





When I was approached by the City of Beaverton, Oregon to create a custom painting, I was intrigued and honored. I was asked to visually represent the Sister City relationship that Beaverton has with Cluses, France. As always, I went to work doing research and working out relationships and ideas that would combine visually on a two dimensional surface. As I thought about how to approach this special piece, I struggled with color. Initially, I wanted to use the good old red, white and blue, that would reflect the colors of the two countries flags, but it occurred to me, this was about the two cities, not the two countries. That's when I went to work on discovering the similarities and differences that I could incorporate in to the final result. Finally, I determined that I would use the colors of a vineyard, as both Cluses, and Beaverton are located near famous wine regions. The green hues in this painting represent the color of mature grape leaves, and the vibrancy of the green plays against the grey to enhance the color saturation. In addition, anyone who has spent time in Beaverton, Oregon knows that there are many days of "grey", like it or not. I chose to celebrate this particular feature of the region. The many layers of texture are evident, but most prominent are the swirls and curls, which I wanted to represent motion, and the feeling of wine moving around in a glass. The white bars on the sides of the painting indicate the trend of globalization, tearing down walls and borders with initiatives like this wonderful Sister City Program.

Of course, with any good design, the trick is to incorporate all of the essential elements in such a way that even if the viewer didn't know the symbolism, they could still enjoy the piece as a whole. Scroll down to find out how I did it...

As it turns out, Cluses, France is historically known for its precision clock and watch making. Being close to Switzerland, supplying the finely crafted pieces for exceptional time pieces has defined the area for many years. The clock face is obvious, but I also chose to use this opportunity to incorporate the number four. The relationship between Beaverton and Cluses was formed in 1999, which has the lucky number four assigned to it in Eastern Astrological calendars.



This element is fairly straight-forward. The letter "B" represents Beaverton, and the "C" identifies Cluses. The placement of these letters in the painting indicates the central relationship between the two cities. In addition, the "B" is from a font that is indicative of the "wild wild west", as Beaverton was once truly considered the frontier of western expansion. For the "C", I chose a more refined font, common in "old world" representation.



At first, this section may seem arbitrary, but I think it's one of the best parts of the painting. As I was doing my research, I discovered that Beaverton and Cluses are almost exactly one degree apart in latitude. Beaverton sits at roughly 45 degrees North, and Cluses at 46. If you imagine a map in front of you, the left square would represent Beaverton, and the square on the right, one degree North, would of course indicate Cluses. In addition, the number two (as in a "pair") always represents a close relationship, (Sister Cities). Another image is that of a bridge. The evolution of Cluses as a trade center was only possible because of an ancient bridge built over the Arve River. Beaverton is also situated close to the major rivers of the Tualatin and Willamette. Finally, if you look at this part and imagine a music score, the squares represent notes on a partial music staff, which is a subtle tribute to the major Music Festivals held in both cities throughout the year.





The color and shape of these images are hopefully fairly obvious. They represent grapes, and reinforce the visual feeling of a vineyard, as alluded to earlier. They also provide vital movement for the eye around the painting and gave me the opportunity to add color to an otherwise mostly monochromatic painting. Of course there are five of them for a reason, but I can't give EVERYTHING away, now can I?

