

Sarasota's first roundabout sculpture signifies common ground



The "Embracing Our Differences" sculpture was designed by Blessing Hancock and is the first roundabout art placed in Sarasota. It is located at Orange Avenue and Main Street in downtown Sarasota, Florida.

STAFF PHOTO / CARLOS R. MUNOZ

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PHOTO GALLERY

["Embracing Our Differences" sculpture installed in downtown Sarasota](#)

The artist that created the first roundabout sculpture in Sarasota says it will symbolize unity and emphasize our differences.

Blessing Hancock, a world-renowned sculptor whose work is in cities throughout the United States, China and Canada, said she worked with local non-profit "Embracing Our Differences" to create a contemporary art design that symbolizes unity and the "one-ness of everything."

"The actual form of it is an infinity loop," said Hancock, who lives in Seattle and was one of 39 artists who submitted designs in a world-wide call to artists. "So my concept is that embracing our differences is really about coming together and creating a common interest, common lifestyles. There are a lot of differences, so there are four different colors.

“I think everyone has a different voice but if they can work together they will become a stronger voice. It's not about making everyone the same but working together.”

The stainless steel statue, which stands inside a roundabout at Main Street and Orange Avenue, is 20-feet tall and was designed with rainbow-colored panels similar to the “Embracing Our Differences” logo.

It was installed by Gizmo Art Production of San Francisco, which works closely with the artist on installations.

The Sarasota non-profit “Embracing Our Differences” is best known for its annual outdoor exhibit and educational programs.

The developers of One Palm Avenue — Dennis McGillicuddy, John Meshad and iStar Financial of New York City — donated Hancock's sculpture to fulfill a public arts contribution required of large downtown construction projects. One Palm Avenue, located at Ringling Boulevard and South Palm Avenue, includes the Aloft Hotel.

The city's criteria for public art must include a balance of artistic styles, excellence, durability, and moderate price, a news release from Embracing Our Differences says.

The panel narrowed 39 submissions to three artists, “whom we invited to come to Sarasota and share their concepts,” said Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing our Differences, in the news release.

“Ultimately, the panel chose Hancock's work for its powerful symbolic message celebrating the infinite power of humane diversity.”

Five judges were on the panel who selected the statue: Susan McLeod, chairman of Sarasota Sculpture Center and International Sculpture Center; Vicky Randall, a Ringling College instructor; Tim Cameresi, an artist and designer; Graci McGillicuddy, past member of Florida Arts Council and board member of Embracing Our Differences; and Shannon Warren, a Florida artist who has donated designs to Child Protection Center.

“The strength of it on Orange and Main, plus the blend of the colors all weaving together through the sculpture is going to make that statement,” McLeod said. “It's a strong statement — in fact — about the city of Sarasota as well.”

Hancock says she visited Sarasota to visualize how the design would be viewed and created a sculpture that changes as you circle it.

“I wanted to create something that as you move around it, whether it is walking or driving, you are going to see different perspectives,” she explained. “It's going to open up and close. There are parts you are going to see through and there are color fields. I liked it in that specific round setting.”

The design will become part of her portfolio, which will be promoted as she tours the world.

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