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May 17, 2024

Dear Jennifer,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide email comments on the proposed sculpture at Pier C Park.

My husband, David White, and I are residents of Hoboken since 1985 and 1997 respectively.

I am a sculptor and professor of fine arts at [Pratt Institute](#), Brooklyn, for the past 28 years. Courses that I teach include Welding, Forging and Metal Fabrication, Direct Metal Sculpture, Making: Materials, Methods and Meaning, and Land Art (art in the public realm). I am a graduate of [The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art](#). My work has shown in the United States and Europe and been collected in museums including The Brooklyn Museum, The Newark Museum and The Neuberger Museum. The Hoboken Historical Museum exhibited my work in a solo retrospective in 2002.

As more particularly described below, I feel the City's proposal is inappropriate. Please feel free to contact me with questions.

Respectfully,

Jenny Lee

Design and programmatic considerations

Any artwork or structure placed in Pier C Park should complement the park and the Hoboken waterfront in program and form. The park's design is understated and functional. Its built environment echoes the horizon and waterline to organically and unobtrusively dovetail with the rectilinear footprint of the long-absent original Pier C. The sculptural quality of the landscape simulates the forms of a barrier beach while the interior breaks open to reveal the play landscape—a whimsical, other-scaled world designed to engage children of all ages and abilities.

Without adding value, the proposed sculpture detracts from, and even collides with, the purpose and design of the park from the standpoint of gesture, scale, relative proportions and geometry.

Views

Every design element of the park is integrated and in service to the spectacular views of the Hudson River. The park's uninterrupted, arcing walkways and long piers capitalize on views to Manhattan as well as to the north (George Washington Bridge) and south (Verrazano Narrows Bridge).

The braided steel rope fencing is designed to be "invisible," from within the park and through the park from points north and south. The fencing handrail houses downward-pointing lights. This provides an unobtrusive and functional solution to public safety and lighting that obviates the need for tall, bulky structures by the water's edge.

The proposed sculpture, by contrast, sticks up in a hard, geometric semi-circle along the length of the pier and out into the river. In taking this grandiose gesture, the stainless steel and glass structure is abrupt, intrusive, and out of place. From the rendering, it will hulk over park visitors and obstruct views from all parts of the park and from points north and south of the park.

In addition to disrupting views, the proposed sculpture will interfere with other park functions. The park is designed to encourage users to experience waterfront wildlife opportunities, including water fowl and a nearby osprey nest. The pier is also purposed for fishing, but the tall and arcing members of the proposed sculpture would interfere with casting and pole placement .

These [photos](#) taken last week clearly illustrate the low-keyed, organic functional park and waterfront designs that prioritizes a panoramic view of the Hudson River.

Intangibles

When do architecture, landscaping, structures, objects and experiences become art? No easy answer but probably when they engage the viewer in a special way that elicits insights and realizations from them. The waterfront generally has this effect. Pier C Park with its multiple and complex functions, engages park and waterfront users in ways subtle and profound. It is through spending time in the park that one starts to contemplate and appreciate the park's programming, one's own relationship to the space, the people and the river, horizon to horizon.

The proposed sculpture does not do this. It is a blunt imposition of the artist's statement that the river flows both ways, although that's unclear from the work itself. Instead, wham, we're left with a hit-on-the-head assertion by the artist.

Process

Public art is commonly defined as art in any media whose form, function and meaning are created for the general public through a public process. This proposal lacks the public process in ways that include: choice of art, artist, and manufacturer, and location and placement of art. It is common for public art to be open to competition and several proposals presented for public vetting. These were not part of this process. The [College Art Association](#) has a comprehensive description of and further resources on public art and its associated processes.

Engineering

The proposal is an installation of two tubular stainless steel semi-circles, each standing on two points over the length of the pier. It is proposed that glass forms will cantilever on either side of each semicircular tube. Would the stainless steel tubes need flanges, and at what size, to support the considerable span and load. How far in from the fencing would the sculpture have to be in order to accommodate the flanges?

Stainless steel rusts, albeit at a slower rate. Why is the stainless structure proposed to be fabricated in and shipped from the Netherlands. Don't we have local manufacturers? The proposal calls for the glass parts to be made locally to save on shipping costs. Apply the same reasoning to the stainless part.

History and culture

The proposal makes reference to the Hudson River, early Dutch settlers and the prospective Dutch artist. Dutch settlement and subsequent "purchase" of Native American land on both sides of the Hudson in exchange for trinkets is not necessarily something to celebrate.

Other considerations

In my profession, this type of work is sometimes called "plop" art or "plonk" art. It is usually large, abstract, modernist or contemporary sculpture made for government or corporate plazas, spaces in front of office buildings, skyscraper atriums, parks, and other public venues. The term is a form of wordplay on the term "pop" art, connoting that the work is unattractive or inappropriate to its surroundings – that it has been thoughtlessly "plopped" where it lies. The term "plop" suggests the sound of something falling heavily and suddenly and seems apt for this proposal.

—

City of Hoboken

[Pier C Park](#)

Fishing Pier Play Area Water Play area Rookery – (For the birds) Promenade

Location: Sinatra Drive near 4th St.

- Fishing Pier
- Play Area
- Water Play area
- Rookery – (For the birds)
- Promenade