

FORD GROVE

A Richmond Artwork that Continues to Evolve

By Kari Huhtala, MCIP

Doug Taylor, a well know BC artist, created the Ford Grove art installation in 2000 at the Coppersmith Corner shopping centre in Richmond. The installation was designed to continually change over time.

Transportation, specifically the automobile, as a significant player in Richmond's development as a car culture is the artwork's theme. The installation funded by Westbank Corp chronicles the history of farming on the delta, celebrating the present and at the same time being a portent to the future.

Taylor says "Ford Grove represents the eradication of some of the world's richest farmland. This metaphor of the machine being invaded by nature also offers speculations on the future of unfettered development. Indeed it is only a matter of years before the trees have their way with this vehicle. "

The public art piece incorporates a grove of Trembling Aspen trees that grow through the immaculate body of an elevated vintage vehicle. It is whimsical in nature while at the same time bringing into focus a variety of metaphors about the relationship between the natural world and man's use of machines.

The project's landscape architect helped go the rounds of the Pitt Meadows nurseries to find the Okanagan based Trembling Aspen trees but not until after a great effort. The architect wanted an exotic Asian variety which was lovely on its own to look at, but not being native to the local environment this variety wouldn't have fit well with the artwork's premise.

The Trembling Aspen was chosen for the variety's fast growing nature and for the aesthetic manner in which the shaky uneven leaf suits the tentative relationship between technology and nature.

Rick Ross and Bill Noble took on restoring the 1952 Ford truck which in point of fact worked the blueberry fields in Richmond.

Since installation and planting, the artwork has elicited some of the strongest positive response to Taylor's work to date. Taylor's response "I just love this piece! I believe people are highly responsive to an artwork which marks the passage of time and of course here you have nature continuously adjusting to

the presence of technology. "In the year 2000, the calibres of the trees were 38.1 millimetres (1.5 inches). Today they're 229 millimetres (9 inches)!



Photos by Douglas Taylor

Ultimately, the vehicle will become part of the grove, twisted, mangled and sculpted into a new art form while still managing to reflect the artist's original message.