

ART JURY CORNER

Nobody Will Ever See It

"*Nobody will ever see it.*" The Art Jury often hears this statement from applicants and their designers; they are suggesting that if a project isn't visible from off the property, the Art Jury shouldn't care what it looks like. As explained below, there are many reasons why the Art Jury cares about an *entire* project, but first lets examine the statement itself. Applicants often believe that a project (or portion thereof) will not be visible to other residents, both near and far. Art Jury members have seen many projects from the earliest design stages through completion, from this experience over many years the Art Jury knows that, once built, developments can often be much more visible than generally expected. In fact the Art Jury began requiring story poles a few years ago as an additional tool to allow the Art Jury and the community to determine the visual prominence of projects while still in the design stage.

The Art Jury is responsible for upholding the Protective Covenant. Paragraph 46 of the Covenant states in part that the Art Jury is to "*...insure a uniform and reasonably high standard of artistic result and attractiveness, in exterior and physical appearance...*" The Covenant makes no exceptions for areas that are not currently visible from the street or neighbors. The Art Jury therefore looks at the entire project for artistic result and thus creates a fair and uniform review process that serves the entire community and maintains a uniform high standard of design throughout the Covenant.

Designers often suggest that "nobody will ever see it" because the existing or proposed landscaping will screen views from neighbors and the road. This may be true, but it may not be. Firstly, landscaping takes time to mature, and the growth rate varies from project to project depending on the level of care given. Some landscape installations have not performed well due to root-bound nursery stock or unanticipated soil conditions. Furthermore, even mature landscape screening can decline with age; the infestation of the eucalyptus trees is a perfect example. The eucalyptus trees have been the foundation for much of the landscape screening in the Ranch since its inception, but the decline of the trees caused by the infestation has made many structures more prominent than they used to be. And, twenty years of landscape growth can be eliminated in one weekend by a landscape crew. Additionally, Fire Department regulations now require additional widespread vegetation clearing (even on neighboring properties). Due to all of the above, the Art Jury wants all projects to be judged on the merits of the site planning and architecture; landscaping is seen as an added benefit to a project, not a solution to visual prominence.

Even when a project is not currently visible from neighbors, that visibility can change over time. New views of the property can be created by the construction of new homes or additions on neighboring lots. Visibility notwithstanding, the Art Jury must always be cautious not to set a precedent for inappropriate features; when friends visit a home they may see a feature that they wish to construct on their property, but in a more prominent location. If the Art Jury does not approve the request to replicate the inappropriate feature, the Art Jury is accused of being inconsistent. Allowing something that the Art Jury does not feel is appropriate because "nobody will ever see it" could create a precedent for allowing the same thing on other lots where it will be seen by neighbors or the community.

The Art Jury's review of entire projects, regardless of current visibility, creates a fair process that serves the entire membership and results in the preservation of the community character that we all want to maintain and enhance.