



Best Products Corp. once had the sculpture of an Indian on top of its building

4-7-85 ✓ A figurehead atop county government?

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SANTA CRUZ — A huge fiberglass bust of an American Indian will soon be peering over the roof of the five-story County Center if art enthusiasts have their way.

The reddish sculpture weighs 1,500 pounds and is 25 feet wide from elbow to elbow.

County and city arts commissioners, two local Native American groups, Board of Supervisors' Chairman Gary Patton and Supervisor Joe Cucchiara all support accepting the sculpture as a one-year loan to the public arts program from the artist, 33-year-old Paul DiPasquale.

Supporters say the Indian head would be an improvement to the boxy, gray concrete government headquarters.

But Supervisor Dan Forbus finds the idea repulsive.

"I think it's obscene. I'm part Cherokee, and I don't find an Indian sculpture on top of a cement building as

having anything to do with the Indian culture," commented Forbus Friday.

Forbus said he has seen a photograph of the piece, which is designed to perch with peering eyes and outstretched elbows from the corner of a large building to overlook the landscape below.

"I know people seem to like this idea, but I see it as doing nothing, except furthering the sculptor's ability to make a profit," added Forbus.

DiPasquale said he would like to finance the project by selling limited-edition lithographs of how the Indian would look on top of the County Center.

Supervisor Cucchiara is enthusiastic about the sculpture.

"I think it's wonderful," Cucchiara said. "I've been really excited about it. I think it would be a marvelous addition to the local area — anything to brighten up the county building."

One suggestion has been to mount the Indian above the office of the chairman of

the board, which today would put it above Patton's head.

In that position, the art work would be highly visible from San Lorenzo Park and the Water Street bridge. One county worker said she fears in that location it might frighten the children in the park.

Another suggested location is at a front corner of the building, overlooking the parking lot and easily seen by travelers along Ocean and Water streets.

The Indian head, elbows, arms and hands are now in storage in a Maryland warehouse, said DiPasquale.

DiPasquale has offered to pay for insurance and for trucking the sculpture to Santa Cruz. He said he would store it in a friend's yard until a decision is made.

A crane would be used to install the Indian on a 16-by-16-foot platform on the recently-repaired roof of the County Center.

The sectionalized artwork cost \$20,000 to make over a two-year period, according

to the artist.

He said it was originally designed to be installed as a public work of art on the East Coast.

When those plans fell through, DiPasquale said, the Best Products Corp. leased it through the company marketing budget to serve as an eyecatcher on top of one of its buildings.

The company stopped leasing the work for budget reasons, he said.

"If profits are down, shareholders don't like to see the company spending money on Indians on their roof."

There was a plan to move the sculpture to Wyoming, but that plan was axed due to "anti-Indian sentiment," said the artist.

"Meanwhile," the artist added, "I'm paying \$200 a month to keep it out of sight in a warehouse. Not only is that expensive, but (the sculpture) is not doing what it should be doing as public art."

Supervisors are scheduled to make a decision in coming weeks. The plans have already passed muster with city and county arts commissioners. Patton has written a letter endorsing the idea.

City Arts Commissioner Judith Frick and Ken Wormhoudt, a member of the commission's visual arts review panel, wrote a letter, saying the artwork "is an opportunity to display an important piece of artwork."

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A "most impressive location," they said, would be on the roof of the county building.

Other locations considered were the roof of the Civic Auditorium and the downtown public library, but their roofs were considered to be impractical.

One problem at the County Center is that the 1,500-pound bust could damage the roof, which recently underwent a costly repair job.

DiPasquale said he is obtaining assurances from the roof repair company that his art will not damage the roof.

He maintains roof damage is not a problem because of the way the weight of the sculpture will be distributed.

Cucchiara does not believe it will damage the roof.

The supervisor added: "Art is art, you know. It isn't meant to be practical."

County general services assistant director Jack Jakobsen, whose department oversees the roof repairs, said, "I don't know at this point if it would be a problem. We will take a look at it. We can't afford to have damage."

Two local Native American groups have written letters of support. Also the project was well-received at a recent gathering held at the Civic Auditorium, where those in attendance signed petitions supporting the proposal.

"I want to make this a personal thing for Santa Cruz," said the artist. "My gamble is that the piece will be well-received, that people will like it, and that they would want to have a lithograph hanging on their walls showing an Indian on the county building."

DiPasquale said he moved to Santa Cruz about two years ago, partly because he felt the Santa Cruz and San Francisco areas are more receptive to artists.

Also, he said there was a plan by Best Corp. to move the Indian to South San Francisco, but the move never took place. He said Best stopped paying for storage in March.

He said he would eventually like to donate the sculpture to the American Indian movement.

"I'd like to not continue moving it around."

DiPasquale said he is a former teacher at Northern Virginia Community College and has had a one-man showing at the North Carolina Museum of Art.

He is working on another roof piece — a large, fiberglass wave.

He said he has already made a model for the 18-foot, curling wave with several swells that would be built from blue, green and white plastic and lit from the inside to make it look like the real thing.

"I would like to do more roof-oriented pieces," he added.