
Current Situation

Approximately 188 artworks are in the Town's possession and the Public Arts Office has a Filemaker database entry for each that includes a photograph and all related information that could be gathered in a reasonable amount of time. All of these artworks are covered by some amount of insurance. Some works are publicly displayed on Town property, some are hanging in offices and areas only available to Town staff, and others are in various Town storage areas. Some works are properly maintained, others require conservation, and the conditions of some items are unknown. Some works are identified as property of the Town and others are not. The original and current owners of some artworks may never be determined and thus may be the responsibility of the Town simply because these works are now in the Town's possession.

92 of these works may be considered part of the Town's Permanent Collection as records of commission by or gift to the Town exist. Another 96 works are currently "in limbo" as they are of unknown provenance or have not been officially accessed into the Permanent Collection. The status of these 96 works should be decided by recommendation of the Public Arts Commission and Office to Town Council before further conservation and policy development can proceed. This decision is worthy of Commission and Council consideration for the following reasons:

- some items are in disrepair, are deteriorating and/or are improperly stored, and the appropriate remedy or action depends upon the status of the item in question;
- the majority of these artworks are not identified or labeled as Town property, and thus are at risk of being discarded or destroyed (a mural has already met this fate);
- the following moratorium on the acceptance of gifts of art by the Town was endorsed by the Arts Commission on February 11, 2009, and so the Commission is unable to proceed in a timely manner should a gift be offered: "The Percent For Art and Permanent Collection Committee recommends that the Chapel Hill Public Arts Commission decline to accept any gifts that are intended to be used as part of the circulating office collection until there is an Asset Management policy articulated and adopted by the Town."

Along with determining the status of the 96 works mentioned above, the Public Arts Office and Commission should determine if any other collections or categories are needed at this time. Current Public Arts policies recognize only a "Permanent Collection" that pieces are either a part of or not. This may suffice, or other tiers or collections may be required (perhaps a "holdings" category for mementos, awards, and other items that require care but do not fit the Permanent Collection). Town and Public Arts policies require the Arts Commission to make recommendations to Town Council about the acceptance of gifts and about artworks to access to and de-access from the Permanent Collection.

Course of Action

The Commission may wish to take one of the following actions:

1. ask the Public Arts Office to develop a recommendation for the status of the 96 "unassigned artworks" in question, or
2. form an ad-hoc committee of Public Arts Commissioners to work with the Public Arts Office to develop a recommendation for the status of the 96 "unassigned artworks" in question

The resulting recommendation may then be considered for endorsement by the full Commission and sent to the Town Council. Once Council acts, the Public Arts Office and Commission may continue the cataloging and conservation of the artworks in question, and a Collection Management and Collection Development Policies may be created.