

ONE FINE DAY

Richmond's Art Beat

Discover the creative forces behind the city's vibrant renaissance.

BY VIRGINIA SHANNON

When, in 2018, major arts events—including Wine and Bowties' hip-hop and culture festival, Feels, and West Edge Opera's summer performance series—decamped to Richmond's Craneway Pavilion following years in Oakland, it signaled a greater trend. Tired of sky-high venue- and studio-rental costs, many artists are staking a claim in the more affordable west Contra Costa city, and forging a burgeoning creative community in the process.

It's not hard to understand why. While Richmond's reputation was notoriously seedy a decade or so ago, city officials and community groups have made strides in cleaning up some of the more dilapidated areas, restoring historic buildings, and creating green spaces. The city is also home to the East Bay's largest visual-arts organization, the **Richmond Art Center (RAC)**, which offers 60-plus adult and children's classes each quarter, and hosts exhibitions in its four galleries.

Richmond also boasts 32 miles of shoreline—with **San Francisco Bay Ferry** service that launched in January—as well as large swaths of industrial-style real estate, owing to the city's history as a World War II production hub.

These days, you'll find dozens of artists hidden away in those nondescript warehouses. They're at the forefront of a growing movement that is positioning Richmond as an ideal destination for anyone interested in exploring creativity in the East Bay. richmondartcenter.org, sanfranciscobayferry.com/richmond.



Archie Held's *Heritage* sculpture stands proudly in Richmond's Civic Center Plaza.

THE VENERABLE PIONEER

One of the area's most established artists, sculptor **Archie Held** works out of a sprawling complex of warehouses that he started acquiring in 1985, thanks to his friendships with building owners on the block. "I used to not invite artist friends over here because this is so obscenely big," Held laughs. "People come here and their jaws drop."

With the help of his crew, Held creates curving or twisting hand-textured metal forms, sometimes with a water element, for clients including George Lucas, Bill and Melinda Gates, Michael and Susan Dell, several Napa wineries, and countless

cities and corporations. (He also designs and constructs the Pac-12 football championship trophy every year.)

Despite his vast experience making large-scale outdoor sculptures, Held says he also enjoys smaller commissions, such as ornamental pieces that serve as a focal point for a family home. "A lot of people think they could never afford a sculpture, but it's more affordable than people think," he says. "I try to do something that's more personal than putting a shape in their house. ... It will have a lot of meaning for them." *To learn more about Held's work, or to inquire about scheduling a studio visit, go to archieheld.com.*