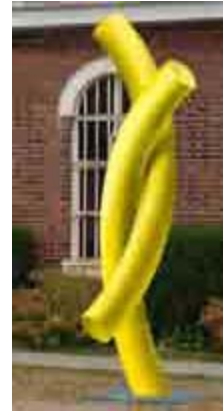


# Public Art for Art's Sake and Ours: A Streetscape Installation

by Michele Fairfield, The Link, September/October 2011 #160, p11  
[www.the-link.ca](http://www.the-link.ca)



**P**assersby on their way around the village of Colborne will surely notice two cadmium yellow partially-entwined cylinders outside the Colborne Art Gallery. Maybe they will stop and take notice. Notice their form – bent, moving, without front, back or side. Notice their suspension, the lines they make in the air, the space created around them, the emerging shadows with the changing light. Notice their texture and size. It's hard not to notice their colour. And to notice the sculpture is an abstract form.

"Yellow was a conscious decision," says its creator, Claus Heinecke. "It was to be visible, to gain attention for the gallery and the curiosity of people." Naturally, as an artist Claus considered much in the process of creating this contemporary piece: context, form, material, and –whether or not to title it.

"The space required it be vertical, to be seen from inside the gallery, but in scale with the outside setting," Claus notes. The sculpture's shape continues an interest Claus has in form. He comments that they are like paint-brush lines in the air and reflect his aesthetic intent toward simplicity. The sculpture is fibre-glass with the pigment suspended in the resin he used. Clause points out that using colour in an outdoor sculpture is relatively new for artists, although there is evidence some ancient works had colour that wore away with time. With the advances in chemicals, he is confident the colour, with care, will be lasting. (His process is similar to that used in logos on airplanes which withstand many stresses).

At first Claus wasn't sure he wanted to confer a title. He shares his thinking process around the issue with which many artists struggle: "To call it something, to relate it to something familiar harkens to the idea that visual art must look like something, must represent something. For me, it's about feeling, energy, direction, and the elements that make the rhythm. Often we are reluctant to title work as it might limit what people might see in it. On the other hand, a title offers a point of entry, to help people make a

connection, particularly when they may not be predisposed to viewing abstract work. So, then it's not just a big question mark and may resolve people into understanding." Claus also asserts that people who have not developed an aesthetic for appreciating abstract work might develop one with exposure. And words can be a starting point for discussion.

Empathy is the title Claus chose. "Two interlocking cylinders echoing each other in size and shape seems an apt metaphor for the idea of empathy, a quality to be fostered by society for the sake of peace and harmony." He adds, "I think it is a pleasant form, there is not an aesthetic conflict going on." By taking art to the street, the Colborne Art Gallery hopes to sow the seeds for interest in and involvement with contemporary visual art.

"Art in the public realm creates awareness in people who may then pursue abstraction further," says Claus. "In an ideal world there would be lots of opportunity for public art of all kinds. We do have formal ones like monuments, which have a purpose. It's good to have art in parks, in places where streets converge...to prompt a dialogue."

In this case too, it reminds everyone of the gallery and the artists among us. Dialogue leading to understanding, creating empathy.

What: Colborne Art Gallery,

Current exhibit: Diverse Inventions, Irene Osborne

When: Until October 2nd, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 5 pm.

Where: 51 King Street East, Colborne

Contact: 905-355-1798, [www.thecolborneartgallery](http://www.thecolborneartgallery)