

# ***Integrated Artwork for Public Projects***

## ***Factors for Success***

**Fundamentals of a Successful Art Program  
Recommendations for Policies and Procedures  
Art Program Roles and Responsibilities**

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# ***Integrated Artwork for Public Projects***

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## ***Lessons Learned Report***

Westside Light Rail Public Art, December 1998  
Tri-Met  
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## Fundamentals of a Successful Art Program

1. **Agency leadership** with clear investment and understanding of the benefits (and the challenges) of an integrated art program. Willingness to empower and support an Art Committee to design and oversee the program.
2. **Clear agency goals** for the art program, which respond to Federal Transit Administration policy and philosophy and include these concepts:
  - respond to the community
  - do it right and well
  - build art that will “last a century”
3. **Shared core values** among all key players: willingness to partner, to learn, to risk and to explore all possible solutions.
4. **A reasonable budget** for staff, administration, artist fees and technical support during design and document development, construction oversight and/or fabrication and installation; supplemented by a realistic contingency budget.
5. **Commitment-to-build support** of the agency staff, capital project staff, all contractors, affected neighborhoods and communities and the region for the program and its benefits.
6. **Visionary professional artists** selected with successful collaborative experience, who are specifically interested in learning about and working with the heavy construction industry.
7. **Collaborative prime architect or landscape architect** selected with experience and enthusiasm for partnering with artists.
8. **A wise and inclusive art committee** with diverse perspectives on art and experience in public art.
9. **Dedicated, experienced art committee chair** with process leadership skills and public art experience.
10. **Project director and prime design management representative sit as art committee members.**
11. **An experienced upfront public art consultant** (if the agency is undertaking integrated transit art for the first time) to help structure the program.

12. **Passionate staff** with project and budget management skills; a deep background in art and collaboration.
13. **A well-defined Design Team structure** and Design Team project plan.
14. **Personal and professional support for the art program** in lead construction management and resident engineers.
15. **Clear collaborative agreements** in and between all teams, including well-defined and consistently executed communications with all, managed by staff.
16. **Realistic and inspired design**, informed early in design development by construction management.
17. **A complete construction management plan** that integrates artists' concerns and art quality-assurance processes throughout.
18. **Art project quality standards drive a rigorous collaboration** between artists, architects and construction management that begins during design development (50-70%). This collaboration begins with joint decisions defining what entity will be contracted to construct or fabricate each art project.
19. **Quality standards enforced by agency, construction management and architects** as specified in construction documents or artists' contracts.
20. **Stringent budget oversight structure.**

## **Recommendations for Policies and Procedures**

### **Recommendation I**

#### **Employ Resources Early to Build Commitment To Program & Goals**

Four scenarios help describe the issues surrounding Recommendation I:

- Plans are delivered to engineers who have had no previous contact with the art program. In their attempts to decipher the documents, the art projects are derided as “a waste of time”.
- An inspector, who has never met the artist involved, signs off on art work without either artist or architect present.
- A contractor sits down for lunch with frustrated workers who are struggling to do something they've never done before. Angry over the loss of time (and money) the contractor belittles both the artists and the art project. What happens to “attention to detail”—and quality control—after break?
- An artist is called to approve work and is given two days instead of two weeks’ notice. The resident engineer says: “I’m doing the best I can. I called, but the artist won’t come.” The artist says, “I was working on another job. They said they’d give me two weeks’ notice.”

Successful public art programs are led by teams of people who believe in the work they are doing. If the people involved in executing the program think what they are doing is “stupid”, that attitude will show in the quality of the product..

Cynical, resistant attitudes cause issues not only for the art, but can deepen any divide between labor and management.

Attitude must be addressed early and consistently throughout the program, applying both communications and learning strategies. The communications messages should include: 1) Why the client is committed to this program; 2) What are the projects and what do they mean; 3) Who are the artists; 4) How will the art program change the way we usually work? and 5) How committed is the agency?

#### **Specific recommendations for building commitment:**

1. Develop and execute a strategic employee communications campaign of education and dialogue about agency’s art program policies and commitments with all employees. Remember attitudes shift most readily through conversation with a respected peer.

2. Hire prime architects who agree to partner with artists from conceptual development through completion. Contractually define collaboration goals. Hire architects excited by the opportunity to work with artists and who have demonstrated success leading collaborative process.
3. Hire Design Team artists with successful collaborative public art experience.
4. Choose a Construction Manager or Lead Resident Engineer willing to accept the “burden of art” as a strong personal and professional commitment.
5. Assign clear responsibility to the Construction Manager/Lead Resident Engineer to build engineering and contractor knowledge of (and buy-in for) the art program. Support this challenge with resources and staff time.
6. Gain additional team buy-in throughout pre-construction meetings by using collaborative project planning to build the artist/engineer/contractor/architect partnership and address resistance.
7. Provide mentoring for any less experienced Design Team or project artists to help them learn about contractors, construction and the work of resident engineers

## **Recommendation II Establish, and Avoid Breaking, Collaborative Agreements**

*Collaboration sometimes feels like as much time is spent designing process as designing product. People working in collaboration must construct collaborative agreements together and this is more time-consuming than in a traditional hierarchy.*

The art program was a series of interlocking collaborations:

- The Art Committee (including agency project senior management)
- The Artist Design Team
- The Artist/Architect Design Team
- Staff-Art Committee Chair collaboration
- Staff-Agency Project Staff collaboration
- Art Program-Community collaborations
- Artist-Architect-Engineering Collaborations
- Artist-Architect-Engineering-Contractor/Subcontractor Collaborations
- Artist/laborer or Artist/fabricator collaboration

Art programs require a truly extraordinary amount of collaboration and collaborative effort. Sometimes the process breaks down. Mostly, these “breaks” fell into one of two categories:

- “Group flailing”: Several times, a team or group fails to recognize that a process could help them address a difficult issue. Instead the group talks and brainstorms and talks some more, far beyond the point of positive returns.
- “The *Just Do It* Response”: A member of a team (usually someone with design or management authority) abandoned process midstream and made a unilateral decision out of need or frustration.

Such breakdowns in collaborative process are experienced as breakdowns in trust. In most cases, these breaks waste time and money as people struggle to get the project back “on track”. Sometimes a break creates adversarial relationships and behind-the-scenes manipulation.

### **Specific recommendations for collaborative process:**

1. Collaborations can benefit from upfront agreements. In particular, process agreements should be made to:
  - Establish ground rules for communications and decision-making
  - Identify roles team members are individually expected or willing to play
  - Illuminate issues of self-interest

- Address difficult contingencies that the group expects to encounter
- 2. Select key leaders with established “process skills” who can comprehend and guide the multiple collaborations.
- 3. Commit in advance to full explanation of reasoning and choices when a breakdown in process occurs. Without this process, groups often get “stuck” in blame.
- 4. Work together to understand the reasons for seemingly unwarranted unilateral decisions.
- 5. Remember: Too frequent unilateral action will destroy any good collaboration.

### **Recommendation III**

#### **Assure Quality Control Concerns Guide Design Development**

*Quality control is the most basic challenge of the art program: How do we move from ideas to great art?*

Integration of art and design requires a level of partnership with the construction industry contractors who are building the core of the line.

In general, heavy construction industry and civil contractors have industry standards for work lower than the quality demanded for the exacting execution of most art projects.

The project must anticipate extraordinary amounts of time and energy spent confronting this challenge. In many cases during construction, artists are found working beside laborers, making art, and this has the potential to transform laborers into craftspeople.

#### **Specific recommendations for quality control during design development:**

1. Place art projects solely under control of the artist (and his/her fabricators) whenever possible.
2. Remember: the integration of art at the heavy construction level provides the foundation of the Design Team partnership. Without that foundation, the art projects could become “just embellishment”.
3. Review, as early in design development as possible, all art projects and discuss the possible methods for constructing each project, with quality and cost control the primary considerations. Engage architects, artists and construction management in this “construction review” to make mutual choices about who will fabricate or construct.
4. If the art will be constructed by contractors or their subs:
  - Establish a reasonable understanding between artists, architects and engineers of what is industry standard work and detail the construction documents within that understanding.
  - Detail a short list of expert, cost effective subcontractors with “level of quality” fully described (best if compared to industry standard as a benchmark).
  - Identify and combine projects that can be awarded to a higher quality “finishing contractor”.
  - Make construction documents thorough, with drawings, models, grids, material samples and multiple displays of the design.
5. If the art will be fabricated off site by the artist and his/her fabricators:
  - Assign quality control contractual responsibility to the artist.
  - Coordinate and insert all requirements into construction documents so contractors and engineers are aware of the requirements and ramifications.

- Make installation and mounting part of the art and plan thoroughly during design development.
6. If the art will be completed on site by the artist individually or by overseeing subcontractors hired by the artist:
    - Collaborate between construction management, architects and artists to define the construction project plan steps.
    - Assign quality control contractual responsibility to the artist.
    - Coordinate and insert all requirements into construction documents so contractors and engineers are aware of the requirements and ramifications.
    - Make installation and mounting part of the art and plan thoroughly during design development.
    - Define agreements with prime contractors necessary to assure the success of this method.
  7. Conduct thorough, final design review at 95%, providing a master list of deficiencies and conflicts to all, including artists/architects. This provides six weeks before the 100% final-final review, allowing significant time for the coordination necessary to address engineering issues.
  8. Test all materials and construction methods for durability and constructability.
  9. Conduct a thorough maintenance review in partnership with whomever will be specifically responsible for maintaining the art or design..

## **Recommendation IV Establish Preconstruction Agreements to Assure Quality Control During Construction**

*Construction management should know they “have to do the art right,” and know that “right” will cost money. Management must make this goal clear at the outset, and construction management must inform the contractors. Without this clarity, quality control during construction will be difficult.*

The artists, architects, resident engineers and staff are mutually responsible for quality control. Construction management and resident engineers have enforcement (budget) power and the deepest daily working relationship with the contractors and their subs, but seldom have the capacity to inspect and approve an art project—only the artist’s eyes can see if it’s “right”.

During preconstruction meetings, a vast array of competing concerns must be acknowledged and addressed. The contractors’ primary goals are to bring the job in at industry standard quality, on time and under budget. The art program goals are quality execution of concept—also on time and, if possible, under budget. The common goals (time and money) should be clearly identified, and the differences (quality standards) directly discussed. Construction management must make agency intentions regarding quality clear—and the artist should explain the importance, as well.

Some in the construction industry have a hard time understanding why this is so important, and it is hard for them to hear and listen. The message to the contractor is simple: To get the art done as cost-effectively as possible, the goal is to get it right the first time. Getting it right means a higher level of quality than is industry standard. The challenge is reaching agreements during preconstruction meetings as to how that higher level can most effectively be achieved.

If this issue is clarified early in the meetings, preconstruction meetings become planning meetings instead of negotiations.

### **Specific recommendations for pre-construction planning:**

1. Work with the Construction Manager/Lead Resident Engineer to design an extremely careful strategy of introducing all resident engineers to the art projects they will be asked to supervise before beginning any planning.
2. Assure contractors and all resident engineers fully grasp the significance—to them—of meeting the art quality standards. Hold this discussion during the earliest pre-construction group meetings.

3. Check and recheck the quality of any new subcontractor proposed by the contractor. The best “reference” for an unknown sub is for the artist (with technical support) to interview them and observe their working methods.
  
4. Address these issues during preconstruction meetings:
  - review the drawings
  - identify potential issues
  - review the assignment of construction responsibilities and roles
  - clarify the sequencing, including fabrication, installation and mounting
  - finalize subcontractors
  - define inspection and approval processes, expected intervals, and notification agreements
  - finalize the project calendar (starting from the contractor’s project milestones schedule)
  - build partnerships

## **Recommendation V**

### **Keep Communication Open During Construction**

*The single most important challenge during construction is tracking of details and trying to keep most of the people on the same page most of the time.*

The art staff should be responsible for providing ongoing, continual communications across the project. Art staff should attend all weekly contractor meetings, and then work to liaison with artists. Staff conducts weekly schedule and issues meetings, and distributes monthly issues reports to engineers, architects, artists, contractors, subcontractors and the Art Committee.

Stringent budget tracking is absolutely critical. Given the complexity and variability of art program processes, the budget management system must work effectively. Every six months, staff conducts a bottom up collection of data of project progress. The central project management staff analyzes data against project management goals and resets budgets against projections of percent of project left to complete.

Resident engineers play a crucial role in quality control during construction, tracking details of a portion of the project. The critical factor in their willingness to undertake this “additional” task is their *personal commitment to the art program*.

The resident engineer (RE) manages the project plan as designed during pre-construction meetings, manages the budget, communicates deadlines and issues with all key players, mediates situations and find solutions as inevitable challenges arise. Contingency funds are critical bargaining chips when RE or architect are pushing a contractor to do an art project over and do it right.

Artists generally have no authority to assure quality control for contractor work, but feel great responsibility. The artist have most control over the quality of the construction when they visit the site frequently, track project progress on their own, build individual relationships with the contractors, subcontractors and laborers, and learn on the job from the contractors and laborers. These site visits are above and beyond the scheduled inspections and approvals.

The site visits also allow the artist the opportunity to build a respected relationship with the RE—on the engineer’s turf.

Final responsibility for quality control during construction often falls on the architectural project manager. He/She works as the liaison between the artists and the engineers and contractors and the ability to manage that relationship is critical. The architect hold authority to approve quality, to stop construction, to request (or in some situations demand) a redo or contract alteration.

**Specific recommendations for quality control during construction:**

1. Address issues when they surface, especially uncomfortable political concerns or issues regarding accountability.
2. Staff should:
  - Assure clear, regular and inclusive information flow.
  - Stay absolutely current on construction and political issues that impact the engineers' capacity to negotiate with the contractors.
  - Help develop common terminology for the work to be done. Translation of industry terms is critical.
3. Resident engineers should:
  - Follow pre-construction planning and agreements.
  - Encourage their staff to fully support and understand the art program. In particular, inspectors must partner with artists and architects on all inspections and approvals.
  - Remember compliance will not create quality results. Understanding benefits of doing it right the first time may.
4. Artists should:
  - Partner with staff to construct letters of agreement with all fabricators or subcontractors, outlining approval checkpoints and deadlines coinciding with the master project calendar.
  - Track project(s) by visiting the site.
  - Know the contractor, fabricator or subs. Communicate regularly to track progress. Seek their important suggestions about process improvements and quality concerns.
5. The architects should:
  - Accept final responsibility for quality control on the art projects. Always remember partner with the artist on oversight and approvals, and remember the artist has no "enforcement power" with contractor or subs.
  - Act as interpreter, teacher and translator between all players.
6. The Art Committee should:
  - Consider its mission accomplished when the program enters construction. If a large scale political or community situation arises, the committee can be brought in to these matters by staff on an as-needed basis.

## **Recommendation VI Provide Artists With Experienced, Trusted Technical Advice**

*Artists need a dependable source of technical advice.*

A trusted, experienced technical advisor can help the artists:

- Explore novel solutions (the artists' value-added) at the "edge" of industry capabilities
- Understand constructability issues
- Help build the fragile, early, conceptual collaboration between architects and artists
- Advocate or renounce the technical possibilities of an idea
- Research solutions, methodology during design development
- Describe construction and engineering issues that present quality control risks
- Learn about construction industry methodology and standards, and create a more realistic "frame" for collaboration
- Craft the short list of recommended subcontractors
- Speak engineering and contractor language and can provide translation when needed
- Research subcontractor references when replacements are suggested by contractors.
- Set realistic quality control expectations before and during construction
- Recommend changes in approach when all else fails
- Undertake inspections and approvals, assessing technical and construction quality while the artist focuses on the "look".

The need for technical advice is too critical to leave to happenstance. Eventually, during construction, responsibility for quality control is shared between artists, architects and engineers. The best way to assure that enforcement is to build shared decision-making on technical issues earlier into the design development program.

This report recommends ALL three approaches be integrated to address the need for technical advise, because a solid solution to this issue can help address the quality control concerns of preceding recommendations.

1. Identify the Construction Manager/Lead Resident Engineer as early as possible. The Construction Manager/Lead Resident Engineer will
  - Be involved in preliminary design charrettes
  - Consult during design development process, learn the art projects (at 50-70% phase)
  - Partner with the architect and artists to define who and how each project can best be constructed to provide maximum quality control.
  - Provide civil engineering expertise to the artists
2. Require the architects to identify their Project Manager at contracting and include him/her in design charrettes. The architectural project manager will:
  - Serve as the primary technical advisor to the artists

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- Assure clean, clear construction documents on all art projects
  - Provide construction industry expertise as needed by the artist
  - Enforce quality construction as defined by the documents during construction.
3. Provide a Technical Support Liaison to the artists. The technical liaison:
- Partners to explore potential solutions
  - Researches subcontractors
  - Translates for the artists on site
  - Tracks daily issues during final design and construction
  - Mentors artists from design through construction

## **Recommendation VII Clarify Roles Relating to the Art Committee**

*The Art Committee should have a clear understanding of its roles and responsibilities including a detailed definition of structure and process.*

### **Specific recommendations regarding role clarification:**

1. Establish a trusted working relationship between Art Committee, Chair, Project Director and Art Program Manager
2. More clearly define the scope of Art Committee responsibility, decision-making structures and authority during all stages of program development through bidding, including:
  - Clearly define the Art Committee’s curatorial responsibilities
  - Develop clear agreements on the Committee Chair staff relationship
  - Expand the Art Committee’s responsibility to provide or seek sources of technical advice during design development
  - Obtain commitments from the prime architect and Project Director to serve as full-time committee members, attend all meetings and send a “second” to sit in when he/she is unavailable
  - Include responsibilities for signage and documentation policy/program advice
  - Define when the Committee role will end
  - Provide upfront written job descriptions and definition of the communications structures to all Committee members
3. Identify a specific role for the Resource Panel, or recruit as needed

**Recommendation VIII  
Agency Board and Managerial Leadership Should Conduct a Rigorous  
Face-to-Face Dialogue about Art Policy**

*This report is only a starting point. It provides fuel for discussion and decision-making. However, a long term commitment to art suggests the need for a deeper managerial and agency understanding of and commitment to integrated art as the foundation for a transit art program.*

**Choices to be made during this dialogue:**

- What should be our commitment to ongoing art program staff?
- What is the role, structure and authority of the Art Committee?
- What is the relationship between the agency and the community's public art program?
- Will we always use Design Teams? When, where and why or why not?
- Do we always seek prime architects willing to collaborate with artists?
- Should the agency maintain and update files on artists?
- Should the agency build agency knowledge of other art programs?
- What should we tell employees about our art commitments and policies?

## **Art Program Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Art Committee**

Community representatives with significant art experience; asked by the client to assume responsibility to develop the Art Programs and provide oversight. Hires staff.

### **Artist Design Team**

Collaborates with architects and others on Design Team to develop conceptual framework. Different “partnerships” of individual artists and architects work together. Artists responsible for individual projects as agreed upon, for oversight of project artists, for integrating art into construction documents as agreed upon and/or for oversight of fabricators; and construction/installation oversight. Participate in community meetings.

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### **Design Team**

Informal term used to describe the collaborative group including artists, architects and landscape architects who conceptualize and design each program.

### **Public Art Staff**

(Manager, Coordinator, interns) Tracks all schedules and issues lists, structures and implements project communications and tracking; budget oversight and management, contracting; attends all design and construction meetings; liaison with artists, architects, engineers and all others on project; public relations including documentation of process and product.

### **Resource Panel**

Local advisors recruited by Art Committee to provide specific areas of expertise to artists during concept development.

### **Project Artists**

Artists who design and implement (sometimes fabricate) specific projects with regard for initial Design Team concepts at pre-determined sites.

### **Artist Fabricators**

Experienced fabricators recommended by artists. Artists and contractors should, if possible, subcontract fabrication of artworks to suppliers recommended by artists.