

Mayor Ford lauds zodiac art installation in Nathan Phillips Square

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Toronto Mayor Rob Ford with a rooster sculpture during the opening of an Ai Weiwei sculpture exhibit at the reflecting pool at Nathan Phillip Square Tuesday, June 18, 2013. The rooster is Ford's Chinese zodiac sign. (MICHAEL PEAKE/Toronto Sun)

TORONTO - Mayor Rob Ford was still the cock of the walk out in public Tuesday - days after he was allegedly assaulted with a drink at another public event.

Ford climbed on a giant sculpture of a rooster head Tuesday in Nathan Phillips Square as part of the unveiling of Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads - an art installation by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei.

The event was the mayor's first public appearance since he was allegedly assaulted with a cup of juice at Taste of Little Italy on Saturday. During Tuesday's event Ford was surrounded by around nine staffers and four City Hall security guards. While he was heckled at one point, there was no repeat of Saturday's event where Ford was allegedly hit with a cup of juice.

Ford didn't speak about the juice incident Tuesday.

Although they kept a tight perimeter around the mayor, Ford's staff was spotted still handing out his familiar Rob Ford

Mayor magnets and business cards to everyone they walked past in front of City Hall. Ford also shook hands and posed for photos with some people in the square as he made his way to and from the event.

All 12 statues based on the 12 signs of the Chinese zodiac will be in the Nathan Phillips Square reflecting pool all summer as part of a joint venture by the City of Toronto and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

The rooster - Ford's Chinese zodiac sign - wasn't the only statue he got up close and personal with. He also pulled the cover off a sculpture of a giant rat head as part of the unveiling.

"The City of Toronto is delighted, absolutely delighted to host the Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads exhibit," Ford said. "This impressive series has been enjoyed around the world ... we are so proud to be chosen as the only, only Canadian city to publicly display this beautiful collection."

Ford invited "everyone" to visit City Hall to see the sculpture that he called a "once in a lifetime exhibit."

"My zodiac sign - I was born in 1969 - is the rooster. So, I love astrology. I've followed it my whole life and I'm sure everybody knows their sign and often reads their horoscope," he added.

In his speech, Ford trumpeted his administration's support for the arts.

"My administration has raised a lot of money for the arts - we are huge supporters of the arts," he said.

Zodiac Heads will be on display in front of City Hall until Sept. 22.