

**Monument Review Guidelines:  
City of Portland and Multnomah County**

**October 13, 2021**

**Background**

When the Metropolitan Arts Commission (MAC) was formed in 1973, artwork owned by both the City of Portland and Multnomah County, including historical and memorial statuary deemed to be fine art, became the responsibility of MAC. In 1995, MAC became a non-profit agency, the Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC), and this responsibility transferred to RACC via an intergovernmental agreement among regional jurisdictions and long-term contracts between RACC and the City of Portland and Multnomah County. RACC builds Public Art Collections on behalf of the City and County and also oversees their maintenance and conservation. When necessary, RACC also oversees the review, re-contextualizing, relocation and removal of artworks from the Public Art Collections.

**Policy**

The Public Art Collection has the power to create inclusive spaces that are welcoming to all communities living in the city. Conversely, public art in the form of historic monuments and memorials in these spaces frequently depict figures or events seen through the outdated lens of privilege, failing to recognize the aspects of history that contain dispossession, enslavement, and discrimination. The legacy of the people or events depicted can change over time and it is therefore imperative that these artworks be regularly reevaluated, taking into account new information that comes to light during research or based on the evolution of a changing community. Monuments and memorials may be considered for review, relocation or removal from the collection based on careful and in-depth evaluation of the artwork and are subject to the criteria stated below. A review plan will be developed that identifies potentially affected parties; outlines roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority; identifies the community groups and individuals to be engaged; and defines community feedback.

Every attempt will be made at all points of engagement to notify the artist and donor, when applicable. Upon completion of the review process, approval of next steps is made by the Public Art Committee or by the RACC Board on recommendation from the Public Art Committee (PAC) if the value of the artwork exceeds \$10,000 and with owners if the value of the work is over \$150,000.

**Criteria for Monument Review**

A work of art may be reviewed for one or more of the following reasons:

1. A work is not or is rarely on display for lack of a suitable site.
2. The condition or security of the artwork cannot be reasonably guaranteed.

3. The artwork has been damaged, or has deteriorated and the cost of repair is disproportionate to the value of the artwork as determined by RACC staff or by an appraiser as the situation dictates.
4. The artwork endangers public safety.
5. The location of a site-specific artwork is so severely altered that the work's installation is no longer physically possible or conceptually relevant.
6. The artwork is significantly incompatible or inferior in the context of the collection.
7. The City/County chooses to replace the artwork with a work of more significance by the same artist.
8. There has been sustained and overwhelming public objection to the artwork over a two-year period. This can include regular social justice-oriented graffiti, vandalism, or defacement.
9. The property on which a site-specific artwork is located is no longer owned by the City of Portland or Multnomah County.
10. The artwork has been stolen or destroyed.
11. The subject or impact of an artwork is significantly at odds with values of antiracism, equity, and inclusion.<sup>1</sup>
12. The artwork is an ongoing rally point for gatherings centered on racist or bigoted ideology.
13. Artwork does not support RACC's Mission Statement or uphold its values.

### **Review Elements:**

- 1- Research the subject of the artwork, the artist, and the donor if applicable.
  - a. Are any of these elements at odds with the values of antiracism, equity, and inclusion
  - b. Is the artwork an ongoing rally point for gatherings centered on racist or bigoted ideology?
- 2- Owner provides research on the means of acquisition and any legal restrictions.
- 3- Evaluate community feedback, both historic and current, as defined in the review plan.
- 4- Center those most impacted in the recommendation for next steps.

### **Review Procedure**

RACC team members are responsible for recommending artworks for review and should first determine if there are any possible barriers, legal or otherwise, that stand in the way of either re-locating or moving a monument or removing an artwork from the collection or disposition (what happens to the monument when it is removed from the collection). The artist (if living), the City Attorney/County legal staff, and the appropriate City/County bureau will be consulted if necessary.

1. A Monument Review Panel will be appointed as needed. This panel will consist of storytellers, scholars, community members, artists and an art conservator or curators. Representatives of the RACC Board, the City, or County, will be included as the situation requires. This panel will oversee a review plan as stated above.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional resource: [City of Portland's Core Values \(Resolution 37492\)](#)

2. RACC team presents the findings of the Monument Review Panel to the Public Art Committee (PAC). The PAC will either approve or reject the recommendation for next steps including moving the monument to a new location, removal of the monument from the Public Art collection and disposition. In the case of artwork valued above \$10,000 and under \$150,000, the PAC will forward the recommendation to the RACC Board for final approval.
3. Removal (deaccession) of artwork valued above \$10,000 is approved or rejected by the RACC Board. Final approval for artwork valued above \$150,000 may be determined by the owner.
4. If approved, RACC team will proceed with the plan for next steps as approved by the PAC, the RACC Board, and/or the owner of the monument.
5. If a monument is recommended for removal from the collection, the Public Art Team will record the process with a Review Worksheet. The worksheet and all other related documentation will be permanently retained by RACC regardless of the outcome of the recommendation.

### **Implementation of Monument Review Recommendations**

The following options include but are not limited to:

- Moving the artwork to a new location
- Re-siting of the artwork at the former location with added interpretation of the historical and/or current context
- Moving the artwork into long or short term storage
- Permanent removal of the artwork from the collection.

### **If Removal is Recommended:**

Taking into account the reason for removal from the collection, and the materials and scope. The following actions may be considered:

1. Exchange:
  - An exchange may be made with the artist, a gallery, museum, or other institution for one or more artwork(s) of comparable value by the same artist. If deemed appropriate, the artist will be given the first opportunity to exchange the artwork. Any artwork that is acquired into the collection through an exchange is subject to the accessioning criteria outlined in the RACC Collections Management Policy.
2. Transfer:
  - The artwork, or any part of the artwork, can be donated to the artist, the original donor, a nonprofit organization, a conservator for educational purposes, or, in the case of site-specific artwork, to the owner of the property on which the artwork is installed.

- The work may be sold through auction, gallery resale, or direct bidding by individuals, in compliance with City and County law and policies governing surplus property.
- Proceeds from sale of an artwork will be deposited in the Public Art Trust Fund departmental account from which the original purchase was made if acquired through the Percent for Art Program.
- Funds from the sale of donations will go into the Public Art Trust Fund for future undesignated projects. Any pre-existing contractual agreements between the artist or donor and the City or County regarding transfer of ownership will be honored.

### 3. Destruction:

- An artwork may be destroyed if that is the accepted recommendation of the Monuments Review Panel. Options for recycling will be pursued when possible.

Additional options may be identified for specific artworks.

## Term Definitions

**Accession** – The act of adding an artwork to the permanent collection.

**Anti-racism** – A belief or practice that recognizes pervasive racism in society, and actively combats racial prejudice and discrimination in order to promote racial justice and equality.

**Artist** – A practitioner in the visual arts who is generally recognized by peers and adjacent arts and cultural communities.

**Artwork** – All forms of art conceived in any discipline or medium, including visual, performance, literary, media and temporary works.

**Bigoted ideology** - a belief, opinion, or faction devoted to prejudice against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular group.

**Collections Management** – The process of managing the information and disposition of all objects for which RACC has permanently or temporarily assumed responsibility. This includes developing, maintaining, and enforcing collections policies and procedures that address the care, handling, placement, and storage of artwork.

**Conservation** – The repair of damaged or deteriorating artwork in a way that maximizes endurance with as little change to the object as possible. Treatment performed by a conservator can typically be undone if necessary. As opposed to **restoration** which refers to treatment that returns the artwork to a known or assumed state, often by the addition of non-original material.

**Deaccession** – The formal removal of accessioned artwork from the permanent collection.

**Disposition** – The ultimate method of disposal of a deaccessioned artwork. This can be done through sale, trade, donation, or destruction.

**Diversity** - The quality or state of having many different forms, types, ideas, etc.; the state of having people who are different races, ages, who have different cultures, or who are from different geographical locations in a group.

**Donation** – An artwork or sum of money given willingly and without compensation.

**Equity** – Equity addresses the historic, institutional systems that create oppression based on identity. We strive to use an intersectional approach to transform historic power dynamics for accountable systemic change based on the principles of humanity, justice, and belonging.

**Inclusion** - The active practice of sharing power with traditionally excluded individuals or groups in processes, activities, and decision or policy making.

**Maintenance** – Regular routine inspection and care of an artwork carried out by a trained technician.

**Monument/memorial** – A statue, building, or other structure erected to commemorate a famous or notable person or event; a structure intended to commemorate someone or something.

**Monument Review Panel** – Appointed panel tasked with oversight of a Monument Review Process.

**Percent for Art** – A percentage of capital construction costs for public buildings mandated by City and County ordinances to be set aside for art.

**Public Art** – Original works of art that are accessible to the public and which may possess functional as well as aesthetic qualities, regardless of accession into the public art collection.

**Public Art Collection** – All accessioned works of art owned by the City of Portland and/or Multnomah County.

**Public Art Team** – The people hired by RACC to oversee the development and execution of Public Art programs and the public art collection.

**Public Art Trust Fund** – The RACC fund that receives all Percent for Art monetary contributions derived from improvement projects and public art funds from other sources.

**Site-specific** – Artwork specifically designed for and permanently installed in a particular location.

**Work of Art** – see Artwork.