

Art Subcommittee Facilitator's Report
Minnesota Office for Collaboration and Dispute Resolution
Bureau of Mediation Services
January 4, 2016

Part 1. Public Input on Capitol Art

Methodology

There were two components to the public input on Capitol art: responses to an online survey (see appendix XX for full survey) and public input sessions.

Five of the six online survey responses were multiple choice. The most popular responses are included in this report. One question was open ended...*protocol under development will be summarized.*

At the public input sessions, volunteers took notes on participants' responses to several questions (see appendix XX for list of questions). The Subcommittee facilitator then grouped the comments into themes. The most common themes are included in this report. A technical qualitative data analysis was not conducted.

Purpose for Art in the Capitol

Top three **online survey** responses*:

- Historical events that shaped and influenced Minnesota – 79%
- Geography and landscapes – 37%
- Contributions of our diverse peoples – 29%

** This question was asked in two very similar ways and got almost identical responses. The responses to the two questions were averaged.*

The most common themes from the **public input sessions** were:

- The art should reflect the diverse peoples of Minnesota (women, people of color, youth, immigrants) – 39 comments
- Art should tell a wide variety of stories – 27 comments
- Art should be engaging and interactive and/or utilize multi-media – 26 comments
- Art should be sensitive, inclusive, inspiring, welcoming, reflect current values – 22 comments
- Art should reflect Minnesota landscapes (including urban landscapes) – 16 comments
- Art should engage with difficult issues, demonstrate an evolution in thinking, tell bad and good – 16 comments
- There should be more interpretation – 14 comments
- Art should include present - 14

Governors' Portraits

Top two **online survey** responses:

- Display Governors' portraits, but in a less prominent location – 31%
- Continue displaying every official Governor's portrait in a prominent location – 28%

Only 4% selected not displaying portraits.

The most common themes from the **public input sessions** were:

- Display portraits in a way that contextualizes them and utilizes them to help visitors better understand Minnesota, including the challenging aspects of history – 63 comments
- Include virtual component to display some or all and for interpretation – 19 comments
- Do not display all portraits at all times, but rather use some criteria for rotating them – 18 comments
- Standardize the size and/or style - 12

Only seven comments stated that all portraits should be removed and only seven comments stated that no change should be made to display of portraits.

Controversial Art

The most common themes from the **public input sessions** were:

- Move art that some people feel is insensitive or inaccurate* – 63 comments
- Art should include multiple and diverse perspectives and tell the full story of events including the controversy (to be accomplished both through interpretation and use of new art) – 48 comments
- Utilize robust interpretation – 29 comments
- Utilize new art to balance current art – 15 comments
- There is value in the current art – 12 comments
- Art should reflect current values (equality, diversity, respect) – 12 comments

Only seven speakers indicated that no change should be made. No speakers indicated that art should not be displayed, but rather that it should be displayed in a museum or other location. Integrating the two most common themes is a key challenge and opportunity. Together the themes raise the question of how to display art that is sensitive and accurate and which encompasses diverse perspectives and controversial topics.

**More concern was voiced about insensitivity than inaccuracy. Additionally, as it was not always possible to determine whether a speaker meant to move art within the Capitol or remove it from the Capitol, the responses are grouped together. However, the context indicates that more speakers meant remove the art than move it within the Capitol.*

Part 2. Subcommittee Consensus Building Process on Capitol Art

In order to arrive at preliminary conclusions about art in the Capitol, the Subcommittee heard expert testimony, conducted background research, considered public input, and participated in consensus building discussions.

Purpose of Art in the Capitol

The Subcommittee adopted a vision statement to guide its work. The vision statement identifies five purposes for art in the Capitol. The Subcommittee did not rank these purposes. The Subcommittee intends to inventory which of these purpose are and are not being achieved by the current art.

Works of art in the Capitol should engage people in

- reflecting on our state's history
- understanding our government

- recognizing the contributions of our diverse peoples
- inspiring citizen engagement, and
- appreciating the varied landscapes of our state

Governors' Portraits

The Subcommittee identified a number of shared objectives for the role of Governors' portraits in the Capitol. Those shared objectives were grouped into the following categories:

- Display of portraits should include robust interpretation
- Portraits should be displayed in a way that is engaging
- Portraits should be utilized as a vehicle to tell Minnesota stories
- Portraits should be displayed in a way that honors both the Governors and the people of Minnesota

The Subcommittee reached a high level of consensus on a recommendation for the role of Governors' Portraits in the Capitol. The recommendation has three components.

- All Governors' portraits should continue to be displayed
- They should be displayed in a format (possibly a Hall of Governors) that enables contextualizing them and providing meaningful and engaging interpretation.
- Portraits should be displayed in a way that is less prominent than the current display. This could be accomplished through utilizing size and style guidelines and/or a change of location (possibly a Hall of Governors).

Next steps. The Subcommittee intends to have further discussion regarding where the portraits should be located, what the size and style guidelines might be, and the type of interpretation.

Controversial Art

The Subcommittee identified a number of shared objectives for the outcome of the recommendation regarding controversial art. Those shared objectives were grouped into two categories:

- Art in the Capitol should be unifying and affirming.
 - Examples from this category include:
 - all Minnesotans can see themselves in art in Capitol and thereby feel connected to the art that is there
 - the art in the Capitol should be a portal to our better natures.
- Art in the Capitol should engage difficult issues
 - Examples from this category include:
 - engender conversation about identity, power, and perspective
 - include evolution in thinking (regarding history and treatment of Native Americans) for educational purposes

A key challenge and opportunity facing the Subcommittee is how to integrate the two themes listed above (which are reflective of the top two themes from the public input sessions on this topic).

The Subcommittee reached a high level of consensus that one component of the recommendation regarding controversial art is that it should include robust interpretation. The Subcommittee also reached some level of consensus on two other aspects of the recommendation. One, that including new art which includes a greater

diversity of perspectives, experiences, and peoples is important. Two, that some type of change needs to be made to the art in the Governor's reception room.

Next steps. Discussion centered around two paintings, "Treaty of Traverse des Sioux" and "Father Hennepin at the Falls of St. Anthony," which are located in the Governor's Reception Room. The Subcommittee intends to engage in further discussion regarding all of the art in the Capitol which might be considered controversial. The Subcommittee also has plans to engage in further discussion with the Minnesota Native American population on this topic. Additionally, the Subcommittee is investigating whether it is possible or practical to include meaningful interpretation of painting located in the Governor's reception room.