

# SRQ DAILY

SARASOTA | BRADENTON



***The Giving Back Philanthropy Edition***

**"This is a symbol of the next phase of Sarasota."**

- Jim Shirley, Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County

## TODAY'S NEWS

### [Public Art] **Ba'al, Yizhaq and the Future of Public Art**

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After a day of downpour, the rain let up just in time yesterday evening for the arts community to gather outside the soon-to-open Sabal Palm Bank Plaza at the intersection of Ringling Boulevard, Links Avenue and Golf Street for the unveiling of the latest piece of public art to grace Sarasota's cultural landscape. Entitled *Ba'al &*

*Yizhaq*, and the work of the late internationally known Israeli artist Boaz Vaadia, the unveiling marked a “historic moment” for the city, says Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County Executive Director Jim Shirley, and not just because of what the sculpture is, but how it got here.

Coming in at roughly 4,000 pounds, a crane was definitely involved, and probably lots of strong people with hard hats as well, but that’s not quite what has Shirley excited. Instead, it’s the introduction of a novel public-private partnership that made this piece of public art possible—despite the \$200,000+ price tag. “This has really been a community effort,” Shirley says, and a model for the future. “This is a symbol of the next phase of Sarasota,” he says.

Sum it up in a word: collaboration. Add another: flexibility. The project began with developer Dr. Mark Kauffman of Red Property Management, who petitioned the city to allow him to bundle his three existing public art obligations (based on three developments in the downtown area) into one, and go in with the city on a single, substantial piece of public art. The city agreed to the notion, and set about amending the city code to allow it. Kauffman would supply around \$70,000—a bit more than his obligations originally entailed—but that left roughly \$140,000 up to the City of Sarasota.

The city could do half that, but suggested Kauffman fundraise for the rest. “It took me about five seconds to answer,” he says, “and the answer was no.”

Enter Sam Alfstad and Alfstad& Contemporary, which offered to become the third partner in bringing *Ba’al & Yizhaq* to Sarasota. The move required another look at the city code, to ratify this new breed of partnership—developer plus city plus private business—as a player in the world of public art, and the city made its final changes in August 2017, allowing the project to move forward to fruition.

But what began with the artist’s blessing would finish without him, as Vaadia passed in February of 2017. “Fortunately, a piece of his genius and his passion is right here,” says Alfstad.

Looking to the future, Alfstad hopes that this partnership represents only the beginning, and many more developers and businesses follow in their footsteps. “We’re calling on them,” he says, “to do it again.”

