Summary of Jury Comments for the 2008 PAN Year in Review

Ted Landsmark, 2008

Agencies with the foresight, resources, and courage to commission multiple works by different artists in the same place transcend the stereotype of public art as an isolated piece of sculpture planted in front of an otherwise banal entryway. By integrating multiple works into the overall planning of interior and exterior spaces, such agencies heighten the public’s awareness of how art enriches environments in a comprehensive, collaborative and systemic way.

Many of the projects I found most intriguing brought variegated light into interiors, re-landscaped exteriors, and established positive interactivity between the building’s users and the public servants who worked there. The best pieces brought joy and whimsy to what would otherwise be thought of as overcrowded or dreary passageways and waiting areas. Many of the most intriguing pieces enabled adult spaces to become more child-like and playful. Artistic narratives commemorating diverse cultures or labor histories increasingly take less didactic approaches than in the past as they inspire flights of imagination in those who experience the work.

The body of knowledge that has accumulated from prior public artistic efforts is increasingly inspiring a generation of creative artists and commissioners of public art, and what we saw speaks well for the works presented, and as a harbinger of wonderful work yet to come.

Jody Pinto, 2008

The public art projects chosen represent a broad spectrum, yet common in many is the desire to physically engage the public, to collaborate with communities and professionals in other fields, and to redefine how a site or material is viewed and used. The use of humble and/or recycled materials, the inventive use of natural light and the elements as collaborators in these projects demonstrates the growing concern of artists to engage the environment.

Temporary and performance-based projects were chosen (also temporarily sited sculpture) to acknowledge and encourage the value these works have in expanding public art engagement and promoting emerging artists.

Public art is still in its’ infancy. If the field is to grow and mature critically, temporary and performance work must be encouraged. This is how the field began. At present, we need the inclusion of experienced artists and consultants as mentors in programs, on advisory panels, and on policy boards to insure that public art will retain and grow its’ soul.