



SYRACUSE PUBLIC ART COMMISSION

March 13, 2012 5:30 pm Syra-Stat Office, 215 City Hall

Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Present: Chris Capella-Peters, Karen Convertino, Bob Doucette, Corky Goss, Nancy Keefe Rhodes, London Ladd, Dan Ward, Bahar Zaker

Absent: George Curry, Rick Destito, Joanna Spitzner

Staff: Kate Auwaerter

- I. Meeting called to order at 5:30 p.m.
The Commission reviewed the minutes from the February 14, 2012 meeting. N. Keefe Rhodes moved to approve the minutes and L. Ladd seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.
- II. Old Business
No Old Business
- III. **New Business**
SPAC 12-03: *Resourced Mural at ArtRage*, Chris Stain. Rose Viviano and Kimberley McCoy of ArtRage presented the proposal for a new mural on the side of the ArtRage building on Hawley Avenue. The mural will coincide with an exhibit of posters created by artists from the *Just Seeds Arts Cooperative* and students of the Syracuse University Fiber Arts program. The gallery received a grant from the Puffin Foundation to commission a mural from *Just Seeds* artist Chris Stain to coincide with the exhibition. They presented two possible mural images – an apocalyptic vision featuring a person wearing a gasmask and the silhouettes of industrial buildings, and an image of community garden with children. R. Viviano noted that she found both images compelling and was considering asking the artist to merge the two. The Commission discussed the two contrasting images. N. Keefe Rhodes suggested that the cityscapes in the “gasmask” mural include silhouettes of buildings in Syracuse, rather than the generic cityscapes presented. She noted that this would make the image more place-based and enduring. C. Goss asked about the materials, specifically if the artist intended to use a sealer to help with the longevity of the mural. He recommended contacting Golden Artists paints to ask advice regarding sealers as well as products that would protect against graffiti. R. Viviano explained that they had shared the images of the murals with the neighborhood, but noted that the most immediate properties were all vacant. K. Auwaerter recommended that the applicants post the idea of the Hawley Green Neighborhood Association list serve so that the larger neighborhood was aware of the project. C. Capella-Peters summarized the discussion and stated that in order for the Commission to come to a decision, the applicants would need to provide the final image, accurate dimensions, materials/products (paint and sealer, graffiti removal), and any text included as part of the installation.

IV. **Discussion**

Public art mapping and the Public Art Master Plan. C. Capella-Peters and K. Convertino introduced the subject of public art mapping, the master plan and the concerns that a number of commissioners had expressed regarding recent proposals and installations. K. Convertino noted that although public art in the city is not new, the City government trying to build and manage a collection in an organized way was new. She explained her discomfort with making decisions about permanent installations in the absence of a master plan, noting that the decisions that the Commission is making now will impact the ability for the City to carry out the plan in the future. In particular, she was concerned about locating permanent pieces of art in important, iconic locations in the absence of an overall plan. C. Capella-Peters concurred, providing the example of Columbus Circle, which is not just the circle itself but the full urban space. B. Doucette also agreed, using the analogy of St. Marks Square in Venice to note that no one would install any artwork in such an important space without careful thought.

C. Capella-Peters continued by stating that it was important that the plan now become a priority and the first task was to identify the important priority locations throughout the City, starting downtown. She recommended that until a plan was prepared that the Commission consider instituting a moratorium on the consideration of applications for permanent works of art in those intuitively important spaces, such as Columbus Circle. Such a moratorium would need to have a short timeframe. B. Zaker confirmed that C. Capella-Peters was addressing permanent installations only. C. Capella-Peters clarified that permanence would be defined not only by the length of time proposed for the artwork, but by materials, installation and cost.

N. Keefe Rhodes noted the importance of minimizing the duration of any moratorium. She also stated that the Commission needs to be able to demonstrate that it has been systematic and intentional with the decisions that it makes. Otherwise, the Commission will lose the argument that public art is essential to public life, and not just a luxury.

At the Commission's question, K. Auwaerter confirmed that she could have draft mapping and recommendations for downtown prepared for the next Commission meeting. She also stated that she could provide the Commission with a draft master plan by June. This draft could then enter into a larger public discussion for eventual approval by the Mayor and Common Council.

The Commission members agreed to the following schedule: At the April Commission meeting, staff would present a downtown map that identifies the iconic and priority locations and that, once the Commission concurred with those recommended locations, it would not entertain any applications for permanent works of art in those locations until the draft plan is prepared. C. Capella-Peters stated that she saw the "priority sites" as those that the City will reserve for competition or a competitive selection process for works of art.

K. Convertino made a motion for a temporary moratorium on considering applications for permanent installations in the Central Business District until there is an approved draft Public Art Master Plan. The motion was seconded by D. Ward and approved unanimously.

- V. Public Artist In Residence. The Commission recognized that the moratorium had immediate consequences for how Brendan Rose, Public Artist in Residence, is able to move forward with his installations. Brendan Rose, who was in attendance, stated that while it was true that his works were not site specific and he could consider alternative locations, he had spent a considerable amount of time siting the pieces and garnering support for them from the Cathedral Square Association and others for the works. He explained that he is paid not for his time but by the installation, and that time and effort has been lost. He also expressed his frustration that the Commission, he believed, had provided no negative feedback over the last two times he had presented his proposals. He said that he made an effort to adjust his process to be accommodating to the Commission's requirements.

The Commission members discussed with B. Rose the concept of the multi-site installation. He confirmed that the pieces were considered a single installation and were intended as permanent. Concerns were raised regarding the diversity of the City's collection. B. Rose responded that he had been able to find funding for his work, noting that the City was supporting no installations of its own.

C. Goss reminded the Commission of the qualitative language in the Ordinance regarding the variety and diversity of the collection which the Commission is held to. He stated that the Commission was now seeking a compromise with the artist. He recommended, given the time deadlines, that B. Rose look for new sites and consider paring down the total number of pieces. He also noted that he appreciated B. Rose's desire to "see what takes place with the materials" as he is fabricating his work.

B. Doucette stated that the moratorium was not directed at B. Rose and that it was not a rebuke of his work, but rather reflected the concern that the Commission was making decisions about installations without competition or any way of comparing what was being approved to other ideas and possibilities for particular sites/locations.

C. Capella-Peters stated that the Commission will be as supportive as possible of B. Rose and volunteered staff support to find new locations and meet with property owners, etc. The Commission agreed that it would support a letter to the Connective Corridor acknowledging the moratorium and the impact that it has on B. Rose's timetable and it would be supportive of extending his schedule.

- VI. Next Meeting Date. K. Auwaerter asked the Commission to agree to move the date of the next Commission meeting because she would be away on the April 10 date. The Commission members present said they would be available on April 5 and K. Auwaerter stated that she would make arrangements to publicize the date change.

- VII. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 pm.