

Session Name: Contemporary Trends in Public Art

Date: November 6, 2018

Notes

Topic	Key themes or ideas shared, questions & discussion
Contemporary Trends in Public Art	<p>Range of backgrounds around the table from a cross section across Canada.</p> <p>City of Toronto: Reluctance to be too edge (developer driven); ongoing responsibility to program it; maintaining integrity of art projects</p> <p>What are your challenges? How can we improve? What policies could be introduced? How can we continue to raise the bar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The policy states that the community will choose a piece from a list chosen by Council; the entire municipality is supposed to vote and they have the final choice – this is completely unmanageable; have to complete many work-arounds; would like to demonstrate how onerous it is. There is a short list and then the public votes;- Response #1 – there was an opportunity for the public to vote but it's not given that much weight (about 10%); public consultation is sometimes needed;- Maybe you could have a member of the community sitting on the committee but this is very challenging process- How can the public interaction be better managed?- Very hard to push boundaries; community may not be ready for certain pieces but that doesn't mean we should dismiss them because of reactions- Use a local artist or a well know community advocate as a jury member/ambassador- If you can come in really early on the project to start working with the community to have conversations about this is what public art should be and this is what's coming; so that there is a sense of ownership- Sometimes this is backwards and it doesn't work- Saving the data from social media when you get responses back from the public; great information to support public art- Social media and public art; when a new work would appear, there has a lot of social media buzz; this is a new tool- It's about establishing a good social media plan- You get community engagement through social media which is hard to get using other mediums

- Municipality is developing a new public art policy; it is hand in hand with a brand discussion around the municipality; social media should become an integral piece of any brand discussion
- People like to weigh in; and it's an education tool
- The "brand" will speak to identify the city through public art; more an education and communication tool; hopefully an edgy brand
- Another public art master plan was approved in June; has a public art policy; public art master plan carved out a vision as well as practical pieces like where we should focus pieces; extreme consultation process – good to do this to lay the foundation for future engagement in neighbourhoods – great to frame a city's identity through public art;
- Public art and city identity are intertwined;
- Barrie uses a work of art as a brand identifier.

WHAT IS PUBLIC ART?

- Shift in thinking has to occur; often the process is just as valuable as the final tangible pieces
- Always challenging because politicians and the public seem to always want traditional pieces; has to have a good mix of "old school" with new contemporary works that push boundaries
- There's a big education that has to happen with members of council and the community
- Historic vignettes; all historical; very literal very traditional – pleases the older generations; but if you want to go more contemporary we need to think beyond this
- Getting council to understand the concept of "temporary" art; we want to get them used to the idea that not all art has to be permanent with the associated capital costs for maintenance; we can increase the number of temporary projects to keep the momentum of public art building;
- Everyone is aware of being in a precarious situation with new councils being elected;
- Don't want to have to wait every five years to build a monument
- Life cycle of artworks that could have a lifecycle of 2 – 3 years or less; this will be taken from operating funds; capital coming for permanent pieces;
- Temporary program downtown; problem is people don't want some of the works to leave; they have implemented platforms for different works to rotate; something to keep in mind, people sometimes get attached to pieces;
- Mural problem – what to do with murals after 20 years
- Successful mural program – when it's time to change them, how do you do

this?

- Debate about a mural created 20 years ago is it still relevant now; documentation of a time in history;
- Has to have a strategy to deal with the aftermath; how do we keep the pieces in the public domain when they may be well loved but no longer relevant; possibility of keeping it digital
- What about not tangible things – performance based artists; how to document, capture and showcase it later in a different format; look at how performance artists do this in their practice daily; we can learn and apply these principles to more tangible pieces.
- Question to the table – do you include performance pieces in your policies; mixed responses; do you have the ability to accommodate something that is temporary
- In municipalities with not public art program, how do performance pieces work? – they are treated as events;
- Situations where something pops up on city lands? In Kingston there would be a call twice a year for artists to submit performance projects; these would be funded through the public art program – this is a way to be proactive instead of reactive; when artists can't get through the red tape to put up a piece; help build the capacity of the arts community; performance is considered public art
- Number of municipalities have a definition of public art that is very broad
- Internationally public art includes digital, online interactive, performance based
- if you are looking to shift the way of thinking in your municipality, it is a great resource to help define and shape how we think about public art
- how do you work the system to make different projects happen? Cut down one stop shop for the artist?
- Performances they wanted to do on a city bus
- What weird request are you calling me about today?

What about artists ideas that are interactive?

Eg. subway in Toronto; where people could have their say; we want to engage the public but want to make sure there is control

- Protect their brand by monitoring social media
- Intent is freedom of speech; but there was censorship/feedback from City of Toronto;
- This became political; some really major digital artists around the world

have weighed in on this; quasi moderated to make sure in real time there is some oversight; the artist felt the community would moderate it; York felt it was a context for free speech and their students would weigh in;

Surrey had a digital piece where the public could weigh in; youth began to bully each other;

Interesting conversation to have with artists; artists are usually very savvy and well versed in technology ; can understand the complexity of the digital public space; social media; look for other kinds of work that isn't driven by text

If you're working with artists, challenge them with how to challenge the climate in social media; augmented reality, physical reality theres a lot of creativity in that community

Lauching their first public art work thorough development \$\$; low res video; local artists; 3 3 low res videos that were rotated; huge monumental screen; developer has offered to have a curated gallery; low res therefore no advertising; it wil be outside on a huge screen; funded through section 37 money; not a traditional public art; will foster interested conversations with the public; great for a first piece; permanent;

Make opportunities happen;

Respond to the new public

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work being presented tomorrow is around current trends in the context of cultural planning – taking a more holistic view• Council approves design and money of public art and need to get away from that – new council members coming in – how do we transition to get away from this mentality now that new council is in? (AJAX)• Approval processes lengthy and difficult• Most municipalities do not have council involved but third party jury• Policy review in place, new committee to be built• Pelham – challenge that the thought of public art is a waste of money• Trying to implement it subtly without them realizing it’s happening – get over the negative connotations and get public and council to believe in its value• Community engagement is imperative in this selection process – need to be engaged well in advance to buy into it• Canmore – brings short listed residents to do public presentation and they get to know the community, create in collaboration not in isolation,• Often through the call to artists they must show how they will engage the public and its built into the budget so the integration happens• Open studio dates, website with updates• How to integrate urban development with art?• How do we educate and teach people about public art and its importance?• Sense of urgency due to development and build schedules over the next 2 years to really get this going in her community and get the buy-in from the community• Start with temporary and eventually get to permanent (smaller budget)• Rentals• Smaller communities not used to what public art• ideas competition• utilize existing design concepts of the space to collaborate and get an artist to influence the design and make it functional• do the strategic outcomes make sense for your municipality?• Do they line up with your strategic plan?

- Measurement indicators need to be there now in order to get the money to execute
- 4 year planning cycle – what is an appropriate amount of money to ensure public art gets represented throughout the 4 year cycle
- Changing the way in which we talk about it, ask about it
- 1% spend conversation/policy is outdated – in Quebec its provincial policy and you must spend the 1% - future needs to move away from this
- Pooled and 1% is the new mix
- Gap exists to get projects done when a staff person is not in place
- Public art needs to be integrated in cultural planning envelope and the cultural planning envelope needs to be better integrated in civic planning
- We no longer have to prove the value – now it's about community building and community contributor
- Community engagement – you are now a participant and not just an observer
- Town of Oakville put Recreation and Culture together – culture is always getting drowned out
- Shift has happened and the idea is to get ahead of it nowadays be proactive rather than reactive
- Culture is all encompassing now and isn't just about public art
- KPI's – what are some examples of KPI – how many website hits, visitor #'s, surveys,
- Generate the before and after the space was created
- Ensure the purpose is in place first – move past collection, move off the mandate
- Identity as a theme – new technology/innovations, natural environment
- Caution to not oversell a concept and overdo it – some people have challenges with council pigeonholing themselves and dedicating spaces to public art only
- Keep it open to expression in a public realm
- It has always been pigeon holed to get the 1% policy passed – there is a way to move past this
- Municipalities no longer own public art realm – there are a lot of other players now and no one is working together
- Ex. Ottawa LRT – huge amount of money on a digital project – so many other players and no one is speaking to Ottawa LRT and no collaboration

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemporary Trends in Public Art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the best practices? Sacred things? Citizen connection? Is that the best way? Easiest doesn't mean best. • What's still working? • Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dedicated capital fund (use it or lose it) every year ○ Project accounts that can carry up to 4 years ○ Ongoing maintenance of the art – included in the yearly budget ○ Set up a finance reserve • Engineering assessment + budget projections of maintenance in projects • Each piece needs a maintenance plan (weather, public etc. • What is Public Art? what is breaking trends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who is the best delivery partner to do the art? ○ Problems with procurement? ○ Funding partnerships – with other partners curating the program ○ Delivery partners is a trend that we are seeing ○ 3 or 4 different processes through procurement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Open calls, etc. • Question: Clients with pre authorized list? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Paid a third party to commission and they executed ○ Finding the delivery partner • Most common arrangement for procurement for public art <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two step, open call, short list, select proposals with a community group who are on the jury ○ 3 artists on each jury (reference group) • Life cycles of public art – never calling it “permanent” • Conserving things that are limiting opportunities for something new – finding the balance • Trend : wanting to see more local artists (Town of Richmond) • Working with contemporary artists they approach projects in a

different want – encourage the artists on how to integrate their art into the public realm

- Visual art “visual” everywhere, removing the word visual, art is art
- Working with internal partners in public art ?
 - Functional art
 - Speaking to engineers about public art and how to combine
 - Hired an artist created a high water marker in Fredericton to help deal with flooding
 - Has become a beloved piece of art
 - Pitching ideas inspiring ideas
 - Fluvial Flan
 - Working with local horticultural groups
 - Brought people out from all aspects of events
 - What happens when it doesn’t work out for the good?
 - Make sure they hire an artist and pay the artist fee
 - An opportunity for a different way of procurement – specific types of artists
- What is acceptable public art and what isn’t?
- Building Culture Champions within your municipality to help cultivate those relationships for collaborations
- Creating a place instead of a thing?
 - Example: Library Innisfil, library programs the space
- Inter departmental public art committee
- External public art advisory committees
 - Are they helpful? Useful?
 - Having a strong Culture Master Plan is key