



Call of the Siren

Luke Blackstone

June 2007

Firehall no.10, 7278 – 132 Street

Luke Blackstone's tribute to firefighters, *Call of the Siren*, combines architectural features with an interactive sound component. Located in front of Surrey's recently built Fire Hall #10, this public artwork echoes the historic New York and Chicago-style fire hall architecture employed in the design of the building.

In *Call of the Siren*, two brick pillars support a Romanesque-style arch made of powder-coated steel tubing, inside of which is mounted a perforated disc. The overall form is suggestive of an enlarged and simplified siren shape and also evokes the idea of a canopy or shelter. By turning a crank located on the front of one of the pillars, members of the public can produce a soft and subtle siren sound, audible only to those nearby. While the audio and visual siren references remind the community that firefighters are always on duty in the event of an emergency, the shape of the arch also suggests protection – again, a tribute to the public-safety role firefighters play.

In replicating the hand-cranked siren in form and sound, Blackstone alludes to a transitional period in history, when firefighting transportation and technology shifted from horses



and steam to the gasoline-powered engine. In the early 1900s, hand-cranked sirens were installed on fire trucks and engines; these were later replaced by electro-mechanical sirens. This history is compressed in *Call of the Siren*, so that when visitors turn the crank, they are invoking firefighting sights and sounds past and present. They're also generating a call to brotherhood, sisterhood and the surrounding community.

About the Artist:

Luke Blackstone is a Vancouver-based artist best known for his kinetic sculptures, both public and private. Since his student days, he has developed ways to make forms and materials move and change in various ways, using different combinations of energy sources. He has shown his works in galleries and museums in both Canada and the United States and has created several site-specific outdoor public artworks and architectural spaces in British Columbia and Washington State. Born in Victoria, Blackstone studied art at Emily Carr College of Art & Design in Vancouver and the University of Washington in Seattle. Currently, he teaches sculpture at Langara College and continues to explore new materials, technologies and concepts in his Vancouver studio.



NEWTON