

# A little cha-cha-cha, anyone?

DANCE ART DONATED TO DOWNTOWN'S RIVERFRONT



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Using stainless steel feet embedded in the sidewalk as her guide, Sarah Mulhall of Chicago attempts to dance the cha-cha-cha in September 2013 as her fiance Tom De Weerd takes her photo. This artwork has been donated to the Riverfront by artist Robin Murez. [J.L. Sousa/Register](#)

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All day, every day, people strolling along Main Street in front of the Riverfront suddenly pause, then attempt a little cha-cha-cha.

For this, you can credit Robin Murez, the Southern California artist who three years ago embedded stainless steel footsteps, with diagrammatic instructions, on how to do the infectious Cuban dance.

Pedestrians can't resist the dance steps, Murez said. "It gets people moving and it is moving in ways spiritual and fun," she said.

Her work, titled "Cha Cha Cha," was originally installed as part of Napa ARTwalk — a temporary exhibit of public art scattered throughout downtown Napa. It won that year's People's Choice Award.

When the exhibit's two-year run was over, every artist was expected to remove their work to make room for a new crop of art, but Murez wanted "Cha Cha Cha" to remain.

Murez has created public art for numerous California communities, but few works have achieved the crowd-pleasing success of "Cha Cha Cha," with its ability to inject a moment of silly pleasure into the lives of passersby, she said.

Her dance steps seem particularly fitting for downtown Napa, which she described as a "sophisticated tourist destination."

Murez said she wanted to donate "Cha Cha Cha" so it could stay in Napa permanently, but ran into several bureaucratic hurdles. For one, the rules for Napa ARTwalk required removal after two years so new works can be installed.

In September, Murez said she came up to Napa with power tools and prepared to remove "Cha Cha Cha," only every time she walked back to her vehicle, passersby intruded into her work zone and started doing the moves.

Then Marie Lyall emerged from Scott Lyall Shoes at the Riverfront and pleaded with her to stop.

"I didn't know the legal logistics," Marie Lyall said. "I was going straight from the heart as a merchant."

"It's an attraction," she said of "Cha Cha Cha." "Everyone who passes it — pretty much every single person — stops and tries to figure out what it is."

“The funny thing is to watch it after 9 o’clock (at night) after all the wine people have had. It’s hysterical.”

Lyall’s advocacy helped secure the retention of “Cha Cha Cha.” Murez said she donated the work to the Riverfront and agreed to indemnify everyone in case there were ever a liability issue.

Mayor Jill Techel said she’s a big fan of “Cha Cha Cha,” succumbing to its lure whenever she walks by. “I need those metal footprints to make it happen,” she said.

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