



'Endurance' sprints to finish

Ex-Durangoan's sculpture to adorn Florida Road roundabout

By Chase Olivarius-Mcallister Herald staff writer

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By August, the sculpture will be installed in the roundabout on Florida Road near Chapman Hill to commemorate this summer's USA Pro Cycling Challenge. Durango is hosting the start of the opening stage Aug. 20. The event will bring some of the world's top road cyclists to Colorado for the seven-day stage race that will end in Denver on Aug. 26.

The panel's decision marks the end of a competition that elicited 16 proposals in just two weeks.

"I think they have great taste. I'm ecstatic, just delighted," said Wiener, whose proposal beat out Durangoan Shan Wells' "Gearflakes" and Mimbres, N.M., resident Mary Anne Baker's "Game On!" in the final round of competition.

"I love Durango, and it's a good opportunity to create a work of art for that town – it just means a ton to me," Wiener said. "I lived on Florida Road for almost 10 years. I would walk or ride my bike – to the Strater, the train – all the different places I worked. At least twice a day I'd cross that spot."

Though Wiener said he'd faced stiff competition, "Endurance" emerged as the clear frontrunner two weeks ago, when the Artwork Selection Panel released its preliminary scoring of the 16 designs.

Josh Wiener's "Endurance" will be constructed in the Florida Road roundabout in time for the Aug. 20 start of the USA Pro Cycling Challenge. Nine members of Durango's Artwork Selection Panel awarded Josh Wiener, a Boulder-based artist, \$25,000 on Friday to create "Endurance," a steel sculpture of five bicyclists streaking toward an invisible finish line.

Josh Wiener explains the details of "Endurance," the sculpture picked to decorate the roundabout on Florida Road, during an open house Thursday evening at the Squeaky Wheel Bicycle Gallery.



Gearflakes, by Shan Wells



Endurance, by Josh Weiner



Game On!, by Mary Ann Baker

Judged on four criteria – a design's originality, appropriateness, clarity and how well it captured Durango's cycling legacy – Wiener racked up a whopping 224.5 points. "Gearflakes" earned 197 points and "Game On!" 186 points.

The panel made its decision Friday morning after conducting half-hour interviews with each of the three finalists on the top floor of the old Durango Public Library.

Sherri Dugdale, assistant to the city manager, said, "I really think that it took like 10 minutes. The vote was unanimous, except for one holdout."

Models of the finalists' proposals were displayed for the public Thursday at the Squeaky Wheel Art Gallery. Durangoans seized the opportunity to rank the designs on a scale of one to five, using forms to expound on the works' aesthetic merits and perceived shortcomings.

Though the panel was not bound to act in accordance with public feedback, John Dowling, president of Bank of Colorado in Durango – which envisioned, championed and funded the design competition – said "one thing that was really positive about it was that most people made comments that were in line with the panel."

The public frequently complained that Wiener's design – which is composed of five bicyclists – featured no women.

Dugdale said the panel communicated this concern to Wiener in his final interview. Wiener assured the panel that his design could be modified to depict forms that were more explicitly female.

Many Durangoans praised Wiener's design for taking advantage of the fact that motorists' perspectives on the sculpture will change as they drive to create the optical illusion that the cyclists are in motion.

"The way you'll pass it, it looks like people are racing to the finish line, really jockeying for position," said Wiener.

But this element worried others.

"This artwork will eventually cause an accident as someone slows down to watch the finish line and gets rear-ended by someone also watching," blustered one resident, using all capital letters.

Dugdale dismissed this possibility, saying, "There's artwork in the roundabout out in the Three Springs area, and to my knowledge, no accidents have been caused by the art."

Based on the public's reviews of Wiener's proposed design, few appear apprehensive for their safety.

"This is the coolest thing I have ever seen. The idea is top notch. DURANGO NEEDS THIS," wrote one, with exacting penmanship. Another predicted that Wiener's "strong imagery will be iconic for the town of Durango."

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