



REPORT

Date: 1/9/2017
RE: Deaccession Recommendation Report: Octahedron
TO: CRA Board
FROM: CRA Staff

BACKGROUND

DATA

Title: *Octahedron (Definition: a three-dimensional shape having eight plane faces, especially a regular solid figure with eight equal triangular faces)*

Artist: Karl Schlamming

Original Location: Cambridge Center Plaza, north side of Main Street, nearby Kendall Square red line MBTA station and Marriott hotel entrance

Current Location: CRA Parcel 7, near corner of Binney Street, Galileo Way and Fulkerson Street

Creation Date: 1985

Removal Date: 2012

Materials: Unknown synthetic composite with real gold leaf on the exterior, supporting structure is a steel tube

Dimensions: 160" wide along widest dimension at the center on each side and 240" high including the metal pole

HISTORY AND CRA BACKGROUND

Cambridge Center Plaza

Cambridge Center Plaza (the Plaza), on the north side of Main Street was designed to be a key public open space owned by the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) in the Cambridge Center development plan. The Plaza was part of a master planned development by Boston Properties that was originally called "Cambridge Center" until the name was changed to "Kendall Center" in 2014. There were many historic planning documents dating back to the 70s and 80s that referred to the Plaza as the "Transit Plaza" but that name was used in planning only. The Plaza framed the main entry and exit points to the Kendall Square MBTA station, as well as the Marriott hotel, the walkway to Broadway through the Marriott lobby and several retail establishments such as a bookstore and food court. The Plaza originally had movable furniture with umbrellas and was designed with electricity hookups around the outside edges in order to accommodate plans for a seasonal kiosk retailer that was not originally successful. The Plaza and all its features was owned by the CRA until after the 2012 Plaza reconstruction.

The two defining architectural features of the Plaza were part of a larger artistic vision for the space by the artist: a) the colorful patterned paver layout for the hardscape specially designed to evoke a Persian carpet, and b) the 75-foot tower situated in the southeast corner of the Plaza near Main Street with a series of descending steps framing the base of the tower facing into the middle of the Plaza instead of toward the street. The Octahedron was commissioned in 1985 specifically to be featured as the visual focal point atop the tower as part of the overall artistic vision of the Plaza as a complete unified scheme. The intent of the staircase was to create a casual amphitheater-like environment where workers could eat their lunch on the steps while people watching in the Plaza. The concept essentially being a larger civic version of the traditional urban "stoop." The tower also

enclosed an emergency exit staircase for the hotel ballroom and a ventilation shaft for the underground loading docks.

2012-2013 Plaza Redesign and Reconstruction

In 2012 the Plaza and surrounding ground floor retail was redesigned by Shadley Associates Landscape Architects in partnership with Elkus / Manfredi Architects under contract with Boston Properties and with Callahan as the construction manager. Upon completion of the Plaza renovations, ownership changed from the CRA to Boston Properties. As part of that complete Plaza reconstruction the entire tower was removed from the Plaza to open up the space, remove the stair feature which was never used as intended. At the time of the tower removal, the Octahedron was placed in storage by the construction contractor at the contractor's property in Methuen, MA.

The new Plaza is more open, active and in the summer is programmed with various events including weekly concerts and a popular farmers market. There is better seating with more comfortable movable tables and chairs, cushions to be used to lay out on the new lawn, and large honeylocust trees for shade. The Entrepreneurs Walk of Fame begins at the Plaza. The Plaza opens to the south providing sun nearly all day long. With the Kendall Red Line station as well as new restaurants with patios facing the Plaza on two sides and the walkway through the first floor of the Marriott over to Broadway on the other side, the Plaza is one of the most active nodes of activity in Kendall Square.

The Artist and Fabrication

Award winning German sculptor Karl Schlamminger was hired to create the sculptural object to adorn the top of the utilitarian tower as well as the design for the Plaza pavement pattern. There is no known record of the artist selection process, or Mr Schlamminger's creative process or fabrication of the Octahedron. It is also not known whether Mr. Schlamminger signed an artist contract with Boston Properties or the CRA, as none has been found in historic files from that time. In February 2016 CRA Staff was contacted by local woodworking sculptor Paul Nichols who remembers Mr. Schlamminger visiting a woodworking shop that specialized in wood patterns and models called Dixon's in Woburn, MA to have the Octahedron design created as a scale model so he could see what his idea would look like (see attached images). There was much discussion regarding how to attach the Octahedron to the tower and how to make smooth unobtrusive seams. The solution was to make a small door so that workers could fasten the Octahedron to the steel tube from the inside making the structure appear seamless, and then exit the Octahedron when the installation was completed. CRA Staff was also contacted by Naomi G. Lipsky, President of the Massachusetts Society of Gilders who indicated that she believes the sculpture has a real gold leaf not an imitation finish as some had assumed over the years.

CURRENT CONDITION AND CURRENT SITE

In 2013, the contractor for the 2012 Plaza reconstruction project contacted CRA Staff when they received notice that their storage facility in Mathuen needed to be vacated. CRA Staff accepted delivery of the Octahedron at the CRA property at the corner of Binney, Galileo Way and Fulkerson Streets and placed the sculpture on blocks so it would not be sitting directly in mud. The process of moving the Octahedron required a flatbed truck and a crane at a cost of about \$5,000. The Octahedron was placed in the back corner of the lot surrounded by a locked fence where the CRA stores snow in the winter months and provides space for construction staging in the summer months. In 2016, the City of Cambridge began a design process to transform the Binney Street lot into a public park during 2017, which provided the impetus for the CRA to resolve the future of the Octahedron as soon as possible. Design work on the new public park will begin in the first half of 2016 and be managed through CDD (Cambridge Community Development Department).

The Octahedron was removed from its Plaza tower context by the contractor in 2012 intact and still attached to the large black metal tube that had been holding it upright on the top of the tower. When the sculpture was moved back to Cambridge at some point the hatch door was stolen and removed from the sculpture, leaving the interior of the sculpture exposed to the elements. This has not been a significant concern because the sculpture walls are made of a synthetic composite – possibly fiberglass. The gold leaf has significantly more visible wear on the top of the sculpture that faced the sun, rain and snow for nearly 30 years when it had been properly installed upright.

The Octahedron became a subject of online intrigue in February 2016 which led to an article in the online and paper versions of the Boston Globe. (<https://www.bostonglobe.com/lifestyle/2016/02/18/snow-melts-huge-golden-mystery-object-reappears-cambridge/00LofpoJHYzOFpxQuboheO/story.html>) Several comments on the Boston Globe website to that story suggest re-using the Octahedron as a playscape at ground level in the new park to be built at that location. If it were to be used in that manner, it would not need to be placed upright in its original position, but would need to be adapted for play by either partially burying the lower portion or placing it on a stabilized surface and attaching objects like ladders or handles to it so it could be climbed as well as widening the trap door access point so kids could enter inside.

RESTRICTIONS AND CHALLENGES

There are no known contractual restrictions on the Octahedron because no known documentation exists with Boston Properties or the CRA. While it is unclear who paid for the creation of the Octahedron, the CRA is the assumed owner because the CRA was the owner of the Plaza property until after the 2012 reconstruction was completed. Additionally, when another nearby open space was constructed collaboratively between Boston Properties and the CRA in the late 1980s, Point Park (Galaxy Park), the CRA retained clear ownership of the sculpture within that park. This can be used as an informative precedent from the time.

The current condition of the Octahedron presents a number of challenges:

- The original intent of the sculpture – which was to adorn the top of the tower and serve as the peak of a tall visual focal point of a larger urban landscape - is now entirely gone.
- Without that context, the prodigiously large scale and simple geometric form of the piece makes little sense at ground level and is out of scale with a street-level sidewalk-adjacent urban environment.
- The steel tube structural support system was also designed specifically for the top of the highly reinforced tower, but without an extremely solid high strength base for that steel tube, the sculpture cannot stand upright as it was originally intended.
- In order to stand upright even at grade level, a large and deep concrete foundation would have to be poured for the steel tube in order to be able to form a base of support for the wind loads that the Octahedron would need to be able to withstand.
- The gold leaf finish on the Octahedron has lost much of its luster over 30 years of outdoor display in full sun/rain/snow and if used again as an art piece may require restoration of the gold leaf finish.
- The trap door that was used to originally mount the Octahedron on its structural steel support needs to be re-fabricated and replaced to protect the interior from the elements.
- An analysis of the fastening devices that secure the Octahedron to the metal tube would need to be performed in order to ensure they have not deteriorated and it could be re-used safely.
- While the Octahedron has been placed on wooden blocks to keep one of its eight sides from sinking into the mud, the weight of the object has caused the blocks to sink and the sculpture is now touching the ground on some sides, with an unknown impact on the material, finish and structure.
- The sculpture could more easily be re-used or re-purposed if it were not used as a formal sculpture standing upright in the position it was originally intended, but any re-purpose would require understanding the impact of the use on the structural integrity of the object.

- Moving the Octahedron is very expensive and requires a wide-load flatbed trailer truck with a crane in order to be able to lift the substantial total weight. The weight is believed to be largely due to the metal tube.

DEACCESSIONING ANALYSIS

CRA Staff has identified several conditions for deaccessioning in the CRA Deaccessioning Policy which apply to the Octahedron (numbers corresponding to the Policy):

#3. The restoration of the artwork's structural or aesthetic integrity is technically not feasible, or repair and conservation will render the work false, or the expense of restoring it exceeds 50 percent of the original cost of the artwork;

- *The re-creation of the tower that the Octahedron was designed to be placed on top of would likely exceed 50 percent of the estimated original cost of the artwork given assumptions regarding the increase of construction costs beyond CPI since the 1980s. Alternatively, the creation of a large enough concrete pad for the Octahedron to stand upright safely at ground level using the steel tube support it is already mounted on would be prohibitively expensive for the CRA.*

#4. The architectural support (building, wall, plaza) is to be destroyed and the artwork cannot be removed intact for relocation;

- *The architectural support for the Octahedron as well as the Plaza context that was so important to its integrity as a piece of art was demolished in 2012 as described previously. Without the tower the art piece is out of scale and without the original Plaza context it is incongruous to its surroundings.*

#5. Significant changes in the use, character, or actual design of the site have occurred, and/or the artwork may have lost its contextual meaning and it cannot be re-sited, or re-siting the artwork would be inappropriate, thereby prohibiting the retention of the artwork as originally conceived;

- *The Octahedron has entirely lost its contextual meaning and cannot be re-sited in a similar manner that replicates the original intent of the work on any CRA properties. While schemes have been floated to re-site the artwork in various locations including in a roadway median near the Longfellow Bridge, they have been deemed inappropriate by the City of Cambridge, therefore prohibiting the retention by the CRA of the artwork as originally conceived.*

#7. An artwork is not, or is rarely, on display because of lack of a suitable site.

- *The Octahedron has not officially been on display since it was removed in 2012, although due to the scale of the object protruding above the fence line in its storage location, it can be seen to pedestrians, cyclists and drivers on streets nearby and has generated public curiosity and interaction from afar. Even if the Octahedron was not displayed upright as originally intended, it does not currently sit on a base stable enough nor is it outfitted properly to allow for safe display and access by the general public, and therefore will be kept behind a fence until it is dispossessed by the CRA.*

#11. Removal has been requested by the organization or property owner displaying the artwork (if other than the CRA) or removal has been requested by the artist.

- *Because the Octahedron was not designed into the 2012 Plaza renovation, removal was requested by Boston Properties prior to renovating and taking ownership of the Plaza. Removal is also necessary from*

the Octahedron's current site due to the planned 2017 construction of a new public park currently being designed by CDD on that site.

OPTIONS FOR DEACCESSIONING

Several options for deaccessioning are suggested in the CRA Deaccessioning Policy. The following is a brief analysis of the applicability of each option to the Octahedron:

- Sale through auction, art gallery or dealer resale, or direct bidding by individuals, in compliance with City and State law and policies governing surplus property;
 - *The Octahedron is largely seen by the art and architecture community as having negative value due to the expense of moving it (which is estimated to be at least \$5,000) or the costs involved in re-displaying the artwork in a manner more in keeping with the original intent (which would require pouring a concrete pad or finding a tower to secure the metal rod the Octahedron sits on). CRA Staff pursued whether or not the gold leaf has recoverable value, but according to the Society of Guilders it was not found to recover the costs involved in reclaiming the gold leaf.*
- Trade through artist, gallery, museum, or other institutions for one or more other artwork(s) of comparable value by the same artist. If the artwork is found to be of no monetary or negligible monetary value a donation of the artwork may be made to a willing and interested artist, gallery, museum, or other institution;
 - *A trade for artwork of comparable value by the same artist is not possible because the context that is so important to the integrity of the Octahedron as a work of art has been lost and is thereby not seen as having an equivalent value to his other works. The majority of Mr. Schlamminger's works are site-specific installations that are fully integrated into and rely entirely on their built environment, and therefore a trade of work by the same artist is impossible. A donation of the work has been attempted at the two art institutions in Massachusetts believed to be capable of handling large scale sculpture but has been declined by both (read further in the following section). It is possible the CRA Staff could spend more time pursuing a broader array of art contacts in the New England region if the CRA board believes it to be necessary. At the recommendation of the CRA Board, Staff could pursue a wider more public advertising strategy for donation of the Octahedron that could include listing on various online platforms. The intent would be to find a recipient willing to pay for transportation costs. Prior to pursuing a wider offering strategy, the CRA may need to get permission from the artist.*
- Indefinite loan to another governmental entity
 - *Offers to loan or donate to other City departments for the use of the Octahedron in other contexts such as public parks and streetscapes has been declined by the Community Development Department (CDD) and Department of Public Works (DPW). Municipal or state government entities outside of Cambridge have not been pursued by CRA Staff.*
- Long-term storage
 - *The removal of the Octahedron from its current location is time sensitive as CDD is planning to complete construction drawings for the new Binney Street Park and begin construction in late summer. The Octahedron needs to be removed by that time. Long-term storage without a clear plan for a new home would be prohibitively expensive for the CRA, especially given land costs for*

outdoor storage and lack of availability for indoor storage in the Cambridge-Boston-Somerville area. Long-term storage would likely result in greater physical deterioration both inside and outside of the Octahedron including the gold leaf, metal frame and composite body due to sun, humidity, rain, and snow. CRA Staff does not believe long-term storage would be a prudent use of CRA funding with no clear path toward transferring the artwork to a new owner or back to the original artist. No other CRA-owned land is available for the storage of the Octahedron as all other significant properties are currently being used as public open spaces or temporary civic spaces. Siting the Octahedron at one of these properties for storage purposes would require significant investments to prepare the site to receive and properly display the Octahedron and minimum restoration efforts to the artwork to allow for safe public access.

- Destruction of artwork deteriorated or damaged beyond repair at a reasonable cost, and/or deemed to be of no or only a negligible value, in accordance with national standards for conservation and deaccession.
 - *CRA Staff is considering destroying the Octahedron as recommended by the Artist now that several leads and attempts have been made for others to take it (see the following section). If no others express interest and the CRA Board chooses to approve the destruction of the artwork, CRA Staff has received a cost estimate of \$1,500 from a contractor to destroy and properly dispose of the Octahedron. With the assistance of the Society of Guilders, CRA Staff has found that the gold leaf is not recoverable in a manner that would cover the costs of the gold leaf recovery process.*
- Re-donation, sale or other arrangement agreed upon with the donor or artist at the time of the CRA's acquisition of the artwork.
 - *Due to a lack of documentation from the 1980s origination of the Octahedron project, there were no known arrangements agreed upon with the artist or with Boston Properties at the time of the CRA's acquisition of the artwork.*

SYNOPSIS OF INITIAL EXPLORATORY CONTACTS

In August, CRA Staff contacted the most prominent institutions in Massachusetts that display large scale sculpture, MassMoCA in North Adams, MA and the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, MA.

Representing MassMoCA, Paulette Wein, Assistant to the Director stated in an email dated 8/17/2016 "I checked with our director who asked me to thank you for your offer, but we do not accept donations of art. MASS MoCA is a non-collecting institution that primarily exhibits site-specific commissions and large-scale works on loan from museums, collectors, and artists."

Representing DeCordova, departing museum curator Jennifer Gross called CRA Staff in August 2016 and also declined the donation offer, citing the size as potentially too large.

Representing the Massachusetts Society of Guilders, Naomi G. Lipsky, offered to evaluate whether the gold leaf could be recovered from the Octahedron, or alternatively assist in finding a new home willing to receive the Octahedron as a donation. Ms. Lipsky contacted CRA Staff after seeing the previously described article in the Boston Globe in February 2016. On December 1, 2016 Ms. Lipsky sent CRA Staff a memo regarding her assessment of the gold leaf on the Octahedron, and the process that would be required to reclaim the gold leaf or re-gild the Octahedron. She also visited the Octahedron at that time to take photos and has subsequently been exploring leads regarding those who may be interested in taking the sculpture. Ms. Lipsky has not yet found a

willing party to take the Octahedron nor is it clear what cost the CRA may need to incur as part of any transfer to a new owner.

During summer 2016, CRA Staff wrote up a letter and email and had it translated into German and sent both on paper and electronically to Mr Schlamminger's last known address, but received no response. On August 18, 2016 CRA Staff sent an email to the Ismaili Center in Toronto where Mr Schlamminger had installed his largest most recent works, asking if they could contact him on our behalf since we had trouble finding a current email and postal address for him in Germany.

On August 19, 2016 Mr. Schlamminger contacted CRA Staff by phone having received a call from the Ismaili Center in Toronto that morning. During this conversation, CRA Staff updated him on the current status of the Octahedron and the renovation of the Plaza and subsequent removal and storage of his work. He recalled conversations with the previous CRA Executive Director regarding ideas to place the Octahedron in the roadway median at the base of the Longfellow Bridge. The return of the Octahedron to the artist was offered during that phone call, but declined due to Mr. Schlamminger's location in Germany. CRA Staff notified him that MassMoCA and DeCordova had both declined to take it.

Mr. Schlamminger offered that he was friends with architect Moshe Safdie who's headquarters office is in Somerville and would contact him to see if Moshe Safdie's office could take the Octahedron. Mr. Schlamminger stated that if Safdie's architecture firm would not take it he authorized the CRA to destroy it. Mr. Schlamminger also gave CRA Staff an updated email address.

On August 26, 2016 Chris Mulvey who works at Moshe Safdie's office contacted CRA Staff and arranged to see the Octahedron in person. In a subsequent meeting and conversation, Mr. Mulvey declined to take the Octahedron citing that it was too large and would be too expensive to move because it required a flat bed truck and crane.

PHOTO DOCUMENTATION

ORIGINAL CONDITION / MODEL PHOTOS

See Attached

CURRENT CONDITION PHOTOS

See Attached

ATTACHMENTS

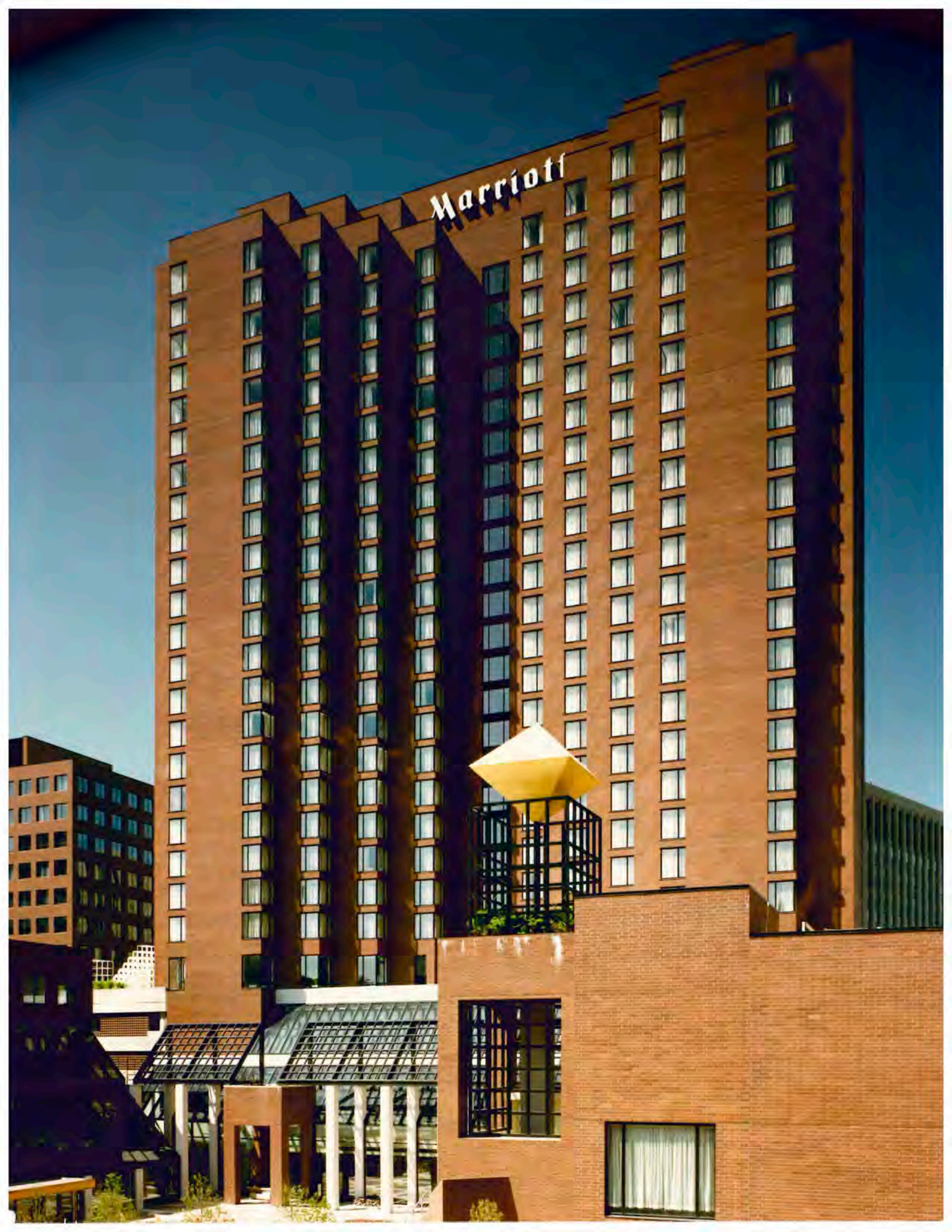
Artist Statement Regarding Octahedron for 2012 CRA Longfellow Median Scheme

Society of Guilders Letter (Naomi Lipsky) dated December 1, 2016 "*Options for the Octahedron*"





Marriott



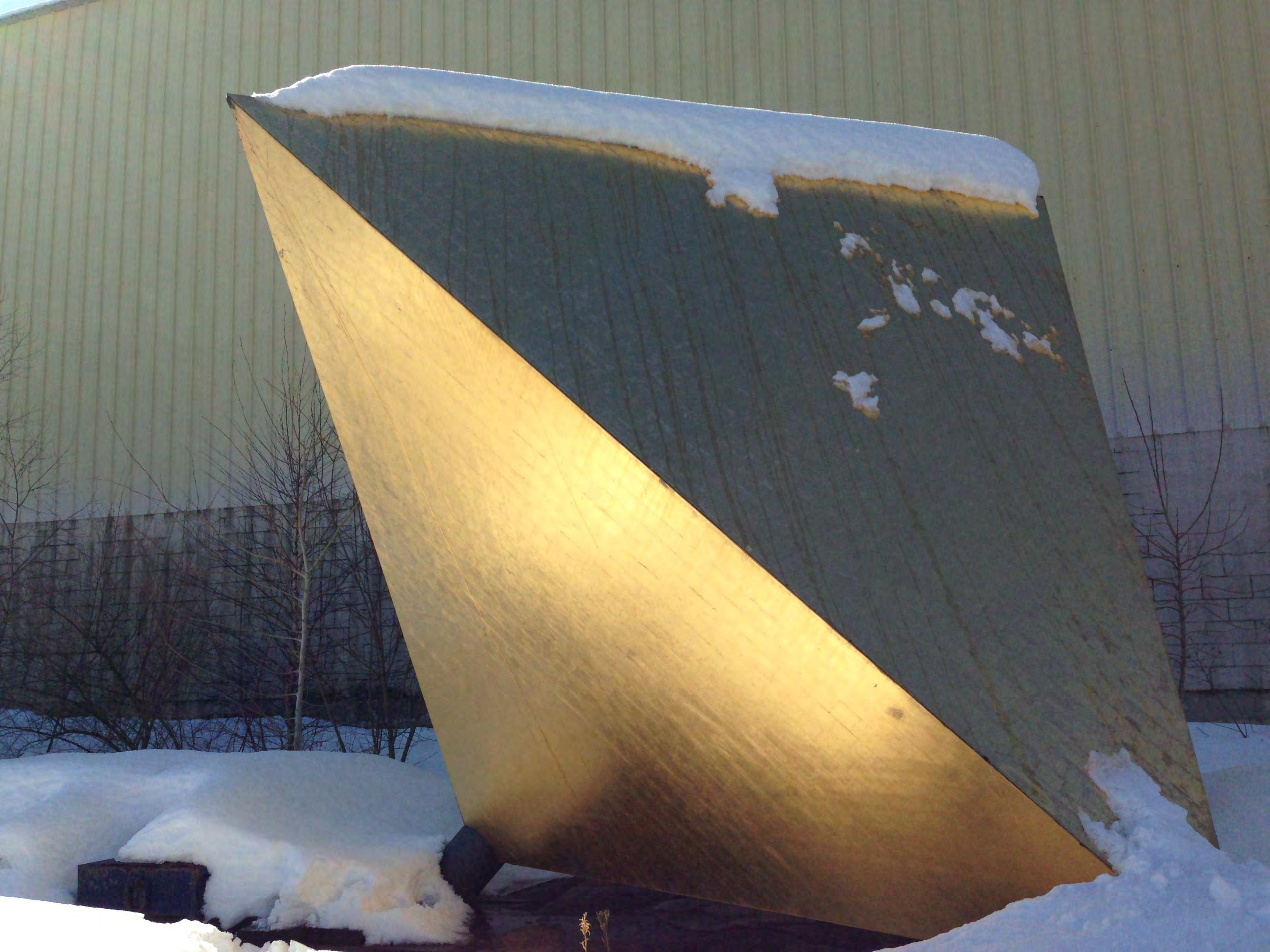
















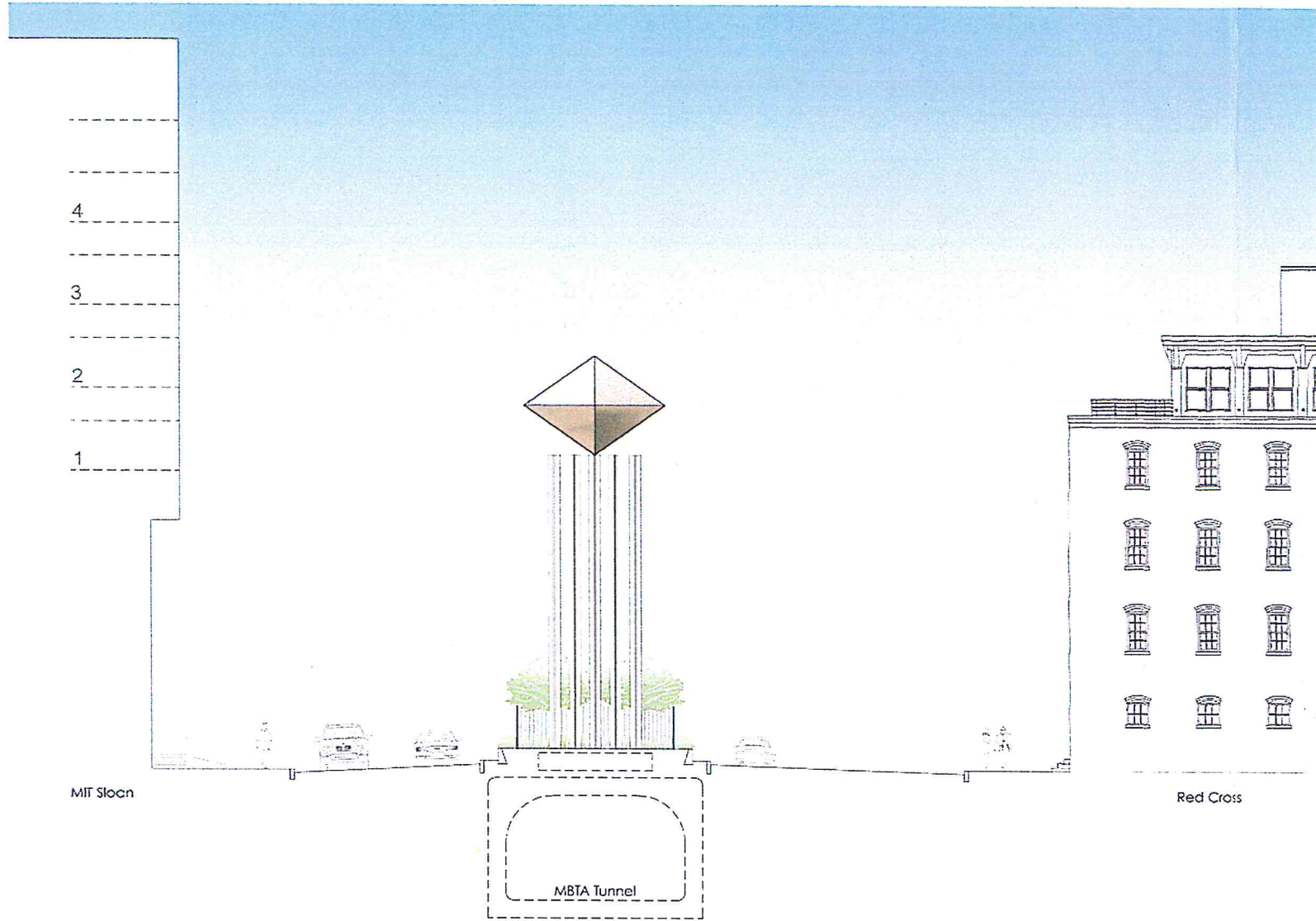
METROPOLITAN

PIPE & C

RAM FREIGHT, INC.







Artist's Statement: **Karl Schlamminger**

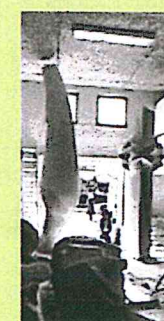
In 1985, I was asked to come to Cambridge to create a sculpture for the Marriott plaza in Kendall Square. Strolling and driving in the City and surroundings, I noticed the beautiful use of gold colored elements on buildings, on roofs, small domes, columns, and capitols. In the sunlight, these gleaming points created very pleasant moments of awareness and joy. I felt that challenge to contribute to this.

The Octahedron like the cube or the hexahedron belong to the Five Platonic Figures. The twelve edges, eight faces with the 60 degree face angles make this regular solid a strong faceted statement with a floating impression that points up and down. In other words, the Octahedron has so much power that it can survive being transplanted, in fact, may even be enhanced by it and become a landmark of the City.

"Conditions are not invariable, terms are not final, thus, the wise man looks into space, and does not regard the small as too little, nor the great as too big, for he knows that, there is no limit to dimension." *Chuang Tzu, 4th Century BC*

SCALE: 1/10" = 1'-0"

Work Samples



Naomi Geller Lipsky, PhD.

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Dec 1, 2016

To:

The Cambridge redevelopment Authority

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Cambridge, MA 02142

Options for the Octahedron

Note: These recommendations were prepared without inspection of the actual sculpture. They are based on known gilding specifications, and the report by Daedalus, Inc. from 2012¹.

1. Re-gild the Octahedron

Based on 14' per side of each equilateral triangle, the total surface square footage will be 784^{ft2}. This is confirmed by Daedalus². To cover that area with gold leaf, where each leaf measures 3 3/8" square, would require 9,924 leaves. In actuality, the leaf was laid with a space of 1/16" between each, meaning that only about 9,551 leaves were used. Gold leaf can be purchased in "packs" of 500 leaves; currently, one price for a pack of 23.5K leaf is \$887.³ Thus, to re-gild the sculpture in the same way it was originally done would cost around \$17,000 just for the leaf (although one would probably get a quantity discount from any reputable vendor.) Actually, gold is properly laid with a 1/8" overlap, not a 1/16" gap, so this would increase the amount needed by about 12%. The labor involved would be a major additional cost. However, the Society of Gilders, a non-profit dedicated to teaching and maintaining the gilding arts, annually donates its members' labor for "community gilding projects" on behalf of another non-profit or governmental organization. This project might interest the Society.

2. Reclaim the gold and destroy the octahedron

Other than historic and sentimental value, the only value to the sculpture is the remaining gold leaf on the surface. The value can be calculated in different ways:

If the octahedron were in perfect condition, and one could remove 100% of the leaf, the leaf could be weighed and sold to a refinery. The exact weight would depend on the type of gold used; 23K gold can vary from 18-23 gm/1000 leaves. An average weight would be about 20.5 gm/1000 leaves, so about 228 gm or 7.18 ounces. The current price for an ounce of gold bullion is \$1195⁴, and since 23.5K gold is not pure gold, its value would be somewhat lower, but estimate that under ideal conditions one could recover \$8580.

However, according to the Daedalus report⁵ and observation of photographs of the site, only half of the gold is still adhering. After consulting with a refiner⁶ and an architectural gilder⁷, it was determined that

¹ Daedalus, Inc. "Condition Assessment and Proposal for Treatment" 2012

² Daedalus, op cit

³ www.easyleafproducts.com

⁴ www.doralrefining.com

⁵ Daedalus, op cit

chemical removal was not practical due to size and material restraints; the gold would have to be hand-scraped, in a contained environment, then recovered with a vacuum and sent to a refiner, who would take a minimum of 10% of the value. A maximum of \$3861, and almost certainly much less than that, could be recovered. Subtract from this the cost of the labor to scrape the surfaces, and to erect the containment structure. Finally, the entire remains would have to be hauled to a construction waste facility by a private hauler⁸. Given that the previous cost to transport the octahedron from Methuen to Binney St was \$5000⁹, it would probably not be much less to haul it to a waste disposal facility.

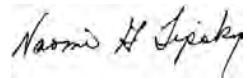
3. Destroy the octahedron as is

Again, the cost to haul it away might be as much as \$5000.

4. Find someone else who wants the octahedron

I am in communication with a governmental entity who might be interested in taking possession of the octahedron, depending on whether I find the structure salvageable after inspecting it. Some agreement on the cost of possibly disassembling it and/or transporting it would have to be reached.

Respectfully submitted,



Naomi G. Lipsky, PhD.

⁶ Mr. Justin Signorelli, Doral Refining

⁷ Mr. Michael Kramer, www.thegildersstudio.com

⁸

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/theworks/ourservices/recyclingandtrash/curbsidecollections/getridofitright/constuctiondebris1>

⁹ Ms. Ellen Shore, CRA, email Nov 17, 2016