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Massive Sci-Fi Art Installation Set to Overtake Midtown Toronto

BY LOW LAI CHOW | JUNE 02, 2016



An artistic rendering of "STARGATE". Bloke taking a picture on his mobile? Check. (Blue Republic)

Sci-fi fans, here's a spoiler alert. Aliens, towering at 12 and 15 feet each, are coming to one of Canada's busiest intersections.

To be exact, these hollow-cast bronze figures, depicted as emerging from swirling glass vortices into the streets, are part of a massive \$1.5 million sculptural art installation project by Anna Passakas and Radoslaw Kudlinski of Toronto-based art collective [Blue Republic](#).

The unusual public artwork is set to be installed come April 2019.

Titled "STARGATE", Blue Republic's proposal emerged first in a nationwide call by Capital Developments and Freed Developments to reimagine the street level of two upcoming condominium residential developments with art. Blue Republic have formerly received several other notable public commissions, including Hong Kong's [Biennale of Urbanism \ Architecture](#).

"Public art plays many roles, and the scope is just as large as in all of contemporary art: starting with purely decorative approach, to those projects that are strongly involved in the urban fabric... if you locate a deeply engaging, interesting project in an underdeveloped area, it is as if you said to the local community: 'Yes, you count! You are just as important as the fancy folk downtown.'"

Amidst the intricate swirling patterns in these glass murals, pedestrians will be able to catch sight of other alien creatures cutting through the flux to make their way out from the vortex.

"It's a busy world, but we want this to command your attention," was Kudlinski's take on the work. "The characters are approaching the traffic on the street, so all who pass by will find themselves in the middle of this dramatic scene. It's up to the viewer to narrate what is taking place."

The resulting 'alien portals' will be situated within the thriving Yonge-Eglinton neighborhood at 150 and 155 Redpath, with layouts ranging from studio to three bedrooms across the two properties. The lower glass walls of both buildings at street level will warp into bold murals projecting the portals from either tower.

While the first installation in Toronto will only be ready in 2019, the art duo harbors hopes to open more STARGATE portals around the world. "These portals can open anywhere in the world," says Passakas. "As to specific locations, we don't discriminate—it could be a crowded inner city or a desert in New Mexico. Each location offers exciting possibilities of its own."

What of Toronto's public art scene?

"Toronto is changing very fast, and so is its public art. There is a building boom here and many new developments create opportunities for artists. There are also festivals such as [Luminato](#) and [Nuit Blanche](#)," says an optimistic Passakas, adding that the duo was commissioned by the former to create public art projects at the Toronto Pearson International Airport and the Brookfield Place in downtown Toronto.

Still, Toronto-based artists face similar struggles as other artists who wish to work with public art: "Getting to this point is not easy. It is a bit of a vicious circle: to be considered, you have to have previous projects to your credit. But where do you start if you haven't yet had the chance to create this type of work?"

"The good thing is that there are many new opportunities in Toronto right now: small communal works, murals in underpasses, Nuit Blanche and some artists' initiatives."