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Brisbane artist's exhibit no butt of City Hall jokes

By **Katie Worth**

Examiner Staff Writer 3/15/09

BRISBANE – When the City Council asked local artist Beth Grossman to create a special art exhibit in honor of the opening of the new City Hall, they didn't expect her to request to photograph their backsides.

"They actually agreed," she said, with an uproarious laugh. "They were really good sports about it."



Vision: Beth Grossman's idea to photograph Brisbane officials' backsides was intended to humanize them.

Courtesy photo

The exhibit, titled "Seats of Power," opens with a special ceremony Wednesday. With it, Grossman hopes to encourage people to think about civic involvement from the chairs' perspective.

Ten people in positions of power in Brisbane agreed to participate, including the mayor, entire City Council, police commander, fire chief and harbormaster.

Grossman photographed the participants as they stood pressing their (clothed) derrieres against a sheet of plexiglass to make them look "squished," the way they would be in a chair, she said.

She sent the photos to a jacquard weaver, where they were intertwined with fabric that she then used to upholster seats. The seats will be hung on the walls of the new City Hall conference room.

Grossman, who has been heavily involved in city politics since she moved to Brisbane more than a decade ago, said the project is intended to make people think about leadership and civic responsibility.

She said the object was also to humanize the people on the other side of the podium. Councilman Steve Waldo agreed to play along.

"After she explained to me what she was going to do, I said, 'Sure, why not?'"

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