

From: ["Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>](mailto:Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca)
To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
Date: 8/11/2021 8:11:19 AM
Subject: [Trans Am Totem Update](#)

Dear Mayor and Council,

This is an update on *Trans Am Totem*, an artwork by Marcus Bowcott and Helene Aspinall donated to the City by the Vancouver Biennale in 2019. The artwork was accepted with a donation for maintenance, in recognition of the need to relocate the work and restore it for longer-term display (anticipated in the donation agreement as 10 years).

The work has degraded badly since it was installed on a temporary basis at False Creek, largely due to bird infestation and its impact on non-durable painted finishes. Staff have worked with Fraser Spafford Ricci Art and Archival Conservation to prepare a conservation assessment and maintenance plan for the work, and are now ready to begin restoration of *Trans Am Totem*. Since this work must be done in a controlled environment, staff plan to remove the work from its current site this Saturday and Sunday, August 14-15.

Please note that, following restoration, the work will be re-installed in a new location. The existing location will be reconfigured following the removal of the Georgia Viaduct, and is not viable as a long-term site. Staff are currently working to identify and gain approval for a future location, aiming to reinstall the work by summer 2022.

CONSERVATION SUMMARY

Initially created for a two-year exhibition period, *Trans Am Totem* was donated to the City with an intended lifespan of ten years. The temporary nature of the initial exhibit means the artwork was not designed or fabricated for longevity, and lacked planning for long-term routine maintenance and repairs.

PRIMARY ISSUES

- Structural Integrity:** There is no mention of service years or anticipated longevity of the internal structure in the supplied engineered drawings.
- Bird Infestation:** The heavy presence of birds makes any cleaning and re-coating on-site difficult and ineffective. Temporary nets installed by the artist have been ineffective and pose a threat to smaller birds.
- Coating Deterioration:** Original finishes and coatings were not applied with longevity in mind resulting in poor condition of paint on all cars and corrosion of metal parts.
- Bird-proofing:** Preventing birds from sitting on and entering the artwork is the greatest challenge but has the most long-term benefit since much of the poor appearance, corrosion and surface damage is due to bird roosting and nesting.

In addition, missing headlights and other fittings allow entry of water, pests, and birds; the solar-powered lighting system has failed; and there is corrosion in various locations including on wire loops holding a front fender in place.

NEXT STEPS

- De-install and relocate artwork to address two most critical issues, structural integrity and bird-proofing the sculpture.
- Structural Integrity:** Confirm structural integrity for intended lifespan with engineer of record and address any deficiencies prior to relocation.
- Bird-proofing:** Undertaking cleaning and re-coating work in-situ is not feasible since it is nearly impossible to keep the birds away long enough to complete the work. No single method of bird-proofing is likely to

guarantee complete success necessitating multiple approaches.

- Siting: In consultation with the artists, staff will identify and review a site where the piece can be displayed for at least 10 years. Due to the planned reconfiguration of the boulevard where it was temporarily installed, as well as other factors, the piece will not be reinstalled at NE False Creek.

Should you have any questions, please email them to Branislav Henselmann (acting for Sandra Singh) at branislav.henselmann@vancouver.ca, and he will ensure they are responded to in the regular roll-up.

Best,
Paul

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.