

This is My Stop

Art in Motion's design competition takes art to the streets (and bus shelters)

By Kim Thomas

My name is Kim, and I ride the bus. Until recently, I had the most plain, puritanical, 4x2-yet-wonderful wooden bench upon which to rest my duff while I waited for Janice, my friendly morning LexTran driver, to retrieve me and get me to work on time. Unfortunately, a few weeks ago, an errant driver somehow managed to destroy the bench, and now, some of my fellow bus riders are apparently using overturned shopping carts as a form of improvised seating.

I'll be honest with you—I'm a bit scared to sit on those carts for fear the contraption might just slide me out into traffic and I will be yet another victim of our fossil-fueled society. As a regular rider, no one was more thrilled than I was to hear about Art in Motion's design competition this summer — a grass-roots contest which might give me and my legion of fellow bus riders a new place to rest our collective souls. This design competition calls upon artists, sculptors, engineers to enter ideas for bus shelters as functional Art.

As Art in Motion board member Marnie Clay Holoubek puts

“We in Fayette County have a choice: do we choose to live in an ever-expanding purely car-driven monotonous low density sprawl of ugliness, or do we act to create a mixed transportation infrastructure that supports mass transit, that treats working people who take the bus with dignity, and that places beauty at the center of street planning?”

—Scott Diamond, Art in Motion

it, “A well placed and well crafted piece of art for public viewing (and use!) can add an immeasurable quality to everyday life. Art in Motion is taking that mundane experience of getting where you need to go by public transport and adding a bit of excitement and interest. We hope that everyone who uses the creative bus shelters will feel that it brightens their day.”

Beast of Burden

At first, I was hesitant to ride the bus. I used to live downtown and saw no need to seek out society beyond the parameters of Main & Broadway. Nah, I didn't *want* to figure out the “complicated” bus schedule, wait at what was hopefully the right stop, then board the bus filled with *strangers*, for heaven's sake and even worse, I would have to eschew my high heels in favor of sensible shoes!

However, my apprehension and angst soon gave way to new job opportunities and relationships with those who live in the suburbs (especially when I moved in with Kevin, who convinced me that riding the bus was safe and easy).

So, on my way to work in the morning, I wait for my Janice to stop and pick me up. I walk a little further to this stop because there *used* to be a bench there where I could rest my Croc-clad feet and wait with the sun in face and pray myself into a good day. Also, unlike some of the other stops on my route, there is a tree that provides some shade, and of course—at one time—there was ample seating.

Once on the bus, there are friendly folks with whom I may chat briefly, or may delve a little deeper. In this setting, I like to imagine myself a modern-day *Siddhartha*, and my driver is the kindly, wise, all-knowing, at-peace-with-self Govinda, the Ferryman that Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* meets and finally realizes that this gentle soul with the kind eyes is the source of all Happiness. The Happiness that comes from equal acceptance of life's ups and downs, like rough stones in the River that smooth away in time by the gentle, flowing streams as well as the rough, troubled and tumultuous cascading rapids. It is the entirety of *all* these fluid actions that turns the craggy edges of stone into polished pebbles. I get to work on time, and the ride

prepares me for the jobs that lie ahead once I reach my office.

At the end of the workday, I find myself trudging up hills to get to the stop, probably humming Rolling Stones lyrics”...never be your Beast of Burden...” I'm usually carrying groceries for dinner and by the time I get home, I truly do feel like an animal of labor.

Once at my going-home stop, I feel so fortunate that there



is a slim column of shade from the shadow of a telephone pole (and also am thankful that I can fit *most* of my bulk into its shadow). I'm also grateful that I can board the bus without assistance... in fact occasionally I am able to actually help folks get on board who need it. Then, I sit back and without having to worry about the next red light or lane change, I will soon be delivered to The Stop near my Home Sweet Home.

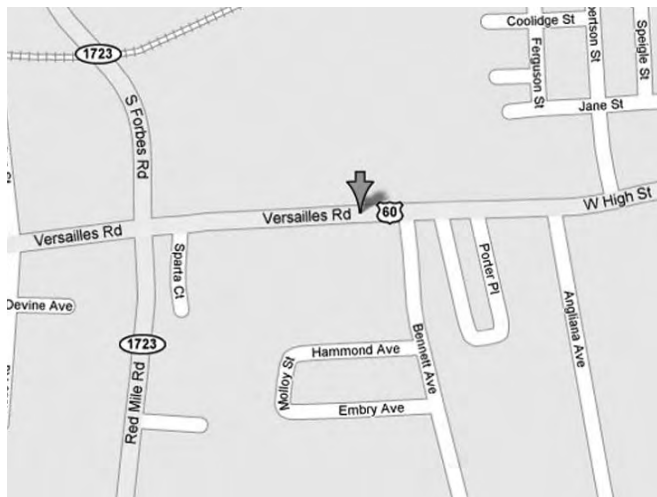
There's nothing wrong with riding the bus. But waiting in the rain, standing on already-tired feet, and hoping my umbrella, raincoat or hat will adequately protect me from the weather long enough to get me on my bus safely can get old.

ART IN MOTION

For riders like me, politics *are* local. Of her role in Art in Motion, activist Yvette Hurt says, “I was inspired to work on this project by my love for this community (my hometown) and the desire to see Lexington be the best that it can be. I see the issue of improving mass transit and increasing ridership as an environmental issue, something that draws on my background in environmental law and policy.”

As for its role in public transit, Hurt says “I also see it as

an issue of caring for our citizens and ensuring that a basic, legitimate need like transportation to work, to a university or trade school, to doctors, visits or a grocery is being met. By providing amenities such as artistic bus shelters, we can help LexTran grow the system so that it serves more people more efficiently,” adding, “I have always been an art lover and



The new site for the Art-In-Motion shelter

want to see more public art in Lexington.”

For riders like me, this feels like a blessing sent from Above via a handful of thoughtful, compassionate folks who want to adorn our city not just with bus shelters, but shelters that are Works of Art. Imagine waiting for the bus in a shelter that feeds my soul, and where I will be shielded from rain, sun, hail, sleet, snow.

Even if you're not an architect, engineer, or sculptor, you're still welcome to partner with someone who is, and enter this contest that will beautify Lexington from the ground up. Because, to use mass transit is to find a way to practice the art of “thinking globally, acting locally.”

Art in Motion, spearheaded by Yvette Hurt and vice president Scott Diamond, sees bus shelters as street furniture:

“Raymond [Betts, Gaines Center founding director] repeatedly impressed upon me and others that one way to build a livable and lively community was to bring art to the streets of Lexington and that has always stuck in my mind...everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy art, and to take part in the dialogue opened by having art fully incorporated into our landscape.”

—Yvette Hurt, Art in Motion

a landmark, an ideal place to wait for a bus and to see and be seen; an avant-garde structure that invites and encourages rider ship; an expression of public art and a place that promotes community involvement.

Diamond sees this as an opportunity for Lexington to lead by example. “Lexington should stop following, and asking whether it's as good as other places, and start *leading* by showing those other places what an American city can be.”

He adds, “I have lived in Boulder and Denver, Colorado, two very differently sized cities, each of whose citizens has chosen to act together to improve urban livability. We in Fayette County have a choice: do we choose to live in an ever-expanding purely car-driven monotonous low density sprawl of ugliness, or do we act to create a mixed transportation infrastructure that supports mass transit, that treats working people who take the bus with dignity, and that places beauty at the center of street planning?”

Art in Motion announced their first design competition for an artistically designed bus shelter in April. The site for the first shelter is the eastbound stop at Versailles Road Shops. The budget for the materials and construction is \$10,000. Since this site is situated on a major corridor into the

center of the city, it qualified for funding from the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Corridors Committee.

Although Art in Motion is a relatively new grass-roots effort, they are partnering with experienced organizations for each aspect of their work. For transportation issues, they partnered with LexTran; contracted with Bluegrass Community Foundation for finances; in working with community organizations, they approached LexLinc; and for advice on the arts communities they went to LexArts. In each case, the role of the partner is to advise, but the choices remain that of the Art in Motion board (which also includes UK's Peyman Jahed; Marnie Houlebek; and Joseph Hillenmeyer).

When the 2004 tax referendum provided LexTran with a dedicated source of funding, Hurt found a way to realize the dream of one her mentors, Raymond Betts, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Kentucky and founding director of the Gaines Center for the Humanities. According to Hurt, “Raymond repeatedly impressed upon me and others that one way to build a livable and lively community was to bring art to the streets of Lexington and that has always stuck in my mind.” Hurt has developed a broad coalition of citizens as well as professional organizations. Hurt believes that “everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy art, and to take part in the dialogue opened by having art fully incorporated into our landscape.”

Civic Destiny: What this project means to Lexington

This project is a grassroots effort by regular people to address three problems that face our city: how to encourage greater use of mass transit for environ-

The Design Competition

Deadline for Design Idea Entry: **July 16**

The three finalists will be announced in mid-August; the winner in September and finally, the first shelter will be built in October.

Prizes will be:
First prize: \$2,500
Second prize: \$1,000
Third prize: \$500

Eligibility: Professional architects, engineers, sculptors and artists are eligible. The contest is also open to submissions by students under the supervision of professional architects, engineers, sculptors and artists.

The competition will be judged by reps from LFUCG Corridors Committee; LexTran; Art in Motion; LexArts; UK's School of Design; Kentucky Transportation Cabinet; and professional artists.

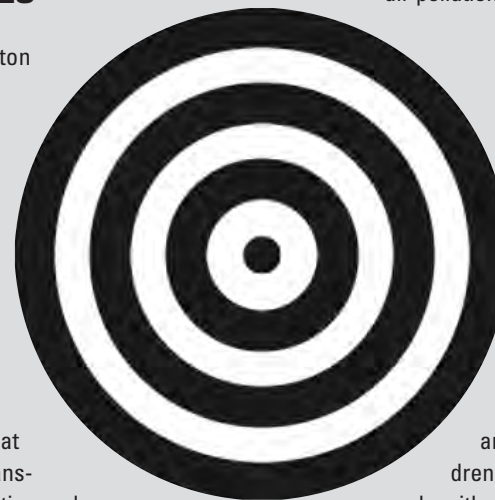
Info, www.art-in-motion.us ■

ART IN MOTION'S GOALS

FOSTERING CREATIVITY Lexington seeks to be a vibrant, innovative city that attracts creative people to live and work here. Art in Motion believes that by providing a new venue for local and regional artists to create new work, they will help in this effort to make Lexington/Fayette Kentucky's center for creativity.

TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT It just makes sense that people are more likely to use public transportation if they can stay dry while waiting and they can wait somewhere stimulating and beautiful. Bus shelters that incorporate art have increased rider ship else-

where, and we expect that they will decrease petroleum usage, air pollution, and traffic congestion. Everyone wins.



HUMAN DIGNITY Art in Motion's Vice-President, Scott Diamond says, “We believe we are helping Lexington/Fayette to address an issue of human dignity. Protecting LexTran riders from the elements says that we value them, and that we value their choice to use public transportation.”

INCLUDING ALL PEOPLE Transportation is a key need for Lexington/Fayette's citizens. Getting around poses a big problem for our children, for people with low incomes and for people with disabilities. By providing shelter from the elements for these two populations, we make a very strong statement about our community's values. ■

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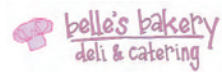
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

mental reasons, how to support the dignity of users of mass transit (people shouldn't have to suffer because they need or choose to use mass transit), and how do we beautify Lexington's streetscapes.

This project is also meant to demonstrate a new way for citizens to take charge of their civic destiny, by working together with government, foundations, businesses and neighborhoods to help make our city the home that we envision.

Art in Motion anticipates that this also will be an engaging tourist attraction, sort of like Horse Mania was, to those who visit our town, travel through it, attend Keeneland, or the Junior League Horse Show and 5/3 tennis tourney in the summer—or come to town for basketball or football games in the fall and winter.

When I go on vacation, one of the main things I notice about a town is landscaping, artistic design—do I see their pride?—it gives me a sense of how the town feels about its residents, both rich and poor.

Diamond agrees, "We see diverse benefits for Lexington from the fusion of art and transportation. We want the shelters to make a positive contribution to the 'image' of Lexington/Fayette, and to enhance the experience of visitors to the Bluegrass Region. Streetscapes do say something about how we feel about our community, and about how our community feels about its citizens. We at Art in Motion want our streetscapes to be pedestrian-friendly and beautiful."

When asked about how this takes art "to the people" in a new way, when Art (and Art funding) is sometimes accused of being elitist, Diamond explains that "we are 'the people,' and we intend to have all kinds of people involved in every stage of the program. We

want to build shelters, art, all over Lexington and we want to empower each community or neighborhood. Art that they see as beautiful, streetscapes that they will sense as quality. I don't see Art as elitist. All people take pleasure in beauty and all people sense quality. I am certainly part of no Elite myself!"

Since we all feel the Pain at the Pump these days (both the gas *and* open-toed variety), Diamond says he hopes this will encourage people to try Mass Transit: "You tell me. Would you rather be wet or dry; surrounded by uncut grass, mud and trash, or enclosed in a gallery of art? Would you be more likely to use transit if the experience is ugly, uncomfortable and unsheltered, or if your daily trip is dignified, dry and decorated by beauty?"

Lexington Vice-Mayor, Jim Gray agrees: "This is a really creative way to do what we really need to do: get bus shelters along our bus routes. A two-fer: It will add to the visual quality of life...and encourage folks to use public transportation."

In the near future, Art in Motion will be approaching neighborhood councils and community organizations to ask them to partner with them to build additional shelters. Individuals can communicate to LexTran, local government officials and community organizations their support of the construction of a county-wide network of bus shelters that incorporate art. Art in Motion is raising funds from private donors, businesses and public agencies.

For the Versailles Road Shelter, the funding is from Federal Transportation dollars awarded through the LFUCG corridors committee.

I ride the bus. And I look forward to art and shelter that will shield me from the elements while I wait for it. ■

Art in Motion: Who's Who

Art in Motion is the brain-child of **Yvette Hurt**, a local lawyer, activist, and arts supporter. She and **Scott Diamond** began trying to build a charitable organization to build bus shelters that incorporate art a year ago. Hurt has also been instrumental in Lexington's smoking laws.

Scott Diamond, Vice President, is an assistant professor of Physiology at the UK medical center, but is changing careers to focus on education reform. He is completing his masters in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at ECU. The Dean of Education at ECU asked for Diamond's help in putting together a program to improve postsecondary transition planning for students with disabilities (another equity issue), and Diamond will join him to help run that program on a part-time basis. He hopes, in the long term, to help lead educational reform in Kentucky.

Board member **Marnie Holoubek** is involved in Lexington's arts scene and is also a leader in promoting green space.

Board member **Peyman Jahed** is faculty in the UK School of Design and an engineer. He put together the design competition.

Board member **Joseph Hillenmeyer** owns a landscape design firm in Lexington. ■