

**Art Subcommittee Facilitator's Report**  
**Minnesota Office for Collaboration and Dispute Resolution**  
**Bureau of Mediation Services**  
**January 19, 2016**

This report reflects the facilitator's findings from the Subcommittee's public outreach efforts (public input meeting and public online survey) and from the consensus building process within the Subcommittee on three issues: purpose for art in the Capitol, the Governors' portraits, and existing artwork under scrutiny.

**I. Public Input**

**METHODOLOGY**

There are two components to the public input: online survey responses (see appendix XX for full survey) and public input sessions. They capture slightly different information. Respondents to the survey provided more clear-cut but limited responses (multiple choice). While the responses from the public input sessions contain more nuance and complexity – for better or worse.

Five of the six survey responses were multiple choice. The most popular responses are included in this report. One question was open ended. The responses to that question were reviewed, themes were developed, and the responses were categorized by theme. The most common themes are included in this report.

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

The Department of Administration received additional comments from the public. Letters from official groups and summaries of other comments were forwarded to the Subcommittee members for their consideration. They were not evaluated in the analysis of the official public input gathering process below.

**PURPOSE FOR ART IN THE CAPITOL**

The survey asked two questions about the purpose for art in the Capitol:

Please rate each statement on your preferred focus for art in the Capitol on a 1 to 5 scale.

- To reflect on our state's history.
- To understand our government.
- To recognize the contributions of our diverse peoples.
- To inspire citizen engagement.
- To appreciate the varied landscapes of our state.

In 1905 Cass Gilbert, the Minnesota Capitol architect, selected art to inspire and educate visitors. In the renewed Minnesota Capitol what Minnesota stories might inspire, educate or interest you?

- Historical events that shaped and influenced Minnesota.
- Influential and notable people.
- Government processes that affect people's lives.
- Contributions of our diverse peoples.
- Geography and landscapes.

Top three **online survey** responses\*:

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

*\* Because these two questions are very similar and got almost identical responses, the responses to the two questions were averaged.*

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

**Most common themes:**

- The art should reflect the diverse peoples of Minnesota (women, people of color, youth, immigrants)
- Art should tell a wide variety of stories
- Art should be engaging and interactive and/or utilize multi-media
- Art should be sensitive, inclusive, inspiring, welcoming, reflect current values

**Common themes:**

- Art should reflect Minnesota landscapes (including urban landscapes)
- Art should engage with difficult issues, demonstrate an evolution in thinking, tell bad and good
- There should be more interpretation
- Art should include present

**Conclusion**

While the theme was stronger for participants in the public input sessions, both survey respondents and participants in the input sessions were interested in art that depicts diverse people and tells a wide variety of stories. Both were also interested in art that depicts Minnesota’s landscapes. Survey respondents were most interested in art that depicts historical events, which was not a strong theme in the public input sessions.

**GOVERNORS’ PORTRAITS**

The survey asked:

Since the 1940’s, an official portrait of each Minnesota Governor has been placed in the Capitol. These portraits have, over time, become a key part of Capitol tours: but, they will, in the future, take up an increasing amount of wall space that would be available for other art. How do you think the Governors’ portraits should be displayed?

- Continue displaying every official Governor’s portrait in a prominent location.
- Display Governors’ portraits, but in a less prominent location.
- Display selected Governors’ portraits on a rotating basis.
- Periodically display all portraits.
- Display the portraits representing “recent memory” – i.e. the last 80 years.
- Do not display Governors’ portraits.
- Other

#### 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%

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

#### **Most common theme:**

- Display portraits in a way that contextualizes them and utilizes them to help visitors better understand Minnesota, including the challenging aspects of history

#### **Common themes:**

- Include virtual component to display some or all and for interpretation
- Do not display all portraits at all times, but rather use some criteria for rotating them
- Standardize the size and/or style

#### **Conclusion**

Given that,

- only 4% of survey respondents selected not displaying portraits
- only a very small number of comments from the public input sessions stated that all portraits should be removed.
- Top two answers in survey state that portraits should be displayed
- Top theme from public input sessions is that portraits should be displayed (in a way that contextualizes them)

there is a clear mandate from the public to keep the Governors' portraits in the Capitol but to organize them in a more meaningful way.

#### **CONTROVERSIAL ART**

The survey asked, "When architect Cass Gilbert designed the 1905 Minnesota State Capitol, he commissioned well-known artists to create paintings that reflected the popular ideas, beliefs, and attitudes of the time. Some of those ideas may not represent the way many of us think today. What do you think should be done with the art that may not reflect our attitudes as Minnesotans today?" Response format was open-ended.

- Keep- unspecified\* - 1296 comments
- Remove from the Capitol - 524 comments
- Do not make any changes - 324 comments
- Utilize interpretation - 250 comments
- Balance old with new - 187 comments
- Move within the capitol - 163 comments
- Not Applicable - 142 comments
- Rotate the Art - 128 comments
- Civil War (keep) - 120 comments
- Other - 10 comments

*\* In the case of these comments it was not possible to determine whether the respondent meant keep the art where it is, keep it in the Capitol or do not destroy it/keep it somewhere else.*

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

- Utilize new art to create a balance
- Remove art from the Capitol art that some people feel is insensitive\* or inaccurate
- 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)
- Keep (unspecified)\*\* art that some people feel is insensitive or inaccurate
- Utilize interpretation
- Rotate art
- Move within the Capitol
- There is value in the current art
- Art should reflect current values (equality, diversity, respect)
- Do not make any changes

*\*More concern was voiced about insensitivity than inaccuracy.*

*\*\* In the case of these comments it was not possible to determine whether the respondent meant keep the art where it is, keep it in the Capitol or do not destroy it/keep it somewhere else.*

#### **Conclusion**

These responses reflect a consensus that the new art presents a wonderful opportunity to tell a wider variety of Minnesota stories and that meaningful interpretation should be utilized.

On the question of whether or not to move any of the current artwork, the large “keep-unspecified” category in the survey introduces an element of uncertainty into determining the public’s desire for this art work. Bearing in mind that limitation, there are more comments in favor of making some change in the location of the art work (remove at 524 + move within 163 = 687) than make no change in location (324). Likewise in the public input sessions, the majority of participants indicated that some change should be made.

No participants in the public input sessions indicated that the art should not be displayed, but rather that it should be displayed in a museum or other location. Integrating the three most common themes from the input sessions 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.

## **II. Subcommittee Consensus Building Process**

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

### **PURPOSE FOR 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.

The purpose of art in the Minnesota State capitol is to tell Minnesota stories.

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:

- Governors’ portraits should be displayed in a way that is engaging
- Display of Governors’ portraits should include robust interpretation
- Governors’ portraits and contextual information should be displayed in a way that recognizes both the Governors and the context of the time in which they served

#### **Conclusion**

The Subcommittee reached a high level of consensus on a recommendation for the role of Governors’ portraits in the Capitol:

Governors’ portraits should be displayed and in a way that enables contextualizing them and providing meaningful interpretation. Additionally, size and style guidelines should be reviewed, revised, and adhered to.

**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

## Conclusion

A key challenge and opportunity facing the Subcommittee is how to integrate the two themes listed above (which are reflective of the top 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 painting, “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.