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Sprint Center's 'The Moons' will be unveiled Wednesday

By ALICE THORSON

Kansas City's most diverting public artwork since the giant underwear of summer 2000 will be unveiled Wednesday at the new Sprint Center.

New York artist Chris Doyle spent two years creating the \$1.3-million installation called "The Moons," which features three circular video screens depicting Kansas Citians "flying" through colorful skies. The 10-foot screens are mounted on poles above plantings and water features designed by the artist.

More than 600 people of all ages responded late last year when Doyle put out a public call for "fliers" to bounce on trampolines in front of his camera. Most came in jeans and T-shirts, but some dressed in costumes. Then-mayor Kay Barnes wore cowgirl garb in honor of the American Royal.

Using a computer, Doyle then placed the figures in space and decided on the sequencing and pace of their appearance.

The Everyman aspect of "The Moons" is a Doyle signature, dating to his "Leap" installation in 2000, in which he projected video images onto a Manhattan building of 420 New Yorkers jumping.

Last year Doyle completed "Vault" in Kansas City, a digital ceiling fresco for the Jackson County Courthouse featuring portraits of county employees.

Doyle describes his Sprint Center piece as "gestural rather than portraiture." The fliers make their appearance individually or in "flocks" in unpredictable syncopated rhythms.

At street level, pedestrians contribute an element of animation as they move along the curving pebbled walkways that link the three garden settings below the screens.

The southernmost screen is an island planted with nine crab apple trees set within a pool surmounted by a walkway. The middle "garden" features locust and pine trees and mist rising from tall grass. The north garden, featuring boulders and two pine trees, is surrounded by a moat.



When artist Chris Doyle asked for volunteers for his Sprint Center artwork, more than 600 answered the call. Doyle shot video of locals jumping on trampolines and created videos that look like the people are flying.

Doyle designed the piece to work from multiple angles from inside the Sprint Center. People will be able to look down on what he describes as a drawing.

“The shapes on the plaza are a drawing,” he said, “all based on ovals and ellipses. The lines and curves relate to the way people fly in the video, undulating and twisting.”

Kansas City public art administrator Porter Arneill likes the way the art and the building relate.

“The arena building sits quietly in its massive presence, while ‘The Moons’ entreats pedestrians and drivers to interact as they pass by,” he said. “The artist has created a visually tactile and playful environment which responds synergistically to its much larger and stoic sibling.”

At \$1.3 million, “The Moons” is the largest commission awarded to date by Kansas City’s 1 Percent for Art program, which sets aside for art 1 percent of the public costs of civic construction. The Bartle Hall Sky Stations, completed in 1994, cost \$1.1 million; Jun Kaneko’s recently completed “Water Plaza” at Bartle Hall cost \$1 million.

Doyle’s piece will change over the year. He has created four versions of the video, one for each of the four seasons.

SEE ‘THE MOONS’

A public unveiling ceremony for Chris Doyle’s “The Moons” will begin at 6 p.m. Wednesday in front of the Sprint Center at Grand and Truman. After the unveiling, the videos will run seven days a week.

To see examples of Chris Doyle’s work, go to chris-doylestudio.com.

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