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ALLSTON BRIGHTON, CAMBRIDGE, ROXBURY

Local artist commissioned for work with Roxbury park restoration

Posted by Matt Rocheleau January 28, 2011 02:00 PM

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(Courtesy: Ross Miller)

Boston area artist Ross Miller took this photo while brainstorming on a recent visit to a snow-covered Alvah Kittredge Park in Roxbury, the site of his newest artistic endeavor.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A local artist responsible for a slew of public pieces that Bostonians walk past, sit on, play in, or otherwise interact with on a daily basis has been commissioned for another work.

Ross Miller, who has owned an Allston-based studio for nearly three decades, will create permanent public art as a key element in the major restoration of Alvah Kittredge Park in Roxbury set to begin this year.

“Art is a music. It engages you in a space and time,” said Miller, who was born in Cambridge, England, and now resides in the more local Cambridge. “I think in many ways when public art works well it helps people engage more fully in that moment.”

The Harvard University alum was selected by the city’s parks department and a [friends group](#) of the Roxbury park after an extensive review of over 120 New England- and New York-based artists, city officials said.

The visual artist has crafted some prominent pieces: “[Harbor Fog](#)” on the Rose

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Kennedy Greenway, markings showing what was once Boston's shoreline etched in the granite pavers on the public park between Faneuil and City halls, the Andrew Square Time Capsule inside the Red Line T station, the annual rebuilding of the fishweir on Boston Common, several outdoor classrooms at city elementary schools and more.

"Miller's commission is based on the unique creativity and quality he brings to his work. His selection was also based on the many successful public art pieces he has created in Boston and the surrounding communities," said Boston Parks and Recreation Department officials in a release.

To ensure the artwork fits with the park's overhaul, the artist will collaborate with the local Highland Park community, city's parks department, the Boston Art Commission, and landscape architecture firm Carol R. Johnson and Associates, Inc., which the city said selected the Alvah Kittredge Park renovation as its 50th Anniversary project and is providing pro bono conceptual landscape design services.

Currently, Miller said the concept idea is rough and still evolving, but the part of the plan is to soften the park's look by removing some of the existing concrete barricades, adding more plantings, reconfiguring seating and providing a safe play area for children. Plans also call for an interactive space involving water, he said. Miller is familiar with using water, or fog, and motion activation, including the pool-noodle-shaped, motion-activated water fountains in Mission Hill Park.

But familiarity won't mean Miller will use any of his past works for ideas.

"The idea is to think about something I've never thought about before," and something that is unique to that space and its community, he said. "That's the engaging part."

The park's restoration effort is being funded by \$100,000 from both the Edward Ingersoll Browne Fund and the George B. Henderson Foundation; \$50,000 from the Harold Whitworth Pierce Charitable Trust and a \$310,000 state grant from the Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC), said the release.

Many of Miller's past Hub works can be seen on the city's public art website, www.publicartboston.com or on his site, www.rossmiller.com. The site will also provide updates as Miller works on the Roxbury park's project.

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at mjrochele@gmail.com.

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