

Public Art

PRESENTING 2D IMAGES OF 3D ART



El Gran
Teatro de
la Luna

This year's Networking will focus on Public Art and Presenting 2D images of 3D artwork. Thanks to Mary Donaldson, the woman with the golden pen, our talented grant writer, we've been able to add a number of Philadelphia's public art images to our portfolio. With our recent acquisitions of images from the Public Art Association, together with our murals, which are indeed Public Art, each portfolio now has a public art print. As we move through the slides this morning, we showcase on each slide one of our newly acquired images.

Here we have El Gran Teatro de la Luna (in English: The huge theater of the moon). This parade of flat, brightly colored aluminum circus performers on a metal trellis stands as gateway to one of North Philadelphia's park.

What is Public Art

- Public Location
- Artist + Community
- History
- Purpose

I Have a Story to Tell
(Osorio)



What public art do you encounter in your everyday life? Typically, one thinks of statues, sculptures and monuments. Basically, public artwork is art that was constructed for everyone to see and enjoy in public places, such as a park, maybe a public garden, a subway, on a wall (such as our murals), or inside a public building. So think beyond statues, sculptures and monuments. Public Art could be a gate, a fountain or a staircase.

Because public art is public, it is not just about the artist, but rather the involvement of the artist with the community. This means that the community's time, energy and money are engaged in the process. In fact, in many cases we, the public, are the owners since most works are paid through taxes.

Public art spans history, and its purposes are varied. Early artists painted on cave walls. Ancient Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans created monuments and memorials to their gods, leaders, and victories. Many of these works still stand today. The Mexican muralists, (Diego Riviera, Orozco) created art so that the common people would learn their history. Public art is art in any media that has been planned and executed with the intention of being staged in the public arena. In fact, the Association for Public Art's mantra is "Public art is a museum without walls."

Here on this slide is "I have a story to tell you," a small glass house with photographic images of immigrants that was envisioned by the Latino community to pay homage to their sacrifices and struggles and to combat feelings of invisibility and exclusion.

Why Public Art

- Free to all
- Preserves history
- Reveals culture
- Enhances environment
- Reflects inner vision to world



The Thinker
(Rodin)

Why is public art important? Public art is for the people, accessible to all, to look at it, to wonder about, and to discuss. Unlike art in museums, the viewer is free to touch it, maybe sit on it, or play on it.

Not only does Public Art add meaning to our communities by enhancing our environment and transforming our landscapes, it also preserves history. It reveals our culture and community values.

As art it reflects the inner vision of the artist and community to the outside world.

Many of us are familiar with Rodin's "The Thinker" sitting outside the Rodin museum.

Issues Relevant to Public Art

- Subject
- Location
- Process
- Controversy
- Time
- Conservation

Cowboy
(Remington)



When discussing public art, we need to take into consideration several factors. First, what is the subject? Is it a realistic reproduction of something we recognize, or is it symbolic, or maybe even abstract? What message is conveyed in the artwork?

We also need to consider where the work is located. Perhaps the artwork was constructed to be site specific, that is, it was created with the location in mind. For example, Remington's Cowboy, which you see here, was the first site-specific sculpture in Philadelphia. The artist took into consideration the environment in which the sculpture would live before creating it.

Another important issue to bear in mind is the process involved in the planning and execution of the artwork. As you can well imagine, when artist, community and politicians come together in a project, the process is usually not simple. Here are some issues that you might think about when considering the process. Who initiated the artwork and why? Was the community involved, and if yes, how? What is the material and why was it chosen?

Furthermore, as with all artwork, public art, especially being in the public arena, is not without controversy. Besides the usual question, "Is it art?" the placement of a work might spark debate. Does the Rocky statue belong in front of the Philadelphian Museum of Art? Does a gigantic stylized version of a clothespin, deserve its prominent location in Center Square Plaza?

Another important point is time. When was the artwork created. Will it stand the test of time both in terms of its artistic merit and the materials with which it was constructed?

One final comment- what is our responsibility as a community in preserving these works of art. Although we cannot control the impact of weather and pollution, we can control neglect, litter and vandalism. Ultimately, we are the caretakers for our public works of art.

The “Art” of Public Art

- Elements

- Line, Shape/Form, Space, Color, Value, Texture

- Principles of Design

- Emphasis, Contrast, Rhythm, Balance, Unity

- Scale

- Style

- Materials

Swann Memorial
(Calder)



When we look at and evaluate public art, what questions can we ask ourselves to better understand the techniques that the artist utilized to convey the content or the intended message. When we interpret any work of art, the same tools, the elements and principles of design apply. Recall that the elements are the fundamental building blocks used to create a work of art. They are *line, shape/form, space, color, texture, and value*. The principles of design are the way the artist arranges the elements to create a visual design, and they include emphasis, contrast, rhythm, balance, and unity.

Also consider scale. Size matters. And it does impact our impressions.

How about style? Does purpose dictate style? Are memorials of people always realistic? When would an artist choose an abstract approach to communicate meaning? Maybe the style choice is merely a form of personal expression and not tied to the message.

Choice of material also affects aesthetics and how we respond to it. Sometimes technical or practical reasons dictate materials. How is it assembled and does assembly affect appearance?

On this slide, we've posed a few questions. We are sure that you can compose many more of your own.

Here, The Swann Memorial fountain was designed by Alexander Stirling Calder to represent Philadelphia's three main waterways: the Delaware, Schuylkill River, and Wissahickon Creek. (Alex S. Calder is the father of Alex, the inventor of the mobile.)

2D Image of 3D Art

- Snapshot
 - Space
 - Time of Day/Year
- Photographer Interpretation
- Distortion

Washington Monument



We Live in a 3D World!

Consider this photograph of George Washington. What if I walked around it? What would I see? Now, what if I walked around the sculpture, what would I see? The back side of the photo is blank; in reality the other side of this sculpture is full of detail. You can walk up to it, around it, examine it from many viewpoints and get more information. A photograph is a snapshot from the photographer's vantage point in space.

Now imagine that you are the photographer. What time of day or season would you choose to photograph this sculpture? Since most Public Art lives in an outdoor environment, that environment is in constant fluctuation. The lighting and weather all influence how we might perceive the sculpture. Some people might enjoy looking at the sculpture in the winter time with a layering of snow. The natural world, outdoors, does not affect your viewing pleasure of a painting on a wall. It does not matter if it is snowing outside.

The photographer who took this picture is not the artist who created this sculpture. Therefore this photograph is one person's interpretation to depict the artwork. How would you decide which point of view best represents the artwork? Would you have chosen this particular side of George Washington's horse to emphasize? However, there is a reason for this particular vantage point. If you look off into the distance, you can see George's friend, Billy Penn. They are facing each other, and together they are protecting the city of Philadelphia.

Photographic Distortion

William Penn
(Calder)



With some experience one can usually discern when an artist works from a photo rather than from life. Both the camera's distance and angle affect the image and can cause distortion. Moreover, our eyes see subtleties in color, depth of field, highlights and shadows that the camera cannot accurately reproduce. It is for this reason that most artists only use photographs as a reference and not as the sole source. Moreover, cinematographers have recognized this problem and tried to rectify it with 3D glasses.

References



- <http://associationforpublicart.org/>
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- *New Land Marks : Public Art, Community, and the Meaning of Place* by Penny Balkin Bach
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perspective_distortion_\(photography\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perspective_distortion_(photography))
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