



Hi-Desert Star

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Artists want to stack stone art on Black Mesa

YUCCA VALLEY — A proposed public “earth works” art project near Pipes Canyon Road will be considered by the Town Council at its Thursday meeting.

The council will hear a presentation on behalf of Australian sculptor Andrew Rogers, who wants to install two large-scale earth works, designs using the natural landscape, on Yucca Valley’s vacant Section 11 property.

The artworks would be designed by Rogers and Copper Mountain College teacher Spelman Evans Downer.

Rogers’ Rhythm of Life Project anticipates paying all costs associated with the endeavor and the finished works would be gifts to the Morongo Basin communities, according to Community Services Director Jim Schooler.

The proposed site is the western portion of a Town-owned 600-acre undeveloped parcel just south of the intersection of Old Woman Springs Road and Pipes Canyon Road.

This hilly landscape of lava named Black Mesa is the eastern edge of the large lava flows that are seen on either side of Pipes Canyon all the way west to Pioneertown.

The two proposed earth works would join a worldwide series of installations that celebrate indigenous cultures. At its conclusion, the Rhythm of Life Project will have involved more than 5,000 people on six continents, according to Schooler.

Since 1999, Rogers has built earth works at Israel, Chile, Bolivia, Sri Lanka, Australia, Iceland, India, China, Slovakia and Nepal. He calls all the works “geoglyphs” because they generally were derived from local petroglyphs, pictographs and the like.

Unifying all the sites is Rogers’ keystone design called the Rhythm of Life, based on his bronze sculpture of the same name in Melbourne.

For Black Mesa, the Rhythm of Life design would be located on top of a hill overlooking the Mojave Desert and built out of stacked rock in a contrasting color to the dark lava of the mesa site. It would be about where the Town of Yucca Valley sign greets visitors as they drive into the town from the north.

The artist said he intends to ensure that the landscape and environment of the Black Mesa will not be harmed in any way, Schooler noted in a news release.

Existing dirt roads would be used in construction, no digging would take place and portions of the site that are already disturbed would be cleaned up.

The design process calls for using stacked rock brought to the site.

If the project is approved, Rogers plans to hire local helpers to build the geoglyphs.

The second proposed work is a collaboration with Rogers and Downer, who met after the “Earth Works Now” exhibition staged at the college and the Hi-Desert Nature Museum.

Downer’s contribution to the Rhythm of Life Project would celebrate the Sun Dagger, a place in the Little San Bernardino Mountains where the midday sun aligns with a rock formation on the equinox.

Downer's design, entitled "The Equinox Sun Dagger," also would be built of stacked rock placed on the ground just above the edge of the lava flow. The artist envisions the sun dagger itself in a yellowish rock as symbolic of the sun.

Both projects would be about 60 meters.

At least one of the works would be finished in time for the release of a 488-page book survey of the Rhythm of Life Project.

The artists told the town their project would be included in the book if approval and details can be worked out by mid-September, Schooler said.

When Rogers travels to the Hi-Desert to supervise construction, he will be accompanied by a documentary film crew that has been recording his world project for Discovery International television.

-- CLOSE WINDOW --