

INPUT FROM FRAMING UP NEW ART ISSUES
WORK GROUP
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Part I - 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.

Governors' Portraits

- 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.*

Part II - ORGANIZING TEMPORARY VISUAL ART EXHIBITIONS

A. Capacity

- a. Remodeling the Capitol will open up many spaces that might be used for temporary art exhibitions.
- b. There is concern, however, about the capacity to organize and manage multiple exhibitions from the start.
- c. 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

- a. 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.
- b. 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).
- c. 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

- a. 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

- a. 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.
- b. 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.

E. Pace

- a. 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.
- b. 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

- a. 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.
- b. Art objects on loan for temporary art exhibitions, by nature, are usually smaller and more portable.

- c. 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.
- d. 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

- a. 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).
- b. While some artists may sign a waiver absolving the Capitol of responsibility, many will not.
- c. 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

- a. 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.
- b. 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 Plexiglas covers; and panels and labels should be edited, designed and mounted in a consistent and elegant manner.
- c. 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. Annual Operating Costs

- a. 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.