

Art Is in the Air

public art | by Sophia Sorensen

High above our heads, gracefully adorning streetlights and dotting the landscape of sky, are vivid images.

In elegant simplicity, a mountain, tree, bird, all exhibiting glorious colours of the palette, are standing still for viewers' pleasure. Placed within sight but out of reach, as if by the heavens. These images are the creations of Joan Elliot's imagination and talent. Now, silk-screened on banners, they accentuate the Lonsdale corridor.

Elliot, in partnership with the North Shore Arts Commission, has found an innovative way to capture images of her surroundings and showcase the results for all to enjoy.

Leesa Strimbicki, public art coordinator, oversaw the Call to Artists and the process that awarded the contract to Elliot. The project is funded by the Public Art Reserve Fund, a small subset of the City of North Vancouver's capital budget. Strimbicki says that the "banners are part of the Lonsdale Corridor Master Plan and signify that changes are taking place in the neighbourhood."

Fourteen submissions were originally received. These were then reduced to a shortlist of three artists. These artists had to submit a proposal for three distinct designs, one for each of three North Vancouver areas, each joined by a common thread. The Lower Lonsdale area has a heritage theme, between 4th and 8th Streets. North of Highway 99, a residential theme presides, and between 8th and 21st Streets, a business theme dominates. The committee chose all three of Elliot's submissions.

It is providence that brought the banners to life. When Elliot first heard about the Call to Artists, she thought it was a great challenge—for an artistically inclined friend. However, when she read the proposal, she herself felt attracted to it, and this feeling inspired her to apply. "I've never designed banners before," says Elliot, "but something about this opportunity drew me in." She was both surprised and elated to be shortlisted and found that the concepts came to her easily once she picked up her artist's brush.



HERITAGE IN NATURE, LOWER LONSDALE/NORTH VANCOUVER BEGAN WITH TREES AND BOOMED WITH LOGGING AND LUMBER MILLS.

The designs are a visual treat. Each banner is bold and complete on its own; together, they form an impressive and complementary trio. Elliot's intention is that "the connection between each banner is the time of day: the heritage theme has the sun rising, the business theme the mid-day sun, and the residential theme is night." The banners are a reflection of how residents spend their time.

Elliot's name may be new to many in the art world, at least in the commercial sense. A long-time North Shore resident, she has been busy pursuing a path that is a blend of corporate experience, entrepreneurial activity, and creative interests. A life-long penchant for the arts guided her toward a profession in interior design, concentrating on business and residential sites. Other artistic passions, such as drawing, painting, and the latest addition, quilting, have resulted in rewarding accomplishments. In particular, her quilting has an altruistic aspect: her quilting club has created and donated quilts for premature



LOWER LONSDALE FROM THE WATERFRONT TO 4TH ST.

infants, women in transition homes, and lap quilts for seniors. The work is an impressive marriage of aesthetics and comfort. Elliot has now taken her sensitivity and talent for creating beauty inside and is sharing it by exhibiting her work outside.

Now that Elliot has completed the banner designs, the next step is production of the final banners. A production company will be selected through a competitive process, and Elliot is looking forward to working with it in order to "learn about the screening process" and to ensure that her designs are depicted with integrity.

Once the banners, autographed by Elliott, have been displayed, they will be sold, the proceeds used to replenish the Public Art Reserve Fund. The lucky few buyers will be able to enjoy Elliot's work for a long time. If you look up toward the sky from April until the end of the summer, you too will be able to appreciate the glory and intensity of her creations.