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## Some regard blue signs as royal eyesore

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Austin architect **Carl Trominski** didn't realize the stink he would cause when he decided to put together an arts project made up of blue signs.

"I thought it would be fun to do something that people could ignore and not even notice," said Trominski, 34.

Well, it didn't turn out that way.

Not only have people noticed the project, which has been around since 2003, they  also griped incessantly about the series of 21 mysterious yet seemingly pointless 2-by-6-foot blue signs attached to the walls of the North Lamar Boulevard railroad underpass just south of Fifth Street.

It sets people off that the Art in Public Places project signs don't have any road sign messages on them. They're blank. It's kind of like a building with no doors.

"I had no idea people would get angrier at that than they would at the traffic," said Trominski, who won a competition among about 30-some entrants to land the project. No wonder the soft-spoken guy didn't want his photo taken next to his work of art for this article.

People are lining up to tee off on this project.

"At first I thought the city had not put the info on the signs, then I thought how could I be so stupid," wrote one of the 160 people who commented on the signs in this paper's Talk of Austin online forum. "The writing would have been put on them before they went up."

But when you stop and think about it, why would you bother to put traffic information on an artsy collection of Austin road signs? Nobody would pay attention in this town.

Take the often ignored and overrated suggestion to "Yield," for example. The only way an Austin driver would heed a message on these signs is if Trominski had placed the words, "Honk, tailgate and speed" on his now famous signage.

The Art in Public Places project has caused a stir mostly because of the cost - \$45,000. Even though the project was paid for by hotel and motel taxes, many think \$45,000 is too much for a bunch of blue signs that say nothing whatsoever.

So, what is the artist's message? Trominski says he was making "sort of a fluttering gesture," whatever the heck that means. He said he also wanted to give drivers stuck in traffic through "two cycles of lights something to ponder."

And, indeed, they are pondering - whether this is a waste of money. By the way, the name of the project is "Moments." As in, "Give me a moment to take a hammer to this turkey."

"If that crap under the overpass is considered art, then someone's art history degree is from a high school," wrote another respondent to Talk of Austin.

Hey, ease off on Trominski. He didn't get anywhere near \$45,000 to put together the project. His artist's fee was about 10 to 11 percent of the budget. And he says that when all was said and done, he was working for "well under \$10 an hour."

Besides, despite all of the attention the project has caused, it has brought Trominski little fame and no groupies.

"As interesting a part of my life as it is, no one seems to notice too much," he said.   
"Every once in a while a guy will introduce me to a friend as the guy who did those signs, usually followed by a puzzled look."

A puzzled look - sort of like the look people get when they drive by the signs.

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