

Consensus Building Update



**PRESENTATION TO THE ART SUBCOMMITTEE
DECEMBER 7, 2015**

Public Input Sessions



Ideas for New Stories – Input Sessions



- **Strongest themes:**
 - Art should represent more diverse peoples (women, African Americans)
 - Art should tell more diverse stories
 - Art should reflect current values (inclusive, sensitive, inspiring)
 - There should be more robust interpretation for current and new stories
 - There is value in the current art

Ideas for New Stories – Input Sessions



- **Common themes**

- Balance – old and new art, perspectives, etc.
- Include components that are interactive, multi-media, performance

- **Themes**

- Illustrate political challenges (marriage equality, suffrage, poverty)
- Reflect society as it is today
- Engage social and environmental justice issues

Ideas for New Stories – Input Sessions



QUOTES

- Capitol is a living building, not a museum
- There is a need to tell the bad with the good.
- Capitol is a civic building so whatever is in there should promote public engagement
- We need to think of the entire story behind great figures and acknowledge the past in all its complexities
- Capitol as the front parlor

What Stories might inspire, educate, or interest you? - Survey



- **Historical events that shaped and influenced Minnesota – 69%**
- **Geography and landscapes – 42%**
- **Contributions of our diverse peoples – 26%**

Preferred focus - Survey



- **Reflect state's history – 70%**
- **Appreciate the varied landscapes of our state – 41%**
- **Recognize the contributions of our diverse peoples – 30%**

Governors' Portraits – Input Sessions



- **Strongest themes**
 - Put in one location (Hall), organized in a meaningful way
 - Include robust interpretation, including use of multi-media

Governors' Portraits – Input Sessions



- **Common themes**
 - Use a virtual gallery for the portraits
 - Rotate portraits AND/OR locate elsewhere

* Very few comments indicating portraits should be left exactly as they are

Governors' Portraits – Input Sessions



QUOTES

- Tell the story in context and it could be enriched.
- (Portraits) are a really great resource on how to interpret the state's history...would be interesting to look at it at the at time in history along with other paintings along side.
- The Capitol does not reflect women or people of any other color than white, because those were/are our governors. History is important, but we need to give the art an opportunity to bring people into the space and feel welcome.

Governors' Portraits - Survey



- **Display but in less prominent location – 31%**
- **Continue to display every portrait in a prominent location – 25%**
- **Display selected portraits on a rotating basis – 19%**
- **Do not display – 4%**

Insensitive/Inaccurate Art – Input Sessions



- **Strongest themes**

- Remove art that is insensitive or inaccurate (more concern about Insensitive than inaccurate art) – far and away most dominant theme in input sessions
- Tell the full story, include multiple perspectives (with new pieces and with interpretation)

In insensitive/Inaccurate Art – Input Sessions



- **Strong themes**
 - Utilize robust interpretation
 - Art should reflect current values (equality, diversity, respect)
 - Art should be accurate and sensitive
 - Use new art to balance current art
 - There is value in the current art
 - There is value in demonstrating controversy and diversity of views

In insensitive/Inaccurate Art – Input Sessions



QUOTES

- Other side of the story must be told.
- How you display the art is key.
- Will people read explanatory labels?
- Not interested in completely removing the controversial art, but in re-contextualizing it.

Inensitive/Inaccurate Art – Input Sessions



- **We understand visually before verbally.**
- **State Capitol is not a museum.**
- **It should be the people's house where visitors and those who work there are inspired to be the best we can be in working together for the common good.**

Art That May Not Reflect Attitudes Today - Survey



- **Keep it – 41%**
- **Remove it (display elsewhere, sell, donate, etc.) – 30%**
- **Put it in a separate gallery at Capitol – 9%**
- **Add interpretation – 8%**
- **Balance old with new – 6%**

Art That May Not Reflect Attitudes Today - Survey



QUOTES

- I worry about glossing over the dark parts of our history, because those attitudes and ideas even at their worst did shape how our state was formed. However, I don't think they should be displayed unchallenged. I'd suggest any piece that contains such content have a new complementary piece commissioned reflecting our attitudes and understanding now that is displayed alongside it.
- Historically accurate art should remain. There should not be censorship based on what makes people feel good today. However there should be literature that balances out/explains the history and attitudes of the times in which the piece was created.

Art That May Not Reflect Attitudes Today - Survey



- **Keep them up. They may not represent our current values, but they did represent our past values, which are historically important. I think it would be a disservice to remove "offensive" art. The conflicts against the Native Americans is a great example; it was a horrible thing that happened, and we don't act like that anymore, but that is an important part of American and Minnesotan history.**
- **I believe they should be installed in a new museum that is designed to tell the true history of the colonization of Minnesota and the intentional efforts to exterminate those Indigenous to this place.**
- **I believe the paintings that reflect imperialism, bigotry, and attitudes of racial superiority should be moved out of the Capitol to an art museum. Art which denigrates groups of people in the state should not be present in the State Capitol which is the center of the democratic, political process.**

Art that May Not Reflect Attitudes Today -Survey



- Do better interpretation, but leave it where it is. We should learn from history so that we don't make the same mistakes over and over
- Create an interactive kiosk showing how our understanding of art in public places has changed.
- Contextualize
- I think much art does not reflect the attitudes of Minnesotans today. I believe it is important to allow the past to speak in it's own words but also to contrast it with today's thoughts. Our attitudes and thoughts today will eventually be the past as well

Committee Deliberations



Governors' Portraits – Shared Objectives



Theme: Portraits as vehicle to tell Minnesota story

- Used as a vehicle to tell Minnesota story. Governors as touchstones. Used to tell story of his time.
- Placed in context relevant to our Minnesota History
- Make past relevant to future
- Provide timeline
- Be educational
- Capture the context
- Give weight to impact

Governors' Portraits – Shared Objectives



Theme: Be engaging

- Meaningful
- Memorable
- Interesting
- Accessible
- Encourage reflection
- Put in perspective
- Activate with interpretation
- Incorporate other art to tell the stories
- Meaningful groupings (theme, time period)

Governors' Portraits – Shared Objectives



Theme: Honor both Governors and collective experience

- Honor collective experience/experience of all Minnesotans
- Honor all Governors

Theme: Meaningful interpretation

- Interpretation has to tell full and true story
- Interpretation should bring out multiple views and complexity

Governors' Portraits – Straw Poll



Most popular option

- Continue to hang all (additional 14-26 over the next 100 years)
 - Establish a “hall of governors” and display all portraits in one location
 - Establish and enforce size and design guidelines to minimize future space demands

Somewhat popular option

- Establish a “virtual portrait gallery” available for viewing on site and online

Governors' Portraits – Straw Poll



Unpopular options

- Rotate a selection of portraits
- Display 10-12 of the most recent governors' portraits
- Rotate a selection based on selected criteria
- History panel identifies a limited number of “most worth” governors to display
- Archive portraits at the Minnesota Historical Society
- Relocate portraits to other locations

Governors' Portraits – Straw Poll



Summary of straw poll:

There is a high level of consensus that all Governors' Portraits should be displayed with some modifications including possibly location, interpretation, and guidelines for size and design.

Governors' Portraits - Proposals



All three proposals state that all portraits should be displayed and include robust, multi-dimensional/media interpretation. Two of the proposal include identifying guidelines for the portraits (size, design).

The primary remaining question is whether to place them in one location or various locations.

Art Depicting Native Americans Shared Objectives



Theme: unifying and affirming

- Unifying
- Inclusive
- Respectful
- All Minnesotans can see selves in art in Capitol and thereby feel connected to the art that is there
- Be affirming of all Minnesotans
- Be a portal to our better natures
- Focus on stories that make us proud to be Minnesotans

Art Depicting Native Americans

Shared Objectives



Theme: engage difficult issues

- Engender conversation about identity, power, and perspective
- Include evolution in thinking for educational purposes
- Acknowledge change in perspective by including a wide variety of art (including problematic art) with interpretation
- Be color conscious versus color blind
- Engage with conflictual and difficult topics
- Include images that no longer represent current views/problematic views with educational interpretation

Art Depicting Native Americans – Straw Poll



Most popular options

- Provide better signage and explanation. Use diverse tour guides. Provide useful handouts. Raise questions for discussion.
- Dedicate space to tell Native American stories
- Use current art and new art together to demonstrate changes. Include permanent art and significant space for temporary exhibits

Art Depicting Native Americans – Straw Poll



Somewhat popular options

- Balance inaccuracies with accurate art; interpret correctly which art is inaccurate
- Relocate some paintings within the Capitol to allow other stories to be displayed more prominently or to enable better explanation
- Remove art that is insensitive, which creates space for other stories
- Move some off-site to make room for additional MN Stories
- ID stories and themes should be telling at Capitol and tell more of these stories (not sure what this was meant to convey).

Art Depicting Native Americans – Straw Poll



Unpopular options

- Create new interpretive pieces for the "Father Hennepin at the Falls of St. Anthony" and "The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux" paintings
- Leave as is
- Remove inaccurate art, which creates space for other stories

Art Depicting Native Americans – Straw Poll



Summary of straw poll:

There is a high level of consensus on three topics:

- interpretation is key
- demonstrating evolution in thinking is valuable
- do not leave pieces in Governor's reception room as are

Art Depicting Native Americans - Proposals



All three proposals emphasize the importance of interpretation and state that the controversial pieces in the Governor's reception room should either be moved or include meaningful interpretation (i.e. no group proposed status quo). Two of the proposals counseled that a plan should be set in place for revisiting and updating decisions about art.

Synthesis



Summary – Governors’ Portraits



- **The outcome of the Committee’s deliberations and public input is fairly consistent**
 - Governors’ portraits should be displayed in some format that enables contextualizing them and providing meaningful interpretations.
 - Portraits should in some way be less prominent. May be accomplished by location or size and style guidelines.

Summary – Art Depicting Native Americans in Controversial Way



- Public input and Committee deliberation both reflect strong desire for more robust interpretation and use of new art to tell a fuller story.
- Split in public input over remove (30%) and use it with new art and interpretation to tell full story (41%) reflects Committee's two shared objectives that art should be unifying and affirming and engage difficult issues.
 - Key challenge and opportunity is integrating these two objectives/options

Summary – New Art



- **Committee has not yet deliberated on this topic.**
- **Survey and input sessions identify different priorities. Survey focuses on historical events (69%) over contributions of diverse peoples (26%). Input focuses on new art which tells more diverse stories and represents more diverse Minnesotans.**
 - **New art which tells more diverse stories and represents more diverse Minnesotan's is key element of the decision about what to do with current art that some consider inaccurate or insensitive.**