

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Commission Chambers
Agenda Item H-1
October 13, 2020
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena**

City Staff

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Arts Advisory Specialist, Catherine Cathers**

Public Speaker(s)

**Joanna Deville
Katia Rosenthal**

Agenda Item H-1

A Resolution approving the concept for a work of public art by Thomas Houseago in conjunction with the Villa Valencia development project at 515 Valencia Avenue in fulfillment of the Art in Public Places requirement for public art in private development (unanimously recommended by the Arts Advisory Panel approval/denial vote: 8 to 0, and the Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 6 to 0).

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And now we should go to H-1, yes H-1. A Resolution approving the concept for a work of public art by Thomas Houseago in conjunction with the Villa Valencia. Presentation.

Ms. Cathers: Good morning. Thank you so much for letting us present. We do have the developers on the Zoom call. We have a presentation also loaded for this. So, I'm going to give a brief overview of the item and then hand it over to the representatives of the project, Joanna Deville with Villa Valencia and Art Consultant Katia Rosenthal. This is the Villa Valencia project. It is located at 515 Valencia Avenue and is coming before the Commission with a petition waiver request of the Art in Public Places fee requirement, by acquiring and installing artwork within the

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project. The artwork is proposed for placement within a public park at the corner of Valencia Avenue and Hernando Street and a project team reviewed over 15 national and international artists. Private developers do have the option of requesting a waiver under the fee as specified in our Zoning Code, Article 3, Division 21. They are selecting option B-1, which is going to be commissioning artwork and placing it on the development property site. The commission work proposed is by renowned artist Thomas Houseago. Houseago was born in 1972 in Leeds England. He lives and works in Los Angeles, California. He is represented by Gagotian Gallery and these are just a couple highlights the development team will be giving a lot more detailed explanation, his background and practice. He had a recent solo exhibition at the Royal Academy of Art, which you will see later in their presentation, a slide of that, and was a Whitney artist in 2010. His works are found in collections around the world, including our very own museums here in Miami. Thomas Houseago utilizes mediums associated with classical and modernist sculptures, such as carved wood, clay, plaster and bronze, as well as less traditional materials like rebar, brass and hem. Thomas Houseago builds monumental figures that show the work of the artist hand and visually oscillate between projections of power and vulnerability which I think you'll see in the piece that they are presenting today. The cost of the proposed art piece and installation is estimated at \$502,275, which is more than the one percent of the project's total Art in Public Places estimated fee of \$451,509. The proposal came before the Arts Advisory Panel and the Cultural Development Board, which both gave their unanimous recommendation to approve this proposal. The developer is required to provide for the perpetual maintenance of the artworks, since it will be on their property site. They will have the sole responsibility of that maintenance and which will be memorialized in accordance with restrictive covenant entered into with the city, following the Art in Public Places funding goals and implementation guidelines. So, here's a little sneak peak, its faded back a little bit, of the piece titled, "Lady" and Ms. Joanna Deville with Villa Valencia is going to speak about the proposal, along with their Art Consultant Katia Rosenthal. So, they are I believe on the call, and I will just advance the slides at their direction.

Joanna Deville: Good morning Mr. Mayor, members of the Commission and City Manager. Thank you very much for having us this morning, albeit virtual. We are very excited to bring forward this proposal for the sculpture by Thomas. I think Catherine has done an amazing job, kind of setting it up for us, and as I mentioned, we are very excited about bringing this to the city and adding to the very robust collection that the city has with public art. As Catherine mentioned, the director working for and brand for Villa Valencia. So, we are a luxury building that's on the corner of Valencia Avenue and Salzedo, and we have over 9,000 square foot park on site. And we are really looking for when we approached the idea of public art, kind of putting together a world class artist in this sort of area that, I think is very close, obviously to City Hall and Miracle Mile, but also a little bit more on the private side towards the residential area. So, I think Thomas' work and the work that we are proposing is something new and fresh, but also really draws on the sophistication in elegance of, not only the project and the site location where it is, but also kind of a reflection of bringing together some modern elements and also materiality to the city and a reflection of that in the city. So, with that, I'm going to let Katia talk a little bit more about Thomas and his work and his studio.

Katia Rosenthal: Good morning Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, City Manager. So excited to bring Thomas Houseago's work to Coral Gables. He has an extensive exhibition history, along with making large scale sculptures all around the world. He essentially is known for these outdoor sculptures. So, the sculpture that is being presented is a brass sculpture. It's around 7 feet tall with a concrete...that will be put underneath of it, and I think that will bring it around to about 9 feet tall. It weighs about 2,200 pounds. It is made out of brass and the foundry that is making this sculpture, a very important foundry in Switzerland called...they are known for making a lot of different contemporary sculptures and Thomas uses them quite often. And that's what I have so far. I don't know if you want to open it up to some questions from the Commission.

Joanna Deville: I think what's really special about this sculpture as kind of Katia was bringing up is, you were really looking for work that has some figurative elements to it, has some geometric elements. Those are both highlights and features of Thomas' work that have been, as we mentioned, kind of well collected and also well exhibited. In addition to the Royal Academy of Art, he has also had exhibitions at Rockefeller Center and at Storm King, which is a world renowned sculpture park outside of New York City, kind of upstate New York and that was one of the places that we really also fell in love with the visualization of seeing his sculptures in an outdoor setting, and how they create a little bit of a monument, but also at the same time are intimate enough that in this particular location where we are planning on placing the sculpture, it kind of creates a moment for a community to kind of come in and have lunch or just enjoy a moment of respite in the city and be able to kind of interact visually to see a beautiful piece like that. And I think that there is a lot of contemplation in Thomas' work, which again, feels very appropriate for a nature setting and for a park setting that is being introduced to the city, because I think again, kind of going back to the idea of the placement, where on the private side this really kind of brings in this intimate space to be exposed to a world class artist. If anyone has any questions.

Ms. Cathers: Could we get the presentation back on screen. Great – thank you. We can just go through it quickly since Joanna and Katia have done a great job speaking about the intent behind the work and a little bit about the artist. So, this is just his extensive CV and background that you see here, images of his prior work. Some of these images are from...

Joanna Deville: This is from Storm King, this is also from Storm King as well, from the Royal Academy of Art, so you can get a little bit of reference in terms of how he and his craft sees...and raised podiums in order to kind of reference historical work as well. You can see here, particularly his work is kind of intermingled with some of the original statutes that are in the courtyard. This is another one that's outdoors, larger shape. This is a rendering of the building. We are actually currently under construction. We are boring our eighth floor right now, so if you pass by the site, which I know is very close to many of the city buildings, you'll see a difference. This is a small view. This is kind of a small sculpture, tabletop size that was rendered to kind of give an idea what the sculpture would look like. There is a really nice interplay of different viewpoints. You do view different size of the sculpture, which I think creates, again, a really nice dimensionality, so whether you are driving by or walking by and depending on your approach, you get a different view of the sculpture. It's very multi-dimensional. This is a render with a...This is the proposed location of the sculpture within the park area and it kind of gives you an idea. This again, very, very rough,

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but the park has some seating and a pergola, its mostly an open lawn, so its also really great for picnics or some social distancing gatherings. And these are some press pieces. So, Thomas has been covered in the New York Times, in W, in various different...Rockefeller Center.

Katia Rosenthal: This is a piece that they engineered for the city. This is a larger sculpture that was made for...in New York, and I think that this sculpture along with most of Thomas Houseago's work really compliments Villa Valencia quite nicely, not only because its in brass or gilded kind of color, I think that its shape and kind of presence will just be a beautiful punctuation in that park.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Beautiful.

Ms. Cathers: We just want to make sure, if you guys can talk a little bit, this may be a question, I don't think its really been addressed so much, except in the minutes that you have. The maintenance of this artwork was discussed extensively, especially because of the materiality of the work and concern about it being in South Florida, and the developer and the studio and the fabricator they've reached out to, have been very responsive with documentation of how the sculpture will be treated and how it will be handled moving forward. So, I just want, if you don't mind them taking a little bit of time to talk about that.

Katia Rosenthal: The compounds of this brass are very specific. The foundry in Switzerland are coming up with various weathering techniques and have had much success with task sculptures made out of brass. In contrast or in comparison, rather, there are two similar sculptures, one heading to Mexico City that is also made out of brass,, that have similar temperate, winter temperatures that we have, and also a similar larger brass sculpture is headed to Hong Kong Bay, and they experience high humidity and typhoons just like us. So, they have no reservations about acquiring a work like that. The studio has given us some instructions to give to conservators and to people that are going to be cleaning the sculpture on a more regular basis. Its kind of a simple oil, it's a vegetable oil, basically a complex hard oil is what its called, and basically that's poured onto a cloth and then rubbed onto the sculpture, to kind of protect it, give it a little extra layer of protection. But Thomas has said many times throughout this five-month proposal that a lot of his sculptures are about weathering naturally and that's kind of like the process of what he wants to happen with all his sculptures, especially the brass sculptures. So, there shouldn't be any discrepancies.

Joanna Deville: As Katia mentioned, Thomas has expressed sort of as we've had extensive conversations with Gagotian who represents him and also, as Katia mentioned, sculptures that are in other places with similar climates that they are very confident in the sculpture placement in South Florida and are also very excited themselves. Aside from the intent of the artist to have the sculpture weather naturally, because that is again, going back to his practice and how he uses materiality as part of the evolution of his work once they are placed. It's also something that we have, again, had extensive conversations with the studio and the maker and the gallery and everybody feels pretty confident about the placement. And as Catherine mentioned also, earlier

when she was speaking, as a developer we are also taking on the responsibility to maintain the sculpture and make sure that the suggestions by the studio for maintenance are being followed.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Anything else on the presentation?

Ms. Cathers: No.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This has been unanimously recommended by the Arts Advisory Panel and the Cultural Development Board. I think we are becoming a city of art and I really love it and if there are no comments, I would like to hear a motion.

Vice Mayor Lago: Just very briefly. I'd like to commend the developer. On the previous development that we had; I think it was about two Commission meetings ago. I voted no on the art. This is a complete contrast. What you are seeing here before and I want to give kudos or credit where's its due. This artist is represented by Gagotian, which is no small feat. It's the largest, most important gallery in the world. It stands on everyone's shoulders. It is the gallery that every artist would love to be represented by Gagotian. If you'd like to see this work in person, there is multiple iterations of this work in person here in Miami, not only in private hands, but also at the Rubel Collection, at the de la Cruz Collection, which are probably some of the largest private collections in the world. This gentlemen's work is cutting edge. Its in every major museum. I've seen it in Whitney, personally I've seen it in other museums all over the world. And just like what happened with the Plaza and just what happened with Paseo de Riviera and what's coming now in Gables Station, this is true world class art. So when they talk about Coral Gables, like the Mayor just said, we are going to be known as a city that has exceptional art and you should come here and spend a day really visiting multiple locations to see a plethora of art that is in every major museum in the world from some of the finest living and past artists on the planet. So, this is very good to see and I'm thankful to the developer for spending an additional \$60,000 on the sculpture and to the art advisors that brought it to us. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Would you like to make a motion?

Vice Mayor Lago: So moved.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is there a second?

Commissioner Keon: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll please.

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes

Commissioner Mena: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

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(Vote: 5-0)