

VISUAL ARTS COMMITTEE

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

3:00 pm

25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 70

Minutes

Commissioners Present:

J.D. Beltran, Greg Chew, P. J. Johnston

Staff Present:

Mary Chou, Allison Cummings, Carol Marie Daniels, Marcus Davies, Jennifer Lovvorn, Judy Moran, Kate Patterson, Susan Pontious

Note: All votes are unanimous unless recorded otherwise.

The meeting commenced at 3:09 pm.

8. Recommendation for the De-Accessioning of Jacques Overhoff's *Untitled*, 1969, at Anna E. Waden Branch Library

Senior Registrar Allison Cummings reported on the San Francisco Library Commission's request that the Arts Commission approve the de-accessioning and possible demolition of Jacques Overhoff's *Untitled*, 1969, a sculpture located on the exterior of the Anna E. Waden Branch Library in the Bayview. Ms. Cummings explained that the artwork is a 24-foot sculptural intervention in an integral brick wall on the façade of the existing building. Subject to the planned demolition and rebuilding of the library, Mr. Overhoff's artwork would need to be either moved or destroyed. Ms Cummings explained that over time the art work has suffered several detractors, including the addition of an ADA handrail and a gate that laterally intersects the work. She also provided background information about the artist, who worked in the Bay Area for 35 years and became known for his architecturally integrated work using building materials. Mr. Overhoff currently lives in Germany, but is working on the Doyle Drive Replacement Project in San Francisco. Ms. Cummings added that Mr. Overhoff's work can be found throughout the Bay Area, and that in addition to the work in question, the Arts Commission's Civic Art Collection contains two other large sculptural works by the artist.

San Francisco Public Library Chief of Branches Brian Bannon spoke in depth about the new library proposal, stating that it is the result of an involved community process dating back to 2007. Mr. Bannon explained that over the course of a number of community meetings renovation of the existing library structure and relocation of the branch were discussed, but based on community needs a plan to rebuild on the existing lot was approved. The new building will be LEED gold certified and will feature expanded collections space, community and computer rooms, and an interior courtyard. The building's art enrichment plan will include community-based artists and arts organizations, with one of the projects consisting of a series of history panels on the new

building's façade. Mr. Bannon stated that the possibility of including Mr. Overhoff's artwork in the new building had been thoroughly explored and that a number of factors proved problematic, including obscured sightlines, incompatibility with the new building's grade and structure, reduction of programmatic space, and the cost and scheduling impact of the artwork's structural reinforcement on building construction. Removal and relocation of the artwork within the new building is estimated to cost between \$100,000 and \$150,000. Mr. Bannon concluded by stating that based on these factors, the San Francisco Public Library recommends that 90 days notice with an option to move the artwork be issued to Mr. Overhoff by the Arts Commission, adding that the artwork will be commemorated in the proposed history panels planned for the new building's façade.

Library Commissioner President Jewell Gomez expressed support for both Mr. Overhoff and his art, but offered her opinion that the work in question was not well-sited in that it has gone largely unnoticed by the community. She also stated that she felt that the benefits of a new library would outweigh saving Mr. Overhoff's artwork.

City Librarian Luis Herrera stated that he feels that the recommendation to de-accession Mr. Overhoff's artwork is the right course of action.

Lydia Vincent presented the Committee with a petition in favor of the artwork's removal signed by 135 residents. Community members Larry Ware, Virgie Newman, Joseph Carullo, Teresa Goines, Jeffery Betcher, Rita Collins, Fran Carter, Lydia Vincent, and Sarah Stangle spoke in support of the artwork's removal in order to allow construction of the new library as planned, as did Branch Manager Linda Brooks Burton.

Ms. Cummings stated that in considering the recommendation to de-accession the work Arts Commission staff had adhered to all guidelines and performed due diligence by contacting the artist, seeking the professional opinion of a representative of the U.S. General Services Administration, consulting with the City Attorney's Office, and obtaining an appraisal reflecting the artwork's current market value. Ms. Cummings also stated that the Arts Commission was unable to identify a suitable site for the artwork's relocation. She then concluded by stating that following careful research and review of programmatic guidelines Arts Commission staff recommend the artwork be de-accessioned from the Civic Art Collection and subject to destruction should the artist, or another party authorized by the artist, not be willing or able to relocate it, based on the following factors: 1) The integrity of the artwork would be severely compromised is detached from its current site; 2) the cost to the library project of relocating the artwork is not merited by its cultural and aesthetic value; 3) the functional needs of the new library supersede the value of keeping the artwork in place; 4) the Arts Commission's Civic Art Collection holds two additional large-scale works by the artist, and the artist is also well represented throughout the Bay Area and United States. Ms. Cummings also added that the Arts Commission's Civic Design Review process has recently been adjusted in order to prevent a similar situation from happening again.

Commissioner Johnston thanked the community for attending the meeting and stated that the artwork no longer functions in its current place and will not work in the new building. He then said that because the Committee should not stand in the way of the new library, the Committee will recommend to the Full Commission the removal and demolition of Mr. Overhoff's artwork. Commissioner Chew and Commissioner Beltran both added that they look forward to working with the Community in the future.

Motion: Motion to recommend to the Full Commission, at the Library Commission's request, the de-accessioning from the Civic Art Collection of Jacques Overhoff's sculpture, *Untitled*, 1969, located at the Anna E. Waden Branch Library.

Moved: Beltran/Chew

Motion: Motion to approve, at the Library Commission's request, the demolition of Jacques Overhoff's sculpture, *Untitled*, 1969, following the expiration of a 90 day notice period in which the artist or a party authorized by the artist is given opportunity to remove and relocate the artwork.

Moved: Beltran/Chew

9. Bernal Heights Branch Library

Commissioner Johnston reminded the public that because the murals to be discussed are not part of the Arts Commission's Civic Art Collection the process would be different than that of the preceding item. Because the murals are on city property, he explained that the Arts Commission is charged with approving any plan of action that determines whether or not they will be preserved. He then stated that the murals were painted on the façade of the Bernal Heights Branch in 1992, but it is unknown how the murals were approved in the first place.

Ms. Pontious presented the request from the San Francisco Library Commission to approve conservation of the mural by Arch Williams and others on the front façade of the Bernal Heights Branch building and removal of the murals on the sides and back of the building. She also stated that Director of Cultural Affairs Luis R. Cancel requested that the wording of the motion put to the Committee be changed to read "revitalize" rather than "conserve" in order to reflect possible treatment to the murals by someone other than a trained fine arts conservator.

Community members Dan Gleich, Nancy Everett, Jeffery Miller, Ellen Egbert, Rosanne Liggett, and Jane Wattenberg all spoke in favor of removing the murals from all sides of the library building's façade. Library Commission President Jewell Gomez explained that the Library Commission felt that keeping the front mural and removing the murals on the building's sides and back presented a good compromise. She also stated that the plan to have Precita Eyes repaint the front mural would preserve its history and revitalize the building's façade. Both Mauricio Vela and Luis Aroche spoke out against removing any aspect of the existing murals.

Ms. Pontious reminded the Committee that they can approve the Library's request, but that the Arts Commission can not compel the Library to remove any part of the mural.

Commissioner Johnston reiterated that the murals remain under the jurisdiction of the Library Commission. Commissioner Beltran then read from an October 13, 2009 letter from David Campos to the Library Commission in which Supervisor Campos wrote “I have decided to support the compromise position, which allows for removal of the side murals while preserving the mural on the front of the building.” Commissioner Johnston recommended that the Committee allow the Library to move forward with their process.

THIS MOTION WAS REVISED.

Motion: Motion to approve the request from the San Francisco library Commission to revitalize the mural by Arch Williams and others on the façade of the Bernal Heights Branch building, and to remove the murals on the sides and back of the building due to their deteriorated condition.

Moved: Beltran/Chew

10. New Business

There was no new business to report.

11. Old Business

There was no old business to report.

12. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:02 pm.

MD 10/26/09