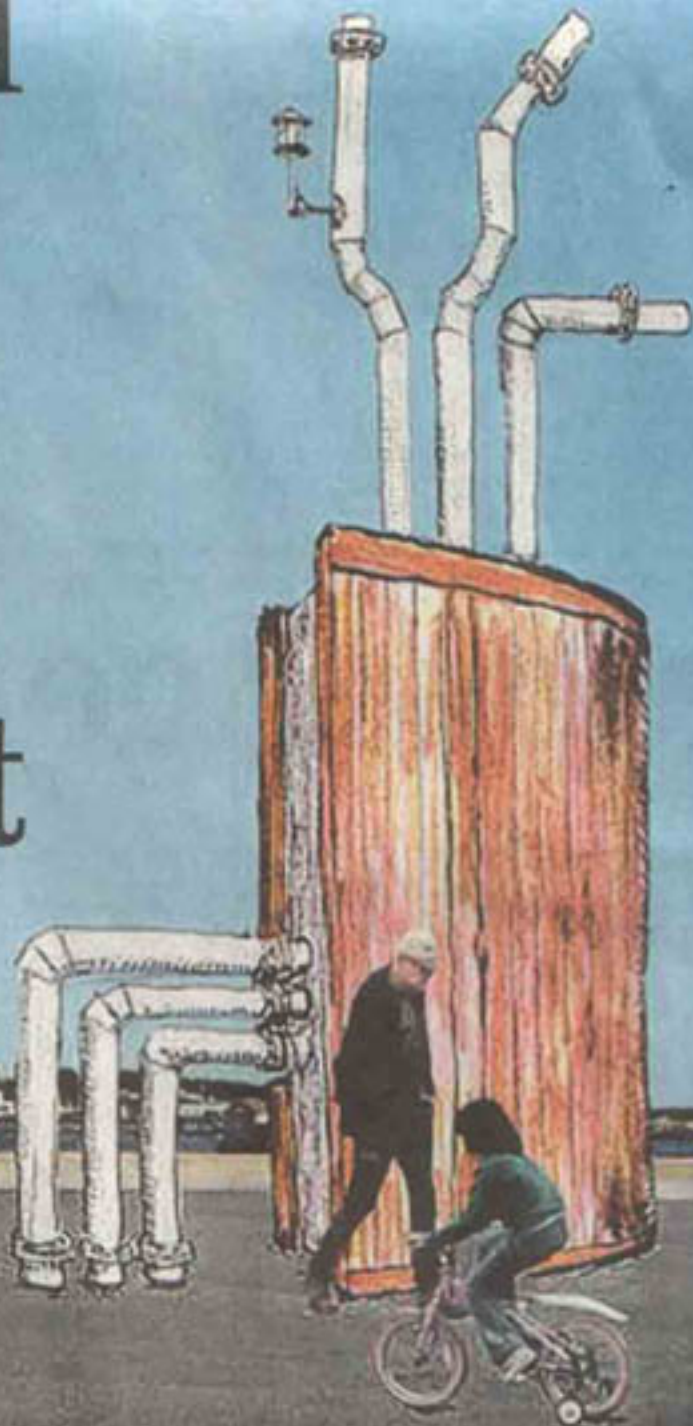


# Wexford council rejects 'sewage pipe' art



What Wexford is missing: a section of Dessardo's 500-metre The Drainage

**What was on offer bore no resemblance to the town or its heritage. It looked like a sewage pipe**

Michael Furlong, an independent councillor, said Dessardo's presentation was "an embarrassment to the sculptor and to the members of the council. I couldn't understand him". The Italian speaks in accented, but fluent, English.

Furlong added: "Before the seafront was done up, there were ballast cranes there, and they looked more arty than what this man was proposing. To be spending €125,000 on this proposal would be a waste of taxpayers' money.

"What was on offer was a disgrace. It bore no resemblance to the town or its heritage. It looked like a sewage pipe.

"I don't know about art, but I know enough to be able to say that if we'd voted for that, we would have been hounded by

the public. I hope now they'll come up with something we can all agree with."

Philomena Roche, the mayor, insisted that the final decision on the sculpture did not rest with the selection panel, but with councillors. "He's a lovely young man, but the proposed artwork wasn't the vision we had for our promenade. What we wanted on it was something that reflected the maritime and traditional history of the town," she said. "This proposal reflected the history of a drainage scheme."

Yet there is unhappiness about the decision within the selection panel and the arts department of Wexford council, a separate body to the borough council that looks after the county.

This partly stems from a suggestion by Adrian Doyle, the

manager of Wexford town, that Dessardo's work was rejected because it had strayed outside four sites outlined in the brief. "A section of the sculpture would be sited directly on the quayfront - an extremely busy promenade," Doyle said in a statement.

Dessardo said he was never told there was a problem with the siting of his sculpture, and that this is not referred to in a letter cancelling his commission that was sent to him by the council.

He added that he had not been paid for the second part of his work, and that he had not heard from the council since December. He said: "It's not just the money I've spent. From the point of view of my career as an artist, I have a right to show it."

A new competition is now being organised.