

**Jomsky, Mark**

**From:** Michael Cornwell [cornwellm@sbcglobal.net]  
**Sent:** Friday, January 23, 2009 3:46 PM  
**To:** Jomsky, Mark  
**Subject:** Fw: RE: Public Art and the Pasadena Civic Auditorium

To Mark Jomsky, City Clerk, CMC

Per our conversation this afternoon....curious why this January 4 message was not included as an Attachment to MICHAEL BECK'S Agenda Report of January 26, 2009. Please investigate and explain. You will distribute as we discussed.

Please acknowledge. Thank you,

Michael Cornwell

One South Orange Grove Blvd, Unit # 2

Pasadena, CA 91105 - cell 310 387 9248

**To:** Pasadena City Council people

**Copies to:** Mayor Bill Bogaard; City Manager Michael J. Beck, Pasadena Arts and Culture Commissioners; PCOC; Pasadena Heritage; Pasadena Arts Council; Pasadena Art Alliance; Council Field Representatives

**January 4, 2009**

A recent LATimes\* article headlined criticism of Pasadena's public arts plans and voiced concerns of Sue Mossman of Pasadena Heritage and Michael Ross of the PCOC that:

1. The sculptures chosen for the Civic Center Plaza are too large.
2. The sculptures will detract from the experience of the architecture.
3. The sculptures will interfere with the purpose of the plaza as a place to "mingle."

The article did not describe the intense process over 3 years in which both the PCOC and Pasadena Heritage participated. It made no mention of the size of the plaza or the setting of the Civic Center building on a

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foundation raised well above the level of the plaza. It did not cite the participation of the Convention Center architect in the selection of the artists chosen and the proposals they submitted or any of the city's written criteria for the art that was to be selected. Such criteria included visibility from Green Street and work scaled to enhance the plaza and the Auditorium with its Convention Center additions to create a unified whole. Nor did it mention the careful vetting of city fire and safety requirements and maintenance issues in the selection and development of the work. Public art as an afterthought is rarely successful. It works best when, as in this case, the art is intentionally planned and sited early in the project.

It is important for each of you to know that in addition to those criticizing the public art plan, there is also a significant constituency in the Pasadena community excited and energized by the proposed plans. This constituency would argue that:

1. The sculptures enliven the plaza and the existing architecture and, thanks to their size, respond to the scale of the architecture as it has evolved on the site.
2. Far from detracting from the architecture of the historic auditorium, they will enrich the experience and give a more realistic notion of Pasadena as it is today: a city that knows how to celebrate its past as it moves confidently forward integrating it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
3. The sculpture, iconic as they are, will encourage meeting and mingling on and around the plaza. It is likely that the sculpture will entice more residents and visitors to experience the plaza with its architectural surround at more times of day and night than an empty plaza that responds solely to visitors to the convention center and/or events at the Civic Auditorium.

I thank you for your attention and for your careful consideration of the proposal passed to you from the Arts and Culture Commission of the city with their recommendation to approve.

Sincerely yours, Betty Duker

\*[LATimes](#), December 27, 2008 "Pasadena's public art plans draw criticism" by Raja Abdulrahim

**Jomsky, Mark**

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**From:** Jakiege@aol.com  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 25, 2009 3:55 PM  
**To:** Jomsky, Mark  
**Subject:** Jan.26,09 vote on placement of Public Art in Pas. Civic Aud. and Conv. Center Pl

To Pasadena City Council,

Item #7

I am against further study of the Arts and Culture Commission recommendation that public art as selected be placed in the Civic Auditorium and Convention Center plaza.

I urge the City Council people to approve the Arts and Culture Commission recommendation that public art, as selected, be placed in the Civic Auditorium and Convention Center plaza.

Joyce G. Engs  
Long Time Resident of Pasadena  
Member of the Pasadena Art Alliance

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**Pasadena Heritage  
651 S. St. John Avenue  
Pasadena, California 91105  
626 441-6333**

January 23, 2009

Mayor Bill Bogaard and members of the  
Pasadena City Council  
100 North Garfield Avenue  
Pasadena, California 91109

RE: Public Art Proposal for the Pasadena Center

Dear Mayor Bogaard and Council Members:

On behalf of Pasadena Heritage, I am writing to express our support for the position of the Pasadena Center Operation Company (PCOC) that two proposed large sculptures not be approved for placement in the main plaza of the Pasadena Center. The installation of these pieces conflicts with

- The Civic Center Master Plan
- Countless hours of public input and planning over more nearly two decades, as well as the original Plan for the Civic Center conceived by George Ellery Hale and our first planning commission in the 1920s.
- The vision statement for the public art component
- The site plan and design of the Pasadena Center expansion

Please consider the following background and commentary as you review the public art proposal for the Pasadena Center.

**Pasadena's Civic Center and its Importance**

The Pasadena Civic Center is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is considered one of the best examples of civic architecture from the City Beautiful Movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The district includes the Central Library on the north, City Hall, and the Civic Auditorium on the south, with other public and private buildings completing the list of contributing structures. The creation of the Civic Center was a monumental public effort and investment and placed Pasadena on the cutting edge of planning and architectural design at the time.

The Civic center continues to be the real and symbolic heart of the city, and a place of elegance of distinction that sets Pasadena apart. The recent, very successful City Hall Seismic and Restoration project, which has won many awards and received millions of dollars of grant support for historic preservation, showcases Pasadena's leadership in protecting and preserving this unique civic place and its individual contributing buildings. In keeping with this direction, the design the Pasadena Center expansion project demonstrates great care and respect for the Civic Auditorium as the iconic building around which the rest of the project was designed.

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### **Decades of Planning**

The Civic Center Master Plan, developed by the Civic Center Task Force (appointed by then mayor Chris Holden and chaired by former mayor Katie Nack) was undertaken nearly 20 years ago to set the course and establish clear direction for the future of the Civic Center. The resulting plan, recorded in the “Grey Book” document, was a multi-year effort that engaged planners, city political leadership, business interests, and community representatives. The enhancement of historic buildings and public spaces, including public amenities and public art, were part of the Civic Center Task Force’s charge. Its work was continued by the Civic Center Implementation Task Force, a second appointed body that reviewed projects and proposals in the Civic Center for compliance with the planning documents. Pasadena Heritage representatives served on both of those bodies.

Important themes that emerged and were reinforced during this process were the brilliance of the original 1920s Civic Center Plan (the Bennett Plan), the need to preserve and celebrate the Civic Center as an historic district as well as an active civic place, the unfortunate loss of integrity in places where new buildings were allowed that are incompatible and undistinguished, the need to recapture parts of the original plan where damage was reversible (particularly relative to the Plaza Pasadena), and the desire to add appropriate new elements that would beautify and unify the Civic Center, encourage pedestrian activity and enhance, but not compete with, the original vision of George Ellery Hale and our first Planning Commission. Adopted “improvements” for the Civic Center included:

- Restoring the original decorative sidewalks around City Hall, recreating the decorative paving in front of the Civic Auditorium, and extending the use of pattern and color in sidewalks and street paving to add visual interest and unity to the district as a whole
- Adding a fountain in the middle of Centennial Place (in front of City Hall) that would not interfere with a variety of public uses in that space
- Improving street lighting using historic street light designs
- Adding new trees, replacing dying trees, and adding additional landscape features where possible
- Adding street furniture with a unified theme throughout the district

Some elements of this adopted plan have been implemented already; some are awaiting additional funding.

The Pasadena Center expansion was first being discussed even as the Civic Center Master Plan was being finalized. When the idea of the expansion was approved and the design phase began, the specifics of the Civic Center Master Plan were firmly in place. The first design was not responsive to the Master Plan and was abandoned. The second design – the one that is now nearing completion – responds quite specifically to the intent and the goals of the Civic Center Master Plan, including the creation of an enlarged public plaza along Green Street (with decorative paving and new lighting) and new buildings or facades that frame the original Civic Auditorium as the centerpiece. Many other factors, including detailed programming of the buildings and spaces, were carefully considered to maximize the functionality as well as the aesthetics of the center.

### **Public Art Often Considered**

The idea of public was woven through this lengthy planning process because all the participants were aware of and supportive of public art as a worthy community undertaking. During the Civic Center Master Plan and Implementation process, elaborate public art ideas were proposed with themes of evolution and space, to run from the Central Library south to the Civic Auditorium, in and along Garfield Avenue. That idea was rejected by the Task Force as not relating to the Civic Center and not reinforcing the historic character of the district. Additional elements were proposed for Centennial Place, but were also rejected as unwelcome intrusions in front of City Hall. The idea that City Hall, itself, was public art, expressed in architectural terms, prevailed. It was agreed that nothing was needed except a more pleasing, understated, elegant place in front of the building that could be used for a variety of purposes.

In designing the Pasadena Center Expansion project, the same concept was applied. The Civic Auditorium is the centerpiece of the whole design concept and, as one of Pasadena's most beautiful buildings, it is public art expressed as architecture and has been perhaps the most important center of arts and culture activity in Pasadena since 1931. **The proposed sculptures do not follow the overall Civic Center Master Plan ideals and do not compliment the Civic Auditorium, but rather intrude into the setting of the original building and compete with it for attention.**

The Center's new buildings, site features and new art were intended to compliment, enhance or frame -- but not compete with -- the Auditorium which is the project centerpiece. **One of the guidelines for the public art (taken from the vision statement created for this project) is that the public art will not impede views of the Civic Auditorium. Clearly, the sculptures do impede views of the Civic Auditorium and therefore, the proposal does not comply with the public art guidelines for the project.**

### **Public Art Locations were Planned and Designed into the Project**

The Pasadena Center Expansion project committee and the architects certainly recognized that new public art would be part of the complex, and places were identified and created for its possible installation. Pasadena Heritage regularly participated in these discussions. Murals may apparently be installed just inside the new buildings where story-high walls were designed for two-dimensional art (or to serve as a backdrop for mobiles or hanging sculpture). Transparent glass was stipulated (at additional expense) to assure that the art would be visible. Large, tall, dramatic, free-standing sculpture in the plaza in front of the Civic Auditorium was never contemplated until the sub-committee in charge of selecting the art began its work. Ironically, the sculptures would be so large and distracting that they would compete with the murals and even block views of them. **Therefore, it appears that the public art pieces proposed will compete with each other.**

### **Pasadena Center Function and Programming**

Another critical consideration of the site plan for the expanded Pasadena Center was the need to make it more attractive and more functional, and thus more competitive. A lot of thought was given to how the buildings would function independently and in combination to accommodate a variety of uses, multiple events at a time, and large conventions with several different components. Being able to find one's way around, seeing clearly where find one's destination, and having pre-function and break-out spaces for a variety of programs at once, were all carefully analyzed. The public plaza has many purposes in the

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Center's plan, and the proposed sculptures take up considerable space that was designed for other uses. By virtue of their size and scale, they also interfere with sightlines from one building to another. The PCOC staff can certainly address these issues in more detail.

**Conclusion**

**For all these reasons, Pasadena Heritage urges you to support the PCOC board and its request that the sculptures not be approved.** Pasadena Heritage members have suggested that one of the pieces could be located elsewhere in the project or that these sculptures might be installed elsewhere in the city where their size and scale would be appropriate and where they could serve to enliven a space that needs visual focus. It has been suggested that temporary installations could be placed in the plaza from time to time or that the funds be dedicated to other arts activities like public concerts, exhibitions, or to support the Orchestras of Pasadena. There may be many other ideas worth considering to make the best use of these public funds for art. Pasadena Heritage has no objection to the pieces themselves, but we believe strongly that their size and scale are wrong for this location and conflict with plans and guidelines, both recent and long-standing.

Thank you for considering our views on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Susan N. Mossman  
Executive Director

**Jomsky, Mark**

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**From:** Michael Cornwell [cornwellm@sbcglobal.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, January 26, 2009 3:47 PM  
**To:** Jomsky, Mark  
**Cc:** Beck, Michael; DeWolfe, Stephanie; Branch, Rochelle; Susan Mossman,; Bogaard, Bill  
**Subject:** Fw: Art vs. Architecture

To Mark Jomsky-City Clerk

Mark, Please provide a copy of this message to all councilmembers this evening and others of interest in this matter.

--- On **Mon, 1/26/09**, **Terry LeMoncheck** <tlemoncheck@pasadenaartscouncil.org> wrote:

From: Terry LeMoncheck <tlemoncheck@pasadenaartscouncil.org>  
Subject: Art vs. Architecture  
To: "Michael Cornwell" <cornwellm@sbcglobal.net>  
Date: Monday, January 26, 2009, 3:02 PM

Hi Mike, sorry I was a little delayed getting this to you.

At a recent Arts & Culture Commission meeting, when the Commission was considering its recommendation on the public art projects at the Pasadena Center, Sue Mossman from Pasadena Heritage stated during the public comment portion of the meeting that she and Pasadena Heritage felt that the façade of the Civic Auditorium **was** the art (emphasis mine). In other words, the façade was all the public art that was necessary for the plaza.

Later in the meeting, Rochelle pointed out that the City of Pasadena makes a clear policy distinction between art and architecture, as exemplified by the fact there is an Arts & Culture Commission and, as a separate body, a Design Commission.

Therefore the conclusion that the Civic Auditorium (architecture) suffices for the public art is erroneous.

Hope that helps. See you later!

Terry

Terry LeMoncheck

Executive Director

Pasadena Arts Council

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Facilitating, Empowering and Advocating for the Arts

**Jomsky, Mark**

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**From:** Bogaard, Bill  
**Sent:** Monday, January 26, 2009 4:11 PM  
**To:** Jomsky, Mark  
**Subject:** FW: Sculptures at the Civic Center...

M: For distribution, please. BILL

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**From:** Stephen Nowlin [mailto:stephen.nowlin@artcenter.edu]  
**Sent:** Mon 1/26/2009 3:32 PM  
**To:** Bogaard, Bill  
**Subject:** Sculptures at the Civic Center...

Hi, Bill -- I attempted to send the following to City Council members in anticipation of tonight's Civic Center sculpture discussion -- but the online email at the city's website isn't working, just results in an "out of order" alert.

So, you're stuck with it, since you have another email address listed. Here goes...

All best,  
/steve

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With many valid points of view, opinions, and passions swirling around this subject, perhaps it would be of value to try and clarify a couple of things it is NOT about.

Quoted in Thursday morning's Pasadena Star News (Jan. 22), PCOC board chairman Tom Seifert characterized the fervor of the debate by saying -- "Basically I think it's just opened up the definition of what is art." We should put to rest any such notion -- there is no acceptable definition for what art is, and the outcome of this controversy cannot hinge upon or imply that some sort of definition or another has won the day. If the City Council wants the embarrassment of having stepped in a big pile of steamy dung, then let it be seen by the world as having arrived at its decision over whether to install or not install, by considering the right of these two proposed sculptures to own the title of "art." Don't go there, is my advice -- don't tread in history's worn leather down the labyrinthine paths of Impressionism's battle with the French Academy, Constructivism's entanglement with the Russian Revolution, Hitler's "Salon de Refuses," or Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano's tussle with Senator Jesse Helms. Delete a definition of "art" and "quality" from the deliberations, it's a black hole.

Second, this debate is not legitimately about size and scale. Unless the City Council is willing to label every piece of solid matter interrupting a view of the expanded Civic Auditorium from the perspective of the Library southward, including trees, light posts, the corners of buildings, Paseo tables, chairs, vendor carts and overhead lighting, Green Street cars and trucks, and etcetera, as a threat to the historical and architectural integrity of the new buildings, it is ludicrous to say that only sculptures get in the way, and disingenuous to advocate for their removals while claiming it has nothing to do with the art works themselves but rather their

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## Sculptures at the Civic Center...

scale. I hear no clamor to rid the view of 30-foot high trees on the Civic plaza -- but what is the difference between a tree in the way and a sculpture in the way, if not one of aesthetics? The buildings are massive, tens of hundreds of feet in dimension -- their integrity will easily tolerate the punctuation of a couple of 20 x 30-foot sculptures at street level. Nobody's going to miss the grandeur of the buildings and fixate on the sculpture. Remove size and scale from the deliberations.

What the debate IS about is Pasadena -- in two ways. First, Pasadena has a process for funding, soliciting, and commissioning public works of art -- an open, clear, and transparent process that was followed faithfully in the case of these two sculptures. Developers are aware of the process, City Council members appoint Arts and Culture Commission members to oversee the process, and the city's own Cultural Affairs Division manages it with all the stakeholders. The City Council should not step in to undermine its own duly and thoughtfully accomplished process.

Second, hidden beneath its pastoral image of green lawns and shaded neighborhoods, its self-consciousness as the village below the mountains, its image embodied in architectural richness and admirable preservation consciousness, Pasadena is a simmering city of the twenty-first century. There are larger cities in the world, with larger institutions, but none can match the unique association of art, science, learning, and cultural institutions that exist side-by-side in Pasadena, and across which a spark of creativity ignites intellectual audacity, innovation, risk-taking, and vision for the future on a daily basis. Pasadena, in short, is a cosmopolitan city of the world. Even as it safeguards the enduring values of its past, Pasadena needs to step to the global stage it deserves, to the edge of its future -- and leap forward. It is not a time for timid decisions mired in history's provincialism -- it is time for bold, thoughtful and calculated, audacious, actions.

The City Council should eye the risk of installing these sculptures as a welcome opportunity to tell the world about the simmering Pasadena, the one that values the past but seizes the future. And it should not subvert the good work of its Arts and Culture Commission and Cultural Affairs Division. It should embrace the tension of contemporary art against revivalist architecture, and savor the intellectual debate as exemplary of the kind of city it wants to be.

Stephen Nowlin

Please note: the views expressed here do not represent nor are they intended to imply representation of the views of my employer.