

# Agenda Report

**TO: CITY COUNCIL**                      **DATE: JANUARY 26, 2009**  
**FROM: MICHAEL BECK, CITY MANAGER**  
**SUBJECT: Review of Final Art Plan for the Pasadena Center Public Art Program for Exterior Art Commissions**

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that City Council:

- 1) Find that the process for selection of public art at the Pasadena Center Operating Company (PCOC) was followed in conformance with the Capital Improvement Program Public Art Guidelines;
- 2) In consideration of the dissatisfaction expressed by the PCOC Board with the exterior artworks developed as a result of that process, refer this matter back to staff and the Arts & Culture Commission for consideration of alternatives; and,
- 3) Provide authority to staff and the Arts & Culture Commission to develop an amended artist selection process appropriate for the unique challenges of this particular site.

**ARTS & CULTURE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

At the December 10, 2008, meeting the Commission reviewed and confirmed the implementation of the selection process and moved to recommend to City Council approval of the two exterior final art concepts for the Pasadena Center Public Art Program.

**PCOC BOARD OF DIRECTORS RECOMMENDATION:**

At the May 28, 2008 Board of Directors meeting, the following motion was unanimously approved (with one abstention):

"That the Pasadena Center Operating Company Board of Directors strongly opposes the placement of any public art work or other permanent fixtures on, or to, the Grand Plaza in front of the Civic Auditorium, Conference Center and /or Exhibit Hall/Ballroom. The plaza shall be kept free and clear from any such obstruction in recognition of the fact that the open plaza area was specifically designed to integrate the architecture of the new facilities with that of

designed to integrate the architecture of the new facilities with that of the historically significant Civic Auditorium and is, in itself, a work of art and a planned architectural element.”

An additional motion was unanimously carried (with one abstention):

“That the Pasadena Center Operating Company has made no budgetary provisions for maintenance of the public art and therefore, the Board of Directors recommends that the Pasadena Arts Commission accept full financial responsibility for the cost of all maintenance and repair of any and all public art pieces in perpetuity selected by the Arts Commission and placed on property under the control of the Pasadena Center Operating Company.”

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Public Art Program for City Construction Projects (CIP) requires that one percent of the construction costs of eligible city projects be dedicated to public art by ordinance. The construction of a convention center expansion project and new public plaza prompted a \$1.2 million appropriation by City Council to the Capital Public Art Fund to fulfill this mandate.

The process for selection of art pieces and expenditure of the public art funds is governed by the Capital Improvement Program Public Art Program Guidelines (the Guidelines) adopted by City Council in 1995. The Guidelines set forth a specific process and require the Arts and Culture Commission to review the procedures to determine if the process for artist/team selection was properly implemented. If the Commission approves the process, but the City Council disapproves, the Guidelines state that the matter shall be referred to staff to recommend an alternate process to the Arts Commission.

In this case, the Arts and Culture Commission reviewed and confirmed the process and is recommending approval of the two exterior art pieces developed through that process. The PCOC Board however, took action stating that they do not wish to have any artwork placed in the plaza. A subcommittee of the Arts and Culture Commission and the PCOC Board met twice to discuss alternative locations for the pieces on the PCOC campus, but appropriate sites could not be identified without significant violations of the safety codes.

The parameters of the Guidelines do not provide authority to the Arts & Culture Commission to develop an alternate art selection process in response to the PCOC concerns without first receiving direction from the City Council. Staff is reluctant to recommend implementation of art pieces at a site where the facility operator does not believe they will enhance the operations of the facility.

**BACKGROUND:**

In compliance with the procedures outlined by the Guidelines, staff convened a Pasadena Center Art Advisory Committee in January, 2006, to develop a vision statement, objectives and Public Art Plan for the site. The Committee was composed of three PCOC Board members, members of the historic preservation, arts and design communities, the project architect, two non-voting members of the Arts & Culture Commission, and PCOC and Cultural Affairs staff.

A professional art consultant led two meetings of the Advisory Committee where visuals of many examples of civic artworks were reviewed and discussed. The project architect presented several visuals of previous projects. Other discussion included the Civic Center plan, consideration of the extent to which the plaza could be utilized, the relationship between contemporary art and historic architecture, and the need to engage both visitors and residents by creating a major focal point that would become iconic for the Green Street location. These discussions were the basis for the Art Plan which was approved by the Advisory Committee on October 24, 2006.

The plan places specific focus on visibility of the exterior artwork for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic; appeal to both visitors to the Center and the general public; size and scale of artwork related to the Center; and a sense of obvious significance that would not only be apparent from the Paseo Colorado, but that would invite visitors to the Convention Center site.

That plan states "With the splendid Civic Auditorium in place as a solid expression of Pasadena's past, there is ample reason to place contemporary artwork in the plaza . . ." In reference to the largest commission, specifically to be sited on the plaza, it states "The emphasis on the development of this commission must be directed toward the creation of an artwork whose presence is powerful enough to entice people to cross Green Street to see it and that provides users of the plaza with a sense of compelling adventure and expansive possibilities."

Included in the plan for the Pasadena Center Public Art program was a two-phased approach consisting of an artist selection process for up to three exterior commissioned artworks and two interior commissions. A \$100,000 purchase program for artworks by Pasadena-based artists was also created as a part of Phase I. Exterior public art commissions were budgeted at \$500,000, \$200,000, and \$130,000, and the interior commissions were set for \$125,000 each. Phase II identified expanded opportunities for temporary art installations and other artist exhibition and performance opportunities to supplement the commissioned artwork. No budget has been identified for Phase II.

The final Art Plan was presented to the PCOC Board of Directors as an informational item at their meeting on November 20, 2006.

**Artist Selection Process:**

In January, 2007, a Request for Artist Qualifications was developed to solicit artists for an on-line application process. Extensive outreach was conducted to ensure notification to a broad and diverse pool of public artists from the Los Angeles region. The Request for Qualifications netted over 400 responses.

An artist selection panel was convened, per the Guidelines, to review and select artists for the exterior commissions. Panel members consisted of two voting members from the PCOC Board of Directors and both local and regional experts including curators, arts administrators, artists, and the project architect. Two members of the Arts & Culture Commissioners participated as non-voting members.

Based on a review of the applications and interviews with the final candidates, the panel selected three artists (Hans Peter Kuhn, Dennis Oppenheim and Jim Isermann) and one alternate for the exterior commissions and recommended approval to the Arts & Culture Commission.

At the December 12, 2007 meeting, the Arts & Culture Commission approved two of the three exterior artists and related art concepts as recommended by the selection panel. The Commission deferred consideration of the Isermann work; Isermann ultimately declined to re-propose in response to the Commission's request.

**PCOC Board Concerns**

On January 18, 2008, staff presented the Commission's approvals of artists and concepts as an information item to the PCOC Expansion Committee. A second information presentation was made to the PCOC Board of Directors on April 23, 2008, in accordance with the established procedures of the Public Art Plan for the Center.

On May 20, 2008, the PCOC Board voted to "strongly oppose the placement of any public artwork or other permanent fixtures on, or to, the Grand Plaza in front of the Civic Auditorium, Conference Center and/or Exhibit Hall/Ballroom."

The Public Art Subcommittee of the Arts & Culture Commission met on June 27, 2008, to review the selection process and the concept art plans. They determined that the procedures for artist selection were in compliance with the Guidelines as adopted by City Council and recommended that the Final Art Plan for the Hans Peter Kuhn project proceed as approved in concept. In response to the concerns from PCOC, they requested that staff research possible alternate sites east of the Civic Auditorium for the artwork by Dennis Oppenheim.

At the August 27, 2008 meeting of the Public Art Subcommittee, staff reported that alternate sites proposed for Dennis Oppenheim's artwork were determined to be not feasible due to physical site restrictions. Members of the PCOC Board of Directors and staff were in attendance to reiterate the Board's motion for opposing any permanently placed objects on the Grand Plaza.

The Public Art Subcommittee reported on the status of the project to the full Arts & Culture Commission on September 10, 2008. The Commission recommended that the Public Art Subcommittee meet with Pasadena Center Board of Directors representatives to review and discuss the Public Art Plan and art projects, specifically Hans Peter Kuhn's "Lightfield" (see attachment B and photo of model attachment E).

A follow-up discussion was held at the Public Art Subcommittee meeting on October 15, 2008 with representatives of the PCOC Board. Staff was directed to again research possible alternate site opportunities for both exterior works. Cultural Affairs staff conducted a site visit on October 31, 2008 with PCOC staff to review alternate site opportunities for artwork.

On November 18, 2008, Cultural Affairs staff presented the research results and an analysis of the identified alternate site opportunities to the Public Art Subcommittee and concluded that the sites:

- 1) Were not compatible with the specific requirements of the Pasadena Center Public Art Plan, which called for:
  - highly visible and prominent locations for artwork;
  - accessibility for pedestrian and vehicular traffic as well as for visitors to the Center and the general public from Green Street; and
  - significant size and scale in relation to the site
- 2) Did not meet City Fire Code requirements; and,
- 3) Had severe accessibility impairments.

After a review of staff's findings, the committee concurred that no feasible alternate locations for the pieces were available. The committee discussed the parameters of the Guidelines and concluded that the Arts & Culture Commission had no authority to undertake an alternate art selection process in response to the PCOC concerns without first receiving direction from the City Council. Without opportunity to develop alternatives, the Public Art Subcommittee confirmed that the art selection process had been conducted properly as mandated in the Guidelines and recommended that the Final Art Plan proposals be forwarded to the full Arts & Culture Commission at the December meeting.

On December 10, 2008, the Arts & Culture Commission concurred with the Public Art Subcommittee and recommended forwarding the Final Art Plans (see attachment B, C, and E) for both exterior proposals to the City Council for approval.

**ANALYSIS:**

The Pasadena Center Convention Center expansion project is composed of the historic Civic Auditorium, two flanking buildings and a sequence of landscaped plazas in the Civic Center area providing ample opportunity for public art. Exterior

and interior artworks will enrich the cultural campus of the Pasadena Center for both residents and visitors.

#### **Final Art Plan for Hans Peter Kuhn**

Artist Hans Peter Kuhn's final art project concept is an abstract light sculpture installation to be located on the public plaza adjacent to the east Conference Center pavilion (see attachment B and E) "Lightfield" is composed of 25 illuminated polycarbonate tubes that rise approximately 5 feet from the base. The field of light will swivel and be randomly repositioned by an automatic mechanism, a two-axis swiveling base programmed to allow each tube to move and rotate in a conic fashion. The tubes may also be programmed to disengage, allowing the tubes to sway in the wind.

The base is concrete with granite-clad sides and top, 15'x38' in plan and 20" high. Computer, servo controllers and electrical will be housed in an adjacent building allowing for easy access to reprogram the motion of the illuminated tubes or for maintenance.

Acknowledging one of the defining characteristics of Pasadena as the science of light and space through the studies and advancements emanating from Cal Tech and JPL, the sculpture offers a sculptural expression of this heritage.

The piece is intended to be an aesthetic link between the historic Civic Auditorium and contemporary Convention Center that enfolds it. The juxtaposition of the minimalist conceptual kinetic sculpture against the backdrop of the City's historic architecture has the capacity to create an iconic artwork for the plaza.

The illuminated tubes are LED lights that should have a long life with regular maintenance and routine cleaning. Routine maintenance, including changing LED lights will be the responsibility of the maintenance staff of Pasadena Center with training from the artist/fabricator. Approximate cost of LED light is \$50 to \$75. Responsibility for major conservation will be assumed by Cultural Affairs.

#### **Final Art Plan for Dennis Oppenheim**

Dennis Oppenheim's final art concept is a sculptural piece in architectural scale forming an enclosure of projection surfaces which will be sited on the west end of the Plaza, adjacent to the Ballroom (see attachment C and E). "Thinking Caps" draws its inspiration from the saying "put on a cap...end up with an idea..."

The sculpture is 15'h x 24'd consisting of three hats: the rain hat, sun hat and conductor's cap. The hats, measured from the foundation to their tops, are: the rain hat at 16½ feet, sun hat at 20 feet, and the conductor's cap at 12½ feet. They are made of structural steel, galvanized and/or powder coated steel, punch plate, perforated metal and grating, Lexan and pattern projectors. The projector uses a 150 watt halide lamp with a 12,000 hour lamp life. A 48"x80" path through the artwork and the use of tactile warning strips around the piece ensure that it will meet accessibility requirements.

These hats form an enclosure or gathering space that viewers can enter to observe the images projected onto each of the hat's surfaces. These images are an abstract representation of thought – of the person “wearing” the hat and producing the “ideas.” Fabricated in architectural scale, the artwork will convey the notion that architecture is an armature to create and hold ideas, thereby reflecting the many activities, conferences, functions, meetings, etc. that take place within the Pasadena Center.

The piece is intended to be engaging and thought provoking during the daytime and nighttime hours. The images projected onto each hat's interior will draw people into the enclosure, creating a gathering space for exploration of thoughts and ideas.

Routine maintenance, including changing projector bulbs will be the responsibility of the maintenance staff of Pasadena Center with training from the artist/fabricator. Approximate cost of light bulbs is \$120. Responsibility for major conservation will be assumed by Cultural Affairs.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Current expenditures to date for the artist selection process, excluding staff time and including payments to the artists for development of concepts, total \$148,677. Costs associated with a new artist selection process may vary depending the length and complexity of the process and cannot be quantified until a process is defined.

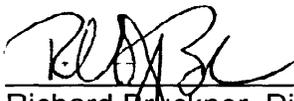
Respectfully Submitted by:



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Michael Beck, City Manager

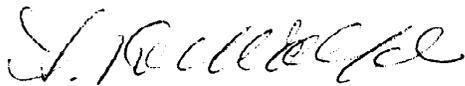
Approved by:



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Richard Bruckner, Director  
Planning & Development Department

Prepared by:



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*for* Rochelle Branch,  
Cultural Affairs Manager

Attachments:

- A – Arts at Pasadena Center: Planning Document
- B – Lightfield Final Art Plan by Hans Peter Kuhn
- C – Thinking Caps Final Art Plan by Dennis Oppenheim
- D – Guidelines for City Construction (CIP) Projects
- E – Photographs of Scale Models of Lightfield and Thinking Caps
- F – Pasadena Center Operating Company Letter of Opposition, January 21, 2009