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FEATURED

Venice Flying Carousel Tells Stories Through Art

By Lila Victor
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Photo: Lila Victor

VENICE - A carousel for all ages that doubles as interactive art and a piece of Venice history will be opening soon. Human powered, 20 feet in diameter, with eight animals, five kiddie swings, and a two-person chariot, the Venice Flying Carousel brings the community together to celebrate Venice's past, present, and future.

Robin Murez, the creator of this project, is passionate about imbuing her pieces with historical significance. Each animal on the carousel relates to Venice in some way and includes small personal details significant to the sponsors - or, as Murez calls them, "adopters" - of each creature, combining the history of Venice with the stories of those who currently reside there. The carousel itself is modelled after the original Dentzel Carousel on Abbot Kinney Pier in 1910. "I think that doing public art that relates to a community is oftentimes about learning the history, whether it be recent or past," said Murez of the significance of sharing Venice's stories through her carousel.

The Venice Flying Carousel is part of a series of public art sculptures created by Murez. They are all interactive, do not involve technology, and represent the stories and history of Venice. This particular project took around 6 years to create, with each animal made of basswood and intricately carved, gilded, and varnished by hand. Murez harbors an interest in keeping her projects sustainable, with the carousel being completely human-powered. As of now, it requires someone to stand at the wheel and turn it by hand, but once it is more permanently installed, it will be bicycle-powered, with the music powered by solar panels. In fact, her carousel is a perfect representation of the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) field.

Part of this sustainability initiative is tied to educating children in fun and artistic ways. “Kids also love seeing that you don’t have to have electricity, you don’t have to plug something in,” said Murez. The carousel, and some of the animals, is a kinetic sculpture or, in other words, art that contains some element of movement or motion: the duck’s feet swing, the fish’s tail oscillates from side to side, the kiddie swing tiger’s tail moves up and down.



Smiles of wonder and awe light up the faces of adults and children alike; an ostrich, a Tongva turtle, and Ray Bradbury’s rocket ship are among the wooden animals that fly through the air; enchanting music plays as the carousel spins around. Everyone who sees this public art installation is enthralled, a sense of childlike magic drawing people near. “I like my work to embody the concepts that it’s also conveying.” And indeed, Murez has achieved that and more through the Venice Flying Carousel, not only inspiring children to learn about sustainability and delight in artistic design, but also sharing the stories of and claiming its own spot in Venice history.



Children from École Claire Fontaine visiting the carousel.

Photo: Robin Murez



Murez with mechanism fabricator Al Sorenson (center foreground) and neighbor Flenn Searle (left), assembling the carousel in a temporary location on the Venice Canals.

Photo: Robin Murez



Venice Flying Carousel creator, Robin Murez assists local children climb aboard her hand-crafted menagerie.

Photo: Lila Victor

Initially, the LA Department of Recreation and Parks agreed to the permanent installation of the Venice Flying Carousel. However, due to delays in city permitting, Murez pivoted, creating a portable mechanism and a petition to have it installed in the park before the end of 2023. Until then, rides can be scheduled by emailing info@veniceflyingcarousel.com for children and adults, completely free of charge.