A brief guide to Bellwether 2014

BY DANIEL NASH

Another two years has passed, which means its time for downtown Bellevue to transform, once again, into an outdoor art gallery.

Bellwether 2014: Connect will bring in more than 30 sculptures to decorate a three-quarter mile walkway from City Hall to Downtown Park.

The City Arts Program has sponsored an outdoor sculpture exhibition every two years since 1992. It was rebooted and renamed Bellwether in 2010, when city officials decided to turn the exhibit into a stepping stone toward a permanent downtown art walk.

The 2014 sculptures include works made of materials as sturdy as aluminum and as ephemeral as newspaper, and styles ranging from realist statues to abstract found materials work.

Elizabeth Gahan, an artist working out of Seattle's Georgetown neighborhood, creates colorful geometric "shards" she installs on existing structures. Amazon featured her installation "Graphic Plume" in its South Lake Union headquarters storefront windows during the winter. Over summer 2013, "Chromatic Crystallization" sat wrapped around the Westlake Park arch.

Gahan began building her sculptures out of corrugated plastic — the material often used for election season yard signs — when she discovered the sturdy textile couldn't be recycled. Print shops were more than willing to give her their extras and misprints.

In some of her work, she also works in repurposed advertisements, recycling their familiar parts to add to the overall aesthetic beauty of her sculptures.

"Chromatic Crystallization" and many

Above: Sculptor Elizabeth Gahan in her office at her office in Equinox Studios, in Georgetown. Gahan repurposes old advertisements and corrugated plastic to create geometric sculptures that are often installed on existing structures.   Photo by Daniel Nash

At right: Bill Vielehr's "Unconcealed Column" (depicted on the cover of this issue) will be on display in Downtown Park. The Colorado artist takes advantage of reflecting light to `color' his aluminum sculptures.   Photo courtesy of Bill Vielehr

of Gahan's other projects, create a specific feeling about the structures they attach to. Though technically additive to the constructions, the installations create the sense that everyday surfaces are coming apart at the seams — like living inside a video game and tilting the camera just right to see the polygons clip. It's not like seeing the world come apart in an unsettling way; it's like seeing a previously unknown part of these mundane objects that has held everything together all along, sight unseen.

By contrast, many of Bill Vielehr's metal-cast sculptures look to be coming

apart at the seams quite literally. Work like "Unconcealed Column" (pictured above right and appearing in Bellwether) adopt the appearance of building components in a state of ruin.

Geemon Xin Meng's "Jim Green Portrait Sculpture" is a fiberglass statue of a former Vancouver city councillor — a man Meng has never met. The statue is an exploration of the personal projections artists make on their work, he wrote in a statement on the piece.

The city will host an open celebration for Bellwether at from 6-8 p.m. June 27 at Bellevie City Hall, 450 110th Ave. N.E.

Bellwether 2014
Connect
What
30-plus sculptures on display
Where
City Hall to Downtown Park
When
Through Oct. 12