

TO: CITY ARTS COMMISSION

FROM: Library Services Department
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TITLE: Plan for City-owned Art

ABSTRACT:

The City-owned art collection contains a significant amount of wall art obtained for decorative purposes. The liability of owning the majority of this art exceeds its appraised value. Separating valuable art and art that is locally important from decorative art will enhance the focus of the City-owned art collection and improve its manageability.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Arts Commission (a) retain City-owned art that is of high value or local importance; (b) de-access/surplus City-owned art that is of low appraised value and limited local importance and (c), offer retained City-owned art in storage for public conference rooms, lobbies, and other offices and public areas.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:

No funding requirement.

DISCUSSION:

The City of Newport Beach owns 2 types of art:

1. Public art, which is, in the words of art historian Cher Krause Knight, “art that has been planned and executed with the intention of being staged in the public domain, usually outside and accessible to all. Public art is significant within the art world, amongst curators, commissioning bodies and practitioners of public art, to whom it signifies a working practice of site specificity, community involvement and collaboration. Public art may include any art which is exhibited in a public space including publicly accessible buildings, but often it is not that simple. Rather, the relationship between the content and audience, what the art is saying and to whom, is just as if not more important than its physical location.” (Knight, Cher Krause, *Public Art: theory, practice and populism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008) Examples in the City of public art are the sculptures *Horizon '76*, the *Marine 1/1 Memorial* sculpture, the "*Nakayoshi - Good Friends*" sculpture, and the *Seagulls in Flight* memorial at the Corona del Mar Branch Library.
2. Wall art for office decoration, obtained for the purpose of making a space more attractive for an individual user or users.

Agenda Item B.4.

This staff report deals with wall art, primarily paintings. Newport Beach has 92 pieces of wall art currently in storage at the Central Library. The values of the pieces, which were recently appraised by Page Art, Inc., vary from \$20.00 to over \$49,000.00 (for Lisa Marie Fellers' *Back Bay Thistle* etching). The total appraised value of the wall art in storage is \$85,304.00. *Back Bay Thistle* is a significant outlier; without the value of this work factored in, the average appraised value of art in storage is \$128.00.

Many of these pieces were previously on display in the former City Hall, and were removed when that facility closed in 2013. Other pieces were either on display or in storage at other City facilities, and were sent to the Central Library for inventory in May 2013.

As this collection ages, it requires maintenance, repair and restoration. Wall art is subject to fading and discoloration. Materials degrade and paintings require cleaning. Framing and protective glass also factor into the cost of owning a collection. In the case of City-owned wall art, the liability of owning these pieces surpasses their value as controlled property. A general rule in art maintenance and restoration is that a piece should be worth the costs associated with maintenance and restoration.

The lack of display space is also a consideration. For example, the Civic Center's spaces are geared more towards glass to allow more light into the building. Placing art here – where a mounting place exists – would require that wall art be covered with UV glass to prevent further fading and damage.

Staff recommends that the City Arts Commission use the appraisal completed by Page Art, Inc., as a basis to retain City-owned art that is of high value. In addition, the Arts Commission should retain locally significant pieces that depict Newport Beach life, culture, and landmarks. The 10 Elizabeth Wiltrout Longridge watercolors acquired in 2011 are good examples of locally important art, as is *Back Bay Thistle*. Pieces such as these should be hung in public lobbies, conference areas, offices, and other public spaces.

Wall art of low appraised value and of limited or no local importance should be treated as controlled property and be removed from the City Art Collection. This is in accordance with the proposed revision of Section F of Council Policy I-11, *Acquisition of Art by the City of Newport Beach*, which states, "The City Council may sell, donate or otherwise remove any Art in the City collection." Remaining City art should then be offered for display in lobbies, conference rooms, offices and public areas. Areas that currently display City-owned wall art should retain these pieces.

Staff recommends that the City Arts Commission use these guidelines as well as Council Policies I-9 and I-11 in developing a process to evaluate the stored art for retention or de-accession.

NOTICING:

This agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the City Arts Commission considers the item).