



Staff Report

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TO: Mayor and City Council
THROUGH: Steve Powers, City Manager
FROM: Salem Public Art Commission

SUBJECT:

Salem Public Art Commission Annual Report

Ward(s): All Wards
Councilor(s): All Councilors
Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

ISSUE:

Informational report to update the City Council on the work of the Salem Public Art Commission

RECOMMENDATION:

Information only.

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND:

Salem Revised Code 15.030(d), states that the Salem Public Art Commission “will report annually to the City Council on the disbursements of funds from the Public Art Trust Fund.” The Salem Public Art Commission’s Policy and Guidelines Manual, Section 4 states “City staff will prepare an Annual Report describing the activities of the Commission for the preceding fiscal year, including revenue received and expenditures made for each work of art. This report shall be approved by the Commission, and staff will file the Annual Report with City Council on or before January 1 of each year.”

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

The Salem Public Art Commission is comprised of seven members with expertise in art, art curation and art management, as appointed by the City Council. Chaired by Rick Yurk, Commissioner Chris D’Arcy serves as Vice Chair. Commissioners include Paula Booth, Rachel Bucci, Carol Hauser, Nathan Good and Eileen Cotter Howell. The Salem Public Art Commission meets monthly and has formed a

Collection Subcommittee.

Budget Fiscal Year 2017-18

While the Public Art Fund was set up to receive dedicated funding of one-half of one percent of the total eligible costs of public improvement projects, the Public Art Fund has relied on funds from other sources. As part of the City of Salem's 2017-18 Budget, the Public Art Fund was allocated \$15,000 from the Transient Occupancy Tax fund to support future acquisition, management and maintenance of art in the City's public art collection.

Per *Salem Revised Code* 15.030, 70 percent of these funds are to be used for acquiring public art, 20 percent are to be used for the purposes of managing the public art collection to include program management and community education, and 10 percent are to be used to support maintenance, conservation and de-accessioning of materials in the collection. The proposed Public Art Fund Budget for FY 2017-18 is \$58,740.

Taking Stock of the Collection

This past year, the Commission engaged an appraiser to estimate the value of the Salem Public Art Collection. In general, the Salem Public Art Collection is valuable, in fairly good shape, includes well-known local and northwest artists, and reflects a historical progression of the Salem area (Attachment 1). The majority of works in the Collection were acquired in 1972 and 1974 as part of the Civic Center's opening and the Mayor's Art Invitational shows, and are in good condition. Overall, the almost 100 pieces in the Collection are valued at \$1.37M. The Commission has identified some gaps in the two dimensional works of the Collection and will work on resolving a gap in contemporary pieces and works by local artists of national acclaim.

In 2016, the Commission completed a comprehensive digital, online inventory of the art within the Salem Public Art Collection. With the enthusiastic support of an intern and the Information Technology Department, the Commission also launched an interactive map of Civic Center buildings and downtown, featuring locations and stories of art in the City's collection.

Placing Art in the Landscape

The Commission, in partnership with the Downtown Advisory Board and Urban Renewal Agency continues to support an art program for the streetscape in downtown. In past years, the Downtown Advisory Board and the Urban Renewal Agency have allocated funding for pedestals to display art in the streetscape. The Commission is actively considering future placement of art at the downtown pedestal locations and continues to work with the Oregon Artist Series Foundation to identify appropriate works for these locations.

Recently, the Commission developed a program for signage of art in the streetscape and landscape. In addition to these activities, the group also accepted a new Leroy Setziol sculpture donation by the

Oregon Artist Series Foundation, located at the south east corner of the Liberty and Trade intersection.

In the near-term, the Commission intends for focus acquisition activities to three dimensional acquisition for outdoor placement throughout Salem's public spaces, in collaboration with Parks, where appropriate.

Enhancing Public Mural Program

In December 2016, in recognition of the value of art to the vibrancy of Salem's downtown, the Downtown Advisory Board recommended the use of Urban Renewal Agency funding for the two mural installations. One mural is to be located on the Chemeketa Parkade's east stairwell, the other is to be located on a short, rounded wall of the City-owned lease-able space in the alley between Liberty and Commercial, accessed from Chemeketa Street.

The proposed murals are the result of the Salem Public Art Commission's effort to commission murals from well-regarded northwest artists, recognized for the quality of their recent public commissions. In creating the Salem Public Art Commission and the Public Art Fund, the City Council in 2010 recognized "that visual arts contribute to and provide experiences that enrich and better the social and physical environment of the community..." Beginning with more than 25 artists of interest, the Commission sought interest and availability from 10 northwest artists. Of the four submitting conceptual designs for the mural sites, the Commission selected two: Blaine Fontana and Damien Gilley. The murals will be the subject of a Salem Public Art Commission public hearing on June 8, 2017. If approved, the Damien Gilley piece will be installed before July 5, 2017 and the Blaine Fontana piece will be installed beginning July 10 through July 25.

- **Damien Gilley, Mirror Maze.** (Attachment 2) Damien Gilley's approach to this site is highly influenced by the architecture present, as his work uses architecture as a place maker that houses our cultural activity. The proposal integrates ideas that represent the artist's body of work while connecting this project to the larger community. Much of the artist's work interprets the perception of moving through urban centers through a lens of multiple temporal references. This approach aims to challenge the viewer's traditional viewing of their surroundings by using subtle visual cues that are abstracted forms from the site. Elements of play and perception are important for the artist to communicate, aiming to give the viewer moments of pause and reflection. The artist hopes the work opens up ideas in the viewer of future forms of structure, contemporary visual interaction with our environment, and the promotion of unique abstract interpretations of our communities. The artist wants to reinforce the transformative nature of place by drawing attention to its innate, and sometimes invisible structures. This bold graphic solution echoes the most simplified of elements of the surrounding area to make a strong perceptual effect. It both identifies prominently the architecture it exists on while offering a more visual experience that aims to multiply and dislocate traditional architectural physicality. In general, it breaks apart monotony to give a unique reflection of the surroundings in a formal context, presenting the locale in a more dynamic moment.

The proposed mural will cover the entire surface of the short wall in the alley between

Commercial and Liberty Streets NE. Several new businesses have opened recently in this portion of the alley between Commercial and Liberty Streets NE. Fronting the alley, these businesses are accessed from the alley and rely on customer traffic to the alley. The proposed mural will face south, to the business entrances. At this location and this size, the mural is an appropriate scale and will bring much-needed color and vibrancy to the existing building or surrounding business district.

- **Blaine Fontana, Waldo Stewards:** (Attachment 3) Blaine Fontana's proposed work to be featured on the Chemeketa Parkade stairwell, viewed from the alley and Chemeketa Street NE between Liberty Street NE and Commercial Street NE, is titled "Waldo Stewards." The work honors Salem's own Waldo Park, the smallest redwood park in the world. The redwood tree encompasses the canvas of the stairwell and includes Pileated Woodpeckers, which are often hidden and rarely seen. By featuring the woodpeckers, the artist's intent to conceptually mirror the discovery of this mural and add an energetic narrative to the concept. The work also features pop graphics to symbolize the pinecones leaving the tree for growth and development.

The proposed mural will cover the entire exterior surface of the Chemeketa Parkade's east stairwell. The mural installation will face south, east and north for a total surface area of 529 square feet. By wrapping the Chemeketa Parkade stairwell, some features of the mural will be visible from the elevator doors on the west facade. At this location and this size, the mural is an appropriate scale and will bring much-needed color and vibrancy to the existing building or surrounding business district.

In the near-term, the Commission plans to build on the mural program.

Curating the Collection

With the inventory complete, the Commission began to re-examine existing installations in the City Council Chambers and the Mayor and City Manager's Office. Several works were relocated and installed in each of these ceremonial spaces. Two new works by local artist, Susan Trueblood Stewart, are currently on display in the Mayor and City Manager's Office.

The Commission continues to work with the Salem Public Library Foundation relating to the artworks from the City's Collection that are featured in the Salem Public Library. This summer, the Commission will work with the Library Foundation to re-hang works on display in the Library when the remodel of the Reading Room area is complete.

Following completion of the appraisal of the collection for insurance purposes, the Commission intends to assess the condition of the pieces in the collection to help prioritize maintenance and, if funds remain, secure professional photographs of the works in the collection. Research into the origination of pieces on public view will continue, for possible future inclusion in the Salem Public Art Collection.

Courtney Knox Busch
Strategic Initiatives Manager

Attachments:

1. The Salem Public Art Collection, May 2017
2. Damien Gilley, Mirror Maze
3. Blaine Fontana, Waldo Stewards