

City unveils \$450,000 zig-zagging steel art piece at Quarry Park recreation centre

BY SHAWN WHITE

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It may be 13,600 kg. of zigzagging steel, but it's expected to be a warm gathering spot for southeast Calgary residents for decades to come.

The city unveiled The Fold on Wednesday, a \$450,000, self-weathering, steel public-art piece, complete with small staircases, openings and even a shared public library that will serve as the gateway to the soon-to-be-opened Quarry Park recreation centre.

Artist Adad Hannah, who's based in Vancouver and Montreal, said the city's latest work of public art was meant to be a focal point of the community, both as a landmark and a meeting place.



Artist Adad Hannah poses for a photo with his sculpture 'The Fold' outside of the Quarry Park recreation centre currently under construction in Calgary on Wednesday, April 27, 2016. Hannah, who lives in Vancouver and Montreal, says The Fold is made from self-weathering steel and is designed to be interactive. (LYLE ASPINALL / POSTMEDIA)

“I’m hoping that this sculpture works as kind of a landmark for this neighbourhood, and then when you get up close you have this personal interaction with it,” said Adad, who noted the artwork has been a two-year process, about six to nine months of that actually spent crafting the steel sculpture.

“On one level it’s sort of a big sculpture you can look at, but it’s also something your kids can play in and around.”

He said the self-weathering steel used in the project, known as Cor-Ten, creates a protective coating as it rusts, making it both durable and enduring.

As it weathers, its colour will continue to change from its current orange-brown to a deep purple.

“It gets more and more beautiful over time,” Hannah said.

“With public art, it’s always a concern that it’s going to last — this is built to last.”

Kim McCrimmon, who is also an artist, lives in nearby Riverbend and served on the selection committee for the artist.

The committee pored over some 400 applications before trimming them down to about 50. From that short list, Hannah’s work and reputation stood out.

“We were looking at artists from all over the world,” said the mother of three.

“What really jumped out about Adad was his community involvement. He really wanted an understanding of what it was we wanted to create.”

McCrimmon said because the recreation centre will no doubt become a community hub, it’s vital that the artwork is a part of bringing neighbours together.

Sarah Iley, the city’s manager of culture, said involving the community in determining the best fit for public art is a key part of Calgary’s public art plan.

“Community members really brought a lot to the table,” she said.

“From our perspective, we think this is going to be a really great gathering place for the community for years to come.”

The Quarry Park recreation centre will open its doors to the public July 1.

Iley added the city will be rolling out more public artwork in the coming months and years for three other recreation centres in various stages of construction in the Great Plains Industrial Park, Rocky Ridge and Seton, all with significant input from the communities they serve.

What you need to know about The Fold:

- The total price tag for the work is \$450,000;
- Approved in 2013, the structure took between six and nine months to build;
- It is made from 13,600 kg. of self-weathering steel;
- The zigzagging structure, complete with openings, platforms and stairs, stretches almost 40 metres;
- The artist's concept called for a series of connected open rooms, made from material that looks better as it ages;
- Its artist led several community workshops to invite feedback;
- Workshop participants created their own model of a folded steel sculpture, which influenced the final design;
- Artist Adad Hannah took on an artist mentee for the project to learn about the design and execution of public art;
- Hannah has created two other public art pieces, Blocks for the Musée at Montreal's Museum of Fine Arts, and LEAP at Concordia University's PERFORM Centre.