

# Art finalists chosen for Meccanica project

By Andrew Fleming

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The shortlist for artists hoping to create a public work of art at a new condo development beside the Olympic Village has been narrowed down to three finalists from dozens of applicants from around the world.

Canadian artists Shayne Dark, Greg Snider and Vancouver's Cedric Bomford are all vying to have their work permanently displayed as part of the upcoming Meccanica complex, an L-shaped residential complex featuring both a seven-storey building and a 15-storey tower built by Cressey Development Group at the corner of First Avenue and Quebec Street.

The art display is the result of a City of Vancouver requirement that all privatesector rezonings greater than 100,000 square feet incorporate some form of public art. Developers are required to hire a public art consultant to coordinate the process, and a public art committee appointed by city council oversees each step of the process.

Hani Lammam, Cressey's vice president of development and acquisitions, admits that developers likely wouldn't want to spend the money on art projects if they weren't being forced to, but says he is glad they are.

"I don't think we would be doing it on our own if we weren't compelled to," Lammam told the Courier. "Having said that, what we have chosen to do is, instead of treat it as an obligation, is to say 'You know what? This is an opportunity and let's take it seriously and engage the best in the business.' We view the requirement as an opportunity to enrich the neighbourhood."

Lammam said Cressey is contributing between \$1,500 to \$2,000 for each of Meccanica's 170 total housing units, meaning the cost of the final price tag will be in the ballpark of \$250,000 to \$340,000. He added that the building is already 40 per cent sold and that residents don't have a say in choosing the art display.

Chances are good, however, that it will have something to do with fast cars as the overall architectural style of the Meccanica complex is intended to be an homage to Intermeccanica, a long-standing family business specializing in building replica vintage Porsches. It currently operates out of the site and, according to owner Henry Reisner, hopes to have a showroom there when the project is completed.

Jan Ballard, a local fine art consultant, believes developers can play an important role in protecting Vancouver's arts community, especially considering B.C. has the lowest per capita provincial arts funding in the country. Ballard's company was hired to find



Jan Ballard, a local fine art consultant pictured here with a model of the Meccanica project, believes developers can play an important role in protecting Vancouver's arts community, especially considering B.C. has the lowest per capita provincial arts funding in the country.

artists and oversee the competition.

"We've had so many government cutbacks in funding for the arts, so having this program in place is fantastic," said Ballard.

"What's even better is you have developers like Cressey who are not just randomly choosing an artist but instead are really striving for the highest creative ingenuity we can find. What I think we are seeing now is that developers are actively embracing the program-Vancouver is such a young city and it wasn't always much of a priority-and seeing public art as a component that is so essential to the health of the city."

Lammam said the project's winning artist will be chosen in the next 30 days.

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