

NEWPORT NEWS

City Center gets 'Handshake'

BY JOE LAWLOR

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NEWPORT NEWS — Giant hands now reach out from the City Center roundabout, looking like they could wave at the passing motorists.

Workers spent several hours Monday installing the new public sculpture — “Handshake” by Gunther Stilling — to precise specifications. The hands, reaching from seven to 10 feet high, had to be positioned just right to match the model of the artwork.

The sculpture, made from cast aluminum with an interior stainless steel frame, weighs more than 1,200 pounds, or about 600 pounds per hand.

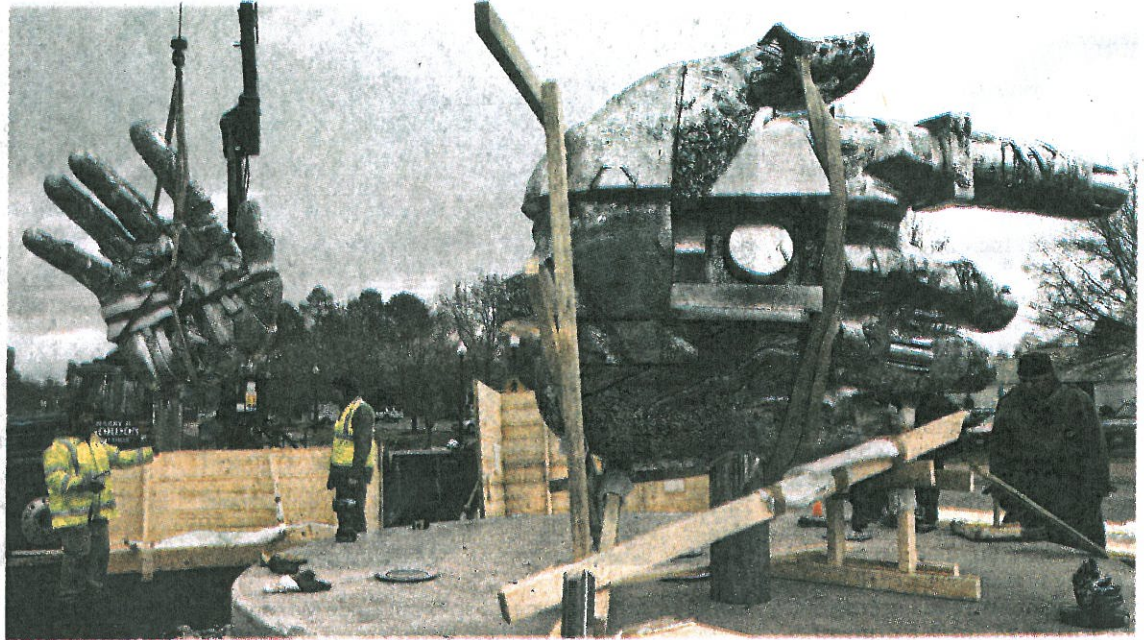
Set into a concrete base, the hands, even on a blustery day, will not be moving anytime soon.

Stilling, a German artist who was in Newport News for the installation, said that’s one aspect he enjoys about public art — its permanence, and how people will be enjoying the art for years to come.

Commissioned by the Newport News Public Art Foundation, which has funded and coordinated numerous sculptures throughout the city, the privately funded “Handshake” cost \$156,000, according to the foundation.

Stilling said artwork gives people a sense of place, a reference point.

“This gives people an immediate identification of a place,” Stilling said. “Cars were stopping today



JOE FUDGE/DAILY PRESS PHOTO

Harry Gordon and Justin Long guide the sculpture’s second hand into place at City Center in Newport News.

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to look at it. People were shouting from balconies (at the apartments overlooking the roundabout), “What are you doing?”

Stilling said he lets others interpret the meaning of the industrial-looking hands.

“People always ask me what it means. I don’t know. We don’t have answers, but we can ask questions,” he said.

Carol Capo, a spokeswoman for the public art foundation, said the “Handshake” for many evokes the business deals made in City Center and surrounding Oyster Point business park.

“This may be the most high-impact of all the sculptures because of its location,” Capo said. “It’s located in an 800-acre business park. It’s designed so that it will be interesting to look at from all sides.”

Capo said the sculpture will not block the view of cars traversing the roundabout. She said the foun-

dation discussed the line-of-sight issues with city traffic engineers, and received a permit from the city to place the sculpture in the right-of-way.

Sculpture unveiling

The official unveiling of “Handshake” — a new public art sculpture at the City Center roundabout — will be at 1 p.m. Thursday. Mayor McKinley Price will speak.

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