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*Transparent Strength by Damion Priour
at the Frisco Police Station
photo by Chris Fritchie*

Home is where the



WITHIN THE FABRIC of any city there is woven among the threads its fundamental culture and beliefs: what it values; what gives it meaning and depth. Art remains fundamental to any society. Public art is a form of public speech and it speaks to the future about the passions the city possesses today.

Anyone driving through the city of Frisco is bound to be impressed with its obvious passion for art. Whether it's the largest bronze cattle run tromping over the Center at Preston Ridge or the bronze surveyor eternally evaluating Preston Road, Frisco is blessed with one of the finest public art collections in the nation. Frisco has had a long-standing commitment to public art, receiving much of its collection through private developers and some individual donations. However, in 2002 the city formalized its own Public Art Program by officially instituting a financial source that would support its further growth.

BY



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CYNTHIA HOWE

Frisco Police
Department, 2006

THE PROGRAM

In 2002 Frisco joined more than 300 cities across the nation with their “Percent for Art” ordinance, committing one to two percent of capital projects for commissions toward public art. This program is responsible for the majority of the public art we now enjoy, consisting of more than 40 pieces. Richard Oldham is the art manager for the City of Frisco. In retrospect, timing of the city’s growth played an important role in the program’s development. “We have something truly special here in Frisco. Most ‘percent for art’ programs are in cities much larger than us, especially considering that when we started six years ago, we were a much smaller city than we are today,” explained Mr. Oldham.

He went on to say how much the individuals within the program have inspired its success. “The vision of our mayor, council, city manager and art board has put Frisco on the map as a strong art supporter. We are recognized around the country as a city that took the initiative early on to improve the quality of life for our citizens.”

The city also hired Via Partnership, whose members advise the Public Art Board as consultants providing a sounding board and a variety of recommendations pertinent to the city’s overall vision for the community. While Via plays an important role in the overall decision making, the choice of each commissioned piece starts with a group of volunteers, citizens like you or me, called the “Artist Selection Committee.”

This committee, also known as the “ASC,” reviews a variety of artists assessing their qualifications and examining their



Texas Splendor by Eliseo Garcia at the Frisco Athletic Center

photo by Chris Fritchie

portfolios. These artists have responded to the city’s advertisements locally, nationally and at times internationally, depending on the magnitude of the project. The artists have a broad idea of what the city is requesting (for example, flooring, wall space, sculpture, etc.) but not any specifics required for the final project. The committee will meet two to four times before determining their recommendation for the artist they have chosen for the commissioned project and the contract is then turned over to the City Council for final approval.

Once the artist has received the commission he meets with a variety of people that may have input for the piece. This process ensures the integrity of the overall piece as being unique to the collection. “When we hire an artist we want their work, not a project designed by committee,” Mr. Oldham

explained. When the artist’s proposal has been developed for the site, it is then presented to the standing Public Art Board whose members include Jessica Weiss, Rhonda Martin, Troy Pelias, John Pozadzides and Tennishea Turner.

These board members are appointed by the City Council and have done a tremendous job overseeing the program. They evaluate the proposal based on aesthetic qualities and whether or not it is appropriate for the site as well as safety issues. These meetings are open to the public and input from citizens is welcome as it serves the community as a whole. When the concept has been reviewed and approved by the board it is then passed on to the City Council for final approval.

Mr. Oldham encourages residents to get involved by saying, “If anyone would like to

Public Art Album

The City of Frisco is committed to the Arts in a very public manner by providing spectacular art pieces throughout the city. *Frisco STYLE Magazine* and *STYLE Creative Photography* have created an exquisite look at the Public Art collection in a new coffee table book, *Frisco’s Public Art*. For more information, see page 70.



The Guardian by Detha Watson at Fairways Green Park

photo by Chris Johnson

be considered for the ASC, they can download an application from our website. I can say with confidence that the volunteers enjoy the process and feel a sense of ownership in the artwork when they participate.”

THE ARTISTS & THEIR COMMISSIONS

Artists play the most significant role in any art collection. Artists can take forgotten elements and forge meaning, evoke emotion and challenge a community to think introspectively. One of the latest and distinct pieces added to the collection was commissioned to Damion Priour. It is entitled “Transparent Strength” and can be found in front of the Police Department at 7200 Stonebrook Parkway. Understanding the passion of

the artist contributes to appreciating the final piece of artwork.

Mr. Priour, a seventh generation Texan, is passionate about each piece he creates. “My art is the product of the Gulf of Mexico’s tidal forces as surely as weather. In my sculpture, glass becomes a metaphor for water. It alternately pools in rivulets and in powerful current flows that join together to carve up immense slabs of fossil-laced native Texas limestone.” Anyone who has lived close to the ocean may relate to Mr. Priour in a significant way. “The pairing of the two materials came as naturally to me as saltwater to my soul. That juxtaposition of materials is important to my work. Old and new, strong and weak all work together to make a formidable yet

peaceful impression,” he explained.

Transparent Strength is forged from this combination of glass and limestone. “The sphere represents the strength of the department. Notice how it subtly pushes through the glass wall... sort of a transparent strength,” Mr. Priour shared. “Transparent Strength was designed specifically for the Frisco Police Department and the title speaks to the fact that police protection can be subtle but powerful. In fact, it’s probably more effective that way,” he continued. Mr. Priour consulted Police Chief Todd Renshaw, among others, in the design process. “Chief Renshaw and I tossed around names for the piece once I described my intent. I think he came up with the very appropriate title.”



*Tendrils of Time by Detha Watson on the Caddo Trail
photos by Chris Fritchie*



Center located at 5828 Nancy Jane Lane.

Mr. Garcia's

Mr. Priour is quite impressed with what Frisco is doing and the collection it now possesses. "The collection is one of the finest collections a city has put together anywhere and Frisco is fast becoming a name on the art scene as one of the best sculpture sophisticates," he stated.

While Mr. Priour's piece evokes the strength of power, Eliseo Garcia's bas-relief entitled Texas Splendor, reflects the power of strength: the historical hard work of Frisco's citizens.

"In the conceptual stage of this commission, I envisioned a work of art that combined images relevant to the Athletic Center with historical and agricultural references significant in the development of the City of Frisco," said Mr. Garcia. His structure consists of two pieces of twenty by eight foot sections created for the aquatic section of the Frisco Athletic

relief images of nature, wildlife and icons of Frisco landmarks intrigue the viewer as they discover a variety of meaning woven within the clay. "My thoughts were that these two monumental "canvases" resplendent with an energetic composition would be inspirational, educational and fun for everyone to enjoy," Mr. Garcia, a native Texan, shared. "Viewers would be surprised to find not only the obvious images but also to discover unexpected forms they overlooked the first time."

Detha Watson received a commission for the Fairways Green Park located at 1710 Buena Park Drive. "The Guardian" is a sculpture that serves as a round bench on the Fairways, depicting an innocent girl sitting as guardian over all she surveys. It touches the heart and brings to mind simpler times. Ms. Watson's experience

with the city has been fun and rewarding for her. "Frisco is doing an incredible thing with their collection and they were just wonderful to work with."

Ms. Watson was born in New Mexico and now makes Sanger, Texas her home. She has been an artist for more than 35 years and Leanin' Tree, a producer of greeting cards, currently has a collection depicting her artwork. Each piece she creates is an intimate act of love between the subject and herself. The Guardian reflects her love affair with her commissions.

The Guardian is imbedded with mosaic work and portrays images of bluebonnets and wildflowers as well as crystals that reflect the light and add an ethereal touch. While the girl was originally intended to be bronze, the final budget called for concrete. Ms. Watson is enthusiastic about the art being created for Frisco. She has another piece, "Tendrils of Time" that resides along the Caddo Trail. It also serves as a bench and beautifully depicts wildflowers sprawling across timeless stone. "The

collection makes the city uniquely stand out among other communities. I loved doing these commissions. I love doing mosaic work.”

A favorite among the collection is hard to determine. Mr. Oldham shared, “I have many favorite pieces. One of my favorites is the work by artists Larry Enge and Charlotte Lindsey in our Limestone Quarry Park. They are beautiful mosaics created from photos of the park. Another is Larry Kirkland’s “Frisco Flyer” at Pizza Hut Park.

There are actually two monumental pieces at Pizza Hut Park, “Golden Goal” and “Frisco Flyer,” both created by Mr. Kirkland. The 33-foot tall Golden Goal looms over the south entrance of the park and gives the illusion of a spinning soccer ball, a set of nested rings centered upon an axis, spinning at random, seemingly against the wind. It weighs more than 8,500 pounds and is overlaid with 24 karat gold leaves.

Frisco Flyer is a 27-foot depiction of a winged-foot. It brings to mind mythological Hermes setting off with messages unknown with a golden foot trailing behind an amber sky. It serves as a tribute to the swift of foot athlete, the soccer player of today and tomorrow. Upon the base is a map of countries where soccer is played and the word “soccer” in a variety of languages.

The artist, Larry Kirkland, is well known for his public artwork that spreads from Pennsylvania Station in New York City to the City of Denver to the Federal Courthouse in Sacramento and beyond the sea to Malaysia, Japan and Hong Kong. Mr. Kirkland currently resides in California and is the recipient of the 1982 National Endowment for the Arts.

Frisco’s Public Art Program ensures the memories of yesterday will be remembered tomorrow, integrating art into the city’s numerous capital projects. It is a collection to be quite proud of and perhaps be involved with in a personal way. These gorgeous pieces are not only destination places for visitors but also wonderful backdrops for personal photos.

Cynthia Howe is a freelance writer living in Little Elm.



*Golden Goal (above) and Frisco Flyer (below) by Larry Kirkland at Pizza Hut Park
photos by Chris Johnson and Chris Frutchie*