

IMPLEMENTING THE SUBCOMMITTEE'S VISION
WORK GROUP
May 3, 2016

At the conclusion of the March 4, 2016, art subcommittee meeting, several of us with art and museum experience (Misa Jeffereis, Walker; Matthew Welch, Mia; Paul Mandell, CAAPB; Sue Gens, MN State Arts Board; Steve Elliott, MNHS; David Kelliher, MNHS; Brian Pease, MNHS, and Brian Szott, MNHS) volunteered to help frame discussion about the introduction of new and changing art to the Capitol.

We have met three times, joined by (Michael Laphorn, Mia, Ben Owen, MN State Arts Board, and Rep. Diane Loeffler), and offer these thoughts about 1) where new permanent art might be added and how that could be accomplished, 2) how a program of changing art could be mounted and sustained, and 3) how performing arts could be introduced.

POSING QUESTIONS FOR THE CAPITOL PRESERVATION COMMISSION

There are spaces and opportunities to introduce new permanent visual art, changing art installations, and performing arts. Any or all of these may be accomplished with the support of existing legislation and entities, which are capable of acting in partnership and consultation with others to make these ideas a reality.

The three major questions for the Capitol Preservation Commission are --

1. Does it want to enhance the experience of Capitol visitors, and make the building more attractive and welcoming to new visitors, through an expanded arts program?
2. If it does, which elements does it support?
 - Contextualizing the Governors' portraits
 - Adding new permanent visual art
 - Organizing temporary visual art exhibitions
 - Introducing performing arts into Capitol activities
 - All of these
3. Will the CPC and its members, who comprise the leadership of all of the State's branches of government, support appropriating the continuing financial resources needed to sustain such a program?

ASSESSING THE EXISTING "COLLECTION"

The Subcommittee has said that "the purpose of art in the Minnesota State Capitol is to tell Minnesota stories.

Works of art in the Capitol should engage people to:

- Reflect on our state's history
- Understand our government
- Recognize the contributions of our diverse peoples
- Inspire citizen engagement
- Appreciate the varied landscapes of our State

The art that has traditionally been displayed in the Capitol incompletely reflects our **state's history**, as no works depict Minnesota earlier than 1680 nor later than 1905, with the exception of Governors' portraits, plaques, and memorials.

Understanding of government is enhanced through allegorical depictions and quotations, but most powerfully through the activity of government that permeates the building.

Recognition of Minnesota's **diversity** is hardly visible. While some individuals, such as Wabasha and Martin Luther King, Jr., are honored, art in the Capitol inadequately honors the native peoples here for millennia before initial white contact in the late seventeenth century and the waves of various groups of European nationalities, followed by African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian and African immigrants, all within the last two hundred years.

How does the art inspire **citizen engagement**? Perhaps the Capitol's widely accepted position as the "people's house," coupled with the public's ready access to the dignity of its architecture and beauty of its art, most provides this inspiration. It welcomes all citizens as the seat of their government.

Landscape views are scarce. They are incidentally provided in the Father Hennepin, Treaty, and New Ulm paintings and in the background of some of the allegorical works, but landscapes of Minnesota's diverse regions and its more than 11,000 lakes are not featured at the Capitol.

The existing art includes, of course, the Governors' portraits. It has been the consensus of the Subcommittee that the portraits should be reinstalled, but with more contextualization and interpretation. This could be accomplished in any number and combination of ways, using a variety of media, although it will be challenging because the settings for the portraits are not gallery spaces, but spaces with built-in separations and interruptions. Rich content about Minnesota's development, however, of which the governors are a part, can be achieved through setting-appropriate exhibition techniques, interactive media, "apps," audio tours, and print. *If the Capitol Preservation Commission concurs with this ambition, the MNHS could develop proposals and estimates for funding consideration.*

ADDING NEW PERMANENT VISUAL ART

The renovation of the Capitol provides limited spaces that would be well-suited for new, permanent works of visual art. The public will have regular access to many of these spaces, although hearing, caucus, and select conference rooms will be inaccessible or occasionally accessible to them. (Please refer to the attached matrix "Capitol Space: Art and Interpretive Options" for a comprehensive list of all available spaces and their use.)

The State of Minnesota has an existing mechanism through which new works could be acquired. In 1983, the Minnesota State Legislature enacted the law forming the basis for the Minnesota Percent for Art in Public Places program.

The purpose of the Minnesota Percent for Art in Public Places program is to make possible the acquisition of works of art to be exhibited in areas of a state building or its grounds, accessible on a regular basis to members of the public. In the more than thirty years that the program has existed, the State of Minnesota has acquired more than 500 works that permanently reside in public buildings through the state. The majority of the works are site-specific—designed and commissioned for the location in which they reside. (Examples are attached to this report.) The process would be well suited to design and commission new work specific for the Capitol.

The Minnesota Department of Administration has statutory authority for the program; however, since the program's inception it has charged the Minnesota State Arts Board with implementing the program through a delegation of authority. The process by which works are acquired is outlined in Minnesota Rules, chapter 1900, section 2210. This process, implemented in cooperation with the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board and the Minnesota Historical Society, could be an effective mechanism through which new permanent art work could be acquired for the Capitol.

The State's permanent art collection includes a broad range of work, including photographs, paintings, murals, stained glass, sculptures, ornamental lights, benches, and gates. Media include paper, textile, glass, wood, metal, and stone.

Any new work purchased or commissioned for the State Capitol should align with one or more of the key themes identified by the Capitol Art Subcommittee.

While preference might be given to work created by Minnesota artists, nonMinnesota artists should not be prohibited from consideration.

Funding for new art could be accomplished through use of a dedicated income stream or by per-project appropriations.

Resources | Timeline

Financial

- Funds to cover the costs for design, creation, installation, and ongoing maintenance of any new work for the Capitol
- Funds to cover staff time to facilitate the selection process, and to cover the costs related to a selection committee's work (travel, refreshments, materials, etc.)
- Funds to assess the condition of the work (perhaps every five to ten years) to ensure

that any necessary maintenance is being performed, and to arrange for conservation or restoration work, if needed

- Work that is permanently installed should be added to the building's insurance coverage, so that it could be replaced or restored if damaged.

Human

- A staff person to facilitate the selection committee and serve as project manager to ensure that works of art are completed and installed on time and on budget

Timeline

- The selection process (identifying artists, agreeing on design concepts) generally takes 12 months.
- The creation and installation of new work generally takes 6 – 12 months. For very large or complex projects, the creation and installation may require additional time.

ORGANIZING TEMPORARY VISUAL ART EXHIBITIONS

- a. **Capacity.** Remodeling the Capitol will open up many spaces that might be used for temporary art exhibitions. There is concern, however, about the capacity to organize and manage multiple exhibitions from the start. It seems prudent to identify 2-3 spaces for inaugural exhibitions and to revisit the feasibility of additional spaces at a later date.
- b. **Sources of art for temporary exhibitions.** Most of the Capitol's existing art is either allegorical (murals) or commemorative (busts, portraits, plaques) and is often site-specific. Most of the existing art is not conducive to temporary exhibitions that address the five broad themes deemed appropriate for the temporary art exhibition program. It has been suggested that the Capitol borrow works from other art museums, but such organizations often only lend to sister organizations (other accredited museums) that meet strict requirements for lending (temperature, humidity, security, light levels, loan term, and so on). It seem logical, therefore, that art for temporary exhibitions be solicited from Minnesota artists, private collectors, and on occasion, the public at large, especially if temporary art exhibitions are part of a larger public engagement strategy.
- c. **Transportation.** While it would be atypical that the Capitol would have to pay a fee for borrowing works for special exhibitions, it will have to bear the expenses of packing and transporting works to the Capitol and returning them to the lenders once the exhibition closes.
- d. **Staff.** Conceiving, curating, and organizing exhibitions, locating appropriate and quality works, issuing loan agreements, arranging for delivery, contracting for preparatory work (matting, framing, mounting, etc), writing didactic materials to “tell the story” (thematic panels and object labels), arranging for the deinstallation of

works and return to the lenders—all of these activities require time, expertise and advocacy to see each exhibition through to completion. Staff will need to be assigned/hired to oversee the temporary exhibition program. At very least, a single full-time person to serve the dual role of curator/registrar seems necessary, but if the program grows, these duties will need to be divided between two separate positions. Examples of the administrative work attendant to organizing an exhibition are attached.

- e. **Pace.** Some consideration should be given to the length of time a temporary exhibition should remain on display, as this defines the pace of the program and the resources required to meet the defined schedule. At minimum, exhibitions should be on view for 6 months, but initially, the Capitol might consider temporary exhibitions of 6-12 months in duration.
- f. **Security.** The wall murals, bronze busts, and wall-mounted plaques that constitute much of the Capitol's art collection are not easily stolen, though they must be safeguarded from vandalism. Art objects on loan for temporary art exhibitions, by nature, are usually smaller and more portable. Effort and resources must be expended to ensure that these works are protected. While some hanging systems for paintings and prints and secured plexi-vitrines for objects can help mitigate risk, increased security in the form of roving guards or surveillance systems should be considered. Exhibition security is also typically enhanced by having just one non-emergency exit by which all visitors depart, a standard that would be difficult to achieve at the Capitol.
- g. **Insurance.** Typically, one of the conditions for the loan of a work of art is that the borrower insure it against theft, vandalism, damage in transit, mishandling, terrorism, and acts of God (tornado, flood, etc). While some artists may sign a waiver absolving the Capitol of responsibility, many will not. Properly insuring works of art that are on loan to the Capitol for display in a temporary exhibition will be a necessity. It is also possible that a rider can be added to the Capitol's existing insurance policy to cover works of art on loan for temporary exhibition.
- h. **Installation.** It is understood that temporary art exhibitions should be installed in a manner befitting the decorum of the Capitol and its existing historic art program. For example, paintings and works on paper will need to be properly framed; small objects and sculptures should be displayed on stable pedestals with protective plexiglass covers; and panels and labels should be edited, designed and mounted in a consistent and elegant manner. While some of the associated costs represent an up-front investment (picture hanging systems and a stock of pedestals with vitrines), other expenses will be ongoing (creating panels and labels for each exhibition).
- i. We estimate that the annual operating cost for supporting an annual turn of 2-3 exhibit installations would be on the order of about \$200,000, assuming this occurs within a supporting institutional infrastructure.

INTRODUCING PERFORMING ARTS INTO CAPITOL ACTIVITIES

A great many Minnesotans visit the Capitol each year because they are engaged in the legislative process or because they are interested in the political and historic significance of the building. But a great many Minnesotans do not visit the Capitol. A performing arts program might be a strategy to bring people into the building who wouldn't otherwise be there or might not feel welcome. Programming could be targeted to attract individuals who are less likely to visit the Capitol.

The spaces available for programming in the Capitol, and the nature of the building, require that the performing arts offered would be small, intimate activities, ones that would be meaningful for attendees and at the same time respectful of others who might be visiting the building for other reasons.

The following are key kinds of activities that might be well suited to Capitol:

- Readings — Authors from Minnesota or who write about Minnesota could be invited to give readings from many different types of work (i.e., history, poetry, journalism, works of fiction, biography of important Minnesota figures, etc.).
- Storytelling — Stories are a vital way to share and pass on culture. Storytelling could be an especially effective way to welcome two key audiences that are missing at the Capitol - persons from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds and very young people.
- Parlor concerts — Some spaces are suited to performances by soloists or very small ensembles in relaxed settings. The performers could provide narrative to give context for the music or the theme being explored. This could be another strategy to bridge cultures. For example a Hmong artist might play the *qeej* and describe its cultural significance, or a Tibetan artist could perform overtone singing and share its history.
- Readers theater/dramatic interpretation — Key episodes from Minnesota history could be brought to life, works by Minnesota playwrights could be read, and the lives of key Minnesotans or the roles they played in shaping our state could be portrayed.

Resources | timeline

Financial

- Funds to pay fees or stipends to artists
- Funds for advertising or promotion (print and online promotion)
- Funds to cover staff time to curate, manage, and promote a performing arts program
- Insurance to cover liability for artists and audience members, and potential damage to property

Human

- A staff person to curate the performing arts program—i.e. to decide which types of performances and which artists would be best suited, and to research and contract with those artists
- A staff person to manage logistics—i.e. scheduling, set-up and strike, if needed
- A staff person to manage outreach and promotion (community engagement, advertising, print programs, Web site, social media, etc.)

Note: depending on how extensive the performing arts program is, it may not be necessary for each of these to be a full-time position. At least initially, they could be part-time; however, the skills required for the three tasks are different enough that it is unlikely that the same person could do all three tasks.

Timeline

- Planning, curating the performing arts program – 6 months
- Promotion beginning at least 2 months prior to first performance, continuing through all activities