

CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
MINUTES OF THE CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION

August 21, 2023

Hybrid format: by teleconference (Zoom) and in person in accordance with procedures on agenda
1400 Highland Avenue
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Spackman called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

B. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

C. ROLL CALL

Present: Dohner, Erlich-Fein, Karger, Patterson, Chair Spackman

Absent: Vice Chair Tokashiki

Staff present: Cultural Arts Manager Eilen Stewart, Cultural Arts Supervisor Eric Brinkman, Recording Secretary Rosemary Lackow

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – July 17, 2023

It was moved and seconded (Karger/Patterson) to approve the July minutes as written. The motion passed by voice vote: 5-0-1 (Ayes: Dohner, Karger, Patterson, Chair Spackman; Absent: Tokashiki)

E. CEREMONIAL - None

F. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (3-Minute Limit)

The following spoke regarding the Bruce’s Beach Sculpture submission:

Anthony Lee, long-time resident of Manhattan Beach, retired professor of African American history and member of the Bruce’s Beach APPC stated: 1) The Bruce’s Beach artwork will be the most important public art installation in the city in that it has national significance; 2) He feels the project could go very wrong if not handled well and if there is a perception that the project was overtaken and controlled by white elites. He strongly urges that the process reach out to the black community beyond the city – to black artists, scholars, authors, activists, etc. (e.g. Black in Mayberry in El Segundo, and the African American Museum in Los Angeles) – and bring their voices and ideas into the conversation to help shape the artwork; and, 3) He believes the APPC as a whole felt that none of the proposals “hit the mark” to embody the history, the meaning and emotion of Bruce’s Beach but perhaps in working with the artists, some may be able to be reworked to reflect the project’s significance and gravitas.

Amanda Park, (Zoom audience), city resident and former member of Bruce’s Beach Task Force and APPC member, echoed Dr. Lee’s comments, and urged the Commission to take time to schedule opportunities for meaningful engagement (workshops, social gatherings, e.g.) with members and leaders of the black community (authors, scholars, activists, etc.) which might also involve the artists.

There being no other speakers, Chair Spackman closed public participation.

G. GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Bruce's Beach submissions recommended by the APPC

Chair Spackman requested that staff clarify the expectation of what is needed at this time from the CAC.

CAM Stewart provided a background of the APPC review, noting that Commissioners Karger and Patterson participated as APPC members and may be able to provide insight. The APPC reviewed 26 proposals, narrowing to nine that the APPC felt met several criteria such as: the connection of the proposal and artist to Bruce's Beach, the viability of the proposal and the ability of the artist to complete the project. The task of the CAC today is to evaluate the nine proposals and decide which should (or should not) move forward in the selection process for City Council review and final selection.

Chair Spackman invited Commissioners Karger and Patterson to provide APPC input.

Commissioner Karger stated that she agrees with Dr. Lee and Ms. Park and feels the APPC struggled with the review and, while acknowledging that some submissions have potential, further community engagement is needed to provide important input to the artists. Commissioner Karger asked if the RFP could be reopened. CAM Stewart responded that it is possible upon recommendation by either the APPC or Cultural Arts Commission, but whether to do so would be up to the City Council. Commissioner Karger clarified that this question did not formally come from the APPC as a group, but she is now wondering whether this is an option.

Commissioner Patterson stated that she agrees with the gravity of this task. She noted that there are challenges in this process, for example, at this point it is very hard to tell just from pictures whether a proposed artwork will effectively "speak" to the many persons who will visit it and result in a meaningful shared experience and it is also impossible to please everyone. She suggests that the CAC proceed to review and provide input for each of the nine proposals, and have a conversation as to which proposals might go forward, including where some might be adjusted to be a richer experience in connecting with Bruce's Beach.

CAM Stewart provided an overview of the process following this review. Staff hopes to insert an extra step to engage more public discussion. After that additional public engagement, the proposals would be taken to the City Council for selection of up to five semi-finalists. The semi-finalists selected by council would then be given a stipend to further develop their proposals and create a maquette, or small scale 3-D model. The semi-finalist maquettes will go back to the APPC first for review and a recommendation for a finalist. The APPC recommendation for finalist would then be brought to the CAC for which will review and forward its recommendation on to the City Council which will review and make a final decision on a proposal and artist.

CAM Stewart noted that the selection process provides good opportunity for additional conversation and refinement of proposals.

CAM Stewart proceeded to lead discussion with the Commission for each of the nine proposals, describing each, the artist portfolios, input from the APPC and staff observations. The nine proposals include: 1) Austen Brantley; 2) Amie Jacobsen; 3) James Dinh; 4) Forma Studio; 5) Muna Malik and Tre Borden; 6) Masud Ashley Olufani; 7) James Moore; 8) Rachel and Rigel Hunter and 9) I Was Here Project & Creative Machines (Joseph O'Connell)

The following summarizes the Commission discussion for each proposal:

- James Dinh (“The Nest”): A circular pavilion with bench seating and glass panels with quotes and photographs. Well thought out and relates well with the existing city plaque, has a reasonable budget. Anticipates ADA compliance issues with seating area, perhaps can be relocated to encircle the new plaque. **Commission comments:** likes: meditative quality; is interactive and draws people in; words seem to hang in the sky and is very open; its elements make sense; at 8-feet in height likely will not obstruct views; embraces the area at the upper level and will correspond to existing city plaque; and involves several of the families with a history at the park. **Recommend as semi-finalist? Yes, with further discussion with artist.**
- Forma Studio (“A Line in the Sand”): A large metal arch with Willa Bruce quote and metal cut out of the Bruce’s wedding photo with flower garden behind. Location proposed has ADA compliance issues, will need to be relocated – could blend well with the city plaque on upper level. Well thought out (reflects community response to Bruce’s Beach), reasonable budget. **Commission comments:** likes: curved shape (peaceful, meditative) and flowers; can be located at upper level and incorporated into city plaque location; likes image of Bruces but possibly not placement in front. Suggestions: incorporate more quotes from the Bruces; flowers to be drought-tolerant. Concern if metal will require much maintenance to prevent rust in marine environment. **Recommend as semi-finalist? Yes, with further discussion with artist.**
- Muna Malek/Tre Borden (“Stakes”): As proposed, nine freestanding curved panels of glass or “stakes” with quotes that relate to the Bruces and families who were the land owners. As proposed with writing on the glass, ADA compliance issues are anticipated. **Commission comments:** very well thought out, has an interactive quality and invites the viewer to walk around the park; use of color and semi-reflective glass; concept of putting down and taking up “stakes” and embraces the history of not only Bruces’ but also other families; Suggestions: possibly reduce number of “stakes” (are 9 needed?) and relocate some upright elements to address ADA issues. APPC and/or CAC concerns: is height excessive? will cause glare? Would this be duplicative of Light Gate? **Recommend as semi-finalist? Yes, with further discussion with artist.**
- Austen Brantley: Sculpture of an African American family enjoying the beach. **Commission comments:** agrees with APPC in that not comfortable with the specific proposed figures and should go back to the artist to request a more meaningful figural representation. **Recommend as semi-finalist? Yes, with further discussion with artist on re-thinking the figures.**
- Amie Jacobsen: “A Better Tomorrow” - Multiple (6) arches with quotes within from historical families on site; proposed to be located behind city plaque. **Commission comments:** agreed with APPC that proposal is too similar to Light Gate; too colorful and there are questions about quotes (which to be included?) and whether difficult, costly to maintain; does not fit the purpose and theme of Bruce’s Beach. **Recommend as semi-finalist? No**
- Masud Ashley Olufani: Proposal depicting tent-like metal structure with etched symbols. A budget was not submitted and staff is doubtful that this can be completed by the artist. **Commission comments:** agrees with APPC concern that tent feature, which creates a secluded space may encourage the artwork to be used as a shelter; does not feel it connects to history and feeling of the place and history. **Recommend as semi-finalist? No**
- James Moore: Proposal features three plaques and a series of abstract figures, has a reasonable

budget and can be completed by artist. APPC did not like plaques but there was some interest in possibly revising the figures. **Commission comments:** overall, piece is not personal and not meaningful to the site. **Recommend as semi-finalist? No**

- Rachel and Rigel Hunter: Proposal is a large concrete clockface on the ground, with hands of clock being pushed and pulled in different directions by human figures and broken open slave shackle off to the side. Staff feels this is a thoughtful proposal, but has doubt that artist can accomplish this project (no previous figural or sculptural work). **Commission comment:** agrees with APPC concerns that messaging too “heavy handed,” too broad and does not connect enough with site and circumstances. **Recommend as semi-finalist? No**

- I Was Here Project & Creative Machines: Multiple large glass free-standing panels with imagery. Has a reasonable budget, proposed location viable; two teams of artists involved. **Commission comments:** likes overall proposal but needs more clarity and collaboration with the artist as to what will be displayed on the panels; also concern if panels will affect nearby resident sight-lines. **Recommend as semi-finalist? Yes, with further discussion with artist.**

In summary, the Commission felt that the proposals for five out of the nine (James Dinh, Forma Studio, Austen Brantley, Muna Malek/Tre Borden, and I Was Here Project & Creative Machines) met minimum criteria but need further collaboration and revision.

Commissioner Karger inquired whether the proposals submitted are sufficiently responsive to move forward, or whether the RFP should be reopened and how, as it has been requested, can more community input be solicited. **CAM Stewart** noted the wide extent of outreach that has been done and that the deadline for submission was extended twice and expressed concern that if the RFP were to be reopened, then some of the artists who have submitted may not want to go forward.

CAM Stewart clarified that originally the project schedule called for taking the semi-finalists to the City Council in September, however the date of council review is now undetermined to allow for additional public input to hear potentially differing but collaborative opinions regarding the proposals. Cultural Arts staff, with the City Manager’s office will plan and schedule additional community input.

2. Work Plan Item Discussion

a. Utility Box Beautification (Phase II): **CAM Stewart** reported that on August 1st the City Council approved the Cultural Arts Commission recommendations; staff is now routing contracts to artists and installer.

b. Murals (Phase II): **CAM Stewart** summarized the RFP process and reported that staff received 116 applications for 7 locations city-wide; and a PowerPoint presentation has been prepared that summaries 100 which have been determined to be viable. **CAM Stewart** noted that although originally only 5 locations were recommended by the CAC, the City Council indicated that it would decide on the total number of locations during its review of artwork proposals.

CAM Stewart, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, described each of the 100 submissions, the proposed location, and artist portfolios. The Commission discussed and conducted two rounds of selection, narrowing down the list of semi-finalists to 27.

At 6:47, after Round 1, **Chair Spackman** called for a recess to allow staff to revise the PowerPoint to show Round 1 preferred proposals per location.

At 7:01 **Chair Spackman** called the meeting back to order.

The CAC reviewed the list of the proposals that are to be recommended to the City Council as semi-finalists, by location and, in a second round, chose the following to be semi-finalists, by location:

Location	Artist	Number	Description
Stairs (Strand)	Charles Bragg	115	Pelican
	Charles Bragg	117	Sea lion
	Daniel Shoyket	90, 91	90266 -
	Armelle Vervialle Ngo	18	Skateboarder
Pier building	Nora Martin-Hall	36	Sea kelp
	Matthew Cavanagh	35, 66	Geometric (keep face)?
	Charles Bragg	112	Pelicans in flight
	Rian Basillo	38	Marine creatures
Police/Fire building	Alex Weinstein	111	Blue/white gradient (Hope)
	Eric Snyder	22	Great white shark
	Emily Tanaka	24	Falcon
	Dana Torrey	101	Fire engine dog rescue
Parking structure	Scott McCurdy	75	Stylized wave
	Taylor Gardner	10	Diving volleyballer
	Dave Titus	70	Pier trompe l'oeil
	Drica Lobo	60	Palm pink sunset
MBAC building	Charles Bragg	116	Green Parrots
	Mikey Meschures	104	Typewriter-Aspire to inspire
	Celina Amaya	86	Hearts
	Jen LaVita	8	Lifeguard tower sunset
Marine Avenue Park	Joanna Garel	44	Tan Surfboards
	John Gregory	3	Family beach scene
	Drica Lobo	61	Breaking wave
Manhattan Heights	Francesco Campanella	9	Blue ocean coral
	Pamela Wall	67	Skateboarder/Volleyball
	Scott McCurdy	74	Characters beach scene
	Armelle Vervialle Ngo	52	Abstract figures beach scene

Staff will forward the CAC's recommendation for semi-finalists to the City Council, for the September 19th meeting. The City Council will conduct a review and select finalists as well as allocate funding for the budget through the Public Art Trust Fund.

c. Sculpture Garden: **CAM Stewart** reported that the bifurcated approach that includes both Options 1 and 4, as recommended by the CAC will be scheduled for City Council discussion and recommendation at its September 19th meeting. Staff is also recommending that the budget for the “Option 1” category of larger sculptures be increased to offset permit and engineering fees.

d. Velzy Plaque: **CAM Stewart** reported that the plaque has been fabricated and an unveiling will be held August 27th at the Hermosa Beach Museum from 2:30 to 6:00 p.m. The Catalina Classic sculpture is almost completely installed and the unveiling is scheduled for August 24th from 2-4 pm at the site of the artwork.

e. New Art Initiatives – No update

H. STAFF ITEMS

Cultural Arts Division updates (Cultural Arts Supervisor Eric Brinkman/CAM Stewart):

- The John Van Hamersveld frieze restoration project at MBAC is now completed.
- History Associates Inc. is back on site at the Red House working on the historic archive project.
- Concerts in the Park: there are two more, 8/27 (Our Generation) and 9/3 (Blue Breeze).
- Exhibits: the 6th Annual Community Exhibition, with a record number of submissions, continues through October 8th. The next exhibition will recognize Homeira Goldstein and will show work of artists who have exhibited through her Time4Art program at MBAC in the past.
- Programming: Fall registration is now in progress and classes are 90% full; excited to report that accomplished artist and professor Edgar Silva will be teaching drawing/painting.
- PATF (Public Art Trust Fund): total fund balance is about \$1.8 million; about \$1.1 million allocated; and approximately \$655,000 unallocated; projected expirations: 2023 - none; 2024 - almost \$244k; and in 2025, approximately \$46k. The numbers of allocated/unallocated funds are expected to change soon with allocations expected for the utility box projects and murals.
- City Council updates: on September 5, staff will take a recommendation for outside firm to conduct the conservation assessment of the city’s art collection. As stated, Council consideration of CAC recommendations are being planned for the meeting of September 19th for two work plan items (Sculpture Garden, Murals).

I. COMMISSION ITEMS

Responding to **Commissioner Karger**, **CAM Stewart** clarified that, regarding the Bruce’s Beach project, the work of the Commission is done for now. Staff will rely on the City Manager’s office for leadership on how to further engage the community in the selection conversation, and when that is done the plan is to package up all information regarding the proposals and community input and submit to the City Council.

J. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:04 p.m. it was moved and seconded (Karger/Dohner) to adjourn the meeting; with no objections, it was so ordered.to adjourn to September 18, 2023 at 4:00 pm.

