

COLUMNS

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Environmental Art – Embracing a Community

In 2009, a **three-sculpture installation** brought life and beauty to a neighborhood in Deep Ellum. The Traveling Man series, consisting of "Awakening" (Good Latimer & Elm), "Waiting on a Train" (Good Latimer & Gaston), and "Walking Tall" (Good Latimer & Swiss) were designed by Brandon Oldenburg of Reel FX Creative Studios and Brad Oldham of Brad Oldham International Inc. The intent: to create a new gateway to the community.

Creating approachable, engaging art was a hallmark of the initial design. The collaborators envisioned larger-than-life sculptures that could be tactile, interactive, and reflective of the community. Being able to sit on the sculptures, walk under them, touch them, reach towards them—each of these actions help the community embrace the experience. The mirror-polished stainless steel finish, some say, allows the viewers to see themselves in him and reflect themselves back into the community.



Brandon Oldenburg

To enrich the community, the three pieces were placed in an area of the city that would benefit from revitalization and a more secure neighborhood feel. If you log onto Facebook or Flickr, you find a host of family photos, with people walking under "Walking Tall," lounging across "Waiting on a Train," stroking the steel birds,

Facts

"Walking Tall" weighs more than 35,000 pounds; the legs alone weigh in at 21,500 pounds. It is taller than the Alamo. Its collective height, above and below ground, is 70 feet. Its front leg took 10 hours to secure in place over the concrete footing. Its hip bones are nearly four feet wide.

"Waiting on a Train" stands nine-feet tall and rests on a 15,000-pound rescued portion of the Deep Ellum tunnel, stamped 1930.

The three-sculpture installation was created on a budget of \$1.38 million. They were built to the same safety protocols that are followed by rail line construction projects and it required more than 12,000 man hours to bring The Traveling Man series to life.

More information at www.deepellumgateway.com.



Images courtesy of The Arts Area Project Trust

and staring at their reflections in the polished stainless steel. Though completed just last September, the sculptures have already become a local landmark and a destination for those who appreciate public art. Much like the Mustangs of Las Colinas, these sculptures always have people milling about.

The most prominent element of the sculptural series, "Walking Tall," required two 32-foot-deep piers that provide a concrete footing for the 38-foot-tall sculpture. Concrete piers were chosen, rather than concrete mass footings due to cost and time savings. His legs, weighing 21,500 pounds, were hoisted over the piers and his hips were then raised by crane and welded in place on site. The building process took longer than expected, but the challenges helped the designers participate in constructing the sculptures in a way that was more fluid and less robotic and visually rigid. "I usually live in the virtual world of animation," says Oldenburg "Working outside of that virtual environment, riveting panels, and interacting with steel ... we learned as we worked and improved the design within the construction process."

All three sculptures were created to withstand 100-mile-per-hour winds. Each has a structure, like a physical skeleton, surrounded by a steel skin. "Walking Tall" and "Waiting on a Train" both required 12 weeks of cutting and welding just to make each skeleton and there are more than 1,800 pounds of welding-rod anodes in the structures of their bodies. "The engineering portion of this project was huge," said Oldham. "We consulted with the engineers (Nathan D. Maier Consulting Engineers) almost daily about some aspect of the project."

The uniqueness of the sculptures appeals to the existing arts community and draws an even larger audience, adding diversity to the already rich Deep Ellum culture. In addition, they just make you smile! ■

Charla Blake, Assoc AIA, is the interior design accreditation coordinator at The Art Institute of Dallas.

BEADY BYE BRIGHT

A HISTORY OF URBAN RENEWAL

