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Emily Carr programs preps students for public artwork

BY SHAWN O'HARA
8:54 AM PDT, THU AUGUST 06, 2015

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Thanks to the efforts of a Richmond developer and an Emily Carr University professor, the future of Metro Vancouver's public art will be in good hands.

Funded by Amit Sandhu, CEO of the Ampri Real Estate Development Group, and Dr. Cameron Cartiere of Emily Carr University, [The Social Practice of Public Art and Community Design](#) educates students on the process of applying for public arts commissions, the various types of public arts, and the departments involved in every commission.

“To ensure we have a sustainable group of artists to draw from in the future to create attractive, engaging art, we have to make sure they’re groomed to take these commissions on,” says Sandhu. “It’s very different from a studio practice. It is highly collaborative with the community, you’re dealing with a lot of stakeholders.”

The program ran from January to April of this year, and educated students on the various moving pieces of a public arts commission, speaking with biologists, Parks and Recreation personnel, archivists and city officials. Sandhu says to truly understand the processes involved in public art, students need to be educated on every aspect.

The program was created after Sandhu, who as a developer contributes to Richmond public arts commissions, noticed a lack of newer artists bidding on public art projects.

“For fairly small commissions we were having larger, industrial-sized, established artists bidding on them, people that have done works up to \$1 million,” he says. “Beyond that there were only a handful of artists bidding on these opportunities which really begged the question: where are all these artists that are able to take on public art commissions, and take advantage of these opportunities? Why aren’t there enough emerging artists who are comfortable enough to take on these opportunities? Why are we only seeing the most established artists in these works?”

The importance of public art to Sandhu is how it can build a community around it, ensure positive interaction and public identity.

“If I’m traveling, and I’m in a city that is unfamiliar to me, when I see public artwork it shows me that people care about the space,” he says. “It shows me that this is somewhere that’s



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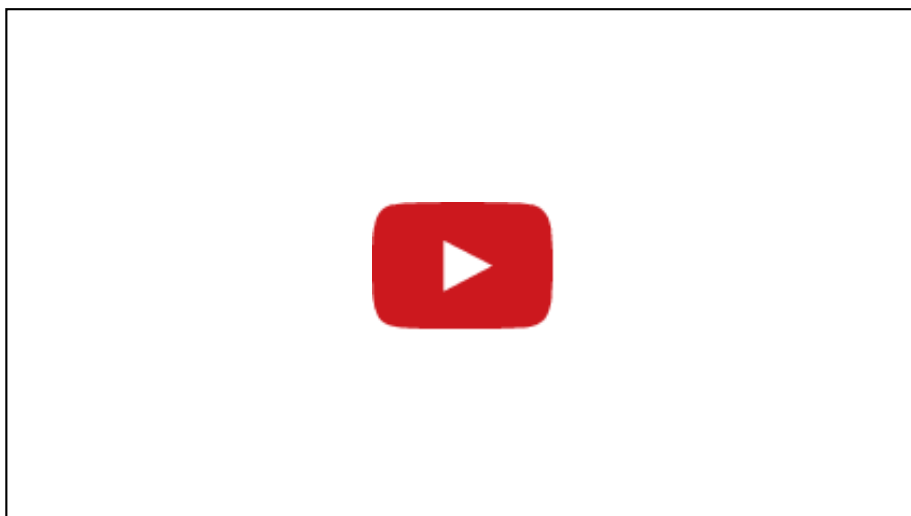
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safe to be, and it also welcomes you out in the public space, and to interact. For those reasons public art is essential. It raises questions, it starts discussions. For public engagement and public discourse it's essential to have art in our public spaces."

Sandhu says that, going forward, he hopes to program will inspire students and universities alike to take a more collaborative approach towards public art, as well as education.

"The goal with this entire project is to show that we've got a group of individuals coming together and trying something new, and really pushing the envelope and showing how we can create a new educational experience," he says. "As the key stakeholder it's worked for me, it's worked for the community, and it's worked for the university. If we can inspire other developers, other universities, and other cities to rethink how they're creating opportunities for their students, by collaborating together I think that's the biggest goal we can hope for."

A documentary, produced by Khare Communications, details the inception and future of the program. Watch the trailer here:



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Shawn O'Hara Shawn is an Editorial Assistant at Vancity Buzz. He loves writing about news, arts, movies, comedy, and culture. Some would argue Shawn is too old to still play Dungeons & Dragons. Shawn would disagree.

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