

██████████ The project, titled “Cousins” and slated to be completed sometime this fall, is Block’s third major art project in the county. The title refers to the ideas in the pieces being interrelated, Block said.

Working as a professional artist since age 26, Block has been an artist-advocate for human rights.

His work has included those such as the Human Rights Painting project with Amnesty International and the Shalom/Saalam Project that reflected that Jews and Arab Muslims could live together in peace.

“I thought that his work combined art with inspirational text and that provided for the diverse community that Silver Spring is,” said Patricia Shepherd, project manager for the South Silver Spring pedestrian linkages program that chose Block for the project. “It gave people a moment to read and feel inspired as they were walking through the alleyway.”

Currently a link between Eastern Avenue and Kennett Street, the wall will likely attract more viewers with the influx of new resident developments and ongoing nearby church activities.

“I hope passers-by are left with a desire to learn about wisdom masters and how wisdom traditions are connected at the roots,” Block said. “A living, vibrant and contemporary [piece of] art should force an audience to question through beauty.”

In creating the pieces, Block chose to stay away from what he deemed “politicized” works such as the Quran, Torah and the New Testament. Instead, he wanted to incorporate text from “wisdom masters” like Gandhi, King and Mandela, and show how they were all interrelated.

“It’s exciting to be in a community that participates in an art project that would push boundaries culturally that others might not be open to,” said Block, whose two young children also participated in the voting.

“With the commercialization of downtown Silver Spring, south Silver Spring has this opportunity to remain off-beat and different,” Buckberg said. “Art and community life are so critical and they are kind of an endangered species.”

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