

ART in the OPEN

URBAN LANDSCAPE: Santa Cruz moves to stabilize public art funding

Art & Artists - 2000

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Santa Cruzans recognize the muscular surfer on West Cliff Drive as a defining feature of the city's coastline just as they identify the musical saw player on Pacific Avenue as a downtown landmark.

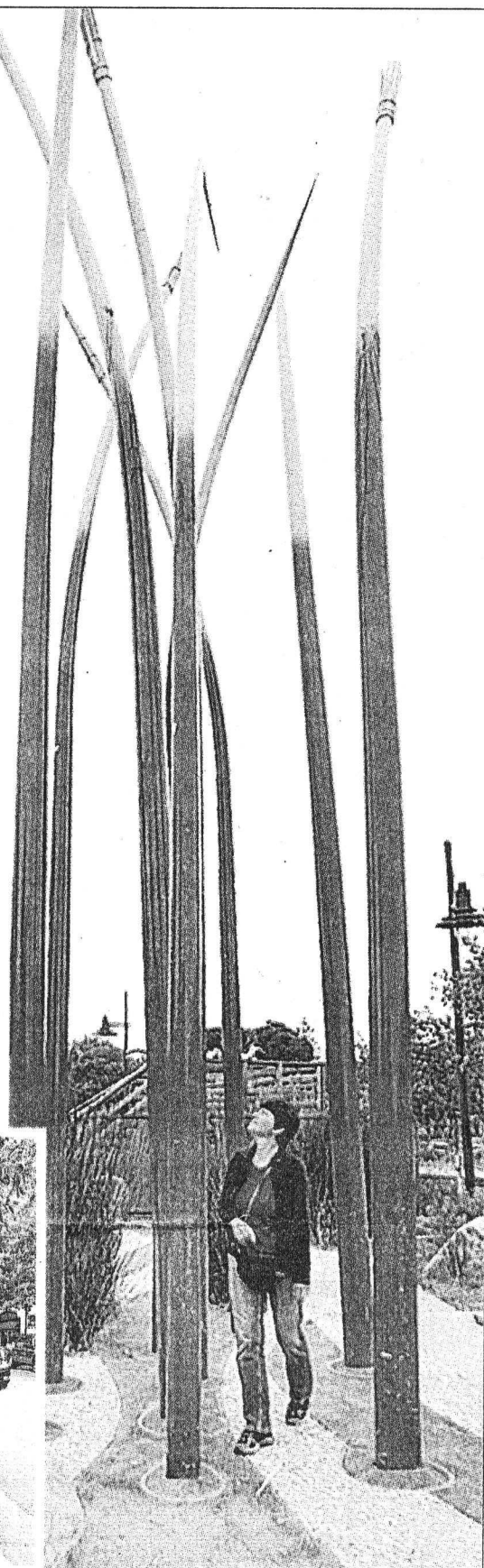
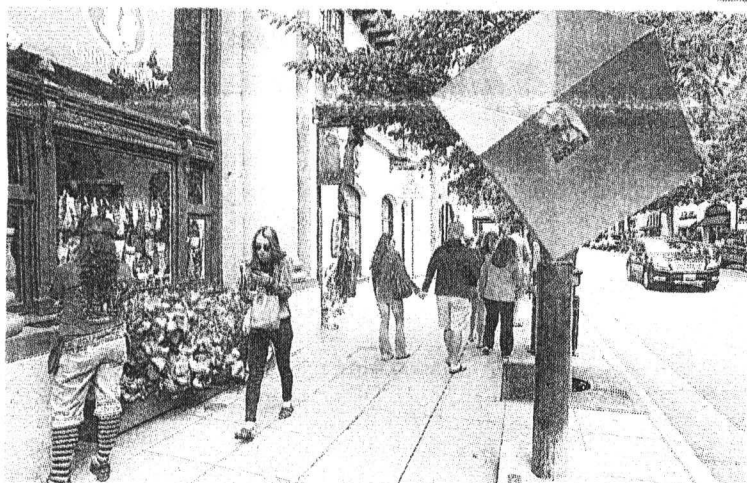
But many residents and visitors alike may not realize both iconic bronze statues — called "To Honor Surfing" and "Tom Scribner," respectively — are part of the city's public arts program, which will turn 15 this year and has recently undergone a major change in its financing.

Created in 1998, the program is responsible for the collection of sculptures, murals, digital prints, traffic box designs and statues that dot the urban landscape.

Some are permanent pieces while others are on loan from local artists, and they all speak to the cultural and artistic diversity of a town brimming with creativity. A giant whale in front of the Natural History Museum and concrete wave built into the Ken Wormhoudt Skate Park also represent Santa Cruz's deep connections to the sea.

Public art continues to be important because the city is

SEE ART ON A2



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

LEFT: Gary Dwyer's 'Hypercube,' installed on Pacific Avenue in 1976, is the oldest piece of art on the city's public art walking tour. There's a small crack in the piece that the city hopes to fix. RIGHT: Inspired by the tules in Neary Lagoon, Carolyn Law's 'Before Now' was placed in Depot Park in 2005.



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

The next project for the city's arts program is to paint a new mural on the walls around Beach Flats Park.

ART

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"densely populated with artists" who yearn for civic engagement, said Crystal Birns, the arts program manager. And the city benefits from livening up public spaces and, especially in the case of murals, discouraging graffiti.

"There is a good problem-solving element to it, too," she said.

In July, the City Council finalized a new model for the program designed to stabilize funding.

While the percentage of capital improvement dollars set aside for public art creation or maintenance went down, the money will now stem from actual projects instead of those planned — a move that will reduce the volatility of funding.

The original model to set aside 2 percent of capital improvement budgets for public art was modeled

ON THE NET

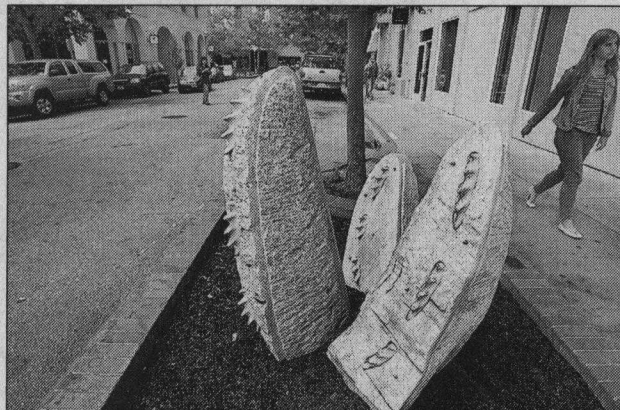
To learn more about the city of Santa Cruz's public arts program, go to www.santacruzpublicart.com.

after programs in larger cities. But funding tends to be more consistent in places where there are more city building projects, and the loss of redevelopment funding further choked the public arts purse.

"This is making it work for small towns that don't do a lot of construction," Birns said of the changes.

Overseen by the city's Arts Commission, the program plans new projects each year. Birns said the program will be involved in efforts to revive Abbott Square adjacent to the Museum of Art & History, and public art also will be incorporated into the upcoming Ocean Street Plan.

On the horizon now is a repainting of a faded mural at a small city-owned park in



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Santa Cruz installed Neal Barab's '3x3x3' marble and granite sculpture at Cooper and Front streets in 1987.

Beach Flats shared with the Nuevo Dia preschool, which is run by the nonprofit Community Bridges.

Mary Murillo, school supervisor, said she looks forward to the mural's face lift. She hopes the design will reflect childhood more than its current themes of social activism.

"I think they are really going to like it," she said.

Creation of public art

is costly, but so is maintenance.

The city allocated \$20,000 last year for a consultant to review the public art collection to prioritize maintenance. One piece, "Bear Spirit," was removed from behind the Natural History Museum because it was falling apart; two others were marked for immediate repair, but otherwise the collection is good or fair condition.