

Byward Market vendors challenge City of Ottawa definition of art

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The products of Doozy Candle are consumable and therefore not considered art, according to the City of Ottawa. (Courtesy of Mike Reynolds)

A pair of candle makers from Chelsea, Que., are upset that the City of Ottawa will no longer allow them to sell their wares in the Byward Market because it doesn't consider their work art.

The city is in the process of deciding which vendors it wants to occupy the downtown vending stalls and it's decided vendors selling products that don't last — such as candles — won't make the cut.

City inspectors said their job was to ensure only quality artistic products are sold in the downtown market.

And according to the city, an item is not considered art if it's a consumable product, such as incense, body lotion or candles.

Chelsea candle makers Greg Brayford and Bruce Langer argue they shouldn't be excluded from the market vendors' list.

They own the company Doozy Candle, which used to have a factory and showroom in Ottawa, but is now located at 181 Old Chelsea Rd. in Chelsea, about 15 kilometres north of Ottawa.

Both Brayford and Langer said having a stall in the Byward Market is an important step in taking their work to an Ottawa audience.

They also argued that their candles aren't fully consumable — only the centres are — and that the rest of the product should be considered art, even under the city's definition.

Only the core of the candle burns and then the body of the candle can be refilled, Langer said.

"As a matter of fact, the candle that started our company was 25 years old," he said.

Brayford said the market manager has offered them an option to keep vending — but one that doesn't make sense for their business.

"He said if we wanted to sell our candle in the market, we could sell the outside of the candle only, without the consumable part in the centre, which was just absurd," said Brayford.

The city's definition of art works against locally made crafts, Brayford said.

Under the definition, mass-produced products from China, such as belt buckles, are in, but locally made candles are out, he said.

Brayford said that rather than selling candles without wicks, he and Langer are going to shop around for another venue.