

PUBLIC ART COMMISSION MEETING

A regular meeting of the Public Art Commission took place on Wednesday, November 3, 2010, at 5:30 P.M. at the Cambridge Arts Council.

The following members were present:

Brent Ryan
Stephanie Boye
Miriam Stewart
T.K. McClintock

Staff present:

Jeremy Gaucher, Public Art Administrator
Lillian Hsu, Director of Public Art

1) Flocks Test #2 Installation – Carolina Aragon

Carolina conducted a PowerPoint presentation of the second test site installation for Flocks located in North Point Park. The remaining 30 birds were re-hung on the superstructure with new connections and stronger line. All Birds have remained in place throughout the 3 weeks of the second test.

See details in PDF of Presentation Attached

Staff Action

Lillian to contact Rich Rossi to ensure sign-off by City Manager office.

PAC Approves the project contingent upon approval of City Manager.

3) Art Jury – Sort List Discussion

Referring to the art jury that convened on October 12 and selected a short list of artists for small park projects, Lillian told the members that the art jury found 12 artists they thought suitable for the short list. Lillian had hoped for 20-25.

Jeremy stated that they had looked only at artists who noted they would be interested in projects under \$25,000. Lillian explained that she and Jeremy reviewed the short list with Rob Steck, who felt the list did not supply an ample selection of artists who could do sculptural features in a park (there were a number of painters) and who show experience working on projects. Rob found three artists whom he could consider but felt he needed to see more. Jeremy and Lillian told Rob that it might be a good idea for him to look at the entire slide registry to see if he could find more artists he thinks suitable for small park projects.

Lillian mentioned to the PAC that there are three parks Rob will be working on soon in the southern area of Cambridgeport – small parks that Rob would like to link together conceptually – Alberico, Nunes, and Fulmore Parks. Lillian showed the locations on the parks map.

The Commission discussed the merits of allowing Rob to select more artists from the full registry and giving those names to the art jury for their approval, or having the art jury visit the entire registry and select more artists for the short list. The Commission felt either route would provide the desired level of review by the art jury and also give Rob some control over the selection.

There were also some questions about where the painters on the short list might be able to find future commissions on city sites. Lillian said recent artists have been more sculptural in orientation and parks often have no wall spaces attached to them. Lillian mentioned Pacific Street Park, which has a wall often tagged. Lillian also mentioned that she wanted to write a grant proposal to commission 4-5 murals to be done simultaneously in the City, working with Public Works to find sites, and keeping the goal of introducing a greater variety of wall painting styles to the public than what we currently have. These artists would be selected by an art jury in consultation with CAC public art staff.

There followed a discussion about the balance between taking a greater curatorial role over artist selection and giving a greater role to the public. Lillian said it is difficult to come up with a set of steps that guarantee a high-quality outcome given that each project poses a unique set of characters, circumstances, and variables. T.K. felt it was the role of the PAC to impact quality control of projects. The members discussed the question of “who are the experts?”, in terms of shaping the decisions and outcome of public artworks - should the public have faith in the long-range vision and expertise of the public art administrators, or should the public art administrators see the public as the experts in the life of public space? The members shared familiarity with the dangers of either giving the administrators too much control or giving the public too much control.

Lillian said each project also presents a new opportunity to address the perennial theme of integrating public art with the work of architects and landscape designers and cultivating a good collaborative process.

3) Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 7:15 P.M.