



Staff Report

City Council

Item No. 5.D

Meeting Date: February 12, 2025

From: Anne V. Ambrose, Assistant City Manager

Title: Approve Public Arts Commission's Recommendation to Provide \$2,300 for an Exhibition of Karen and Tony Barone Sculpture in Town Square

RECOMMENDATION:

To approve the Public Arts Commission's recommendation to sponsor an exhibit of Karen and Tony Barone sculptures in Town Square Park and approve the allocation of \$2,300 from the Public Arts Commission general fund budget to pay for installation, signage, and incidental costs towards a reception.

BACKGROUND:

On December 4, 2024, Public Arts Commission Chair Craig Liebelt, Public Arts Commission Liaison Anne Ambrose and Events and Recreation Coordinator Adam Chastain were invited by Michael Fiacco, Director of Special Exhibitions for the Chuck Jones Gallery, to the home of internationally acclaimed artists Karen and Tony Barone to tour their sculptures. The purpose of the meeting and tour was to discuss an idea for an exhibition of Karen and Tony Barone's sculptures in Cathedral City.

About the Artists:

Karen and Tony Barone are a legendary couple working side by side in the execution of their very large-scale sculpture & paintings. Their sculptures can be experienced throughout the Palm Springs Valley. They are local artists with a global reach. This extraordinarily creative husband and wife team's works have been exhibited and acquired by cities, individuals, corporations, & museums worldwide.

The Barones were both born in Chicago where they met, fell in love, merged, married and achieved a high level of success: "Chicago was very good to us." The next stop on their artistic and romantic journey took them to New York City where "we got our stripes." Working out of their sprawling 4th floor loft, they were known as "Soho pioneers."

A hillside studio on their horse farm in East Tennessee became their next artistic environ before heading west to become a powerful artistic presence disseminating art and producing one couple shows from their massive canal-side studio in Los Angeles' Venice Beach. Early in the new millennium, they moved their high voltage creativity to the Palm Springs California desert community of Rancho Mirage in the Coachella Valley, where larger-than-life public art

began to dominate their oeuvre.

Karen & Tony Barone possess a formidable wit. They create mind-boggling works of art that challenge our sense of scale and spatial reality. They place us in an Alice-In-Wonderland state of disbelief and visual adventure. They believe art can be a powerful force for good and human enrichment and they support many causes to that goal. A principal public art initiative is a series of giant 6'-2" brightly colored Dalmatian puppy sculptures titled "R. HERO". The "R. HERO" sculpture was conceived to honor Firefighters & First Responders. One of their accomplishments includes an expansive swooping 50' sculpture known as the "Forks". It dominates the front façade of Acqua California Bistro @ The River and the colorful mega ensemble art installation of 9 ginormous rabbit sculptures in Palm Desert. The "Rabbits" and the "Forks".

DESERT WARREN 2", is a 45ft wide aluminum ensemble sculpture installation consisting of nine rabbit sculptures 8ft & 9ft tall. It is currently on exhibit on Hwy 111 @ Town Center Way in Palm Desert, CA.

"ANIMAL CRACKERS" consists of 2 larger-than-life, illogically positioned and brightly colored jungle creatures: a 7.5ft tall pink, "CHERRY VANILLA GORILLA" and a 9ft long bright red "JAGUAR" w/black markings. They appear together in a pure desert landscape against a mountain backdrop located in Rancho Mirage CA on Hwy 111.

"SHELTER DOG" @ Westin Mission Hills Resort, Rancho Mirage, CA is on loan from the artists to support the resort's extremely successful guest adoption program in conjunction with the Palm Springs Animal Shelter. The program finds forever homes for rescue/shelter dogs and has achieved over 200 adoptions. "SHELTER DOG" is a 6ft+ tall golden colored aluminum puppy sculpture standing on all fours.

PRESENTLY - The Barone's are immersed in multi-disciplined art projects which have become vehicles for Karen's VIDEO PERFORMANCE ART and the couple's PAINTINGS ... the future has arrived! Videos and paintings are viewable in the virtual museum at BaroneArt.com

A full-length documentary film about the couple and their art is in post-production ... it's an amazing love story.

DISCUSSION:

Proposed Exhibition

Michael Fiacco and the Barone's are proposing a large-scale exhibit of their sculptures, to be exhibited in Town Square Park from March 14 through April 27, 2025. This exhibit will run concurrently to the Desert X Coachella Valley exhibition from March 8 through May 11, 2025, a time where people come from all over to see the various installations throughout the Coachella Valley. While Cathedral City does not have a Desert X installation, it is hoped the Barone event will capture the interest of art lovers locally, throughout the state and beyond.

Cathedral City's exclusive proposed art installation, Karen & Tony Barone: CATHedral City Public Art Exhibition "CAT-ALYSTS OF THE FUTURE," promises to be something truly exceptional! An exhibition of 14 'larger than life' Pop Art sculptures by celebrated Coachella Valley Artists Karen & Tony Barone will boggle your mind and dazzle your senses! You will feel as if you've entered Disneyland and Alice In Wonderland wrapped into one as you view

such works as 6 foot tall “Golden Cat”, the 10 foot tall duo of dancing “Pajama Party” rabbits, two 8 foot tall “Playful Pink Poodles”, “Happy”, a 6 foot Golden Retriever, “Saucy Meatball”, a 9 foot tall Ladle cupping its giant namesake, and “Double Dipping-Double Licking”, an 8 foot tall triple decker ice cream cone. Did we mention an 11-foot pair of bright red chopsticks caressing a “Jumbo Shrimp”? The 7 foot “Creamsicle Dreamsicle”, complete with a giant bite missing? Or an 8-foot-tall packet of “French Fries” pouring on to the sidewalk?? “CAT-ALYSTS OF THE FUTURE” is going to delight everyone who sees it! And it will give Cathedral City much more than just 10 minutes of Warholesque ‘art fame’!

The sculptures would be placed around the exterior of Town Square Park and in front of City Hall on concrete surfaces. The pieces will be adjacent to the walkway around the park and will not impede passage on the walkways.

The Barone’s are also discussing a possible opening reception, but details are not fully vetted yet. A request of not to exceed amount of \$300 is being made towards a reception.

The cost to move the sculptures from the Barone’s residence to Town Center Park in downtown Cathedral City, and to pick them up and return them at the end of the exhibit is \$1,500. There would be additional costs of an amount not to exceed \$500 for signs to go along with each art piece.

The Public Arts Commission considered the item at their regularly scheduled January 14, 2025 commission meeting and unanimously voted to support the item and recommend it for approval to the City Council.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The total proposed budget is \$2,300 to include:

Transportation of Sculptures	\$1,500
Signs	\$500
<u>Reception</u>	<u>\$300</u>
Total	\$2,300

There are sufficient funds available in the Public Arts Commission’s general fund budget for this event.

	DESCRIPTION	GENERAL LEDGER ACCOUNT CODES	PROJECT CODE	AMOUNT	ONE TIME or ONGOING
2024-2025	Karen and Tony Barone Exhibition	100-500-510-513-8300-8301		\$2,300.00	One Time
2024-2025	Total			\$2,300.00	

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:

Goal F: Embracing, Inclusive Community

F-3: Promote additional community events and celebrations.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Quote for sculpture transportation, installation, and retrieval
2. Samples of Karen and Tony Barone's sculpture