



**MILWAUKEE**  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

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## **Ray Chi Selected to Commission Public Art at East Library**

### *Milwaukee Artist's Concepts Will Activate Space on Cramer and North Avenue*

MILWAUKEE – The Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) announces the commission award for a public art installation outside of the new East Branch. **Ray Chi**, Milwaukee multimedia artist, has been selected to create art on North Cramer Street and along East North Avenue that will engage visitors and pedestrians and reflect the ideas of community, literature, story and learning.

Chi's art proposal will invigorate the space with three separate and distinct interventions—rack, serpent and boulder—that seek to uncover the 'dreams' of overlooked and under-loved elements of the urban landscape: the bike rack, the strip of grass by the street curb and the concrete beneath our feet.

"I am truly honored to have been selected for this public art commission. I have called this city 'home' for the past 16 years and have always considered the East Library to be 'my library,'" said Chi. "I feel a special sense of duty to give back to this place that has given so much to me and my family over the years. It is my hope that this artwork will help rekindle a sense of wonder in all of us, and open our eyes and minds to the potential for beauty to reveal itself in *every* aspect of our daily lives."

**Ray Chi** is a 2013 Mary L. Nohl Fellowship recipient in the established art category. His work varies greatly from furniture and film to public art. He is currently an associate lecturer at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Visit [www.ray-chi.com](http://www.ray-chi.com) for more information.

"Libraries are places for communities to reimagine, reinvent, and relearn," said 3<sup>rd</sup> District Alderman Nik Kovac, a member of the selection committee and Library Board of Trustees. "There can be no better reminder of the transformative power of knowledge, imagination, and conversation than Ray Chi's entrance procession of sculpture which will greet all the users of the City's newest library this fall. Ray Chi's idea is deceptively simple. The mundane objects we walk around, between, and upon will suddenly—but also forever—come alive on the northeast corner of Cramer and North. The bike racks will dance, the grassy tree borders will buck, and the sidewalk will rise."

"We congratulate Ray Chi on his winning concept for MPL's newest library," said Library Director Paula Kiely. "As an anchor institution in the community, it is important that we create spaces that encourage collaboration and dialogue and enhance the appeal of the area and the neighborhood. Ray's work of art will heighten our sense of surroundings and interaction."

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“Thank you to the four artists who shared their talents, time and concepts for public art in this space,” said Kiely. “The community is lucky to have such a deep and diverse pool of talented people who care so much about improving our urban spaces.”

Chi was also the community favorite. Through a survey, the Library invited community feedback. Overwhelmingly respondents favored Chi’s proposal.

“Ray’s work will complement the North Avenue streetscape,” said Jim Plaisted, Executive Director of the East Side Business Improvement District #20. “Our business district has a history of encouraging public art and amenities that enhance this unique commercial and residential neighborhood on the East Side.”

### **Public Art Program Details**

MPL sent out a “Call for Artists” in November, 2013 and received 22 submissions. The Public Art Selection Committee selected four finalists. The committee heard presentations from the finalists on February 4<sup>th</sup> and selected Ray Chi’s proposal.

The selection committee members include: Library Director Paula Kiely, Alderman Nik Kovac, Milwaukee Public Library Foundation Board members Barbara Stein and Cecelia Gore, Deputy Library Director Joan Johnson, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Associate Professor and Director of Community Media Project Portia Cobb, East side resident and Beloit College Associate Professor of Art and Art History Mark Klassen and Hammel, Green & Abrahamson (HGA) Designer Jane Dederling.

MPL announced the commission award for two public art installations inside the new East Branch on October 9, 2013. The commissions were awarded to two local artists Santiago Cucullu and kathryn e. martin. The request for qualifications for both the external and internal public art projects and artists’ conceptual proposals can be found at [www.mpl.org/EastLibrary](http://www.mpl.org/EastLibrary).

The public art project for the East Branch is funded in part by grants received from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation’s Mary L. Nohl Fund, Marvin W. Haesle Fund for the Arts and the Jean Hutchinson Fund, the Milwaukee Arts Board and from the sale of the former East Library Eames furnishings. The library has budgeted \$25,000 for the external art installation and \$15,000 each for the two internal art installations.

### **Learn More about East Library**

[www.mpl.org/EastLibrary](http://www.mpl.org/EastLibrary)  
<http://blog.mpl.org/yourmplbranch/>  
[www.facebook.com/milwaukee.public.library](http://www.facebook.com/milwaukee.public.library)  
<https://twitter.com/MilwaukeePubLib>

Construction of the Standard @ East Library, the development that will house the new East Branch, is well underway. MPL’s Facebook page [www.facebook.com/milwaukee.public.library](http://www.facebook.com/milwaukee.public.library) features a photo gallery of construction progress. The library will take possession of the space in early spring and will be completed in the fall of 2014. The new branch will incorporate the hallmarks of a 21<sup>st</sup> century library model – technology-rich, highly-flexible spacing used to create a forum for community engagement and collaborative work areas, a smaller print collection, designated areas for each age group and self-service technology. The branch will be reflective of local history and culture.

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**Greater Milwaukee Foundation Background**

*The Greater Milwaukee Foundation is a family of more than 1,100 individual charitable funds, created by donors to serve the charitable cause of their choice. Grants from these funds serve people throughout Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee and Washington counties and beyond. Started in 1915, the Foundation is one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the world.*

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