabout public art project

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The city of Napa has chosen finalists for a public art piece that will be placed near the three roundabouts that mark the entrance from Highway 29 to downtown Napa.

KEVIN COURTNEY, Register

The city of Napa has chosen four artists as finalists for a roundabout public art project, which, when completed, will be located near the city's Highway 29-adjacent triad of roundabouts west of downtown Napa that [opened in late 2019 and early 2020](#).

The four finalists, approved unanimously by the city's Public Art Steering Committee at a Tuesday meeting, are Ilan Averbuch, Ana Teresa Fernández, Clare Rojas, and Pae White.

Next, the finalists will propose conceptual designs, which will be reviewed by a selection panel, and will need to be approved by the steering committee and the Napa City Council.

The finished art piece is planned for a section of pavement at the intersection of California Boulevard and First Street (not in the center of a roundabout). The final piece will likely be installed late this year or early 2023, according to city recreation manager Katrina Gregory.

Gregory said at the commission meeting the city set aside a budget of roughly \$350,000 for the public art project, with a proposed artist fee of \$300,000.

The roundabouts were identified as a priority area for public art back in 2018 because it's a major gateway in and out of the city, Gregory said.

To push the art project forward, the city began working with Artsource Consulting on outreach to artists in July 2021, Gregory added.

"We wanted to work with an outside consultant to help us really elevate this project and do more robust outreach to national artists," Gregory said.

Kerri Hurtado, the curator for Artsource, said a selection panel of five art professionals was organized to select the finalists for the roundabout project. The panel includes Judy Chang, a

member of the city's public art steering committee, as well as Bay Area art professionals Abby Chen, Rhea Fontaine, Betti-Sue Hertz, and prominent Napa artist Gordon Huether.

The panel selected the four finalists from 204 applications, Hurtado said. The panel will make a final recommendation to the commission and the Napa City Council on the conceptual design proposals submitted by the four finalists.

Hurtado said Artsource worked closely with the city to develop criteria for selecting the finalists and goals for the final artwork.

“What we were really looking at was to enhance Napa’s image as a world-class art destination,” Hurtado said. “So we really wanted to cast the net out to find artists that have some recognition in the greater art world. We would like the piece to be iconic and a true gateway piece, obviously site-specific and original, inviting and aesthetically appealing, and, most importantly, really viewable and impactful as a drive-by experience, as this is not a pedestrian site.”

Hurtado also gave a brief overview of each finalist. Averbuch is a New York-based artist, primarily a sculptor who works with themes of “civilization and its many versions of history and natural science,” Hurtado said. Averbuch works with durable and sustainable materials like recycled stone, wood, steel, glass, and copper, she added.

“I would like to create a project large enough to be enjoyed simultaneously by pedestrians and motorists,” Hurtado read from Averbuch’s letter of interest. “The work will be symbolic and explore themes of navigation and the city’s natural and industrial history. I envision a work that is unmistakably site-specific, borrowing from the natural industrial and cultural history of Napa.”

Fernández, Hurtado said, is a Mexican artist based in San Francisco, who primarily works in painting, sculpture, and land art. Hurtado added Fernández is interested in highlighting “expressions of ingenuity by Latinx communities, privately or in the public, that improve the vernacular of service as essential workers and human beings in the labor force.”

For the roundabout project, Hurtado said, Fernández wants to “engage with the city with ideas of intersections, connections, and inclusions.”

“I grew up daydreaming of vibrant and engaging sculptures that would be gender fluid and more about energy than about isolated individuals,” Hurtado read from Fernández’ letter of interest. “I would use the space to illuminate the cross-generational and cross-cultural spectrum the city provides to both its residents as well as the international tourism at all times of the year.”

Rojas is another California artist, based in Bolinas, Hurtado said. Much of Rojas’ work is influenced by childhood visits to her Peruvian artist grandmother, who would tell her “very folkloric stories of superpowers that were innate in the natural world,” according to Hurtado. Much of her work involves narrative, Hurtado added and addresses the relationship between humans and nature.

The selection panel liked the way Rojas interacts with storytelling, Hurtado said, and “thought she could really tell a story about Napa and be site-specific.”

White, also a California-based artist, focuses on “an exploration of things that were neglected or forgotten ephemera of everyday life,” Hurtado said. White’s also very interested in transitional sites, such as airports, busses, and ports.

“Because the viewer is so focused on a specific goal of getting from point A to point B, I like the idea of being able to introduce an unexpected moment of surprise and delight to an otherwise very specific trajectory,” Hurtado said, reading from White’s letter of interest.

Each of the finalists will be paid \$2,500 for their conceptual designs, according to Gregory.

In other news, the Public Art Steering Committee was also scheduled to discuss adding public art to the medians along Soscol Avenue. To fund the project, Gregory said, the city was proposing that budget allocated for public art for the city’s downtown Second Street parking garage be reallocated to the Soscol project.

The reason for that, she added, is the parking garage is several decades old and the city’s public works department is starting to evaluate its useful life.

“I think it could still be a great location for maybe temporary art,” Gregory said. “But to make a significant contribution with the public art fund not knowing the life of that parking garage, maybe that wouldn’t be the most fiscally prudent thing to do.”

The committee took no action, however, because committee member Jennifer Abram disconnected from the virtual meeting. That meant only two committee members remained, so the committee lost its quorum. The meeting ended after the remainder of the committee waited for about 15 minutes for Abram to come back, which didn’t happen.

https://napavalleyregister.com/news/local/four-finalists-chosen-for-napa-roundabout-public-art-project/article_86f15093-4541-52d1-9dd8-de2505a39086.html

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