

Get ready for big-time public art

As president of Central Indiana Community Foundation, I get challenged by a lot of people who have a lot of questions.

"Why can't we have some of the cool stuff other cities have, like major public art?" a CEO of a public company asked me the other day. This time I was pleased to be able to answer not only that we can, but that we will. The Indianapolis Cultural Development Commission, with generous support from the Deborah Joy Simon Charitable Trust, just landed "Tom Otterness in Indianapolis," a major public arts exhibit by a world-renowned artist. This achievement is due to the fast thinking and hard work of Mindy Taylor Ross, public art coordinator at the Arts Council of Indianapolis, a Cultural Development Commission partner.

Our city's exhibit will follow on the heels of "Tom Otterness on Broadway," a 24-piece exhibit of bronze sculptures along a five-mile span of the famous Broadway theater district in New York City. It has been a sensational success in New York, drawing rave reviews and thousands of free-spending cultural tourists. It received attention from the national television and print media and



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was extended four months, through mid-March, by New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Seventeen of Otterness' sculptures, including a number of pieces not seen in New York, will be exhibited throughout Indianapolis April 15-July 31. The announcement that the exhibit was coming to Indianapolis rated a substantial article in *The New York Times*.

This exhibit will be a major part of a historical turning point in how our community thinks about arts and culture and how people from other cities think about Indianapolis. "Tom Otterness in Indianapolis" will play a big role in capitalizing on a unique opportunity our city has in gaining national attention for a string of significant cultural events this spring and summer. During the 3-1/2 months that Otterness' whimsical sculptures will be charming residents and visitors, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, the Indianapolis Zoo, the Indianapolis Arts Center and the Herron School of Art will all be opening exciting new facilities. We will also be able to show off to cultural leaders from all over the country as our city hosts the national conventions for both the American Association of Museums and the Association of Children's Museums.

All this and more is being marketed as Indianapolis 2005 by the Cultural Development Commission and its partners: the city

of Indianapolis, Indianapolis Downtown Inc., Arts Council of Indianapolis and the Indianapolis Convention and Visitors' Association. In turn, the partners are helping major cultural organizations work together better to prove that the whole of our cultural community really is more powerful and marketable than the sum of its parts.

The board, staff and donors of major cultural institutions are to be commended for their vision and commitment to growing their organizations and facilities. But fully seizing the unique opportunity these simultaneous openings present is only possible due to the fact that our city finally has an organization with resources like the Cultural Development Commission. Mayor Bart Peterson's and Lilly Endowment Inc.'s decision to each commit \$5 million over five years to create and enable such an organization is to be commended. "Tom Otterness in Indianapolis" and future public art exhibits also depend on a strong, big-picture organization such as the commission.

And what will be the legacy of this wonderful convergence of cultural facility expansions and special events? The rest of the country will know a lot more about how dynamic our city has become. And our own citizens will discover that the idea of Indianapolis as a cultural destination is beginning to become a reality. •

Payne is president of the Central Indiana Community Foundation and the Indianapolis Foundation.