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Westlake Embarks on an Unprecedented Public Art Plan

WESTLAKE, TX – July 13, 2017 - The Town of Westlake is on the brink of becoming a major player in the world of art with the exciting announcement of a brand new public art advisory committee that will position the Town as the gold standard for cities around the world.

The committee will help guide the Town of Westlake in its search for an innovative approach to creating art that will do much more than filling an open space, but instead, will energize the landscape by combining our environment, our land, and our architecture to uplift our community.

This unusual partnership between the committee and the Town is truly unlike anything else. The two entities will work together to create art competitions that will garner the attention of artists from around the world to be a part of this special opportunity. How this partnership will differ from others is that the committee won't be searching for existing work that can be bought from an artist who will work under contract for a predetermined price.

The typical outcome of this approach often lacks a holistic purpose and is more subject to personal preferences. Instead, the committee will bring the artists to Westlake to create their work instead of simply buying a piece and drop it into the Town.

Any artist who participates in the Westlake competition will have an opportunity to be observed by the Metroplex art leadership, something very important to finding and cultivating new and emerging talent.

This is important because many emerging artists often go unnoticed by larger audiences. Galleries in the US and Europe are losing money in recent years as the costs to run them go up. As a result, galleries are frequently forced to show established artists with a clear record of retail success. This means galleries are increasingly challenged to perform a key role in sponsoring and promoting new and emerging talent. This is the foundation of Westlake's program, a partnership between the Town, museums, and leading galleries in search for a masterpiece and emerging talent. In this way, the Town becomes an important force for art.

The nine-member committee who will be forming the competitions can be best described as a "Dream Team" in the art community. Rebecca Lawton, Former Head Curator of the Amon Carter Museum in Ft. Worth, Judy Deaton, Head Curator of the Grace Museum in Abilene, Sue Canterbury, Associate Curator of American Art at the Dallas Museum of Art, Terry Oldham,

Former Director of the Albrecht-Kemper Museum in Kansas City, Barry Whistler, Owner of Barry Whistler Gallery in Dallas, Cheryl Vogel, Owner of Valley House Gallery in Dallas, Paloma Anoveros, Curator for The Charles Schwab Company and former Curator San Francisco Museum of Art in San Francisco, Katie Blair, Senior Design Manager, The Charles Schwab Corporation, and Chris Worley, Owner of Chris Worley Fine Art in Dallas.

The committee will advise and work with the Town Council as they collectively initiate the first and subsequent art competitions. They will also evaluate entrants and curate the event so that a group of highly qualified finalists emerges for Town consideration. The power of their participation will attract the best talent seeking exposure for their own advancement and afford Westlake an unusual slate of entrants.

These competitions will also further bring the arts community and the Town together with its corporate partners. Individual corporations will be able to sponsor the competitions, especially those that would add the art to their own sites. "The value of Westlake's Art Program to the larger arts community broadens support beyond the corporate limits of Westlake to include the entire metroplex. Thereby fund-raising opportunities are greatly expanded. In addition, incoming corporate citizens can establish closer connections with Westlake as well as the larger arts community through sponsorship support of this effort", says art advisor to Westlake, Robin McCaffrey.

To understand how this all came about we must first go back to the beginning. In 2007, a public art society was first formed and adopted, with many residents volunteering numerous hours to help create the foundation of our town's first public art program. In addition, they brought several performing artists to Westlake throughout the years and served with passion, dedication, and understanding of the importance a public art program brings to a community. Unfortunately, most of this group's groundwork could not be fully implemented due to lack of funding and a more specific plan for public art acquisition and placement.

Fast forward to May of 2016 when Russell Tether of Russell Tether Fine Art and Robin McCaffrey of MESA-Planning were tasked to assist Westlake in taking this initial work of the Westlake Public Art Society and further develop a new public art plan. Later that year, a public workshop was held to gather input on what Westlake residents and businesses would like to see as a part of a public art program in our community.

Residents stressed that Westlake must be the subject of the work and the artist must engage with Westlake in the conceptualization of the piece. This led to the programmatic subdivision of the Town into four "Art Settings"- regional, Town, open space, and pastoral. In each of these settings, public art has a purpose and each presents aspects of Westlake that must be translated through the vision of the artist.

Then in June of this year, Town Council officially adopted the new public art plan and are in the planning phases where Mr. Tether will begin to organize the competition team while the Town will work with MESA-Planning to set up the governance structure, prepare ordinances, policies, and other actions that must be executed to establish the program.

Once that's established, the committee will work hand and hand with design professionals, curators, art institutions, and sponsors to create competitions that may attract artists from around the world.

"From my perspective, as both a resident and Mayor of the Town of Westlake, I am humbled by the gifts of time and talent that the members of the arts committee are making on our behalf. These are all individuals who are incredibly well-respected in their field who will be working, pro bono, to make public art come alive in Westlake. It is a tremendously exciting time", says Mayor Laura Wheat.

Westlake will now play a pivotal role in advancing art through a time of rapid growth and focus the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity presented by such growth to produce a legacy that future generations will greatly appreciate.

TOWN OF WESTLAKE: The Town of Westlake offers residents and businesses a premier place to call home amidst the hustle and bustle of booming North Texas. The Town's leadership and staff make sure residents and corporate citizens alike enjoy personal, concierge-like service and are committed to purposeful, planned development, and strategic design and implementation. In addition, the Town owns and operates Westlake Academy Charter School, a one of a kind International Baccalaureate K-12 public school. The school has a national reputation sought after by potential residents. Between the strong neighborhoods and close-knit school community, the Town of Westlake is ideal for all individuals, families, and businesses wanting a bucolic, small town community with access to DFW Metroplex amenities. Contact: Town of Westlake, 1301 Solana Boulevard, Building 4 - Suite 4202, Westlake, TX 76262, Phone: 817-430-0941, Fax: 817-430-1812. Visit Westlake-TX.org.