



ART CONSERVATION CONDITION REPORT FOR *LANDWAVE*, AN OUTDOOR PUBLIC SCULPTURE IN PETER’S PARK, BOSTON

Date: October 13, 2017

Prepared for: Old Dover Neighborhood Association and Friends of Peters Park

Artists: Shauna Gillies-Smith and ground, Inc., Gillies-Smith/Kilkelly/Cormier

Title: *LandWave*

Location: Peters Park, Boston, MA (Washington St, facing S/SE).

Date: 2010

Materials: Compacted earth, steel, concrete, glass tiles, LED lighting, plantings, watering system.

Fabricator of glass mosaic: Unicorn Fine Arts, NY

Description: *LandWave* is constructed of two waveform berms, covered with blue and green glass tiles onto shaped concrete, and lit by LED lights at the “crest” of the waves.

Overall dimensions: approximately 100’ long by 30’ wide, 4’6” at its highest point.

Introduction

LandWave was created as an innovative artwork for Peters Park in Boston, guided by experienced artists, administrators, and fabricators. Landscape architect Shauna Gillies-Smith with her company ground, Inc., and the design team of Kilkelly/Cormier created the artwork after years of consultation with the art initiative’s leaders and consulting with neighbors. Light artist John Powell was hired to design and install LED lights to follow the top edge of the two berms.

This conservator was hired to provide materials and fabrication assessments and to determine a written maintenance plan. A number of materials were considered to face the surface of the two berms, including epoxy blocks, pebbles, and mosaic. Many of the materials were not durable enough, did not provide enough color to fit the designer’s wishes, or were breakable. The

landscape architect submitted glass tiles, but these were easily broken (hammer drop test), resulting in conchoidal (sharp edged) fractures. The conservator recommended smalti glass tile mosaic, which had been successfully used in a number of public art projects in Boston and New York, and suggested Yakov Hanansen, of Unicorn Art Studio, Inc. as the fabricator.

The landscape architect chose the glass tiles that had broken during testing, but used this fabricator. Unicorn had recently done an indoor wall mosaic in curved forms with blue glass tile in a hospital in New York. This setting was very different from an outdoor berm next to a baseball playing field, but the artist felt it best represented her vision.

Original installation and construction issues

When Unicorn Fine Arts came to Boston in mid-summer of 2010 to install the artwork, they found the contractor had used poor concrete and had applied the cement to the berm structure with an uneven profile. The cement appeared to be “punk” cement, a term used to describe cement mix previously exposed to damp conditions before mixing. The mosaic installers arrived on a weekend, and were unable to reach the landscape architect, so they did their best to smooth out the concrete. Some uneven areas powdered as they reduced them, also indicating a poor mix and application.

When lighting artist John Powell inspected the berms, he also found very poor and uneven concrete in the shallow channels where he would install his LED lights. The lighting system never fully worked due to water infiltration, and within 10 months the idea of lighting the two wave sculptures was abandoned.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

LandWave was examined on site on October 5, 2017 at the request of the Old Dover Neighborhood Association and Friends of Peters Park. Many areas of glass tile were missing; there were hundreds of broken, cracked, and compressed glass tiles with sharp edges, and many pieces of sharp glass bits in the dirt surrounding the artwork. A passing dog walker noted she is concerned about her dog crossing near this area due to glass.

The plantings appear to have all been pulled out, and there is dried dirt where the plantings once were. There is broken glass and a few dozen unearthed watering hoses, which are a trip hazard. Some of the channels intended for the lighting are exposed, with the sheets of frosted unbreakable glass missing and LED parts exposed.

CONCLUSION

LandWave is no longer what the artist team originally envisioned, and the full design was never realized. Although there has been some vandalism in the area (cracked glass and ripped out plantings), much of the materials problems are due to material choice and poor construction of the berm concrete.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LandWave cannot be conserved, because so much of it is actively deteriorating due to materials failure. It could be rebuilt, but would require some redesign and engineering, and the glass tile should be replaced with a more durable product, all of which would be very costly.

DEACCESSION of PUBLIC ART

Another option is to consider deaccession. Deaccessioning is a procedure for the withdrawal of an artwork from public exhibition. Standards applied to deaccessioning and disposal must be at least as stringent as those applied to the acquisition process and should not be subject to changes in fashion and taste.

An arts commission or governing body decides when a work of art should be deaccessioned after a careful and impartial evaluation of the artwork as per the criteria listed below and in accordance with the Visual Arts Rights Act of 1990:

1. The condition or security of the artwork cannot be reasonably guaranteed.
2. The artwork requires excessive maintenance because of faults of design or workmanship and/or inherent vice.
3. The artwork has been damaged or has deteriorated and repair or conservation treatment is unaffordable or unfeasible.
4. The artwork endangers public safety.
5. A significant change in the use, character, or actual design of the site prohibits the retention of the artwork as originally conceived.
6. The artwork cannot be re-sited or re-siting would not be appropriate.
7. The artwork is significantly incompatible or inferior in the context of the collection.
8. There has been sustained and overwhelming public objection to the artwork over a ten-year period. In this case, deaccessioning may be considered as one of a number of solutions.
9. The agreed upon period for the artwork's exhibition is at an end.

Reasons for Deaccessioning *LandWave*

Reasons for Deaccession of *LandWave*

- *The artwork requires excessive maintenance because of faults of design or workmanship and/or inherent vice.*

The choice of an inappropriate tile and poor concrete quality has and will continue to cause major deterioration.

- *The condition or security of the artwork cannot be reasonably guaranteed.*

Glass tiles are continuing to fall from the walls of the wave berms, and the top channels will likely continue to be ripped out.

- *The artwork has been damaged or has deteriorated and repair or conservation treatment is unaffordable or unfeasible.*

Conservation treatment is inappropriate, given the inherent problems of the concrete. The artwork requires replacement and refabricating.

- *The artwork endangers public safety.*

Broken glass is a safety issue.

Deaccession Agreement in Original Documents

In addition, the original signed legal documents between the artist and the Old Dover Neighborhood Association and Friends of Peters Park agreed to the following:

“...At such time as the *LandWave* artwork becomes degraded beyond conservation or repair or the use of Peters Park precludes the further existence of *LandWave*, by agreement of the two Fund Advisors, at least two of the Principal Parties, the principal of the *LandWave* Fund may be spent to restore the ground to its original condition. Any remaining funds will be transferred to the Arts Fund at the Boston Foundation.”

(from *Agreement for the Maintenance of LandWave*)

Suggested next steps

1. The arts commission, neighborhood group, or governing body consider the history of the artwork, the failures of the materials and construction, the security of the artwork as it currently is, and public safety issues that are a direct result of its deterioration.
2. The same group (s) consults with the artist(s) to confirm agreement for removal, and write a deaccession agreement contract.
3. Deaccession agreement contract is legally approved and signed.
4. Removal of artwork is carried out and its removal documented. Area is cleaned and filled with a material suitable for public safety.



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