Public art is a mirror that reflects the local environment, cultural values, and artistic vitality of the community in which it exists.

At its best, public art is more than just art installed in public places. It is a community-based process of dialogue, involvement, and participation. Public art enhances the quality of life for citizens by encouraging a heightened sense of place, enhancing a community's prestige, and enlivening the visual quality of the built environment.

—Anonymous

In the late 1950s, a small group of Philadelphia citizens unintentionally started a revolution. Their idea was a simple one: set aside a small portion of the construction costs of public projects for the inclusion of artworks which would enhance what they considered to be the stark modernist architecture of the time. From this little-heralded beginning was born a movement that has overtaken the country and become the primary method by which public art is funded in the United States.

After the Philadelphia Redevelopment Agency and City Council both passed percent-for-art mandates in 1959, a number of other cities followed suit—most notably Baltimore in 1964 and San Francisco in 1967. The movement gained momentum in the 1970s and swept across America.

Today, 300 cities, counties, states, federal agencies, and other government bodies have adopted percent-for-art programs, generating more than $200 million annually in public art support. This has resulted in the commissioning of thousands of public artworks.
How Public Art Benefits the Community

- Contributes to the enhancement of a cityscape, creates a sense of place, or improves the design qualities of public infrastructure.
- Fosters collective memory and gives meaning to place by recalling local and regional history.
- Enlivens public space by creating a sense of serendipity and discovery.
- Promotes local urban and economic development by creating opportunities for local artists.
- Makes sense of communities by creating landmarks, directional elements, and defining neighborhoods and districts.
- Gives visual expression to local cultural diversity.
- Creates a sense of community identity through unique functional elements such as bus shelters, tree grates, seating elements, paving patterns, parking garages, etc.

What is Public Art?

Public art is different from studio art or art exhibited in museums and galleries. Public art is accessible to the public, it typically reflects an awareness of its site, both physically and socially, and, most importantly, public art involves community process in its creation. A wide variety of approaches to public art are possible. Some approaches emphasize integrating artwork into the built environment, others emphasize placing artwork in a plaza or on a wall, and still others involve the creation of temporary works in community settings. Depending on the needs of a community, one or a combination of the following approaches may be taken:

- **Discrete object**: The traditional approach of placing stand-alone sculptures, murals, or other artworks in public buildings, plazas, parks, etc., as a means to beautify and humanize the environment.

- **Integration of public art and architecture**: A multi-disciplinary design team approach wherein artists work on project teams with architects, engineers, landscape architects and other design professionals to design and create public projects, such as transit systems or waste water treatment facilities to achieve the highest aesthetic innovation. This approach may also result in artist-designed functional elements that are integrated into the project such as flooring, furniture, light fixtures, fencing, tree grates, etc.

- **Master planning**: Artists working with other design professionals, policy makers and community groups to identify specific opportunities for the integration of various forms of art within a specific project or urban context, such as transit systems, neighborhood redevelopment districts, airports, parks, and civic plazas.

- **Urban design/place-making**: Artwork projects that contribute to the enhancement of a cityscape, create a sense of place, or improve the design qualities of public infrastructure. Artist-designed freeway enhancements, bridges or parks are examples of such projects.

- **Temporary installations/sculpture**: Non-permanent artworks that respond to a specific physical or social environment. Temporary projects can involve a single artist working with the community or hundreds of artists responding to the same subject matter.

- **Arts and community development program**: Artists working in communities to create public art projects that respond to the reality and integrity of those communities (e.g., artists working in social institutions, prisons, homeless shelters, with the elderly, youths).

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Public Art Selection Process

The goal and the process of artist and artwork selections make public art unique in the art world. With some notable exceptions, the goal of the selection process is to identify an artist who will be commissioned to create an artwork, not to choose or purchase an existing artwork. This approach allows the commissioned artist and the commissioning agency to engage in an outreach process with the community early in the development of the artwork project. The artist can then design an artwork that responds to the specific physical and social context of the project.

The process of selection is a democratic one. That is, rather than making unilateral decisions on the appropriate artists for a commission, it is the responsibility of staff to curate professional selection panels to review artist qualifications, interview artists and make final recommendations on the most qualified candidate. A selection panel should include artists, arts professionals, design professionals and community representatives. The following are examples of typical selection processes:

Open Call for Entries/Request for Qualifications (RFQ): The most commonly employed method of artist selection. Detailed information describing the project and how to apply are distributed and publicized through an RFQ. Artists submit a package that includes a resume and slides of their work by a specified deadline. A selection panel reviews submissions and finalists are determined for interviews. The panel makes its decision based on the following: (1) aesthetic quality of artists' past work, (2) artists' demonstrated ability to respond to project site and context, and (3) the specific criteria for the given project.

Limited Invitational Process/Curated Pool of Artists: In contrast to an open call or RFQ, staff develops a short list or pool of artists
who are qualified to accomplish a commission, and invites these artists to apply. These artists are presented to the panel, along with artists who the panelists themselves suggest are appropriate to consider. The panel uses the same criteria in making their recommendations as in an open-call process, and finalists are invited for interviews. A limited invitational process or curated pool is used when the project schedule does not allow for an open call or when a specific set of skills is required.

Blind Competitions – A Request for Proposals (RFP): a detailed package of information, often including site plans, photos and competition guidelines is issued. Artists design a proposal based on the guidelines in the RFP. Each proposal is given an identification number used by the selection panel during the review and selection process. The selection panel considers the project criteria outlined in the RFP when reviewing submitted proposals. This method of selection is most often used for high profile projects of regional or national interest with ample budgets to support the process. One advantage to blind competition is that the process allows everyone an even playing field on which to compete.

Once the selection panel makes its recommendation of an artist or proposal for the artwork commission, their recommendation is often reviewed for approval by an arts commission or other reviewing body as designated by the governing ordinance.

How is Public Art Funded?

Public art programs can be funded by both the public and private sector. The majority of public art programs at the state, county, and city level are funded through a law or ordinance that sets aside a percentage of funds from the construction budget of what is known as an eligible capital improvement project. These "percent-for-art" mandates generally provide a percentage of total eligible capital improvement project costs for the acquisition and commissioning of artworks. While the details of individual funding ordinances vary, three common elements include:

1. Definitions of eligible capital improvement projects (CIP)

Since public art program funds are made available through CIPs, defining the eligibility of such projects is a critical consideration, as it will have a large influence on the scope of the artwork project that can be accomplished. Think about the wide variety of building projects a city, county or state undertakes, and you will soon have an impressive list of potential CIPs to consider: office buildings, transit projects, libraries, schools, parks, airports, hospitals, street/sidewalk improvements, fire stations, county/state buildings, freeways and bridges. The type of project, identified as an eligible CIP, will also have a significant influence over the approach of the public art program it funds. That is, the broader the definition of eligible CIPs, the broader the scope of the public art program. Minimum project value may be a defining
constraint (e.g., only projects with budgets greater than $300,000 are eligible). The flexibility to pool public art funds from multiple smaller projects to create fewer, larger-budgeted projects should be considered as well. It should be noted that every public art project, no matter how small, takes significant staff resources to accomplish.

2. Percentage identified for public art projects
The percentage allocated for public art projects typically ranges between 0.5 percent and 2 percent, which may also include project administration and maintenance costs if these are not to be funded from the municipality's general fund or another source. In recent years, most new programs have allocated at least 1.5 percent of capital costs, which ensures sufficient funding to provide for both artwork and program administration.

3. Guidelines for expenditure of percent-for-art
After defining what type of CIP is eligible and what percentage of that CIP budget provides funding for public art, guidelines regarding the specific use of those funds are the next consideration. To begin, the total pool of percent-for-art funds must be appropriately divided into two funds: (1) administrative funds and (2) artwork project funds. Public art program administrative costs run between 15 percent and 20 percent of total percent-for-art funds, leaving a balance of between 80 to 85 percent to fund artwork projects.

Administrative costs are the costs associated with running a program (e.g., staff salaries, overhead, public relations) and the costs of managing a project from beginning to end (project development, artist selection, community outreach, artwork dedication and maintenance).

Artwork project funds are often divided into design vs. fabrication and installation costs—typically at a rate of 15 percent for design and 85 percent for fabrication and installation. In addition, most art budgets factor a contingency of approximately 10 percent from the fabrication and installation budget for unknown or unforeseen project costs.

Artwork project costs are any and all costs associated with the artist's responsibility to design, fabricate and install the artwork project, and are typically facilitated through a contract directly with the artist. Artwork project design costs include, but are not limited to, the artist's design fee, research, travel, project proposal, engineering and construction documents. Artwork fabrication and installation costs include artist's travel, materials, studio overhead, subcontractors, fabricators, installers, site preparation, insurance and bonding.

Think about the wide variety of building projects a city, county or state undertakes, and you will soon have an impressive list of potential Capital Improvement Projects to consider: office buildings, transit projects, libraries, schools, parks, airports, hospitals.

Advantages of the Percent-for-Art Funding Model
There are distinct advantages to funding public art through the percent-for-art mechanism.
• It ensures that the level of artwork funding is commensurate with the size of the funding capital improvement project.
• It protects the artwork funds from budget cuts which can occur when public art funds are borne by a municipality's general fund.
• Since artwork funds are determined in advance, early selection of artists and their involvement on project design teams can be achieved, and the artwork can become part of the fabric of the overall project, rather than an afterthought.
• This approach is flexible enough to be adapted to the needs of a given community. The model allows for small scale, discrete objects in neighborhood parks as well as architect/artist collaborations on large municipal buildings.

Critical Issues to Consider When Crafting a Percent-for-Art Ordinance

• Contact public art coordinators in your region. Note that coordinators may be employed by agencies other than an arts program (parks, planning, redevelopment, etc.).
• Attend a regional or national public art conference to further educate yourself about current public art issues. (Contact Americans for the Arts for Information about upcoming conferences.)
• Consider engaging an experienced public art consultant to develop a public art master plan for your community.

How to Get Percent-for-Art Funding in Your Community

• Investigate whether a percent-for-art legislation already exists in your city, county or state (contact your city, county or state arts agency). Note that some municipalities have multiple overlapping public art programs. One city, for example, could have an active state, city, transit, and redevelopment public art program. (Contact Americans for the Arts for the Guide to Public Arts Programs in the U.S.)
• Create a working group of volunteers with community-wide participation to investigate and pursue a percent-for-art funding ordinance.

Man of Fire (1998) Artist: Kim Yasuda

The artwork commemorates Dr. Ernesto Galarza (1905-1984), scholar, poet, labor organizer, community leader and civil rights activist. San Jose, CA
Program Profiles

The following profiles illustrate the diversity of percent-for-art funded programs.

Seattle Art Commission, Seattle, Washington
In 1973, the city of Seattle took a pro-active approach to including public artworks in its cityscape. According to its public art ordinance, which specified a 1-percent set-aside for artworks, the mission of the program is "to integrate artworks and the ideas of artists into a variety of public settings" with the objective of contributing to a sense of the city's identity.

One of the unique features of the Seattle model is that eligible CIPs included utility plants in addition to the construction or remodeling of any building, structure, park, street, sidewalk, or parking facility. At the time, the inclusion of utility plants within the parameters of eligible CIPs was unusual for a public art program. Seattle's Viewland-Hoffman electrical substation is a pioneer project that set the precedent for the now widely adopted "design team" approach to public art. In a design team project, artists are commissioned to work in collaboration with architects, engineers and other professionals to approach a project as a whole, and in which the artwork is integrated into the fabric of a CIP.

In 1976, three artists, Andy Keating, Sherry Markowitz and Buster Simpson were commissioned to work with the engineers for the Viewland-Hoffman project. It was the first time Seattle (or any public art program in the country) had involved artists in the conceptual design phase of a project. The artists' role was expanded beyond that of designing artworks for pre-selected locations to having an effect on the overall design and aesthetic of a project. The result was a whimsical integration of the artists' sensibility into every aspect of the substation—from security signage, to color-coding the pathways of electricity as a visual guide, to a series of whirligigs—throughout the entire substation. What might have been a case of NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) in response to a large, unattractive electrical substation in a suburban residential community instead became (and continues to be) a popular neighborhood attraction and playground.

Public Art and Design Program, Broward County, Florida
In 1995, the Art in Public Places Program of the Broward County Cultural Affairs Council went through a master planning process
which examined the existing art-in-public-places program and made recommendations for its future direction. The result was a shift of the program focus away from the more traditional placement of paintings and sculptures in public spaces toward the enhancement of urban design through artist participation on design teams. A direct result of the Design Broward master planning process is that artists are now brought into the CIP process at the same time as architects, and work with the architects as collaborators. Artists are also encouraged to reach out into the community in the early stages of the design process to ensure that the resulting artworks respond to community needs and perceptions.

The county’s revised public art and design ordinance allocates 2 percent of the budgets of eligible CIPs for public art; broadens the definition of an eligible CIP to include the construction or renovation of any building (except detention facilities), park, highway or arterial, bridge or causeway, sidewalk, bikeway or above grade utility; and it also includes road beautification and beach restoration projects.

The expansion of the program to include a variety of CIPs in addition to buildings is perhaps the most significant revision to the Broward County Public Art and Design Program. By applying the public art and design efforts to CIPs beyond buildings, the opportunity has been created to effect, over time, the whole look of urban design in Broward.

San Jose Public Art Program, San Jose, California
The San Jose Public Art Program, funded by a two-percent mandate, emphasizes community input through an extensive public process. While developing a series of commemorative art projects in the early 1990s, staff determined that a public process was critical to realizing meaningful projects, and that outreach to the public had a direct bearing on the relevance of those projects to the community. Beyond commemorative projects, the San Jose Public Art Program is currently focused on the continuing development of the city’s downtown, an airport expansion program, and a new emphasis on neighborhoods. All of these projects and programs include a public outreach process.

Years of refining community process are culminating in the development of public art for a new main library—one that will be the first large-scale combined university-municipal library in the country. The artwork, by artist Mel Chin, is a series of sculptural insertions that pay homage to the book collection and the world of ideas that the library makes available. The insertions will be scattered throughout

Viewland/Hoffman Substation (1978)
Artists: Andrew Keating, Sherry Markovitz, Lewis “Buster” Simpson (whirligigs by Emil & Veva Gehrkke

Architect: Richard Hobbs (principal), David Rutherford (project manager), Hobbs/Fukui

This was the first major capital improvement project in Seattle that actively included the artists in the design phase. The purpose of the artists’ inclusion was to humanize and soften the substation’s impact on the surrounding residential neighborhood. Hailed as a landmark project in the public art community, the Viewland/Hoffman Substation continues to generate interest. Seattle, WA
the library, provoking curiosity and initiating further exploration of the book collection. The goal of the artwork is to explore where culture and ideas come from through an extensive and collaborative dialogue with the community. Working with a multi-disciplinary team of scholars, students and community members, Chin is facilitating discussions on a range of personal and civic issues that help define how the community sees itself. These forums are a catalyst to inspire ideas behind the artworks themselves. Samples of the concepts developed to date include the following:

**True and Through:** A 130-foot-tall Dawn Redwood tree, currently existing on the site, will have to be cut down to accommodate the building. Responding to the community’s distress over losing the tree, the artist will mill the tree and clad a series of columns within the building from the lower level through the eight stories of the building, essentially creating an eight story interior tree.

**Roundup:** Referencing the history of San Jose, 81 leather chairs will be branded with the 27 historical cattle brands from the original San Jose rancherias. The chairs will ‘wander freely’ on the second floor of the Library.

City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, San Diego, California  
A few innovative approaches to funding public art through municipal CIPs are being explored across the country as the value of artists' design contributions are gaining recognition and acceptance. The City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture is an example of a public art program whose funding is not governed by a percent-for-art ordinance. While the city council policy, Artists Involvement in Selected Capital Improvement Projects, adopted in 1992, legislatates artist involvement at the inception of CIPs, the artist’s involvement and fees are negotiated on a project-by-project basis. Artists are typically under contract to the project’s prime design consultant (the project architect, engineer, landscape architect, etc.), although in some cases the artist is the lead consultant, hiring designers as sub-consultants. This procedure encourages a comprehensive approach to design aesthetics by including the artist’s involvement on the design team. Fabrication and installation costs of the artist-designed elements are drawn from the construction budget and are fabricated by the building contractor, or a separate agreement is negotiated with the appropriate fabricator (artist or other).

The City of San Diego Metropolitan Wastewater Department (MWWD), in partnership with the commission, committed to hiring an artist as the lead consultant to develop a comprehensive plan to mitigate the visual impact of an existing wastewater treatment plant. Lead artist Mathieu Gregoire selected a team of sub-consultants that included artists (painter, colorist, sculptor, poet and composer) and designers (architect, engineer, landscape architect). In 1996, the team published a precedent-setting comprehensive plan for the aesthetic development of the 30-year-old
plant, including design recommendations and proposals for public artworks for the existing structures and for the new multi-million dollar upgrade and expansion. It is important to note that by January 2000, through the commitment of MWWD and the commission and with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, all the recommendations made by Gregoire and his team have been realized or are in-progress. The comprehensive plan contains a broad range of recommendations, including: a color scheme for repainting the plant that harmonizes it with the natural landscape; terrazzo floor designs, floor mats, and sandblasted walkways using imagery related to nature and the function of the facility; poetry about the site etched into handrails, concrete walkways, walls, and glass throughout the site; a series of nighttime construction photographs that reveal an aspect of the site that is not seen by the general public; a landscape plan that includes a new entrance, parking areas, and pedestrian circulation; and architectural guidelines for building types.

Americans for the Arts is the nation’s leading arts information clearinghouse, with a 40-year record of objective arts industry research. As the preeminent arts advocacy organization, it is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts.

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