

1 June 28, 1994  
2 CRD/KGO

INTRODUCED BY: LOUISE MILLER

PROPOSED NO: 94-359

3 MOTION NO. 9376

4 A MOTION approving an update to King County's  
5 visual arts collection maintenance, site selection  
6 and rotation plan.

7 WHEREAS, the King County visual arts collection is a valuable and substantial  
8 art collection consisting of over 1,000 works of art, and

9 WHEREAS, King County's maintenance and rotation policies were first  
10 developed in a 1989 report entitled *Maintaining Public Art: A Collection Survey and*  
11 *Condition Report on the King County Arts Commission's Public Art Program*, and

12 WHEREAS, the King County council authorized \$37,000 for the maintenance  
13 and rotation of art in 1994, and

14 WHEREAS, the King County council requested an update to the maintenance,  
15 site selection and implementation plan;

16 NOW, THEREFORE BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County that:

17 The report, entitled "Maintaining Public Art, A Collection Management Update,"  
18 included here as Attachment A is hereby approved.

19 PASSED by a vote of 11 to 0 this 26<sup>th</sup> day of September 1994.

20 KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
21 KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

22 Kent Pullen  
23 Chair

24  
25 ATTEST:

26 Janet Masno  
27 ~~Deputy~~ Clerk of the Council

28 Attachments:

29 A. Maintaining Public Art, A Collection Management Update  
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ATTACHMENT A

9376

**MAINTAINING PUBLIC ART**  
**A Collection Management Update**

**King County Arts Commission**  
**Cultural Resources Division**  
**Parks, Planning and Resources Department**

**MAY, 1994**

9376

## **BACKGROUND**

In 1973, King County became the first government in the state of Washington to adopt a 1% for Art Ordinance, establishing the state's first municipal public art program. In 1989, after 16 years of acquiring art, the County developed a model maintenance program, paving the way for municipal arts commissions nationally to address aging art collections in a systematic manner.

The report, entitled *Maintaining Public Art: A Collection Survey and Condition Report on the King County Arts Commission's Public Art Collection* (included as Appendix A), documented the first comprehensive survey of the County's art collection, at the time consisting of 800 pieces. The survey assessed the physical well-being of the artwork and the environment in which it was displayed. Both portable and site-specific artworks suffered from the lack of maintenance over the years resulting in dirty, damaged or altered work. The art suffered from contextual changes as well (filing cabinets in front of the art, for example) and lack of knowledge of appropriate treatment of art (one mural was found with "No Smoking" stenciled on the artwork).

In developing the maintenance program, each artwork was assessed and catalogued, and necessary maintenance was completed and documented. A cyclical maintenance plan was developed scheduling artworks for maintenance annually (in the case of higher risk pieces) or every other year.

Since the 1989 survey, the Commission has designated funds from the Pooled Art Fund, and a small contribution from the Current Expense Fund, to continue this cyclical maintenance program. The County's Visual Arts staff emphasize museum-quality conservation, such as rematting with acid-free mat board and reframing for greater durability. These measures help ensure the longevity of the collection, particularly appropriate given non-museum environment in which most of the County's collection is housed.

9376

## **UPDATE**

### **Survey**

The 1994 survey was completed in May, 1994, and encompassed reviews deferred in 1993 as a result of budget cuts as well as artworks scheduled to be surveyed in 1994. During this survey, an artwork conservation specialist visited all artworks on the cyclical maintenance schedule, dusting, straightening and performing other minor maintenance work, and noting the more complex maintenance needs of each individual piece. The specialist also determined when each artwork should be visited again, based on the environment, condition and nature of the work. Upon completion, the information was entered into the collection data base, creating a permanent record on each piece.

### **Maintenance**

The Arts Commission continues to emphasize museum-quality restoration and maintenance of artworks to ensure long-term enjoyment of the collection by the general public. Trained technicians are employed on an extra-help basis to perform simple maintenance tasks such as vacuuming, cleaning frames, lightly washing outdoor works, etc. Artwork conservators are used for restoration in cases where the artist is technically unable or unavailable to perform the work. For example, a conservator was recently employed to remove wall paint from a beautiful Roger Shimomura painting that was splattered during routine painting of a County facility. Museum-quality framing, restoration of works on paper and cleaning of fiber art are other examples of work performed by expert conservators.

### **Collection Records**

Collection records are extremely important to the responsible management of the collection. Each artwork is catalogued on a computerized data base at the time it is acquired, indicating for example its acquisition date, a description of the piece, its location, staff contact for the agency

9376

- If on a pedestal, artwork will be placed in areas where the pedestals will not be bumped, leaned on, or shoved, and the pedestal will be securely affixed to the floor
- If particularly fragile, large, or site specific (such as assemblages, constructions, or delicate 3-dimensional work), the artwork will be sited permanently rather than as a part of a rotating collection.

Examples of improper siting include:

- Artworks sited in private offices or outside of areas of ready access to the public
- Artworks sited in narrow hallways or within areas of high circulation such as busy paths or stairwells unless protected from being bumped
- Artworks sited in elevator lobbies or other unsupervised areas where much of the traffic is transient unless provided with adequate security and surface protection.

### **Rotation**

The County's collection includes over 600 portable artworks. Ideally, portable works are rotated to provide greater variety in artwork experiences for the public and County employees. Rotation is labor intensive, requiring assessment of appropriate locations within County facilities, coordination with the staff in agencies where artwork is to be sited, assessment of appropriate art for specific sites, transportation and installation of the art. To protect it from unwitting abuse, professional art handlers are employed on a temporary or contractual basis to move art, or it is moved by the Visual Arts Coordinator.

The Visual Arts Coordinator position is currently a half-time, which limits staff resources available for rotation. However, the Cultural Resources Division maintains a list of rotation requests, and attempts to accommodate the requests as time allows using temporary technical staff whenever possible. Priority in moving art is given to situations that could result in loss or

9376

## **EVALUATION OF 1989 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The King County Arts Commission implemented the majority of the recommendations from the 1989 maintenance report (Appendix A). Those not yet implemented include:

- Creating a full-time Collection Manager position
- Developing educational and interpretive materials

These recommendations have the potential of significantly strengthening the County's visual arts program, stewardship and public enjoyment of the collection through more thorough programming. At present, the art collection remains a valuable educational resource, yet untapped.

**9376**

**Portable Collection**

The County's portable collection is eclectic, including artworks from masters such as Mark Toby and Paul Horiuchi to art depicting the fine craft traditions of different cultures. The Commission will discuss whether future acquisitions should be programmed from a curatorial perspective, setting specific goals for the collection. This issue will be addressed as a part of the 1995 work program.

**MOTION 9376**

**MAINTAINING PUBLIC ART  
A COLLECTION MANAGEMENT UPDATE  
KING COUNTY ARTS COMMISSION  
MAY 1994**