

Informal Meeting of the President's Public Art Committee

January 13, 2014, 2pm

Art Museum Conference Room

As this was an informal meeting, Chair Chris Boswell did not call the meeting to order. The purpose of the meeting was to meet with Michael Chavez, Public Art Program Manager in Denver, to learn about Denver's public art program. C. Boswell, S. Moldenhauer, and R. Klages were in attendance.

Michael Chavez's Presentation on Public Art

M. Chavez began his presentation on public art by explaining how the public art program works in Denver. The City of Denver has a 1% for Art program, which is in its 25th year. Typically, Denver averages 7-10 projects per year. In Denver's Public Art Program, every project is site-specific, and proposed projects always start from scratch and progress through a multi-level, transparent process. Participants in the process include community members, engineers, artists, the public art committee, members of Denver's Commission on Cultural Affairs, and the mayor.

C. Boswell asked why there was a need for the various layers, and M. Chavez said that the layers were based on expertise (i.e. engineering knowledge, aesthetic knowledge). M. Chavez said Denver's process could be condensed to one committee. Discussion then turned to how to implement some of Denver's policies and programmatic choices at UW. S. Moldenhauer said the process the Biodiversity Center is following is a good one to follow. M. Chavez responded by speaking about the educational opportunities for students through a public art program and how interdepartmental relationships, such as one between the engineering department and the art department, are beneficial for students and have a tendency to draw in new artists. M. Chavez commented that art should reflect the innovation happening at the University.

M. Chavez also talked about Denver's policy regarding donations. He said having no framework for donations can create additional challenges. In sum, Denver's public art committee evaluates donations for safety, maintenance, financial burden, and aesthetics. The committee then recommends it or not to the Denver Commission on Cultural Affairs, who recommends it or not to the mayor. Denver also asks for 10% of the cost up front for maintenance. M. Chavez said this system works well because no one person is responsible for vetoing the art if it is not wanted. R. Klages said that setting the precedence for a rigorous vetting process on campus would be good for UW.

There was also a discussion on possible new construction on campus (high bay engineering building, Half Acre), and whether or not money had been set aside for art for the buildings. All were in agreement that the art for these buildings should be planned in advanced, not as an afterthought. S. Moldenhauer brought up the Committee's strategic plan for UW arts, and Chavez encouraged the plan to be open and support unique art that people would be excited to go see. C. Boswell agreed that unique pieces would be good for UW, and that UW needed to find a focus for their art.

On a final note, C. Boswell said the Trustees should approve the public art policy this week.