



**Minnesota State Capitol Preservation Subcommittee  
Art Subcommittee  
November 2, 2015 Meeting Summary**

**Attendees**

- Subcommittee: Hon. Paul Anderson (presiding), Sen. David Senjem, Rep. Diane Loeffler, William Green, Peter Hilger (by phone), Ted Lentz, Gwen Westerman, Steve Elliott (ex-officio), Paul Mandell (ex-officio), Michael Laphorn on behalf of Matthew Welch
- Support: Erin Campbell, Cathy Klima, Brian Pease, Brian Szott, Alice Roberts-Davis, Kathy Morgan
- Interested Parties: Scott Russel (Healing Minnesota Stories – St. Paul Interfaith Network), Sue Gens (Minnesota State Arts Board), and media.

1. **Review of October 12, 2015 meeting summary** – Approved by the subcommittee.

2. **Discussion: what other states are doing with their governors' portraits**

- a. Peter Hilger visited 10 state capitols to observe how each managed their governors' portraits. He provided his observations to help the subcommittee get a broader perspective on governors' portraits. Some state capitols had a complete absence of art and instead focused on the building's architecture. Was there a commonality in portrait size? Decorum?

State	Governors' Portraits Management
Colorado	Only a few portraits are displayed, with the most recent in front of the Governor's office. Every U.S. president portrait on display. Colorado has returned the governors' portraits to the governors' families. The families would rather have them displayed in the Capitol. Recently, about 30 portraits were found in the basement and officials are now struggling with what to do with the portraits.
Illinois	Portraits are in a hall of Governors (with interpretation). Some portraits are quite high on the walls.
Indiana	No portraits are visible. There are statues of four significant Governors and four significant Indiana common folk.
Kansas	Only features the current state governor, the rest are displayed in the State Museum.
Kentucky	Hall of Governors resides a space similar to the Minnesota Historical Society. Portraits are clustered within era/issue areas.
Missouri	This capitol has clusters of 14 portraits at 36x36 inches. All portraits are a standard size. Those that were oversized have been artistically resized.
Pennsylvania	All 57 Governors' portraits are in the Governor's offices. Portraits are about 2.5 x 3 feet. This capitol building is about three times larger than ours.
Texas	Governors' portraits line the rotunda all the way toward the ceiling. Also, there is not much art in the Texas state capitol
West Virginia	There is a Hall of Governors on the main floor but it is not accessible at all times.
Wisconsin	The 5 <sup>th</sup> floor of the capitol has the First Ladies' portraits and Governors' portraits condensed into a 36x36-inch poster. A list of significant actions of each Governor is on the right hand side.



- b. Primary Options
  - i. Hang the portraits in the Capitol
    - a. All portraits, all over (status quo)
    - b. Limit to a dedicated "Governors Hall"
    - c. Display "Living History" portraits only (covering past 80 years)
    - d. Display the most "worthy governors" portraits
    - e. Rotate governors' portraits
    - f. Develop a digital/virtual portrait gallery display
  - ii. Remove Entirely
    - a. Hang in the History Center
    - b. Store in History Center, occasionally displayed
    - c. Return to families
- c. Decision Criteria
  - i. Future Duration- 100 years
  - ii. Space availability- will the option have an impact on other Capitol art objectives
  - iii. What would be the impact on the History Center as repository?
  - iv. How will the option impact the effectiveness of historical "storytelling"

### 3. Report on more State Capitols' art - Ted Lentz

- a. Illinois: Rotunda, art on the second floor is limited to sculptures, the 1<sup>st</sup> floor corridor are commissioned pieces over time.
- b. Indiana: Rotunda, second floor has sculptures, 1<sup>st</sup> floor has notable people in niches
- c. Wisconsin: Mosaics on the floor of the rotunda, 8 separate entrances. Paper and cloth displays on rotation. 2<sup>nd</sup> floor has 4 different spaces that have rotating signs that the public have put on display (1 month or so). Railroad room has paintings commissioned to celebrate transportation in the capitol
- d. Kentucky: Beautiful, modern. Demonstrates diversity. Civilization, Nature, Culture and Enterprise as their framework.

### 4. Governors' Portraits Workshop: Goal/Objective with portraits- Mariah Levison

- a. Facilitator Mariah Levison led the subcommittee in brainstorming shared objectives. The objectives were written on paper and posted on the wall.
- b. The following shared objectives were then placed within themes.
  - i. Portraits are vehicles to tell Minnesota stories
    - 1. Used as a vehicle to tell Minnesota story. Governors as touchstones. Used to tell story of his time.
    - 2. Placed in context relevant to our Minnesota History
    - 3. Make past relevant to future
    - 4. Provide timeline
    - 5. Be educational
    - 6. Capture the context
    - 7. Give weight to impact
  - ii. Be engaging
    - 1. Meaningful
    - 2. Memorable
    - 3. Interesting



4. Accessible
  5. Encourage reflection
  6. Put in perspective
  7. Activate with interpretation
  8. Incorporate other art to tell the stories
  9. Meaningful groupings (theme, time period)
- iii. Honor both Governors and collective experience
    1. Honor collective experience/experience of all Minnesotans
    2. Honor all Governors
  - iv. Meaningful interpretation
    1. Interpretation has to tell full and true story
    2. Interpretation should bring out multiple views and complexity
  - v. Other
    1. Let concept dictate space

## 5. Break out session on Governors' Portraits

The subcommittee was divided into three groups. Each group represented the full range of diverse perspectives within the subcommittee. Their task was to develop proposals about what to do with the governors' portraits, taking into consideration the shared objectives. The rationale was that if a small group could agree on a proposal, perhaps larger group would.

The criteria for the proposals were:

- Integrate as many of the shared objectives as possible
  - Integrate as much of group members' perspectives as possible
  - Look for ways to combine options to address shared objectives and members' perspectives
  - Be as specific as possible
- a. Group One
    - i. Group one identified their highest priority as displaying all portraits and doing so with multi-dimensional interpretation.
    - ii. Also included in their proposal was placing the portraits throughout the Capitol, grouped in meaningful ways (i.e. themes, time, type of art).
  - b. Group Two
    - i. Group two identified their highest priority as including all portraits and doing so with multi-media interpretation.
    - ii. They also noted that some of the portraits could be displayed using multi-media.
    - iii. Also included in their proposal was placing all portraits in one location, identifying size guidelines (smaller than current practice), placing them in chronological order, and utilizing emerging technology.
  - c. Group 3
    - i. Group three identified their highest priority as including all portraits and doing so with multi-media interpretation.
    - ii. Also included in their proposal was placing all portraits in one location and elevating some to better tell Minnesota stories.



1. While all are worthy of being portrayed at some time, they should not all be shown all the time. Smaller groupings should be elevated to tell a story of the time, certain policy issues.
2. Use technology to interpret the pieces, give context, in a meaningful way.
3. Hold on to portraits-don't get rid of them.

## **6. Point of View on Native Americans in Capitol Art - Led by Gwen Westerman and Anton Treuer**

- a. Anton Treuer
  - i. Just because the art is historically accurate and old does not mean that it is appropriate to keep that art in the Capitol (i.e. the South and issues displaying the Confederate flag). Often times the Native American community in Minnesota is disengaged during the political process but, once a decision is made, as a group they are more vocal. It is important to engage them NOW.
  - ii. There is not art in the Capitol that particularly shows "we are in Minnesota now", "you are in a diverse place that is different and beautiful and has something to offer".
  - iii. Most of the art with Native Americans depicts Dakota tribes, not Ojibwe. We need to be able to provide more Native American voices in the art. Dakota's story of creation is specific to Minnesota. That seems like an obvious story to tell. The Lady Slipper, wild rice- are unifying aspects of the Native American people of Minnesota that will allow multiple voices to be portrayed.
  - iv. If we do not change anything we will very likely be criticized as being the "rubber stamp" of approval of what already exists.
  - v. We need balance. My suggestion: give those paintings to the historical society to catalogue and present with the possibility of discussion and appropriate explanation. There is a time and place for those pieces of art and it is not in the State Capitol. The Capitol should be used for better representation. Let us broaden our definition of "We the People". Let's include more voices.
- b. Gwen: Unless there are questions from last time, I think I am okay with moving forward.
- c. It was noted by the Minnesota Historical Society that throughout the Capitol, some canvasses that are glued to the wall will be coming down for the restoration. "Father Hennepin" and "Treaty of Traverse De Sioux" are paintings that are removable.

## **7. Native American in art Workshop: Goal/Objective with portraits- Mariah Levison**

- a. Facilitator Mariah Levison led the subcommittee in brainstorming shared objectives. The objectives were written on paper and posted on the wall.
- b. The following shared objectives were then placed within themes.
  - i. Unifying and respectful
    1. Unifying
    2. Inclusive
    3. Respectful
    4. All Minnesotans can see selves in art in Capitol and thereby feel connected to the art that is there
    5. Be affirming of all Minnesotans
    6. Be a portal to our better natures
    7. Focus on stories that make us proud to be Minnesotans
  - ii. Engage difficult issues
    1. Engender conversation about identity, power, and perspective
    2. Include evolution in thinking for educational purposes



3. Acknowledge change in perspective by including a wide variety of art (including problematic art) with interpretation
  4. Be color conscious versus color blind
  5. Engage with conflictual and difficult topics
  6. Include images that no longer represent current views/problematic views with educational interpretation
- iii. Other
1. Capture and honor government processes
  2. Reflect character and nature of state
  3. Relatable

The final two ideas were included in the list but are options, not objectives.

- Place painting that require significant interpretation in spaces that allow for that interpretation
- Place problematic or painful pieces elsewhere

#### **8. Break out session on options for the four controversial pieces that are currently located in the Governor's reception room.**

The subcommittee was divided into three groups. Each group represented the full range of diverse perspectives within the subcommittee. Their task was to develop proposals about what to do with the four controversial pieces that are currently located in the Governor's reception room, taking into consideration the shared objectives. The rationale was that if a small group could agree on a proposal, perhaps the larger group would.

The criteria for the proposals were:

- Integrate as many of the shared objectives as possible
- Integrate as much of group members' perspectives as possible
- Look for ways to combine options to address shared objectives and members' perspectives
- Be as specific as possible

- a. Group one developed three options for the four controversial pieces that are currently located in the Governor's reception room.
  - i. Move those pieces to another location within the Capitol
  - ii. Move them out of the Capitol (History Center)
  - iii. Keep them where they are but include interpretation.
- b. Group two
  - i. Relocate "Treaty of Traverse des Sioux" and "Father Hennepin at the Falls of St. Anthony" to another location in the Capitol and include meaningful interpretation.
  - ii. Establish intervals for revisiting decisions about location of art work in Capitol
- c. Group three
  - i. Group three identified four components that the decision regarding Native American art should include:
    1. Interpretation is key and should define the location of the works.
    2. Commemorative art is less important than narrative art.



3. Develop a plan which allows for the telling of Minnesota stories as they emerge.
4. Demonstrate the evolution in thinking.

**9. Public Input Meetings update**

- a. Cathy Klima provided the most recent schedule of Public Input Meetings. One co-chair will be assigned to each meeting. Handouts will include the survey and vision statement about art in the Capitol.
- b. A statewide press release has been approved by the Governor's office. It will be sent out later today.
- c. The online Public Input Survey is on SurveyMonkey. It will go live later this week. The cutoff date for responses is December 18.
- d. Cathy Klima presented the Public Input Meeting slideshow for feedback.

10. Next meeting: **Monday, December 7**. The meeting will go from 10:15 am – 2:30 pm. The location is to be determined.