

## **Claremont Committee for Public Art**

League of Women Voters of the Claremont Area Observer Report  
By Observer Rachel Forester  
May 24, 2018

### **Purpose of Committee**

The purpose of the City of Claremont's Public Art Program is to enhance the aesthetic and cultural quality throughout the community, provide opportunities for the public to be exposed to a broad range of quality visual art, acknowledge our local artistic community, inspire pride, identity, and a sense of place among the residents of the community and enhance the general welfare of people living and working in the City of Claremont. The Committee for Public Art reviews prospective public art projects, installations, and exhibitions and advises on the city's art collection. Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month.

### **Committee Members**

At the moment the committee consists of multi-media artist and educator Karen Neuber (chair), marketing and fundraising professional Amy Croushore, professor of art history Adriana Tchalian, homegrown Claremont artist Christopher Toovey, painter and sculptor Georgette Unis, practicing artist and museum professional Jessica Wimbley, and former CMC facilities director and artist Brian Worley. Jessica Wimbley has announced her resignation from the committee as she will be moving to take a position at UC Davis. Brian Worley serves as the requisite liaison between the art committee and the architectural commission.

### **Professional Staff**

The committee has been run through the Human Services Department assisted by Director of Human Services, Anne Turner and Manager of Human Services, Melissa Vollaro. New city manager, Tara Schultz has directed that the committee be under her office's purview, with Public Information Officer Bevin Handel as the staff liaison.

### **Meeting Conduct and Attendance**

This committee operates with a far more casual atmosphere than many other city commissions. Meetings are more likely to begin a little late with some members arriving after the meeting has begun. The Brown Act is followed; however agenda materials and meeting minutes are not easy to find on the city website. I have not observed any attendance from the public.

## Notable Items

- **City Collection Appraisal**

On September 11, 2017, Melissa Vollaro provided an oral update on the art appraisal by Jacqueline Silverman Associates. All 40 pieces in the city's collection, which includes sculptures, the plaza fountain, murals, and paintings throughout the City's facilities, were appraised and found to have a current retail replacement value of \$1.1 million. Manager Vollaro spoke about doing an exhibit at the Alexander Hughes Community Center, coordinating with Claremont Museum of Art or Claremont Heritage, highlighting the City's art inventory and considering deaccessioning some of the pieces. Some paintings found to be of significant value were moved to the vaults at the Pomona College Museum of Art in order to offer protection from further deterioration and greater security than city facilities could offer.

- **Deaccession of Artwork**

Following the appraisal of the city's art holdings, it was determined that a number of pieces may need to be de-accessed as outlined in the Public Art Master Plan. These pieces were of significant value and the city does not have the means of properly maintaining and securing them relative to that value. *Quietly*, by Frederick Hammersley with a replacement value of \$150,000 is one such piece. On February 21, 2018 the committee approved the sale of the piece to the Hammersley Foundation for \$100,000. This has been subsequently approved by the city council. Karl Benjamin's *Form in Red and Orange* with a resale value of \$85,000 is another such piece. On May 14, 2018, the committee recommended the sale of this piece to the Pomona College Museum of Art for \$60,000. This recommendation awaits approval of the City Council. All proceeds from the deaccession of public art remain in the public art fund.

- **ArtStart Mural in Wheeler Park**

Artist Timothy Robert Smith worked with Vista School and ArtStart students on a mural. Painting of the mural began on September 22 in Wheeler Park. The Committee was invited to attend the event. An Art in the Park postcard was provided detailing the dedication of the mural on October 14, 2017. Staff gave a presentation on the mural to students of the Claremont After School Program (CLASP) that provides after-school tutoring for students at Wheeler Park. The mural process was photographed and documented from beginning to end.

- *The Creating of Arbor*

On January 8, 2018, the committee approved a recommendation to the City Council to commission a sculpture to be placed in front of City Hall. The unnamed piece by Sijia Chen, a Los Angeles based artist, described as a minimal and abstract interpretation of a tree trunk, would have the botanical names of trees found in the city etched into the steel panels that composed the piece. The place allocated for the installation was previously a planter for a tree, but, after more than one tree died, it was deemed unsuitable for further planting and an RFP for public art was issued. City Council had the option to have the piece temporarily or permanently installed and opted to approve the purchase for permanent installation with a 4-to-1 vote. Then Mayor Schroeder, the dissenting vote, lamented that in the City of Trees we ought to be able to keep a tree alive in front of City Hall. Now known as *The Creating of Arbor*, the installation is scheduled for Friday May 25, with the unveiling scheduled for Monday, May 29, at 5:00. The public is welcome to attend.