



PHOTOS: JACK HUTCHESON

Luis R. Cancel

By now you have caught sight of the incredible new addition to the city's Civic Center Plaza: the sculpture, aptly titled *Three Heads Six Arms*, by Chinese artist Zhang Huan. You may wonder how this, or any of the amazing artistic installations that have cropped up around San Francisco in years past, make their journey to our City by the Bay. The man in charge, from the idea's first initiation to its transportation to its new outdoor home, is Director of Cultural Affairs for the San Francisco Arts Commission, Luis R. Cancel.

While the city has hosted memorable pieces of sculpture in the past, Cancel credits a combination of factors for the "rock star" quality that greeted *Three Heads Six Arms'* arrival, complete with dozens of photographers and hundreds in attendance. "One is the scale of the piece," says Cancel. "Even from a distance across the plaza you see this very intriguing form. It just draws you to it." Add to that world-premiere status and Huan's international importance in the art world, and the stage is set.

Cancel's place in the art world is no less impressive as he served as director of the Bronx Museum for 14 years and headed cultural affairs for his native New York City before answering a call from Mayor Gavin Newsom in 2008 to lend an artistic hand out west.

At 26 feet tall and nearly 15 tons in weight, *Three Heads Six Arms* is notable for many impressive reasons, including its conjunction with the Shanghai-San Francisco Sister City 30th Anniversary celebration, as well as the 40th Anniversary of the Arts Commission's Public Art Program.

As it happens, Cancel and his wife, a native of Rio de Janeiro, couldn't be happier with their own move west. "There are so many things to love about this region and this city," beams Cancel. He is quick to extend gratitude and thanks to Ruth Bronstein and her program, Art Care, for her contributions to the conservation of the civic collection, the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as to Director of Programs Jill Manton and her many sleepless nights. "Because of the time difference between Shanghai and San Francisco, only through her dedication did we manage to physically get the sculpture here."

Huan's massive masterpiece, which arrived in many crates—the Buddha's torso lashed to the top of a container shed no less—will be on loan to the city through 2011, so take this opportunity to see, touch, and appreciate the vast beauty of the city's new appendages. Find out more at www.sfartscommission.org. ■ —JENNIFER MASSONI