

CITY OF ANN ARBOR

ANN ARBOR PUBLIC ART COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT [June 2022- July 2023]



Kayak, by Taylor Mentzer of Ann Arbor, MI - Manhole cover near Main & Liberty

Introduction

2022-2023 was a year of transitions with Craig Hupy retiring after 36 years as the Public Services Administrator and the Ann Arbor Public Art Commissions city champion (along with Venita Harrison) in February of 2022. With this transition, Venita led the conversations with city staff to introduce the Ann Arbor Public Art Commission to new leaders as they stepped into different roles. Sarah Fuller, Ann Arbor Public Art Chair transitioned off of the leadership role, with Allison Buck taking back over in January of 2023 and Jamal Bufford

remaining as vice-chair. The commission also was excited for the return of Mary Thiefels to the commission and finally filled a vacant space left after David Esau stepped down after many years of service, with Zhang Fang's addition in the summer of 2023.

Zhang Fang is a University of Michigan Hughes Fellow, who teaches Chinese contemporary art. Fang is also a mother of three children, a wife of a well-known artist (Wang Qingsong), and does translating and interpreting – sometimes for big companies like Bausch & Lomb, or for art magazines .

The commission also had new City council reps in 2022 (Ling Song) and 2023 (Cynthia Harrison).

While there weren't many CIP projects with art enhancements that occurred during this timeframe, the commission continued to work on supporting projects and public art enhancements in Ann Arbor.

Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Enhancements

[Linked here](#) you will find the complete list of current council approved potential CIP enhancements (Appendix A).

Two projects that moved forward during this timeframe were the installation of the second manhole cover design that were cast in early 2019. The first design, Horizon, was used first and the second design, Kayak, began to be used in 2022. These covers continue to be installed across Ann Arbor as new streetscape/sidewalk construction projects require them. The third and final design is set to begin installation in late 2023.

Second, the water treatment plant mural by Artists Alonso Bravo & Diego Goeury were completed in late 2022. An MLive article about the project can be found here for [more information](#). You can also see a video tour of the project on one of the artists instagram page here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cjlo-uluXnN/>.

All of the CIP enhancements that are approved are now flagged within the city's Allowance system that allows project managers to see art assigned to projects and plan and coordinate with departments as necessary.

As a reminder, in early 2018 - managed by The Ann Arbor Art Center, three designs were selected to be turned into manhole covers for projects spanning the next several years.



Above: *Horizon*, by Laurie Borggreve of Edina, MN; *Kayak*, by Taylor Mentzer of Ann Arbor, MI; and *Tower and Tree*, by Shaun Whitehouse of Ann Arbor, MI

Maintenance of Public Art

A complete list of public artworks and a schedule for repairs/maintenance is unable to be included at this time as the city's system (Cityworks) is under construction.

Unfortunately in 2020 a vehicle crashed into *Tulip* by Ray Katz, necessitating the piece to have repairs. The piece was finally returned upon its repair in fall of 2022. As the works continue to be evaluated and the Cityworks system is updated, any identified repairs will be handled by the responsible department.

AAPAC Efforts to Promote Public Art

In 2018-2019, the commission was proud to oversee the creation of a public art inventory, tour, and online catalog by Public Works intern, Olivia Pearce and managed by city staff, Venita Harrison. This inventory continues to be updated with new works and can be found on AAPAC's webpage here:

<https://www.a2gov.org/departments/public-services/Pages/Public-Art.aspx> so that all may enjoy the full collection. In the summer of 2022 and 2023 AAPAC leveraged this tour by participating in the Ann Arbor District Libraries Summer Games with a badge that encouraged participants to visit several of the city's public art pieces to find game codes to enter and get game points. 460 attendees visited the 3 art pieces that were chosen to participate in this event.

Recently the commission was approved to create its own facebook/instagram accounts. This is in the works and likely will take shape over the next year.

Donated Public Art

Two murals were proposed, approved and installed over the spring-summer of 2023 in the Library Lot near the Community Gardens. The murals were funded by The Green Team and Larry Nisson. Murals were created by Mary Thiefels and Lavinia Hanachiuc.

Additionally, The Ann Arbor Art Fair has proposed donating a sculpture to the city as part of the Bicentennial to be unveiled during the 2024 Ann Arbor Art Fair and installed near the intersection of North University and State Street. The [Guild of Artisans](#), State Street Area Association, and Ann Arbor Street Art Fair will purchase the Art Fair artist, Richard Morgan sculpture "Tree of Life" (website; www.richardalanstudios.com) as a donation to the city of Ann Arbor in honor of its bicentennial. Once removed from the base, the sculpture will be 11.16 feet approximately tall. 41 inches wide at the bottom and at the top of the furthest point is 62 inches on the width. The Bicentennial Committee and Public Art Commission are both excited about this future acquisition.

Finally, Sarah Unrath and the University of Michigan's Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) began the process to donate a piece created during the Ann Arbor Summer Art Fair, July 12 at an event called [ELEVATE THE MIC: Performers Uniting for Social Progress](#). The mural was a collaborative work created by the community and was inspired by the iconic tree of the Ann Arbor city logo. The piece was a metamorphosis of a tree evolving into a kaleidoscope of butterflies that were individually created by community members' visually responding to the prompt "What does "community" and/or "progress" mean to you. An image of the piece can be found [here](#). Ultimately, the final product resulted in 3 - 4' x 5' panels that are designed to be hung as a triptych and will be installed within a city building for all to enjoy.

Funding for Public Art

In support of continued Art in the city of Ann Arbor, The Ann Arbor Public Art Commission worked to support the selection of an administrative body to champion and manage the ARPA funding and on March 6, 2023, City Council [adopted a resolution](#) approved an

agreement with Creative Washtenaw to design and administer a grant program for artists and arts organizations on behalf of the City using the ARPA SLFRF funds allocated for this purpose.

The Council approved up to \$200,000 from the \$500,000 allocation of ARPA funds for trauma-informed arts programs, including programs that:

- Are intended to mediate the negative impacts of psychological trauma on the individuals creating or experiencing the art;
- Support at-risk youth, BIPOC, and other marginalized populations who are at much higher risk for exposure to trauma;
- Promote a culture of healing, safety, empowerment, awareness of past traumas, and have a focus on strength and resilience;
- Are not necessarily administered by license-holding mental health professionals but are administered by individuals who make a good faith effort to employ trauma-informed principles.

The commission worked with Creative Washtenaw to help set their granting guidelines and hold a community discussion where folks could share their ideas. Funds began being granted in June 2023.

Additional Working Group and Commission Activities

The commission as a whole supported and provided recommendations and resources for the following projects:

- Treeline Conservancy looking to include public art (March 2023);
- Ann Arbor Art Center's Alley Art Projects - supported and helped move through city channels as needed (Summer 2022/2023);
- West Park Band Shell discussion. The Commission sees this project as a great opportunity for a site for public art performances. Recommended looking into MACC CIP funding as well as inclusion of a member of the Art Commission on the taskforce.
- Business Owners and Developers Working Group continued to advocate for public art at city design review board meetings including an upcoming hotel project potentially bringing art into rooms and/or the lobby.

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- City Staff worked with the Ann Arbor Art Center on the creation of a mural on the ceiling of council chambers.

The ***Special Projects working group*** supported another round of the Golden Paintbrush awards which is still wrapping up as this report is being written, as well as initiated a call for art for a new bicentennial city flag design, at the bequest of the city Mayor. City flag redesign modeled after “I Voted” campaign that created stickers along with voting.

Conclusion

The AAPAC continues to make progress and work with the city to promote, maintain, and install new public art works throughout the city. Although the commission is limited due to funding constraints, commissioners are encouraged by the community’s continued support and positive attitude towards public art.