

## **Public Art & the Municipality of Princeton**

Public art in the municipality of Princeton currently has a modest footprint, but encompasses a number of indoor and outdoor works donated to or commissioned by the former Borough or Township, for which the municipality now has responsibility. These works are the focus of an ongoing inventory that will serve as a baseline for the extent of this collection and for the condition of these works. With the establishment in 2018 of a Public Art Selection Committee, new opportunities exist to assure that the existing works are stewarded responsibly, to provide for the thoughtful review of works to be offered to the municipality in the future, and to secure for the citizens of Princeton new public art opportunities. It is hoped that such a collection need not be a static entity, but that it can grow and evolve to include works that enrich the experience of our community, for its residents and for visitors.

### **Overview and Guidelines**

The Public Art Selection Committee appointed by the Mayor seeks to enrich the community's visual environment by placing works of art in strategic locations both indoors and out. Works of public art enrich the broad Princeton community as well as visitors by enhancing the visual experience; deepening a sense of place and the experience of space; stimulating diverse viewer responses; and fostering lively gathering spots. As such, the work of the Public Art Selection Committee will reflect the community's diverse values and the municipality's commitment to being a lively and welcoming community in the heart of central New Jersey.

Public art has a meaningful history in Princeton, as is articulated in the Municipality's Master Plan, from which we quote:

*“The Princeton community has long prided itself on the visual quality and character of the community. The John B. Putnam, Jr. Memorial Collection of 20<sup>th</sup> century art is located on the grounds of Princeton University and is accessible to the public when the campus is open. The collection includes works by modern masters such as Alexander Calder, Henry Moore, Jacques Lipchitz and Pablo Picasso....*

*In the 1989 Master Plan we identified historic bridges and tree lined roadways as an important visual part of the community. Today, we seek to expand and improve this visual element by acknowledging the importance of all the arts. Princeton has an abundance of cultural activities which occur throughout the community and improve the quality of life in Princeton.”*

At that time, the scope described was expansive and encompassed both the visual and performing arts, concluding with the following recommendation:

*“A public art commission should be created to promote, encourage and further develop public awareness of the arts. Encouragement should be given regarding the integration of art into the architecture of municipal structures and places. The community should seek both public and private programs to achieve this goal. Public places should be enhanced by the placement of art, benches, tables and other public amenities wherever possible.”*

The Scope of the Public Art Selection Committee is defined as follows.

### Scope

Public art in Princeton includes:

- The general collection of works assembled over time by the former Borough and Township, including works in traditional media such as sculptures, plaques, and painted murals
- New works of art recommended for acceptance as gifts (or, rarely, purchases) by the Public Art Selection Committee
- New works of art commissioned or otherwise acquired under the leadership of the Public Art Selection Committee, including works in new media and environments

Public art in Princeton may also include temporary installations or exhibitions intended for the community’s public spaces, whether undertaken by the Committee itself or in partnership with local individuals or organizations.

Working with staff of the municipality, the Public Art Selection Committee provides oversight for the care of existing works of public art as well as advocating for and securing new works of public art through gift, purchase, and loan.

### Principles and Guidelines

The Public Art Selection Committee strives to position works of public art of high quality and strong visual interest in settings appropriate to the scale, purposes, aesthetics, and materials of individual works. Stewardship for the existing collection of public art and for all works entering the municipality’s collection in the future is an integral part of the Committee’s charge.

The Committee strives to operate on a timely and responsive basis relative to community leaders, stakeholders, donors, and others, and to foster productive relationships with other local and regional stakeholders invested in the visual arts. The work of the Committee is subject to the municipality’s public meeting notice requirements, including publication of Committee decisions and major actions.

The Public Art Selection Committee recognizes and makes use of the particular characteristics of public environments (both indoors and out) in which diverse users come

together for a wide range of purposes. Accordingly, the Committee seeks to balance issues of originality and artist's rights with a respect for the diverse activities that take place in such spaces, and for the physical integrity of the 18.1 square miles that constitute this community.

The Public Art Selection Committee seeks to reflect and honor the history of Princeton, including the evolution of its population and of taste, values, and formal expressions in the spheres of art, design, and architecture, while also reflecting the community's aspirational and inclusive values.

### Criteria

In evaluating works of public art, the Public Art Selection Committee applies a consistent set of criteria in evaluating works of public art—whether sited permanently or temporarily—that are offered to the municipality as well as works which members of the community or organizations within the community seek to add to the public environment. Essential to these criteria are the following:

- The aesthetic and/or historical significance of an individual work of public art and its potential to enhance the community who would engage with it.
- The significance of the artist or artists, including ties to the region.
- The relative uniqueness of the work of art, including factors of originality and authenticity.
- The contribution an individual work of art can be expected to make to the vitality of our community, as well as to the existing collection of public art.
- Appropriateness to site, including (for outdoor sites) appropriateness to the site's adjacent architecture, hardscaping, and landscaping.
- The appropriate use of municipal resources, including funding, staffing, etc.
- The municipality's ability to assure the proper long-term care of the work, including security, conservation, and maintenance.
- The safety of the work of art, as well as the safety of users who would interact with it.

For future commissions, additional criteria include:

- The way in which the work would affect the way we think about the community around it, local history, and other measures of deeper resonance.
- The work's capacity to withstand the test of time while embodying the vitality of today's artistic production.
- The importance of honoring artistic intent and integrity in carrying out a work of public art.

### **Public Art Process**

All proposed works of public art for the municipality of Princeton—whether to adorn outdoor spaces, the facades of buildings, or the public spaces of municipal buildings—must be reviewed and recommended by the Public Art Selection Committee. The municipal Council is represented to the Committee by a single member of Council, appointed by the Mayor, and who acts as Liaison, as well as by the Municipal Administrator or designee and the Director of Public Works or designee. Generally, the decision of the Public Art Selection Committee will be considered final, unless in specific instances its recommendations must be reviewed by another entity such as the Historic Preservation Commission, the Planning Board, or the Council itself.

The work of the Public Art Selection Committee is led by a Chair, appointed by the Mayor, who works closely with the Council Liaison. Committee membership is comprised of five regular voting members, including at least one representative from the Arts Council of Princeton. Members serve four-year terms at the invitation of the Mayor, and typically include representatives of local visual art organizations and/or others with expertise or knowledge of public art.

Because one of the goals of the Public Art Selection Committee is to elevate the stature and volume of public art in municipal buildings and around the community, community members and organizations with an interest in proposing a work of public art or a public art project are advised to contact the Chair early, whether in regard to a gift offer, purchase, commission, or temporary exhibition or installation intended for the public spaces within our community.

#### Criteria for Acceptance, Including Preservation Needs

The Overview and Guidelines for public art above provide guidance on the criteria used to evaluate works of public art for gift, purchase, or loan. In addition to qualitative criteria, it is expected that all new works of public art recommended to the Committee should come with any funds needed for their future preservation and/or conservation, except in the case of potential commissions or public art projects for which funds would need to be sought under the Committee's leadership. The absence of such funds could be grounds for the Committee to recommend that a work not be accepted or a project not be undertaken.

#### Definitions and Purposes

Please see the Overview and Guidelines above for definitions of public art and a statement of purpose.

#### Process

- All proposals for new works of public art will be made initially to the Municipal Administrator, who will share them with the Chair of the Committee. Based on the nature of the request/proposal, ample time should be allowed for the Committee to

review the request, bearing in mind that the Committee meets generally on an as-needed basis.

- The Chair will make an initial review of the proposal to determine if it is ready to go to the full Committee for consideration.
- Once the Chair has determined that the request is ready for the full Committee's consideration, it will go forward at the next available Committee meeting. If need be, a Committee meeting will be scheduled for this purpose, but generally such meetings will not take place more than four times a year.
- The Committee will weigh proposals against the criteria established in the Overview and Guidelines for Public Art.

Typically, one of three outcomes is achieved:

- The Committee accepts the work.
- The Committee declines to accept the work.
- The Committee determines that the proposed work is not yet ready for a decision (for or against) and goes back to the proposing individual or organization with requests for revision (e.g. changes to the work, the design, the concept, or the proposed site). In this event, it is the responsibility of the proposing individual or organization to resolve the requests coming back from the Committee. Once these needs are met, the proposer may come back to the Committee at any time with a revised request.
- Once the Committee has made a decision, the Chair, the Council Liaison, or the Municipal Administrator shall communicate the decision to the proposer.
- Typically from this point, logistical matters relating to approved proposals will be coordinated by municipal staff.
- Outdoor works requiring plaques of any kind (e.g. donor plaques, identifying plaques, or interpretive information) must be coordinated with municipal staff.
- Once sited, no work of public art may be moved without notifying and achieving the consent of the Public Art Selection Committee.

### Siting

Where the proposer does not have a preferred site in mind, or where that site has been determined to be unacceptable or impractical by the Public Art Committee, the Committee will determine an appropriate site.

### Commissioned Works of Public Art

In addition to the general process outlined above, proposers or the Committee or the municipality itself may have an interest in commissioning a work of public art. Typically, such requests will come either with funding attached to the proposed commission or failing that with a funding proposal or plan. Any such proposals must be developed by or

in coordination with the Public Art Committee, subject to municipal public notice requirements. In the event of commissioned work, the process of selecting the artist or artists and developing the commission will be managed by the Committee in consultation with interested individuals or organizations. The Committee may on occasion appoint an organization to act on its behalf in carrying out the work of a proposal or commission.

Once a proposed design for such a commission has been achieved, it will enter the review process described above.

### Placing Works of Art

Conditions that must be met include:

- Installation and removal of works of public art shall only be carried out by municipal staff or others with the knowledge and consent of the Committee or its Chair.
- Art hung on walls shall be secured to the wall with security hardware so as not be readily movable.
- Art shall be displayed in rooms or buildings that are generally locked when not in use.
- Art shall generally not be hung in areas or locations whose conditions are likely to contribute to the deterioration of the work of art (e.g. direct sunlight, proximity to a heating or air conditioning unit or to a source of water, etc.).
- Susceptible works of art will be protected with UV-filtering Plexiglas when determined necessary by the Committee.
- Art shall be installed so that it is safe from vandalism, can be easily maintained, and poses no danger to users.
- Art shall not be moved, unframed, cleaned, restored, or otherwise handled without the knowledge of the Chair.
- Art shall not be left in a room during renovations or painting.
- When not being displayed, art shall be stored in a secured area approved by the Committee.

All outgoing loans are subject to the review and approval of the Committee.