

Eye on Del Norte: What is and isn't art?

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Last week, the Crescent City Council voting 3-2, allocated city economic funds, donations and an additional \$2,000 of general funds to the Val Polyanin eclectic collection. This one is a real headscratcher.

Just a few days past the Measure S recommendation to the Council to spend at least \$600,000 per year on street repairs, Mayor Pro Tem Blake Inscore candidly admitted that huge amount would barely scratch the surface in fixing our city streets. Yet Inscore made the motion to allocate an additional \$2,000 to the already \$8,000 for this Polyanin economic development project. Sobering.

Candidly, I just don't get it. Is this really art? Just a few folks calling something art does not make it art.

I shared my opinion with local fine art talent and former city employee Jonathan Gaetke. Artist Gaetke helped move and unpack the crates containing the Polyanin expressions. He also examined each piece. Without rendering an opinion on the collection, Gaetke stated, "Art brings esteem to the community. Art has a clear vision, art should be uplifting and relatable. If one has to explain art, it's not art."

I agree with Gaetke's opinion.

What is the thinking behind this 914-piece eclectic display? Is the collection somehow going to be an economic driver for Crescent City? The \$10,000 allocated will provide the funding to display this non-traditional expression of what some label as art. The donation will be on display at the city-owned vacant Bank of America building. The First Friday group will conduct a once-a-month public display of Mr. Polyanin creations from May through October...Then what? Sell it, store it, stow it, donate it to someone else?

Ukrainian-born Polyanin abandoned his 20 year plus collection from the Hambros property, last year. Hambros donated the bizarre paintings and sculptures to the city on a 5-0 vote. Why on Earth would the city willingly accept Polyanin's abandoned property on 101 South? How on Earth could the council see the value or return on investment this collection could possibly bring or be an economic driver for Crescent City? For two decades, locals and visitors alike had plenty of opportunity to see Polyanin's bizarre imagination. Did this 20-year run bring an economic boon to Crescent City? If it did, I must have missed it.

Perhaps this Avant Garde collection might be better situated in the Melrose District of West Hollywood.

It's important to recognize what Crescent City represents and what attracts valuable visitors to our community: the magnificent ocean, the breathtaking Redwoods, Trees of Mystery. Absolutely! Puzzling, incomprehensible bizarre expressions on the backdrop of arguably one of the most beautiful geographies on the North American continent? Hmm...

Does anyone in the room believe moving this collection to the Bank of America building is going to have a positive impact on the city's economy? If you raised your hand, please contact me re: the sale of the London Bridge on Lake Havasu?

The city has its public money on these next six months. What is the city's return on its investment? Perhaps city fiscal folks should research the salvage value of the raw material used to generate this collection.

Roger Gitlin is a retired two term Dist.1 Supervisor and retired Multi-Subject CLAD California-Credentialed teacher.