

State of the Art Gallery

# Mystery, Love, & Participation

By Ariana Meyers / VOICE

**G**IVING THE COMMUNITY THE OPPORTUNITY TO PUT THEIR PERSONAL TOUCH ON A PIECE OF PUBLIC ART, two interactive sculptures from sculptor Patrick Melroy not only encourage, but thrive on audience engagement and participation.

Melroy's sculptures *Public Flag Pole* and *Love Lock California* will be exhibited as part of the State of the Art Gallery on State St., starting on 1st Thursday, April 5th from 5 to 8pm.

"Throughout the majority of my career I have been committed to making work built with the intention of participation by everyone in proximity to the work," revealed Melroy, who started making art at

a young age, when family members and neighbors found the need to channel his imagination and affinity for making trouble into something more productive. "I grew up building and making objects from my imagination. Those creations become real only when someone other than me interacts with them."

His continued motivation to engage with the public is not only derived from a desire to connect through art, which Melroy described as the strongest form of communication, but also to allow his work to change along with the audience. "My audience quickly becomes my most important collaborators, bringing their strange and beautiful behaviors and histories to my work," he commented.

"The pieces for the State of the Art Gallery will only find completion when the community joins me in making them real."

Melroy's sculptures are intended to attract people "like a magnet," as he described, in order to get people to fully experience his work. "This attraction of the audience is a fun dance I have been honing for years. I am constantly cataloging the world around me, taking notes on how people use the world around them... from lines at the bank to hand rails, even the shoe sales clerk becomes fodder for my projects."

Melroy's close observations of the world around him are shared by his wife and daughter, and their observations during daily walks



Patrick Melroy

along State Street served as the inspiration for his sculptures for State of the Art Gallery. "While walking the street we like to seek out the glitches and fractures in the tourist town façade," commented Melroy. "The neglected utilitarian aspects old mail slots and painted shut panel plates on walls,

especially the wonderful newspaper boxes inset in the low walls around the trees."

His sculpture, *Public Flag Pole*, which will be located on the corner of State St. and Ortega St., was inspired by the empty flagpoles found throughout downtown Santa Barbara. "Many businesses have super tantalizing empty flag poles," commented Melroy. "Vacant flag poles inspire so many questions: What kind of flags have flown there? Who was in charge of putting the flags up and did they enjoy tugging the ropes through the pulleys? When did they stop, on what specific day was the last flag flown on those poles in front of Marshalls?"

However, unlike the other flag poles downtown, Melroy's interactive *Public Flag Pole* is intended to hold flags designed by members of the community. "Everyone is invited to email a picture of a flag design to palegrayarts@gmail.com. If your design is selected to be turned into a cloth flag, we will invite the designer to the flag pole site for a raising and lowering procedure," shared Melroy. "Over the course of the three months we should be able to fly dozens of community designed flags."

The interactivity of Melroy's other sculpture, *Love Lock California*, a chain-link fence segment shaped like California to be located on the corner of State St. and Victoria St., builds off the recent trend of locking padlocks to fences to signify love, made famous by the Pont des Arts in Paris. Melroy also hopes to put together some workshops with MOXI for children to make their own personal locks to add to the piece. "The hope is for the sculpture to grow like a piece of

urban coral, changing in shape as people add their locks," Melroy explained. "I think giving them a safe appropriate place to satisfy that instinct is a wonderful collaboration between artist and audience."

Melroy's curiosity about art and the community doesn't stop on State Street. His keen eye drew him to research two pieces of art, with the help of Alexandra Cole, that are a mystery.

"We have located two medium-sized concrete obelisks, which have no apparent record. One is stamped 1936. Both are placed at corners between sidewalks and the street. One is at the corner of Quinto and Bath the other is at the corner of Micheltorena and Gillespie," he added. "They are distinctly

different than the standard sandstone hitching posts. They are perfectly made and blend into the environment seamlessly until you notice them, then you can't stop noticing them. They suddenly stick out in the this fantastically unreasonable way. I visit one or both of them at least once a week."

For Melroy, the State of the Art Gallery, is the perfect opportunity to foster this relationship between the public and his work. "Honestly this process has been so fantastic. The city staff Sarah, Julia, Hannah, and Tom, have made this all so pleasant," he enthused. "It is beyond unusual for a city to be this supportive of temporary interactive sculpture. This entire event speaks to



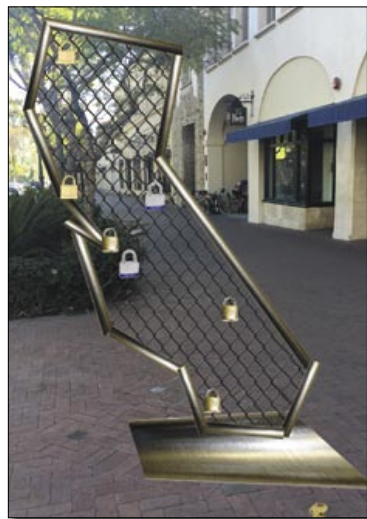
Public Flag Pole by Patrick Melroy

the great direction the city is headed toward, continuing to earn its long held aspiration of being a truly arts friendly city."

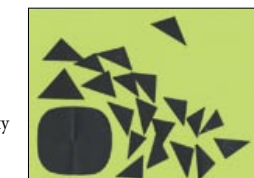
The State of the Art Gallery is also a great opportunity for local artists, according to Melroy. "Artists in this community are overflowing with ideas for art to add to the existing terrain. I am very hopeful that we as a community can expect to see this show happen regularly to give opportunities to more of the artists here," he revealed.

The ribbon cutting opening reception for State of the Art Gallery with Mayor Cathy Murillo will take place by Melroy's *California Love Locks* sculpture at 5pm on 1st Thursday, April 5th.

[www.sbac.ca.gov/soag2018](http://www.sbac.ca.gov/soag2018)



Love Lock California by Patrick Melroy



Some of the proposed flags

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