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CONDOS

NOISE NO-NO

How to turn the
volume down
upstairs. PH4

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BATHROOM RENO

Two daughters
need two sinks in
a tiny loo. PH4

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for the cooler
months. PH5

ART *and the* CONDO

A new public art installation
moves beyond sculpture with
an intriguing alternative

By Jennifer Febraro

In a city so busy with condo developments, it's good to see streetside artwork mandated into the mix of private amenities and podium sizes. That's the case with Daniels' unveiling of a public art installation in front of its HighPark Condominiums, which sit directly across from the park. After an intense competition, artists (and partners by marriage) Elle Flanders and Tamira Sawatzky of The Public Studio won the opportunity to create a work of art that would enliven its surroundings.

"For this particular competition," says Niall Haggart, vice-president of The Daniels Corp., "we mandated a local mentorship between seasoned artist and novice." Part of the appeal of The Public Studio's proposal was that it included their mentee and studio manager, Lili Houston Herterich.

Also, Flanders and Sawatzky proposed using a class of OCAD students to help create a digital portion of the project.

Daniels wouldn't say what the installation cost, but the City of Toronto's Public Art Program mandates a minimum of one per cent of the gross construction cost of any development be contributed to public art.

But what's good for the artist is clearly good for the creation of a world-class city as well. The Public Art initiative has led to a number of spectacular artworks, including the City Place-sponsored Canoe Landing Park by Douglas Coupland and the One St. Thomas Condominium-funded Shift by Carl Taçon, a 136-foot-long fragmented concrete drape. Both sculptural pieces insert the viewer into a surreal landscape of sorts.

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WINTER STATIONS

DESIGN
COMPETITION
RETURNS
FOR BEACHES
LIFEGUARD STANDS

The inaugural Winter Stations program was so successful last year it drew droves to the frigid beaches of the ... Beaches. Five lonely lifeguard stations were transformed into colourful works of public art. The 2016 competition is now open for submissions, with a Nov. 12 deadline and an expanded reach of 10 stations, taking the program from Balmy Beach to Ashbridges Bay Park. Winners will be named in January; stations must be ready by the Feb. 13 opening. The brief calls for "temporary wintertime installations anchored to the lifeguard stands that inject colour, movement, humour and life into the landscape." The theme is Freeze/Thaw; while they should be about Toronto winters, Spring can be invoked, too — who wouldn't want a bit of that by mid-February? See winterstations.com. *National Post*



The courtyard at Daniels's High Park condominiums is a public space, housing the three installations of a coyote family, an under-lit sculptural bench and the large LED screen.



PETER J. THOMPSON / NATIONAL POST; HANDOUT

Trio of art pieces

COYOTE

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For this commission, entitled We Are All Animals, The Public Studio created a conceptual bridge between the condo's courtyard and its relationship to High Park through three key features — a programmed 22x9-foot LED screen, three larger-than-life hand-carved limestone coyotes, and a large bronze under-lit bench inscribed with the title of the project. "When conceptualizing the pro-

ject, it seemed natural to make it site-specific, so we took a lot of our inspiration from High Park itself," Flanders says. "On the other hand, screens play such a huge role in our lives right now. We were trying to figure out how to reconcile the idea of merging our relationship with nature and technology."

Flanders and Sawatzky also took inspiration from the works of primatologist Frans de Waal, who specializes in writing about the moral behaviour of animals. "He claims that animals and humans are not as far apart as we might think," Flanders

says. "So we tried to bring together the natural world or landscape while also pushing the envelope of what public art could be."

The screen renders a single scene from High Park in digital gaming software with details that are always changing. "There are random events, seasonal changes, weather shifts, animals coming on and off screen, and so on — that will look different five minutes from now," Sawatzky says. "A lot of people thought it was just a film on a loop — it's not. It's the same scene — but one that constantly changes."

This means no viewer will see the same art twice, ever. Not five minutes from now, not 20 years from now. This required a feat of complex cod-

ing, which was accomplished by developing a special algorithm. Here's where those OCAD students come in, through its Digital Futures Initiative.

Student Chris Jadoo figured out how to pull all the programming together. "He really came up with the bones of the program," Sawatzky says. "It's also a really big challenge to ensure something this mammoth won't glitch."

"This really brings something unique to the community," says Ward 13 Parkdale-High Park Councillor Sarah Doucette. "It's something that passersby can feel, touch, almost taste. When we get a café in the courtyard there, you will be able to just have a cup of tea and watch the artwork. It's really fascinating."

Doucette also played an integral role in the development — by suggesting that Daniels turn the building around.

"Initially, during the planning stages with the city, the building had the courtyard facing in the opposite direction," Doucette says. "But with Daniels agreeing to turn the building around completely, the courtyard was able to face Bloor street like a U-shape, which kind of draws people into the artwork and frames it."

In a sense, the screen is its own living entity, mirroring the life of the park it sits across from. What will you see if you walk or drive past it? You'll never predict. That's what makes this artwork so appealing.

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