

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
ARTS ADVISORY PANEL MEETING
Tuesday, January 20, 2015, 11:00 a.m.
Economic and Cultural Development Department

EXCERPT MINUTES

Arts Advisory Panel Members in Attendance:

	JAN '15
Dr. Carol Damian	P
Jill Deupi	P
Marijean Miyar	E
John Stuart	P
Freda Tschumy	P

Staff in Attendance:

Cindy Birdsill, Director

Leonard Roberts, Assistant Director, Economic and Cultural Development Department

Jorge Casuso, Business Development Analyst, Economic and Cultural Development Department

Guests in Attendance:

Christine Rupp, Director, Coral Gables Museum

Ramon Trias, Planning Director

Uri Man, Area Vice President, Gables Residential

Hugh Johnson, Landscape Architect, Architectural Alliance

Mario Garcia-Serra, Attorney, Gunster

Victor Arias, Artist, Victor Steel Corporation

1. Review of proposed Art in Public Places project for Columbus Center Phase II, 100 Alhambra Circle

Mr. Garcia-Serra said the developer had commissioned Victor Arias, who has 20 years of experience creating art works for public and private spaces, to create a public art work inspired by Columbus' discovery of the new world for the plaza at Columbus Center. He said the art work would be enjoyed by those who use the plaza, those in the surrounding high-rise buildings that look down on the plaza and passersby. He added that the art work could be used as an educational tool. Mr. Johnson said that the plaza itself was the art work and that it would create a significant place for art and education. The proposed work uses globes, maps, longitudinal lines and wave patterns to evoke the idea of exploration and the concept of bringing the old world to the new. Mr. Johnson said the proposed plan reduces the water element in the plaza and creates passageways to the plaza by removing a wall near the existing commercial building that was Phase I of the development. The proposed art works would retain the vertical features at the end of the water pool and add a dome and a globe. The globes and plaques that provide information about Columbus' journey would be educational tools. Mr. Arias showed several samples of his work and his proposal for the plaza. He said that the columns holding up the globes are meant to evoke mangrove roots and that bougainvillea would cover parts of the sculptures to add color and create shade. The sculptures would be constructed of aluminum and would be powder coated, requiring little maintenance. Mr. Johnson said that the current paving in the plaza would be removed and replaced with concrete separated by metal bands and covered with a 1/8-inch to 1/4-inch lithocrete coating. The globes, accompanied by information plaques, would be placed near the benches, whose design would mirror the wave patterns in the water features and railings. The plaza and the water feature would be lit at night, and the sculptures would have dramatic up-lighting.

Mr. Stuart told the artist that the proposal does not live up to his best work and that the chosen materials do not evoke Coral Gables. He said parts of the proposal were too dry and abstract and failed to relate to the City's identity. Mr. Stuart added that the connection between the mangrove and the globe didn't work. Ms. Birdsill said the globe felt "heavy" and Ms. Tschumy agreed, adding that it was "arbitrary." Dr. Deupi said the reference to the mangrove was "too subtle" and

that the shape could be seen as representing a jellyfish. Ms. Tschumy agreed and said it looked more like a twisted pony tail or a stream of water. She said that the globe was jarring and didn't seem to relate to the other elements. Mr. Stuart worried that placing the small globes on pedestals would be expensive and may not help with the message. He noted that the rendering of the proposed plaza did not include the 18-story project that would be built and that the panel was not really seeing things in context. Dr. Deupi said she would like to know more about the educational component and added that art education was a hard sell. She said that she doubted students would be taking field trips to the plaza and that careful thought should be given to who would be using the space. Dr. Damian agreed that students would not come. Dr. Deupi urged the developers to think of the plaza more as a space for relaxation. Dr. Damian recommended that the applicant go back to the drawing table and give consideration to the comments made by the Board. She said the education component was not necessary and added that she thought the artist had the creative potential to "take this beyond abstract metal objects stuck in a base."

Dr. Deupi made a motion to qualify artist Victor Arias for the Columbus Center Phase II Art in Public Places Project. Mr. Stuart seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Dr. Damian made a motion to have the developer for the Columbus Center Phase II Art in Public Places Project return with a design concept that takes into consideration comments made by the Board. Dr. Deupi seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Jorge Casuso
Business Development Analyst