

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Minnesota Artist Lights Up DC Metro Area  
with Holiday Tree Made of Toys**

December 2013



Acclaimed sculptor and stained glass artist Karl Unnasch has lit up a community in the Washington, D.C. Metro Area with a glowing public art installation - a holiday tree made entirely of toys.

The holiday centerpiece located in the Fountain Plaza of Downtown Silver Spring, MD was unveiled on Nov. 16 in a Tree Lighting Celebration amidst hundreds of spectators, streamers and holiday music. Commissioned by The Peterson Companies in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, Unnasch's winning proposal was to create a non-traditional sculptural "holiday tree" comprised entirely of new and gently used outdoor-friendly toys and sporting goods which - in keeping with the holiday spirit - would be donated to less-fortunate area children following de-installation.

With its whimsical construction and bright colors, the tree - appropriately entitled *Playtime Jubilee* - has been said to have a "Dr. Seuss" feel. Boldly colored plastic sleds and play sets form the skin of the 35-foot-high tree, which is in turn thickly adorned with smaller toy forms as ornaments. The piece, however, becomes even more magical at night. Inspired by his stained glass work, Unnasch illuminated the plastic panels of the tree from within, causing the entire installation to glow in what he calls "rich and juicy colors".

"This sculptural holiday tree is an ingenious re-use of childhood's leftovers... No matter the viewer's age, *Playtime Jubilee* appeals to the child in all of us," says Dr. Michele Cohen, former Director of Public Art for Public Schools in NYC who is currently serving as the public art consultant for the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County. "It's an enormous undertaking... I think the people who are passing by are in awe, frankly. They immediately respond to the humor of it and the fact that it's such a fun thing... and then they understand the scale, and their jaws drop."

The piece has generated nationwide buzz. On Dec. 3, it appeared on NBC's 'Today' Show, and on Dec. 20, it even reached an international audience when it was featured on *Voice of America*. Local media had already covered the work extensively, and on Downtown Silver Spring's Facebook page, dozens of comments were posted by community members reacting to the installation's aesthetics and concept. Laurie Yankowski, Regional Marketing Director at The Peterson Companies and spokesperson for Downtown Silver Spring, is pleased that the piece is mustering both conversation and controversy. "Isn't that what art is all about?," she asks.

Some viewers have speculated that *Playtime Jubilee* is a comment on consumerism while others feel that it is an attempt to draw attention to the increasing role of disposables in our society or our wasteful nature. While his artwork has often addressed such themes in the past, Unnasch actually approached this particular work with much less serious intentions.

“It’s the holidays,” he says, “and I tend to get a bit nostalgic. So I thought back to my own childhood, and all the toys under the Christmas tree, and thought: What if all those toys were to just fly up *onto* the tree? I’m just a big kid at heart,” he claims, “and with this piece, I was able to just kind of let that come out through my hands.”

When asked what he hopes people will take away from his piece, Unnasch replied, “People just need to be happy when they walk away. We need more of that. Society could use a little more calm.”

A *Wider Circle* is the charitable organization which will be receiving the toys for distribution following the de-installation in January.

More about Karl Unnasch can be found on his website at <http://www.karlunnasch.com>.

More images and details for *Playtime Jubilee* can be found on its Project Page at <http://www.karlunnasch.com/project-pages/2013.11-playtime-jubilee-holiday-tree-of-toys-and-sporting-goods-in-silver-spring-maryland.htm>.

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**About the Artist:**

Karl Unnasch's work has been exhibited as far as Europe and has been acclaimed in publications as esteemed as The New York Times and Art in London Magazine. While continuing to exhibit, Karl today focuses primarily on public and architectural art, most typically incorporating stained glass and sculpture into his work. Over the last half a decade, he has installed notable works at prominent locations including educational facilities, medical wings, theatre lobbies and public gathering spaces. For more information, visit [www.karlunnasch.com](http://www.karlunnasch.com). Or, visit the Project Page for Playtime Jubilee at <http://www.karlunnasch.com/project-pages/2013.11-playtime-jubilee-holiday-tree-of-toys-and-sporting-goods-in-silver-spring-maryland.htm>.

**About Downtown Silver Spring:**

Downtown Silver Spring is a 440,000 square foot shopping, dining, and entertainment destination located in the heart of downtown Silver Spring spanning from Ellsworth Drive to Fenton Street in Silver Spring, MD. Downtown Silver Spring has an eclectic mix of specialty retailers, exciting restaurants and amenities that include Whole Foods Market, Regal Majestic Theaters, H&M, a mosaic interactive fountain with outdoor cafes provides a neighborhood gathering spot for outdoor events. For more information, visit [www.downtownsilverspring.com](http://www.downtownsilverspring.com). Or follow Downtown Silver Spring on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for real-time updates.

**About Peterson Companies:**

Peterson Companies is one of the largest privately-owned real estate development companies in the Washington, DC region and offers fully-integrated development and management services for commercial office, residential and retail real estate. The company is responsible for some of the most prominent and successful mixed-use, residential and office developments in Northern Virginia and Maryland including National Harbor, Virginia Gateway, Downtown Silver Spring, Washingtonian Center, Fairfax Corner, Fair Lakes, Burke Centre and Tysons McLean Office Park. Founded by Milt Peterson over 30 years ago, the company has an extensive two million square foot development pipeline throughout the Washington DC region. For more information about the company please visit [www.PetersonCos.com](http://www.PetersonCos.com).

**About the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County**

Since 1976, the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County has been Montgomery County's designated local arts agency, committed to providing non-profit organizations, artists and scholars with the resources they need to continually bring quality arts and humanities to this community. Our vision is to provide leadership that sustains arts and humanities organizations, artists and scholars and inspires participation in our County's rich cultural assets. For more information go to [www.creativemoco.com](http://www.creativemoco.com) and for our cultural calendar, go to [www.doandgo.org](http://www.doandgo.org)

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