



DATE: October 3, 2022

TO: Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis and City Councilmembers

FROM: Lorie Hoffman, Arts Community Manager, 452-4246
Community Development Department

SUBJECT: Biannual Arts Update

The Bellevue Arts & Culture Program administers several lines of business: 1) annual arts grants; 2) public art production and maintenance; 3) the annual Bellwether arts festival; 4) capacity building and partnerships with private and non-profit partners; 5) implementation work for the BelRed Arts District; and 6) cultural planning. Additionally, the program manages community engagement with artists, cultural organizations, and creative businesses; contributes to Citywide planning initiatives; produces and supports events; plays a leadership role in the Eastside's and region's cultural sectors; and supports the Bellevue Arts Commission.

Activities of the Arts and Culture Program are primarily guided by Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan and the 2020 Economic Development Plan. These plans layout the foundation and the role of the City in supporting and catalyzing arts, cultural, and creative activity.

This update will focus on the Bellwether Arts Festival and public art production and maintenance. Arts Grants allocation recommendations will come to Council before the end of the year, and a study session on implementation work around the BelRed Arts District will be presented to Council in Q1 of 2023. Corresponding images can be found in Attachment A.

2022 BELLWETHER ARTS FESTIVAL

Bellwether is a free, annual, multi-disciplinary arts experience produced by the City of Bellevue, in collaboration with Bellevue's arts community and the city's Arts Commission.

A bellwether is a sign of things to come. The name was chosen as a symbol of the overarching mission of the event: to showcase Bellevue's creative future and to turn that future into reality. Bellwether got its start as a biennial sculpture exhibition in 1992. Now, the event has evolved to encompass new forms of art and culture.

This year, Bellwether explored Art + Tech with four areas of engagement: Digital Residencies, augmented reality art installation, Portable Collection Opening Reception, and a Techtober Mini-Teaser panel discussion.



Digital Residencies: Showcasing local arts and experiences on digital platforms, Digital Residencies are a new way to exhibit art as part of the Bellwether Arts Festival; and a contemporary spin on the traditional Artist Residency. Selected artists presented videos, 2D images, 3D works-in progress, ephemeral experiences, artificial intelligence (AI) generated designs, and more throughout the month of September. Content was featured on the social media channels of the Artist, Bellevue Arts Program, and Bellwether Arts Festival. Artists were selected by a community panel, and approved by the Arts Commission and included: Dustin Curtis, KT Hancock, Xin Xin, and Warren Armando Pope.

Images found on Page 1 of Attachment A

Augmented Reality Art Installation. # GLITCHGODDESS: Publicly acclaimed as the first Feminist digital Art piece to hit viral metrics, #GlitchGoddess, by Marjan Moghaddam, entered into the art fair with a body that disrupted the legacy artworld's depiction of the female form in a singular manner while switching from slender, heavy, young, old, pregnant, glitched, stylized to artistically abstracted, set to a voiceover of women complaining about inequality in the art world.

Marjan Moghaddam is an award-winning, pioneering, digital artist and animator, who works in a variety of media for animation, Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs), Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality Art, as well as traditional print, sculpture, and installation. She is considered as one of the top female 3 dimensional Computer Graphics (CG) modeling artists in the world. Marjan is a political refugee and immigrant from Iran, and lives and works in Brooklyn, where she is a Tenured, Full Professor of CG and Animation, at Long Island University.

#GlitchGoddess was presented in Partnership with Future Arts.

Images found on page 2 of Attachment A

Portable Collection Opening

Reception: This reception in Bellevue City Hall celebrated over 40 artists whose work entered the portable collection at the city of Bellevue during the COVID-19 pandemic. These artists' work span styles, subject, and media, and are unified by artistic excellence.

In 2020 the Bellevue Arts Commission purchased 21 new works for the Portable Art Collection, with the goal of growing the collection of portable artworks and diversifying the collection by adding

a range of visual art mediums and artistic voices. In 2022, the Bellevue Arts Commission purchased an additional 29 artworks to continue supporting local artists through the COVID-19 pandemic. Both calls garnered over 1,000 artwork submissions by hundreds of artists.

Portable art increases the number of artworks accessible in city-owned buildings in Bellevue neighborhoods. Prior to this call, the City's Portable Art Collection contained only a handful of



artworks, one or two being added every few years.

Images found on page 3 of Attachment A

Techtober Mini-teaser Panel Discussion: This 90-minute conversation with artists in the tech field was a glimpse behind the curtain. Moderated by ggLocators' Cami Smith this conversation with Netflix Animation Studios Recruiter Camille Leganza and Netflix Games Platform Senior Recruiter Miguel Calderon focused the symbiotic relationship between tech and art. Topics included work in voice over, Arts Direction, Sound Design, and Psychology of Avatar Creation.

This panel discussion was presented in Partnership with PACE.

PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

With more than 127 pieces, the public art collection is one of the most visible and consistent ways the City provides access to art for residents. The pieces are sited across the city and vary in age from 1961's Rock Totem by James Fitzgerald to 2022's DT Park Artwork, (working title) by Marc Fornes slated for installation this November. The design and fabrication of public art is funded by the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget with individual pieces averaging 3-5 years from ideation to installation.

The long lead time for public production is tied to the process involved in site identification, working with the artists and Arts Commission through an iterative and inclusive design process, and supporting the artists through the fabrication and seasonal installation processes. This ensures high-quality pieces that are accessible to the general public.

This also requires the Arts Program to plan long-term to ensure dollars and spaces are available when the artwork is complete. Over the last 18 years, the Arts Program's steady allocation of \$350,000 from the CIP has allowed public art projects to make commitments to long planned projects like the coming Downtown Park NE Corner artwork. That said, the stable funding has not been indexed to inflation, which has continued to impact the cost of fabrication and construction. In general, nationwide averages in construction cost inflation typically are between 3-5 percent per year, but recent years have been anything but average with construction inflation topping 19 percent. Fabrication of permanent public art projects is closely tied to construction inflation, especially when factoring in the cost of materials, such as steel.

We can look at the Newport Hills artwork on 119th Avenue SE built in 2013 as an example of the impact of inflation over time. Applying a conservative construction inflation estimate, the Newport Hills artwork built in 2013 for \$75,000 would today cost over \$131,000, an increase of 75 percent.

Because of this pressure, going forward the Public Art Program will have to adapt by taking on fewer projects. This adaptation will shift the Arts Program away from medium-sized projects to producing smaller pieces that enhance our neighborhoods, while larger pieces that provide memorable experiences in Bellevue's public spaces are completed. Examples of both small and large public art are listed below.

Recent activity

Portable Artworks: In 2020 and 2022, during the COVID-19 pandemic, 49 portable artworks were purchased from local emerging artists. With the goals of increasing representation of local

artists in the Public Art Collection and supporting artists during the pandemic, purchased artworks dramatically increased diverse representation in the collection. The 2022 purchase is currently on display in Bellevue City Hall, and 2020 purchased artworks will be installed in city-owned facilities across the community in the coming months.

Downtown Utility Box Art Wraps Phase II: Artwork has been installed on 10 utility boxes across Downtown. For this opportunity, the second phase of the Utility Box Wraps Program, artists were selected from the Eastside Artist roster and living within East King County. Downtown Box Wraps have been immensely popular, with some of the highest levels of engagement this year on Arts Program social media channels. Images found on page 4 of Attachment A

Maintenance and Major Restoration: Extensive maintenance has been performed on 6 artworks in 2022, with major restoration in progress on *Longboat.Reed.Rockery* by Dan Corson at Bellevue City Hall currently. In 2023, arts program staff will explore a long-term ongoing maintenance contract with qualified vendors to ensure the proper care of these public assets.

Upcoming activity

Downtown Park NE Gateway Artwork: After several delays, this landmark artwork planned for installation in November 2022 by artist Marc Fornes, will anchor the new plaza entrance at the NE corner of the Downtown Park. Images found on page 5 of Attachment A

130th Streetscape Artwork: Planned for installation in late 2023 or early 2024 at the intersection of Spring Boulevard and 130th, this BelRed artwork by artist Po Shu Wang will be an interactive and technical artwork where users can trigger a quiet musical collage developed from recordings of BelRed musicians. The contract for fabrication and installation was approved by Council earlier this year. Images found on page 5 of Attachment A

Spring Boulevard Artwork: Originally slated to mark the pedestrian route from Spring Boulevard to the 120th light rail station, staff is exploring moving this installation by Jill Anholt westward a block to NE 12th and Spring Boulevard at the Eastrail Connection. The contract for the fabrication and installation of this artwork is expected to go to Council for approval in 2023. Images found on page 5 of Attachment A

BelRed Mural Pilot: 10 Artists from a four-county region (King, Snohomish, Pierce, and Island) have been selected to bring murals to the Belred Arts District. Installation was originally planned for late summer 2022 but has been pushed back due to the delay in Light Rail timelines as we wait for ownership of the selected walls to come to the City of Bellevue. Artwork design, however, is well underway, and we will be ready to hit the ground running when the weather is favorable in Spring 2023.

City Wide Youth Art – Utility Box Art Wraps Phase III: Building on the incredible public reception and popularity of the Box Wraps program, and listening to Council feedback to see Box Wraps across the city, the 2023 program will bring new artwork to neighborhoods across the community with an emphasis on youth art.

LOOKING AHEAD

Bellevue, with its investments in public art, arts and cultural organizations, events, and strong creative economy will continue to be a place for arts and culture, but there are challenges. The pandemic compounded and exacerbated existing pressures, such as increasing rents and a lack of affordable arts and cultural spaces, making conditions significantly more challenging for many working or operating a business or organization in the arts and cultural sector. Despite that, artists and arts and cultural organizations still see Bellevue as a place where they want to be. This is due to a variety of advantages that Bellevue has throughout the region, including its central location on the Eastside, a population that is engaged in arts and cultural activities, the strength and competitiveness of our economy, quality schools, the safety and quality of our built environment and neighborhoods, and our diverse community. Planned work in this summary is targeted to highlight and address challenges while working to catalyze a more vibrant, livable and best-in-class Bellevue.

Attachments

A. Biannual Arts Update Images