

Artwork for new Walnut Creek library OK'd

By Elisabeth Nardi
STAFF WRITER
Contra Costa Times

Article Launched: 07/17/2007 10:35:18 AM PDT

The simple beauty of a book was the inspiration for artist Christian Moeller's library public art piece.

At a Walnut Creek Arts Commission meeting Monday night, commissioners and the public got a first peek at the city-commissioned artist's idea for a public art piece in the new downtown library.

The piece is a steel 26-foot-tall bookcase which will be filled with 4,400 books, he will make, in different shades of gray. The case will stand tall, seen on both levels, in an entryway to the new downtown Walnut Creek library scheduled to be built by 2010. Up close the books will look like books, but stand back and the spines of the books create an image of a woman holding a finger to her mouth and saying "shhh."

"I have wanted to do something in a library," Moeller said. "There is something beautiful about a book.... books are works of public art."

The piece is called "Portrait in 12 Volumes of Gray."

Moeller looked at libraries of the past and present, how technology has changed libraries, and he created a piece which uses books as pixels and the bookshelf as a display. It celebrates the new possibilities of digital information while honoring the tradition of a book, Moeller said.

Moeller was commissioned by the city to do the piece for \$200,000. The city's public art ordinance requires that 1 percent of a capital improvement project or building be set aside for acquisition of artwork.

The Arts Commission unanimously approved Moeller's conceptual design of the bookshelf. Moeller, who is a professor at UCLA, will have until the library is built to complete the project, but before he could begin he had to get approval from the commission.

This is one of the largest city commissioned pieces ever. Moeller was selected before officials saw what he would suggest for Walnut Creek, it was the first time in the city's history that the artist was selected rather than the work.

On hand Monday to see what Moeller would present were four city council members, city staff and various residents all eager to see the unveiling.

"A book being the most public of public art . . . it all works very well together -- it's refreshing and unique," said Commissioner Michael Fotheringham.

Close Window

Send To Printer