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## Film explores world of public art in Santa Barbara

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Spread along sidewalks, tucked away in courtyards, displayed in local parks and wholly surrounding the residents of Santa Barbara is a rich array of public art.

From the “Dolphin Family” fountain at the entrance to Stearns Wharf to Herbert Bayer’s “Chromatic Gate” at the Cabrillo Ball Field to ancient Chumash cave paintings and modern murals, the city contains a wealth of artistic expression, much of it overlooked on a daily basis.

An hour-long documentary titled “In Plain Sight: Public Art in Santa Barbara” unveils those works of art, offering audiences a comprehensive tour of permanent and temporary installations throughout the city.

“That was the main point, to let people know they probably walk by these works of art every day and never realize it,” said Tony Ruggieri, who produced the City TV documentary along with Christy Zwicke. Ruggieri said the project started as a collaborative effort with the Santa Barbara County Arts Commission, which hosts an annual tour of public art and approached the city’s government access channel about creating a video tour.

“To me, the initial concept of the idea of having a videotape or a public DVD ... came from hearing all this mythology in the community associated with pieces of public art,” said Ginny Brush, executive director of the commission.

The amount of misinformation was compelling, she said, and spurred her to approach City TV about possibly recording the commission’s yearly tour. But Zwicke and Ruggieri saw a greater opportunity.

“Just by videotaping the tour, we’d be missing the voice of the artist who put the piece together,” Ruggieri said.

After expanding the concept into a documentary-style production, shooting took place over the course of about a year, including interviews with local artists who have contributed to Santa Barbara’s public art scene.

The passion of the artists and their insight into creating art is what residents and visitors miss when they view public installations, Ruggieri said.

“I think we achieved the goal, to raise awareness of these pieces,” he added.

Along with funding from the city’s Redevelopment Agency, the film also received financial backing from Santa Barbara Beautiful and a private donation from David and Janine Jacoby.

After wrapping up production in 2007, the creators submitted the film to the Santa Barbara International Film Festival and received two screening slots. In addition to a well-attended showing on Saturday, the film will play at 1 p.m. today at the Center Stage Theater in Paseo Nuevo, followed by a modest reception with the producers.

For those who can’t make it to the screening, Brush said the County Arts Commission is selling DVDs and will use proceeds toward maintenance of public artwork. More information is available by calling the commission at 568-3990.

“We’ve gotten great feedback,” Brush said. “To us, it’s been a tremendous tool in learning that the public really does enjoy finding out about these hidden works of art.”

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