

Information Only

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Bellevue Arts Commission

1E-109 or Zoom Meeting, 4:30 pm

City of Bellevue, WA

Grand Connection Crossing: Artist Selection

At today's meeting, staff will present information about the artist selected by the Grand Connection Crossing Artist Selection Panel to create a new art plan and preliminary artwork concept for the Grand Connection Crossing, a planned pedestrian and bike bridge over Interstate 405.

Code and bylaw support: This item is presented to the Commission supported by Bellevue City Code 3.56.070 item F: "Develop recommendations for acquiring public artwork consistent with guidelines and priorities approved by city council."

Bellevue Art Collection Mission & Vision

Mission Statement – To be a vital platform for living artists and a source of creative inspiration for our community, excelling in representing Bellevue's unique story through art.

Vision Statement – The Bellevue Public Art Collection seeks to be a leading platform and community resource for cultural exchange and creative inspiration through art. The collection enhances the experience of Bellevue's public places, fosters community pride and belonging, raises the discourse on the defining aspects of Bellevue's civic life, and explores the diverse identities and converging cultures of our residents, creative sectors, and the interplay between nature and the urban experience.

Background

The Grand Connection is a pedestrian and bicycle route through the heart of Downtown from Meydenbauer Bay Park to Eastrail in Wilburton. To help realize this vision, in 2017 Council adopted the Grand Connection Framework Plan, which included options for a crossing over Interstate 405. The 2017 plan laid out a broad vision for public art along the entire Grand Connection with high-level themes and precedents tied to the different sections of the Grand Connection.

With the preferred option of a lid park connecting the Grand Connection over the freeway as the ultimate goal, staff has been working to develop a design of a bridge that can accommodate a future lid over the freeway, if that is pursued, or standalone as a key piece of civic infrastructure. This connection, called the Grand Connection Crossing, has a goal of completing the installation of the bridge by the end of this decade. Staff has been working with a team of landscape architects, architects, and engineers to advance the design. The design is currently at 30% design, which means that it's roughly 30% of the way through the overall design process.

With funding committed for an art plan later in 2024, an artist call was issued in September, with applications due in early November. The selected artist will be paid up to \$65,000 for the completion of an art plan for the crossing and a preliminary artwork concept for a landmark artwork integrated into the bridge design. Given the visibility of the project and the technical experience

needed to complete a landmark artwork for the bridge, applicants must have completed the installation of a previous artwork with a budget of over \$300,000. In total, 20 artists applied, 19 of which were determined to meet the qualifications.

The panel was comprised of seven community members and arts and design professionals. Panelists included:

1. Arts Commission Chair Lydia Aldredge
2. Owner and artist at Yuan Ru Gallery in BelRed, Julie Hsieh
3. Steven Kramer, KGIP, developer of the property of the Eastrail and Grand Connection intersection
4. Pearl Leung, Amazon and Friends of Grand Connection member
5. Adam Amrhein, LMN Architects (bridge designers)
6. Joshua Heim, Managed original art chapter in the Framework Plan, Executive Director of the Western Arts Alliance
7. Matthew Szósz, Artist

The panel reviewed all applications and reviewed and selected four finalists on November 15, 2024. Finalist interviews were held on January 17, 2025, and the panel selected artist Matthew Mazzotta for this opportunity in a nearly unanimous vote. Key determining factors included his approach to community outreach as core to his artistic practice, appreciation of his past artworks, especially his project titled *Home* in the Tampa International Airport, and a commission he received in Croatia that he transformed into a curated show of local artists.

About the Artist



Home by Matthew Mazzotta at Tampa International Airport, Tampa, Florida.

Matthew Mazzotta is a Canton, Massachusetts-based artist whose artworks have won numerous awards, including the “Architecture Project of the Year” from the Dezeen Awards at the Tate Modern, Architizer A+ Award, CODAworx awards, and Americans for the Arts. He received his Bachelor of Fine Art from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and his Master of Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Program in Art, Culture and Technology. He is a Fulbright scholar, has been a Smithsonian Artist in Research, a Guggenheim Fellow and a Loeb Fellow at Harvard University.



Cloud House by Matthew Mazzotta in Springfield, Missouri.

He describes the primary focus of his artwork as:

I work at the intersection of art, activism, and urbanism, focusing on the power of the built environment to shape our relationships and experiences. My community-specific projects integrate new forms of civic participation and social engagement into the built environment and reveal how the spaces we travel through and spend our time living within have the potential to become distinct sites for intimate, radical, and meaningful exchanges. Through my process, each project starts by creating temporary public spaces for listening—an Outdoor Living Room—as a way to capture voices from local people who might not attend more formal meetings. Stemming from this approach are experiences that involve people from a range of backgrounds working together to redefine their collective identity.



Gentle Breeze by Matthew Mazzotta in Boise, Idaho.

He has contributed to a number of art plans, including working on the Athens Public Art Plan, where he was hired to create five of his Outdoor Living Room spaces throughout the city as part of community outreach as part of the plan. He also authored a plan called The Main Idea, which created a road map for rural towns to reinvigorate their main streets with art interventions. The final example was a project he managed in Croatia called Pier Shear. For this project, he was originally commissioned to create an artwork for a long pier out into the ocean in Rijeka, Croatia. Realizing the importance of local stories in this location, he turned his commission into a curated series of installations by local artists.



Open House by Matthew Mazzotta in York, Alabama transforms into a 100-seat theatre.

In interviews with his references, staff received the following feedback:

- Each reference had heard lots of community praise for the artworks. All talked about his community process as being the keys to his success. Each project they had worked on with him was very grounded in community outreach and local stories.
- Working relationships – all said he was great to work with. He is a good listener and communicator, asks a lot of questions, wants to get everyone's perspectives, flexible, and really collaborative.
- He stayed on schedule and budget for all projects. One reference noted that he has a whole team, so design, fabrication and installation are all seamless.
- He and his team are very adept at working with other engineers, architects and designers. They found him easy to work with, very familiar with all the stakeholders he needs to reach out to.
- All three references would work with him again.

Staff Analysis

Staff commends the Grand Connection Crossing Panel's selection of Matthew Mazzotta for this opportunity. His work is bold, experiential, and because community outreach is such a part of his

process, as one panelist said in the discussion, “He will make Bellevue look good.” He also has great experience working in a broad range of capacities, from art planning and curation to award-winning artworks, all of which will be a component of this scope of work. Additionally, his career trajectory will bring notoriety to Bellevue and potentially draw tourists to the Grand Connection and Bellevue more broadly.

Next Steps

Staff is currently working to contract with Matthew Mazzotta for this opportunity. As the art plan is developed, staff will present information on the draft plan at a future meeting. The Public Art Committee will be engaged during the development of the preliminary artwork concept. If staff recommend moving forward with further development of the preliminary artwork concept, staff will bring that to the commission to seek their endorsement.

Staff Contact

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