

## Selecting Artist Selection Panel Members

Before beginning the artist selection process, the first step is to establish how the project will be managed and to identify the required steps for approval. A new selection committee for each art installation is recommended. A broad ad-hoc selection panel builds support and ultimately gives more people from the community the opportunity to be involved.

## Who Reviews and Who Approves?

Many programs have ordinances, policies and procedures in place regarding how a site is selected, how an artist is chosen and who reviews/approves the proposed artwork. Make sure everyone agrees on the final approval process well before starting the selection process. It is recommended that every effort be made to de-politicize the process by limiting involvement of elected officials and curbing the impulse to conduct public polls on the web.

Everyone knows that if you ask for an opinion you will be sure to get many. Public opinion does not always ensure good art. Great art is the result of great vision. No matter if a city has a weak public art policy or a strong public art ordinance, the involvement of the public should be limited. Social media has given rise to soliciting opinions from a “public” who may not even know anything about your community and may live in another country or continent. On-line voting initiated by local media does not ensure quality control of the creative process. Too many irons in the fire can lead to “art by committee” with the artist frantically trying to accommodate everyone’s ideas while his/her own get lost in the shuffle.

## Appointing a Selection Committee

The artist or artwork may be selected by an established public art committee; by a board or commission with defined roles; or by an *ad hoc* review committee that has been put together for the sole purpose of selecting the artist and approving the work. Ideally such a committee should consist of individuals who can candidly educate each other on art, the construction project, site details as well as characterize the community. Participants should be willing to engage in debate and be able to judge their peers objectively. There is an art to appointing members to a selection committee. Personalities, knowledge, role in the construction project or relationship to a community are important things to consider.

Voting members on a selection committee should include arts professionals, the project's building and/or landscape architect or engineer, a representative of the participating city/county/state bureau, and at least one citizen at large who represents the community where the project is located. It is recommended that the public art staff and project manager from the public bureau be *non-voting* members. A conflict of interest policy should be required to participate.

Each committee member serves through the completion of one public art project. For complex projects, a sub-committee may be appointed to make recommendations to the full committee. At least two of those sub-committee members must be artists.

## **Selection Committee Responsibilities**

Clarify the role of the Selection Committee before starting the process. Will the committee have the final say on who is selected? Do they approve the final design or is their job completed once the artist is selected? Typically, committees approve all selections by a majority vote or consensus; yet there are instances where scoring may be required.

A committee should always reserve the option to make no selection from submitted applications and to reopen the competition or propose other methods of selection if no proposal is accepted. This can be stated in the Call for Artists.

No single selection process is the best for every public art commission. Geography, demographics and a municipality's culture all play significant roles. Many established programs have developed processes well-refined over time based on experience as well as feedback from artists.

Public art programs and organizations commissioning public art projects can enlist artists to be considered in a variety of ways. These include calls for artists, juried slide registries, and direct invitations. Online calls for artists have grown in use over the past few years and represent a significant cost time savings for both artists and organizations.

## **Program Example: Metropolitan Transit Authority, New York**

At MTA Arts for Transit, the selection panel has five voting professionals: 1) an Arts for Transit representative; 2) an artist who has completed a similar project; 3) the project designer/architect; 4) two arts professionals from the community in which the transit station is located (curator, art historian, museum director, etc.). Community representatives and elected officials are invited and encouraged to share their points of view and preferences, but it is the five-voting member who make the ultimate choices. Arts for Transit chairs the panel. An MTA procurement officer observes meetings.

The community representatives provide valuable information and contribute what artist's work and process seem most suited to the community. Decisions are based on artistic distinction and the best fit of artist and project. Three or four finalists are named and produce proposals for the second meeting of the panel, which selects one proposal for the commission.

## **Definitions:**

**Arts Professional:** By training and/or experience, an arts professional can be a visual artist, graphic designer, art historian, architect, or museum professional.

**Community Representative:** Can be someone who represents the area where the artwork will be located, such as a community stakeholder. An example would be a member of the Parks Board, for artwork to be sited in a city park, or a neighborhood leader.

**Art Commissioners:** Current or former members of the City of Apache Junction Art Commission. For a five-member selection panel, two members of the Art Commission will serve.

**City Staff:** A member of the City staff can serve on a selection panel. For example, the director of Parks and Recreation may serve on a panel for art in a city park.