

The Art of Child's Play

For Children Growing Up in Reston, Public Art Is a Happy Playground

BY JANET REMS ■ PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY INITIATIVE FOR PUBLIC ART—RESTON

Reston's late founder, Robert E. Simon Jr., liked to tell a story about children playing in the concrete "Sun Boat" created by famed Uruguayan sculptor Gonzalo Fonseca at Lake Anne Village Center in 1965. Simon, an outspoken and lifelong supporter of the arts, recounted that favorite and oft repeated story in an interview I did with him just prior to his 100th birthday and Reston's 50th anniversary in 2014.

Asked about what made Reston so innovative, in his long and varied list, he said: "I particularly like the boat. I remember children sitting in it yelling bloody murder. When I asked them what was wrong, they shouted, 'SHARKS!' That's so important to me. It's playing and fantasy that you want to engender."

FROM ITS VERY BEGINNINGS, AMONG SIMON'S CHIEF PRIORITIES WERE MAKING SURE RESTON MET THE NEEDS OF ALL ITS CHILDREN AND THAT THE ARTS AND BEAUTY OF ALL KINDS, INCLUDING ART IN PUBLIC PLACES, BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE COMMUNITY'S CULTURAL LIFE.

Generations later, Reston's children are still climbing in and out,



sitting and playing in The Sun Boat, taking all kinds of imaginary nautical journeys. On any given afternoon, children playing at Lake Anne Village Center also can be found climbing up and down the stairs of artist James Rossant's "The Pulpit" (a.k.a. "the Moon Viewing Platform") or his "Look Out Tower." Rossant's concrete "Pyramid," also a favorite Lake Anne play space, is designed so children may easily scale its seven-foot height in one-foot high steps, and its shady, imagination-stimulating interior is primarily accessible by child-size people.

And on warm days, Lake Anne's "Plaza Fountain"—a collaboration between Rossant and Fonseca, whose

FAMILY PLAY

Three other ways children and their families may enjoy Reston's rich public art landscape include:

- ▶ Upcoming Initiative for Public Art-Reston (IPAR) Chalkfest at Reston Town Center on Saturday, Sept. 10, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Also, free sidewalk chalk art workshop at Reston Town Center on Saturday, Sept. 3, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
- ▶ Families may obtain a Reston Association (RA) map of the community, including Reston's public art inventory, at RA offices, 12001 Sunrise Valley Drive, and the Reston Museum, Lake Anne Village Center. Use the map to organize your own self-guided tours of these diverse artworks, so far numbering more than 40. There also is an uploadable version of this self-guided tour available from IPAR's website. In addition, parents may pick up a self-guided tour (produced by IPAR) of Lake Anne Village Center's public art at the Reston Museum.
- ▶ Also coming for families who enjoy bicycling together: artist-designed bike racks that will be installed at the Walker Nature Center, Pony Barn Recreational Area, The Lake House at Lake Newport, and Hunters Woods Village Center.

For more information, visit www.publicartreston.org



PLEASE SHARE

Parents: Share digital photographs of your children enjoying Reston's public art with the Initiative for Public Art-Reston (IPAR) by emailing them to info@publicartreston.org or posting them on IPAR's Facebook page.

abstract forms were inspired by sand castles — remains, as intended, an irresistibly inviting place for area children to splash together and get cool.

Building on Simon's arts legacy, the Initiative for Public Art-Reston (IPAR) — which formulated and adopted an important public art master plan for Reston in 2008 — continues to work to expand those experiences, from family-oriented chalkfests at Lake Anne Village Center and Reston Town Center in June and September, to an interactive monumental sculptural installation by an acclaimed international artist.

The master plan specifically cites student and community engagement with artworks by professional artists as essential for the successful implementation of public art projects.

While Fonseca's 1965 original "Wooden Horse" sculpture at Lake

Anne Village Center long ago deteriorated and disappeared, a new version, created by artist Marco Rando, who grew up in Reston and teaches art at South Lakes High School, made its debut on Reston Founder's Day this April. "I was honored to be asked to recreate Gonzalo Fonseca's Wooden Horse. I remember playing on the horse as a child," Rando told IPAR. And for as long as this new version — commissioned by IPAR and the Lake Anne Condominium Association — lasts, Reston children again will delight in riding it.

Also, for the past three years, Rando has worked closely with teams of South Lakes High School students on another unique IPAR public art partnership with the Reston Association and the Lake Thoreau Entertainment Association. Creating what has become one of the community's favorite works of site-specific, temporary

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– Jonas Wilson



PHOTO BY SEAN BAHRAMI

public art, the students — driving the process from inception to completion, including a demanding bureaucratic process — designed and constructed vastly different kinetic sculptures (one each year) to sit atop Lake Thoreau’s drably utilitarian concrete spillway.

IPAR’s very first completed public art project in 2010 directly involved even younger children. The vibrant and visually animated glass mosaic that now decorates the Glade Drive Underpass was created by internationally known artist Valerie Theberge, who worked in close conjunction with fourth, fifth and sixth graders from Hunters Woods Elementary School for the Arts & Sciences.

One of those student artists (they created all the mosaic’s stars) was then-10-year-old Jonas Wilson, who mused at the time, “I think we’re pretty lucky to get to do cool stuff other kids don’t get to do. I feel proud having this in my community, proud I contributed to it.”

This summer, Reston children have been happily splashing in another irresistible interactive public artwork — the mosaic-clad fountain at the Dogwood Pool. It is another creation of Theberge, done in a 2013 collaboration between IPAR, RA and the Reston Community Center. Dogwood Elementary School students contributed a few decorative bench tiles, too.

And like the concrete sculptures at Lake Anne and the Dogwood



PHOTO BY SEAN BAHRAMI

Pool fountain, children seem to find artist Patrick Dougherty’s monumental sculptural installation in Reston Town Center’s Town Square Park, “A Bird in the Hand,” totally irresistible, too. Sponsored jointly by IPAR and the Greater Reston Arts Center, since its 2015 on-site construction from a mass of woven tree saplings, thousands of children have run and otherwise exuberantly romped through its winding, mysterious interior.

Dougherty may be an internationally celebrated artist, who earlier this year had a work in the Renwick Museum’s acclaimed “Wonder” exhibition, but do the children running and playing inside “A Bird in the

Hand’ care? Not a twig! For them, it’s simply the art of child’s play.



Janet Rems is chairman of the Initiative for Public Art— Reston’s Communications Committee. The former editor of The Reston Times, she regularly freelances for The Fairfax County Times, writing primarily about the arts.

LEARN MORE ABOUT IPAR

The Initiative for Public Art—Reston (IPAR) is a group of civic leaders who represent Reston’s key community organizations. Joining together to develop a vision and a plan for cultivating a new generation of public artworks throughout the community, in December 2008, a Public Art Master Plan for Reston was adopted. IPAR expects to stimulate community-wide discussion about the role that public art can play in urban places and community life and plans to commission new art works that are engaging, memorable and recognized for their artistic excellence. IPAR is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt, not-for-profit organization. Visit www.publicartreston.org or send an email to info@publicartreston.org to find out more about the Initiative for Public Art—Reston, its mission and future plans, or to get involved.



Chalk Fest

At Reston Town Center

Friday, September 9th: Noon–11pm
Professional Artists and
Sponsored Spaces

Saturday, September 10th: 8am–4:30pm
All Welcome
Registration at The Pavilion



The third annual ChalkFest At Reston Town Center will be September 9–10, 2016. The festival encourages a wide-range of participants—from professional artists to kids—to unleash their inner artist and create chalk drawings all along Market Street in the Reston Town Center. Judges select top drawings from a variety of categories for prizes, adding to the excitement of the day. The People’s Choice Award allows the public to vote for their favorite drawings.



We encourage you to register online in advance in order to secure a space. It will be possible to register the day of the event at the Pavilion, first come, first served, as spaces and supplies permit. You may pay by cash or credit card.

TO PARTICIPATE
REGISTER at
www.publicartreston.org



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