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City Council

Approval of the 2021 Percival Plinth Project Peoples' Choice Award

Agenda Date: 9/14/2021
Agenda Item Number: 6.A
File Number: 21-0853

Type: decision **Version:** 1 **Status:** Passed

Title

Approval of the 2021 Percival Plinth Project Peoples' Choice Award

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Move to approve the purchase of Woman with Graves at Her Back by Aisha Harrison, recommended by the Arts Commission as determined by public vote.

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to approve the purchase of Woman with Graves at Her Back by Aisha Harrison, as recommended by the Arts Commission as determined by public vote.

Report

Issue:

Whether to purchase the winner of the Percival Plinth Project Peoples' Choice Award, as determined by popular vote.

Staff Contact:

Angel Nava, Arts Program Specialist, Parks, Arts and Recreation, 360.753.8384.

Presenter(s):

Angel Nava, Arts Program Specialist, Parks, Arts and Recreation
Frederick Dobler, Chair, Arts Commission

Background and Analysis:

Annually, the first month of the Percival Plinth Project loaned sculpture exhibition is dedicated to a public vote to determine the winner of the Peoples' Choice Award, which is a purchase prize. The vote took place the month of July, through the City platform Engage Olympia.

On August 12, 2021, Ms. Nava shared the results of the 2021 Percival Plinth Project Peoples' Choice vote with the Arts Commission. 334 votes were received with 218 or 65% of voters viewing the sculptures in person and 236 voters providing comments about the work.

With 23% of the vote, Woman with Graves at Her Back by Aisha Harrison took the lead, with Bough

and Bend by Jennifer Kapnek (18.5%) and Memories of a Heron by Shawn Johnson (14.4%) coming in Runner Up and Honorable mention, respectively.

Of the sculpture and her artwork, the artist notes:

In my work I use the body as a site for exploration of the lived experiences of racism, ancestral (human and non-human) learning and connection, and the blend of histories held within my body. My work shows reverence for real bodies (often my own) while also incorporating elements that are physical manifestations of the intangible.

Woman with Graves at Her Back represents an ancestor who survived the journey across the Atlantic. This ancestor witnessed many tragic and heroic things and survived them. Her bravery and will to live is part of why I'm here today. I want to give this ancestor a home that honors her, a place she can rest and behold the sacredness of the Pacific Northwest, where parts of my family have lived for four generations.

Comments submitted by the public with their vote included:

- “Very sophisticated piece. Would grace any collection.”
- “Beautiful, thought provoking, skillful.”
- “It is evocative, solid, and well crafted. She has a strong presence and I want to sit with her. She invites us to pause and reflect on the past, present, future..”
- “There is something about this sculpture that touches the part of me that has endured loss.”
- “It's awesome to see representational figure sculpture that has deep metaphorical historical meaning and features a bipoc woman. Genius that she isn't looking at us!!!

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Public input is solicited through banners, press releases and an online vote.

Options:

1. Approve purchase of Woman with Graves at Her Back by Aisha Harrison as winner of the 2021 Percival Plinth People's Choice vote.
2. Do not approve purchase of Woman with Graves at Her Back.
3. Make another recommendation.

Financial Impact:

\$10,000 from the Municipal Art Fund

Attachments:

Photo