

January 21, 2009

Pasadena City Council:

The Pasadena Center Operating Company (PCOC) has several relevant and legitimate reasons for opposing the placement of public art on the new Grand Plaza.

- Having an open Grand Plaza was part of the programmed design for the Pasadena Convention Center. Since the expanded Convention Center can handle higher capacity crowds, the open Plaza is crucial for large groups of people to circulate between the Exhibit Hall/Ballroom, Civic Auditorium and Conference Building. Other programmed uses include outdoor events, such as parties, receptions and outdoor performances held in conjunction with the Civic Auditorium. It also provides necessary space for outdoor trade show exhibits and food and beverage service, both of which have been factored into the financial pro forma.
- There has been no fund established to repair and maintain public art. The City's Art Plan calls for the PCOC to conduct routine maintenance on the pieces. Based upon the complex materials and technology that will comprise the art, there is a concern that this maintenance will come at a substantial cost.
- The Grand Plaza is art in itself. Considered a vital part of the Civic Center, the Grand Plaza was included as part of the work of the Civic Center Task Force. Its design, including the paving scheme, completes the Bennett Plan and, thus, the Civic Center. Additionally, the goal of the design was to tie the Grand Plaza, the Civic Auditorium and the new Convention Center buildings together so they and act in unity as a singular design element.

In light of these concerns, on May 28, 2008, the PCOC's Board of Directors passed the following motions:

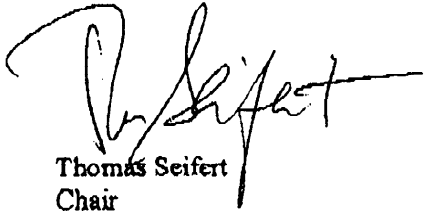
1. *That the Pasadena Center Operating Company's Board of Directors strongly opposes the placement of any public art work or other permanent fixtures on, or to, the Grand Plaza in front of the Civic Auditorium, Conference Center and/or Exhibit Hall/Ballroom. The plaza shall be kept free and clear from 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 the historically significant Civic Auditorium and is, in itself, a work of art and a planned architectural element.*
2. *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.*

CONVENTION CENTER • CIVIC AUDITORIUM • CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

300 E. GREEN STREET • PASADENA, CA 91101-2399 TEL: (626) 793-2122 FAX: (626) 395-7144 PASADENACENTER.COM

After reviewing our concerns, we hope the Pasadena City Council understands why the PCOC's Board of Directors strongly recommends that no public art be placed on the Grand Plaza.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Seifert', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Thomas Seifert
Chair
Pasadena Center Operating Company

MARSHA V. ROOD, FAICP
216 S. MADISON AVENUE, #302
CENTRAL DISTRICT
PASADENA, CA 91101
marsharood@earthlink.net
January 22, 2009

The Honorable Mayor Bill Bogaard

Honorable Members of the City Council

Pasadena City Hall
100 N. Garfield Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91109

Subject: Proposed Public Art for the Pasadena Civic Auditorium

Dear Mayor Bogaard and Members of the City Council:

The issue of whether or not the individual public art sculptures proposed for the Pasadena Civic Auditorium forecourt on Green Street is good or bad public art is best left artists and patrons of the arts. It can be argued, however, that the proposed public art sculptures are inappropriate for their proposed location at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium.

One of Pasadena's important emerging civic dialogues is how to respect and celebrate the City's history, particularly its revered architecture and civic center design, while reflecting contemporary trends in art and architecture. As the *Vision* in the *Public Art Program Pasadena Center RFQ* states: "The Art of Pasadena Center will *relate and extend Pasadena's unique character by honoring its past* and moving creatively toward its future through art that is lively, engaging and provocative." In addition, a key RFP *Objective* is to: "Create a strategy that is sensitive to and takes advantages of the *nature of the Pasadena Center, both in its physical and its operational states.*" *[emphasis added]* Are these standards being fulfilled?

The proposed public art sculptures fail on both counts:

1. *As a matter of principal, installation public art must respect, reflect and interpret the place in which it will be located. "Moving [Pasadena] creatively toward its future through art that is lively, engaging and provocative" must respect Pasadena's unique character by honoring its historic sense of palace.* Pasadena's Civic Center is one of a handful of civic centers listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This listing is based on the Civic Center's being a *unique place* characterized by buildings and landscaped

boulevards gesturing to/balancing one another in a “city beautiful” Beaux–Arts axial plan. Based upon this Civic Center design principle, there is no rationale for placing *stand-alone* public art installation sculptures in the forecourt space of the Civic Auditorium; these sculptures detract from the Pasadena Civic Auditorium’s imposing grandeur, do not relate to one another or to the space, are not symmetrical, and are out of scale with the historic Civic Auditorium and its forecourt.

2. *Create a strategy that is sensitive to and takes advantages of the nature of the Pasadena Center, both in its physical and its operational states.* According to the Pasadena Center Operating Company, these art sculptures are likely to interfere with event staging for the Pasadena Civic Auditorium and would require a high level of operation and maintenance. If the sculptures are to be installed on the Pasadena Convention Center grounds, perhaps they could be located on the east side of the Civic Auditorium on the plaza facing Euclid Avenue or near the entrance to the hotel adjacent to the Civic Auditorium.

Based on a more appropriate location or setting in Pasadena, these contemporary public art sculptures may well move Pasadena toward its future through art that is “lively, engaging and provocative.” Rather than spend precious time and energy advocating or opposing contemporary public art, our community needs a “time out” to have a citywide discussion concerning *what public art is most appropriate where.*

Respectfully submitted,

Marsha V. Rood

MARSHA V. ROOD, FAICP

Jomsky, Mark

From: L Barlow [barlow.co@att.net]

Sent: Thursday, January 22, 2009 4:31 PM

To: Bogaard, Bill; Madison, Steve; Tyler, Sid; Holden, Chris; Haderlein, Steve; Gordo, Victor; Robinson, Jacque; McAustin, Margaret; Jomsky, Mark; Beck, Michael

Subject: Artwork in front of Civic Auditorium

As an architect who was with the firm of Miralles and Associates when their work was done on the Convention Center and the Civic Auditorium, I am very aware of the elements of the historic renovation and design of the restored Auditorium, and the tremendous work and effort it took to bring the structure back to the level of quality that makes it a showcase for the Pasadena Civic Center. The careful attention to color and detail and the accuracy of the material restoration is critical to its success as a major urban structure.

The proposed art sculptures in front of the existing Civic Auditorium are not enhancing the space or its experience. It's quite evident from the mock-ups and models that these elements are very intrusive and don't contribute to the visual or spatial qualities of the front promenade to the building. They block critical views and disrupt scale. This structure is highly unique and has been refurbished to be a striking example of classic historicism, especially with its night illumination. Having these large-scale art pieces compete for public attention, especially with their strong evening illumination, would be a cluttered distraction from the focal point of the Civic Auditorium, which is about music, light, color and space. There is a rhythm and pattern (like a musical score) to the existing entrance which needs to be reinforced by calmer elements that lead the eye to the grand entrance, not away from it. Thematically they compete with the structure rather than complimenting it.

I would agree that these art pieces should be plopped elsewhere, and could be engaging elements in their own right at appropriate locations, possibly as "gateway" elements to the formal Civic Center boundary, where they add to the composition instead of intruding upon it.

:: design :: collaboration :: innovation

Laurie Barlow, AIA

<http://www.barlowcoweb.com/>

<http://greenswardcivitas.blogspot.com/>