



Beloved Kitsilano sculpture alive and kicking again after 3-year absence



WindSwimmer creator delighted to see his work resurrected at Kits Pool

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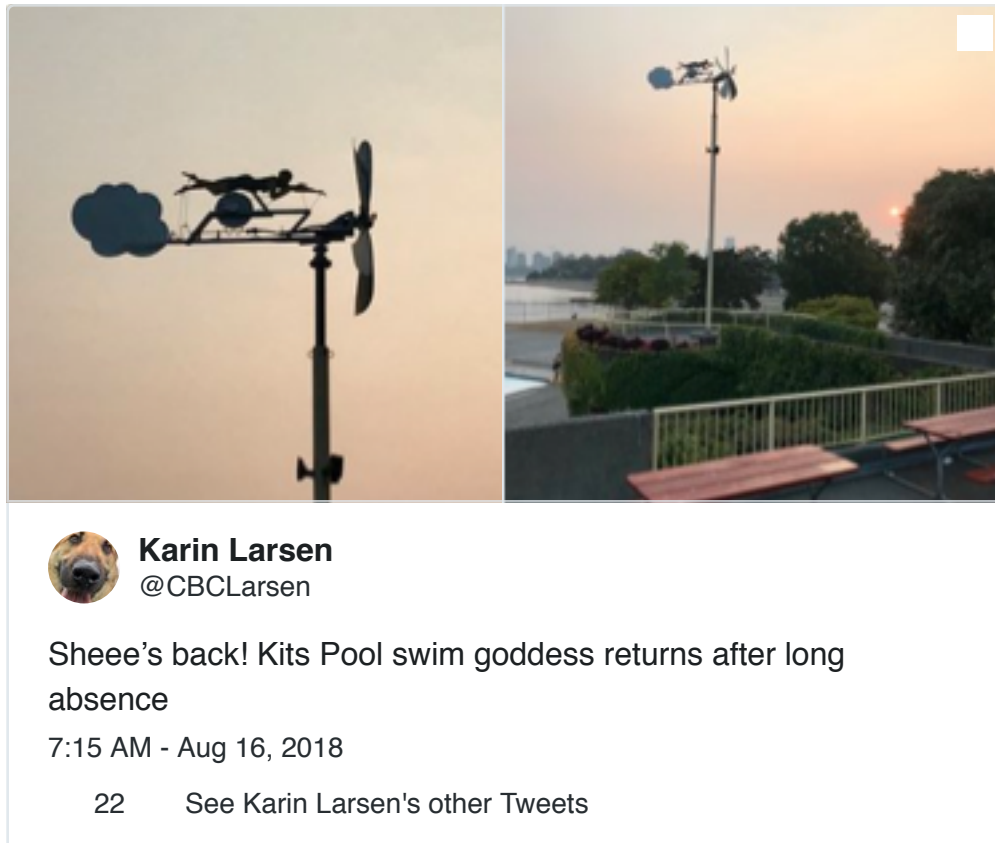


WindSwimmer was first installed over Kits Pool in 1996 thanks to a donation from patrons Herb and Mary Auerbach. (Ken Mayer)

When one of Vancouver's most beloved works of public art came crashing down in 2015, the artist who created Kitsilano's WindSwimmer thought it

would be repaired and reinstalled within three weeks.

Instead, it took three years.



"I just forgot about it really," said [Doug Taylor](#). "I never expected it to be back up again."

On Tuesday, Aug. 13, amid zero fanfare, the hypnotic wind-powered swimming woman whirligig was put back in her rightful place overlooking Kits Pool, surprising and delighting locals who, like Taylor, thought she was gone for good.

"I'm thoroughly excited to see her back," said longtime Kits swim coach KC Emerson. "You'd look at the top of that pole and see a bird sitting there and it just wasn't the same. We certainly missed her."



Doug Taylor says WindSwimmer is so compelling because "repetitive gears, pulley articulating action and repetitive motion is curiously something that people are attracted to. " (Brian Harris)

Taylor blamed the three-year absence on bureaucratic delays.

WindSwimmer was originally installed at Kits Pool in 1996 thanks to funding

from patrons Herb and Mary Auerbach.

For the next 19 years, Taylor maintained the work himself, renting a scissors lift periodically to fix and tweak the pulleys and gears that move his creation.



Taylor said he was inspired to create WindSwimmer after meeting an elderly gentleman who swam alone every day. "He was an older guy and he had lost his wife so I decided to make him a companion swimmer," said Taylor.

"Nobody paid any attention to my comings and going," he said. "I had very enjoyable years up on that lift with the best view in town."

But the most fun was meeting people and hearing firsthand their universal love of the work.

'Tons of feedback'

"It was really neat, I would get tons of feedback. In those days I would even take people up in the lift," he said.

But things changed when a windstorm brought the WindSwimmer down onto the pool deck.

Taylor believes an infusion of acrylic to strengthen the body of the sculpture unwittingly created a harmonic vibration in the kicking action of her legs.

That vibration slowly wore away at a weld, making the whole piece susceptible to a big gust of wind.

Although no one was hurt when WindSwimmer took her dive, the city stepped in, likely more than a little spooked by the incident.

The two parties agreed to work together: Taylor refurbishing the sculpture and city staff improving the security features of the frame.

"It was a pretty good collaboration, but on their schedule," laughed Taylor. "It just took an enormous



City workers reinstalling WindSwimmer Kits Pool Aug. 13. (Vancouver Park Board)

amount of time."

Earlier this week, long after giving up, he got wind city crews were almost ready to put WindSwimmer back up.

Taylor wasn't invited to the reinstallation, but that didn't stop him from celebrating the day.

Instead, he and 85-year-old Herb Auerbach met at Kits Pool where they admired their efforts from the perfect vantage point, the water below.

"Herb and myself ... were greeted by swimmers who have missed her over the last three years," he said.

"I had my doubts WindSwimmer would ever be resurrected. I'm delighted to see her back."