

NED KAHN

## **Proposal for Regent Street Public Art Project**

Ned Kahn, September 1, 2015

### **Salt/Lake**

For the last 30 years, I have been creating large-scale public artworks that increase people's awareness of natural phenomena. Using materials such as water, wind, fog and light, I have worked to create contemplative oases in urban environments, places where people can reconnect with the larger forces of nature. I am fascinated by blurring the boundaries between art, science, architecture and nature.

I have drawn my inspiration for this proposal from the Great Salt Lake itself. While researching the origins of the lake, I became fascinated with the intermingling of salt and water throughout the geological history of the Earth. What we now call the Great Salt Lake was once fresh water and rivaled the size of the Great Lakes of Michigan and Canada. Over the eons, falling rain has washed salt out of the earth and carried it via rivers into the Great Salt Lake. Evaporation allows the water to escape back to the atmosphere but leaves the salt behind. Even the vast salty oceans that cover most of our planet were once fresh water. All the salt in the oceans came from the land. Over the eons, as the oceans became more and more salty, life had to adapt, just as life has adapted to the waters of the Great Salt Lake. The saltiness of our blood matches the salinity of the oceans when the first creatures ventured out on to dry land. In our blood and our cells we still carry the primordial sea.

Delving into the natural history of the Great Salt Lake led me to the idea of an artwork inspired by the complex intermingling of salt and water. My proposal is to cover the entire facade of the Regent Street Parking Structure with a wind-activated skin that suggests water washing over a layer of salt. My hope is that the design of this proposed kinetic skin will dovetail with the renovation of the facade of Regent Street Parking Structure. At our orientation meeting, the owner of the parking structure relayed their intent to cover the facade with a screen of perforated metal. My proposal is to attach an array of blue-anodized aluminum vanes to this perforated metal skin that would sway in the wind and suggest water. Using a white-anodized aluminum or a matte white coating on the perforated metal skin would suggest the salt left behind by the evaporating lake. The wind-activated vanes would extend out 4-inches from the perforated metal skin and lie at a perpendicular angle when there is no wind. As the wind picks up and the panels start to sway, the matte blue surface of the vanes will change in hue as the light from the sky mixes with the blue metal. The result will be a complex and ever-changing mosaic of blue "pixels" responding to the activity of the atmosphere much like the way the surface water of the Great Salt Lake registers the changes of the wind and the sky.

A crucial feature of the proposed kinetic facade is that it will look very different depending on your angle of view. Looking straight on at the facade you will see mostly the perforated metal skin, the salt layer. Looking down the length of the facade you will see mostly the swaying surfaces of the blue panels, the water layer. Thus, depending on the direction of view, the artwork will sometimes suggest salt and sometimes rippling

water. Just as the level of the Great Salt Lake naturally fluctuates, the proposed artwork will suggest the arising and vanishing of water and the salt it leaves behind.

Each individual wind-activated vane will be about 4-inches wide and 8-inches tall. They will be bolted on to the perforated metal skin with a stainless steel bearing assembly. I have developed the technology for bearings on kinetic facades that continue to operate for many decades without any maintenance. The vertical orientation of the swaying panels keeps them from gathering dust and they are naturally washed by falling rain. The moving parts require no lubrication. If any of the components ever get damaged due to an act of vandalism, they are easy to remove and replace. I will provide spares if ever needed. My previous artworks have survived ice storms, hail storms, hurricanes and extreme winds with no damage. The proposed artwork will require zero scheduled maintenance.

In recent years, I have completed a series of large-scale artworks that reveal invisible forces in their sites by converting natural flow patterns, such as wind, into the pixelated motion of many small metal parts. The normally unseen patterns of the wind are complex and entrancing. The psychological effect is similar to watching a fire, waves on a lake or tall grasses swaying in the wind. The proposed artwork for Regent Street will be visible from multiple locations on the street and from the windows and balconies of adjacent buildings. One of the paradoxical properties of some of my recent wind sculptures is that they appear to become more detailed as you view them from a greater distance because the individual “pixels” merge into a seamless rendering of the hidden patterns of the wind. Even from a great distance, the proposed artwork will function as a dynamic beacon and backdrop for the Regent Street project.

The artwork that I am proposing for Regent Street would be a kinetic facade that is entirely powered by the wind. The surfaces of the moving panels will capture light from the sky and the surrounding buildings during the day and at night. No additional lighting will be needed. The movement of the panels will be powered by free and renewable power, the wind. In essence, the sculpture will become an extension of the sky.

My intent is to create an artwork that will change from moment to moment, day to day, and season to season, an artwork that will be intrinsically linked to the atmosphere, the invisible substance that sustains all life. The pixelated appearance of the wind-activated surface will be evocative of high-tech computer animations, yet the actual technology is quite simple, really just a collection of hinges.

My hope is that, like the surface of the Great Salt Lake, the proposed artwork will function as a dynamic register for the ever-changing wind and sky and define a visual oasis where people can gather themselves and reconnect with the mysteries of the physical world.

## **Ned Kahn Studios**

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### **Proposed Budget**

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The wind-animated facade concept that I am proposing for Regent Street is modular in design and can easily be expanded or reduced in area to fit the available funds. My intent is to completely cover the facade of the Regent Street Parking Structure starting above the level of the retail storefronts. Depending on the possibility of additional funding, we could also cover all or part of the East side of the Walker Parking Structure and the North side of the Walker Parking Structure. My understanding is that the owners of the Regent Street Parking Structure are currently exploring options for upgrading their facade. My hope is that the design of the kinetic skin that I am proposing could dovetail with the design of this new facade and thus make use of some of the funds intended for this upgrade so as to augment the art budget and cover the entire facade. If this is not possible, the modular nature of the artwork allows many other options. My intent is that the final design and location of the artwork would evolve through a collaborative process with the design team and the owners of the parking structures.

The proposed kinetic elements would cost \$60 a square foot to fabricate, ship, assemble and install. Here is a breakdown of the costs to cover the entire Regent Street Parking Structure Facade, approximately 30,000 square feet of surface area:

Materials and fabrication costs for kinetic facade	\$1,640,000
Crating and shipping of artwork elements to site	\$16,600
Assembly and installation labor, materials and lift rental	\$120,900
Travel expenses for design and installation	\$7,000
Engineering	\$12,000
Artist fee for design, oversight of fabrication and installation (10%)	\$200,000
Insurance	\$3,500
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>

The approximate dimensions (based on the SketchUp drawings) of the three parking structure facades adjacent to Regent Street are as follows:

West Side of the Regent Street Parking Structure: 387' long by 75' tall = 30,000 sq. ft.

East Side of the Walker Parking Structure: 187' long by 75' tall = 14,000 sq. ft.

North Side of the Walker Parking Structure: 113' long by 75' tall = 8,500 sq. ft.

**Timeline:** The kinetic elements will take approximately 6-8 months to fabricate and about 3 weeks to install.











