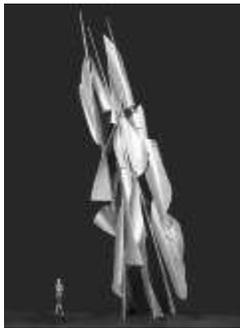


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Ideas with Mile-age? Readers submit suggestions for Scioto sculpture

Possible substitutions for sculpture on Scioto are whimsical, meaningful

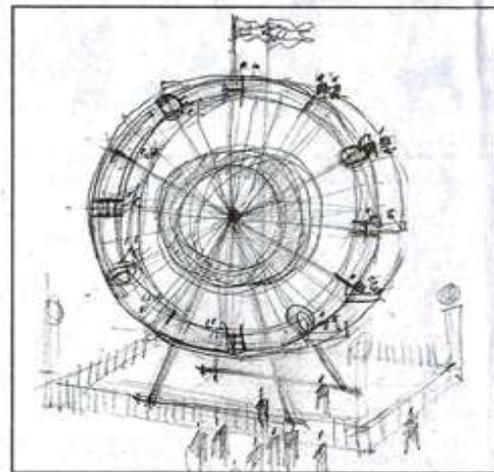
By Joe Blundo



The Discovery sculpture, by artist David E. Black, represents Christopher Columbus' three ships.



The stainless-steel Freedom Ribbon, by Columbus graphic artist J Pogalies, bears the inscription of the First Amendment.



John Payne's Ferris wheel spells "Ohio" around the edge.

If city leaders are open to alternative suggestions for a Scioto Mile sculpture, Columbus folks have a few.

How about a symbolic Ferris wheel, ridden by the likenesses of Woody Hayes, James Thurber and Jack Hanna?

Or an 80-foot metal artwork that resembles furled sails? Or a stainless-steel ribbon with an important message? Or a giant check mark?

The impetus for all of this creative thinking is the proposal by artist Brian Tolle for a 75-foot-tall work that, in its first conception, resembled a power-plant cooling tower. The public reaction was less than enthusiastic.

Tolle, a New York artist chosen by Downtown leaders to create an artwork for the Mile, later modified the idea, but it largely retained its distinctive shape. (The sculpture would be privately funded.)

Tolle has said he is still refining the concept. While he is busy doing so, here are some of the ideas submitted by readers at my invitation:

The Ferris wheel

“Let’s erect a large Ferris wheel on the Scioto Mile,” suggested John Payne, 68, of Upper Arlington — “not a real one but a work constructed of two giant O’s, with O’s, H’s and I’s that spell ‘OHIO’ around the perimeter.”

The wheel, lighted at night, would symbolize the family-oriented nature of Columbus. Payne, a retired architect, would have symbolic figures — a teacher, a firefighter, a construction worker — aboard the wheel, along with replicas of a few prominent residents.

“Historical figures like Eddie Rickenbacker, Woody Hayes, Jesse Owens, Dave Thomas, James Thurber and Jack Hanna.”

The ‘Freedom Ribbon’

J Pogalies, who owns a graphic-arts business in Columbus and has exhibited her artwork, describes her idea as “an expression of freedom based on an elegant mathematical form.”

She proposes a stainless-steel Mobius strip, which resembles a ribbon with a twist. She would inscribe the text of the First Amendment (about freedom of speech) on it.

“The text of the First Amendment — engraved and in Braille in a slender, continuous band — obliges viewers to move around through the Freedom Ribbon,” Pogalies said. “The mirrored stainless-steel surface reflects the Columbus skyline as well as the images of all who view it and thus is constantly changing and fluid.”

The ‘Discovery’ sculpture

David E. Black, a professor emeritus of art at Ohio State University and creator of many works of public art, proposes a contemporary sculpture of three tilted masts (for Christopher Columbus’ three ships), with curving sails that suggest motion.

“At 80 feet high, hand-burnished in stainless steel and lighted at night, Discovery would anchor and enhance our waterfront both aesthetically and symbolically,” said Black, 80.

His public artwork includes Flyover, a memorial to the Wright brothers’ first flight, in Dayton — and works in Fort Myers, Fla.; San Francisco; Tucson, Ariz.; and Washington as well as Germany and Japan.

Other ideas

- Several people proposed giant footballs or monumental Brutus Buckeyes.
- Cows were also a common theme.
- Several readers lobbied for the blue snake once proposed by Columbus artist Todd Slaughter for the Broad Street bridge.
- Others said Brushstrokes in Flight, the Roy Lichtenstein sculpture in the terminal at Port Columbus, should be moved to the Scioto Mile.
- Among the less predictable suggestions:
- A 400-foot-tall rotating check mark. Roy Butler, 74, of Columbus said it would signify that Columbus is the place to choose. Colored lights would illuminate it, said Butler, a retired economic researcher.
- A more traditional depiction of Christopher Columbus’ sails. Kathy Hjelm, 53, of Plain City said it could be made of rolled recycled aluminum to emphasize the city’s interest in recycling. The sails, she said, would symbolize Columbus as a place of discovery.
- An Eiffel Tower-like structure visible from 50 miles away. Lance Grolla, 80, of Columbus said it would be so eye-catching that it could support itself through admission fees. He sees it as a long-term project. In the interim, he said, Columbus could build a slender tower of interlocking steel circles, symbolizing unity and community, until money for the bigger tower is raised.

For those who think that all sounds too grand, Grolla, a retired urban planner, quoted architect and planner Daniel Burnham: “Make no little plans.”

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