



Office of the City Manager

October 31, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From:  Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Re: Aquatic Park Public Art Selection Process Summary and Next Steps

This memo provides a summary of the Civic Arts Program's current work to commission and select two new artwork projects for Berkeley's Aquatic Park, and summarizes the next steps for the projects going forward. The recent results of the selection process yielded the following results:

1. The selection of artist Masako Miki to produce a tile mural for the 42'-long curved wall adjacent to the trail located between the north end of the lagoon and the Berkeley Animal Shelter parking lot.
2. The rejection of all four sculpture proposals for various locations along the 2.3-mile pedestrian and bicycle path that circles the Aquatic Park Lagoon.

Background & Project Intent

Both the mural and sculpture project are intended to be permanent art pieces in the City of Berkeley's public art collection in a prominent park setting in West Berkeley (specifically, Aquatic Park, at 80 Bolivar Drive and the base of Bancroft Avenue). The RFQs for each of the two opportunities were issued on October 11, 2022 with budgets of \$70,000 for the 42' curved wall project known as *Aquatic Park Bay Trail Wall*, and \$350,000 for the sculpture project known as *Aquatic Park Sculpture*. The goals for both of the commissioned artworks are the same, "to enhance a visitor's experience of Aquatic Park by beautifying its context, reflecting the multi-layered history of the site, and highlighting its ecological importance." (Attachment 1). Three finalists from an applicant pool of 52 artists were identified for the *Aquatic Park Bay Trail Wall* opportunity and four finalists from an applicant pool of 98 artists were identified for the *Aquatic Park Sculpture* opportunity. These seven finalists were invited to develop conceptual site-specific proposals.

Extensive community outreach was conducted to elicit the public's responses to the three proposals received for the *Aquatic Park Bay Trail Wall* and the four proposals received for the *Aquatic Park Sculpture*. A "Berkeley Considers" survey that invited respondents to provide feedback on each of the proposals was hosted on the City's

website from July 21 - August 4, 2023 and was widely distributed through the City's community message newsletter (Attachment 2). Additional amplification efforts, including stories about the survey appearing in *Berkeleyside* and *The Daily Cal* (on July 28, 2023 and July 27, 2023), served to broaden the reach of the City's community message platform, which has a circulation of 10,000 email contacts. In addition to the "Berkeley Considers" survey, staff also provided organizations that have a unique connection to Aquatic Park the opportunity to provide additional written input. As a result, over 500 responses to the Aquatic Park Public Art proposals were received, a record number. Typically, the City receives around 50 to 100 comments on public art proposals. Based on the sheer quantity of responses, it was clear there was great interest in these public art projects.

Survey Responses & Selection Decisions

83% of survey respondents strongly agreed/agreed that the artwork proposal by Masako Miki would be enjoyed by people of all ages and backgrounds. This same percentage also strongly agreed/agreed that her proposal would enhance the Aquatic Park environment. The survey results also revealed that there were a variety of concerns related to the sculpture proposals. It is not unusual for public art to elicit strong and sometimes contradictory responses from the community, however, for the Aquatic Park sculpture proposals, there wasn't a single unified reaction or message that came through in reviewing the hundreds of public comments. The fact that the responses were so varied indicated that there was not a clear favored proposal for the *Aquatic Park Sculpture*. Though the short list of project finalists for the sculpture opportunity included outstanding artists who have completed numerous artwork projects nationally and internationally, including a recent MacArthur "Genius" award winner, and all of the sculpture proposals had merit, ultimately the panel decided to not select any of them.

All those involved in the artwork selection process, from Civic Arts staff to selection panelists and the Civic Arts Commission, took the responsibility of this artwork selection seriously. For the sculpture project in particular, due to the complexity of the site, these were not easy artwork proposals to conceptualize, even for the very talented and accomplished finalists. The conditions of the project site demand careful consideration; Aquatic Park is an ecologically complex synthetic lagoon prone to fluctuations in water levels, and the surrounding park serves a variety of communities with myriad users and uses. Another important consideration was the fact that the *Aquatic Park Sculpture* commission would be the biggest budget public art project that the City of Berkeley has ever undertaken, and Aquatic Park is within viewing distance from the location where two controversial large-scale sculptures, collectively known as *Berkeley Big People*, (formerly the largest budget arts commission) had been located prior to the City's decision to deaccession and remove it in 2020. The rejection of all four proposals was informed by these concerns. While it was a difficult decision, the selection panel fulfilled the job with care and thoughtfulness.

Results to Date

The *Aquatic Park Bay Trail Wall* mural proposal was selected because it fulfilled the project goals as articulated in the *Aquatic Park Public Art Project Plan* (Attachment 1) and was unanimously selected and approved by the Civic Arts Commission. Similarly, the Civic Arts Commission was unanimous in rejecting all four sculpture proposals. Once the Civic Arts Commission received the selection panel's recommendation (Attachment 3), their role was to decide whether the recommendation to reject all four sculpture proposals, and accept the Masako Miki proposal had merit. At the September 27, 2023 Civic Arts Commission meeting, the commission unanimously decided to approve the panel's recommendations with the following votes: (1) M/S/C (Ibarra/Covarrubias) *to approve the Aquatic Park Public Art Selection Panel's Recommendation to implement the Aquatic Park Public Art Proposal by Masako Miki for the wall project.* Vote: Ayes — Anno, Blecher, Covarrubias, Dhesi, Ibarra, Ozol, Passmore, Woo; Nays — None; Abstain — None; Absent — Bullwinkel. Public Comment: 0 and (2) M/S/C (Ozol/Dhesi) *to approve the Aquatic Park Public Art Selection Panel's Recommendation to reject all proposals for the sculpture opportunity.* Vote: Ayes — Anno, Blecher, Covarrubias, Dhesi, Ibarra, Ozol, Passmore, Woo; Nays — None; Abstain — None; Absent — Bullwinkel. Public Comment: 0

Proposed Next Steps & Timeline

A new plan for the *Aquatic Park Sculpture* Project is currently in development using lessons learned from the first process. The following changes are slated to be implemented:

- Rather than utilizing a procurement process based upon the evaluation of project proposals, the plan will call for the use of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), a selection process which primarily relies upon examples of the applying artists' previous work, resumes, selected references, and statements of interest about the project. This approach will allow for an artist to be selected and an iterative design process to take place thereafter.
- The RFQ will be posted on the City's bids page and staff will publicize the opportunity widely. The artists whose proposals were rejected in the first process will be invited to reapply.
- The applicants' materials will be reviewed, considered, and evaluated by a panel which will include community stakeholders, representatives from Civic Arts Commission and Parks Recreation and Waterfront Commission, as well as arts professionals. The composition of the selection panel will not change from the previous process, because this particular combination of panel participants is considered a best practice in the field.
- This panel process will include two rounds of selection: round one will yield a short-list of qualified artists for the sculpture project and round two, rather than

selecting between proposals, the panel will instead interview the short-list of finalists and will select the final artist based upon their qualifications (including past work) and an evaluation of their project approach, including a description of how they might engage with stakeholders and conduct site research.

- This proposed change to the second round of the selection process is necessary due to the complexity of the Aquatic Park site. This process will allow more flexibility for the selected artist to adequately engage with stakeholders and community members and to conduct comprehensive site research over time. The artist will be able to develop the artwork proposal iteratively with feedback from the community, and guidance from the Civic Arts Commission.

With the above planned approach in place, Civic Arts staff will present the revised approach to the Parks Recreation and Waterfront Commission for feedback in early 2024, and then to the Civic Arts Commission for final approval by June 2024. Pending Civic Arts Commission approval, Civic Arts staff will release a new RFQ, assemble the selection panel to review responses, and staff will work to execute a contract with the selected artist by December 2024.

Draft Timeline for the Aquatic Park Trail Public Art Project (\$450,000 budget):

Civic Arts Commission - Approve Revised Artist Selection Process	June 2024
RFQ Issued	July 2024
RFQ Response Deadline	September 2024
Artist Review - Round One, Short List Developed	October 2024
Artist Review - Round Two, Panel Interviews	November 2024
Artist Selection and Contract Execution	December 2024

If you have any questions about this project, please reach out to Jennifer Lovvorn, Office of Economic Development, at (510) 981-7533 or jlovvorn@berkeleyca.gov.

Attachments:

1. Aquatic Park Public Art Plan, July 27, 2022.
2. Aquatic Park Public Art Proposal Survey Community Message, July 21, 2023.
3. Aquatic Park Selection Process Summary, September 15, 2023.

cc: Eleanor Hollander, Economic Development Manager
LaTanya Bellow, Deputy City Manager
Anne Cardwell, Deputy City Manager
Jenny Wong, City Auditor
Farimah Brown, City Attorney
Mark Numainville, City Clerk
Matthai Chakko, Assistant to the City Manager



Civic Arts Program

AQUATIC PARK PUBLIC ART PROJECT PLAN



BACKGROUND

Located in the southwest corner of Berkeley, Aquatic Park is a long linear 100-acre park between Ashby and University Avenues. The lagoon, which makes up 67.7 acres of the park, has two water sources- tidal water from San Francisco bay and fresh water from storm water that drains into the lagoon. The park provides a wide range of recreational opportunities including, walking, biking, picnicking, boating, bird watching and Frisbee golf. Swimming and fishing are not allowed.

Aquatic Park was constructed between 1935 and 1937 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). It was built as part of the Berkeley Waterfront Project along with the construction of the Bayshore Highway and Yacht Harbor. Tide gates were constructed to help keep the water level constant in Aquatic Park Lake. A citywide celebration entitled "Pageant of the Land and Sea" was held on May 7, 1937, to formally dedicate the park for public use.

Aquatic Park Lake was designed to conform to international standards for Model Yacht Racing, and in 1938 both the National and Pacific Coast Regatta for M-class Boats were held at the park.

Through the years, community participation has played a key role in the development of various features at Aquatic Park. Most recently, over 2,000 volunteers, organized through Friends of Aquatic Park and Berkeley Partners for Parks, participated in creating "Dream Land for Kids," a fantasy playground designed by Berkeley school children under the guidance of architect Robert Leathers and Associates.

ART OPPORTUNITIES

Bay Trail (70,000):

This opportunity is for an artist to translate two-dimensional imagery to tile, mosaic, or other permanent material.

A large curved wall located along the San Francisco Bay Trail, near the intersection of Addison Street and Bolivar Drive. Wall dimensions are approximately 42.5’ long x 3.5’ high x 2’ deep.



Aquatic Park Trail (\$350,000):

This opportunity is for an artist to create a series of permanent, sculptural artworks at various locations along Aquatic Park Trail and Bolivar Drive.

Aquatic Park Trail is a 2.3-mile pedestrian and bicycle path that loops around the park’s lagoon.



Bolivar Drive between Addison Street to Dreamland Playground in Aquatic Park is undergoing a renovation in conjunction with the development at 600 Addison Street.

PROJECT GOALS

The goals for the artwork are to enhance a visitor’s experience of Aquatic Park by beautifying its context, reflecting the multi-layered history of the site, and highlighting its ecological importance.

PROJECT BUDGET

Bay Trail (artist fee, design, fabrication, transportation + installation)	\$70,000
Aquatic Park Trail (artist fee, design, fabrication, transportation, installation)	\$350,000
Artist Selection	\$10,000
Photography and Plaques	\$8,000
Contingency	\$32,000
TOTAL	\$470,000

ARTIST RECRUITMENT APPROACH AND ELIGIBILITY

Civic Arts staff will issue an RFQ for each of the two opportunities. Practicing artists residing in the United States are eligible to apply.

ARTIST REVIEW PROCESS

Civic Arts staff will review applications to identify a list of artists who meet the criteria outlined in the RFQ.

This list of artists will be presented to the Aquatic Park Public Art Review Panel consisting of 2 arts professionals, a Civic Arts Commissioner, a Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Commissioner, and a community representative. The panel will identify 3-4 finalists for each opportunity who will be invited to develop conceptual site-specific proposals after attending an orientation session with the project team and key stakeholders.

Finalists will be paid an honorarium of \$1,000 for development of a proposal.

The Panel will reconvene to consider the finalists’ proposals in an interview format and will select 1 artist for each opportunity for recommendation to the Civic Art Commission for final approval.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Civic Arts staff will present an overview of the Project Plan to the Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Commission.
- A Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Commissioner will participate on the Panel.
- A community representative will participate on the Panel.
- The finalists’ proposals will be on display for public comment near the project site and on the Civic Arts website for two weeks prior to the final Panel meeting.
- All Commission meetings are open to the public.

TIMELINE (Subject to change)

Civic Arts Commission Meeting to Approve Project Plan	July 27, 2022
RFQ Issued	August 2022
Community Outreach	September 2022
RFQ Deadline	October 2022
First Artist Review Panel	November 2022
Artist Finalist Orientation	December 2022
Finalist Proposals Due	February 2023
Proposals on Public Display	February 2023
Final Artist Review Panel	March,2023
Civic Arts Commission Approval	March 22, 2023
Council Approval of Artist Contract	May 2023
Artist Under Contract	May 2023

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Zoe Taleporos, Public Art Program Lead, Berkeley Civic Arts at (510) 981-7538, or by email at ZTaleporos@cityofberkeley.info

Shape the future, give input for public art at Aquatic Park

Use survey to give feedback on strengths, weaknesses, public appeal, and integration of two types of public art. Survey closes at 5:00 pm on August 4, 2023.



Published:

July 21, 2023

Last Updated:

August 5, 2023

Give feedback via a brief online survey on two types of permanent public art designed for Aquatic Park: sculptures within the landscape; and a tiled, wall-based artwork as part of the northern entrance.

The survey will ask for input regarding finalists' art proposals. Let us know what you think of the individual pieces' strengths and weaknesses, their potential enjoyment by people of all ages and backgrounds, and their suitability for Aquatic Park.

These artworks aim to enrich the visitor's experience of Aquatic Park by beautifying its context, reflecting the multi-layered history of the site, and highlighting its ecological significance.

The selection panel will consider these and other public comments to recommend one of each type of artwork.

[Complete the survey](#) by 5:00 pm on August 4 and share it with others who may be interested.

SHARE FEEDBACK ON SCULPTURE PROJECT AND WALL-BASED ART

The selection panel chose four finalists for the series of permanent, sculptural artworks at various park areas surrounding the lagoon.



They are:

- forma studio: *Pageant of Land and Sea*, a collection of four pieces inspired by the history of Aquatic Park
- Walter Kitundu: *Depth of Field*, a series of 2-3 small cinema-like structures that invite you to take a seat and enjoy a curated view of the natural wonders of Aquatic Park
- John Roloff: *Reflection Ship*, a perceptual device to suggest a reflected apparition or mirage of a ship mysteriously oriented at the edge of the Aquatic Park lagoon
- Jean Shin: *Shell Songs*, a series of three painted, cast-aluminum sculptures, each shaped like a shard of an Abalone shell

Three other artists were chosen as finalists by a selection panel to create site-specific proposals for a large curved wall located along the San Francisco Bay Trail, near the intersection of Addison Street and Bolivar Drive.



Wall dimensions are approximately 42.5' long x 3.5' high x 2' deep.

The artists are:

- Liz Hernández: *Eyes in Bloom*, exploring California's wildflower soul
- Philip Hua: *Uncharted Territory*, a tiled mural featuring birds that frequent the Aquatic Park
- Masako Miki: *Contemplating the Universe*, integrates element of Berkeley waterfront habitat with the history of the Ohlone Tribes

EXPLORE VIBRANT PUBLIC ART IN BERKELEY'S CITYSCAPE

The [Civic Arts Program](#) fosters community connection through engaging artists to create impactful works that enrich our city. We collaborate with artists to bring forth permanent and temporary public art projects in various spaces throughout Berkeley, including parks, plazas, civic buildings, and more. Our goal is to enhance the built environment and reflect the distinctive character of our vibrant city.

There are several places throughout the city of Berkeley where you can view public art.

- [Public art collection](#)
- [Cube space gallery](#)
- [Downtown Berkeley BART Plaza](#)

You may also email comments to civicarts@berkeleyca.gov, or hand deliver or mail them to Civic Arts Program, 2180 Milvia Street, 5th Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704. Comments must be received by Friday, August 4, 2023 at 5:00 pm.

Please keep in mind that although we greatly appreciate your valuable insights in shaping this process, public comments alone will not be the determining factor for the final decision. Thank you for your time and participation!

[See the artwork in more detail on the survey](#), which must be completed by 5:00 pm on August 4, 2023.

LINKS

- [Public Comment Survey](#)
- [Civic Arts Program](#)
- [Sign up for Civic Arts Newsletter](#)
- [Aquatic Park](#)

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Media Contact

Matthai Chakko

City Communications Director
(510) 981-7008
communications@berkeleyca.gov



Civic Arts Program

Aquatic Park Public Art Selection Panel Summary of Round Two Selection Panel Meetings

Selection Panelists

Brennan Cox, Parks Recreation and Waterfront Commissioner
Elena Gross, Arts Professional
Rebecca Grove, Community Representative
Weston Teruya, Arts Professional
Cameron Woo, Civic Arts Commissioner

Selection Criteria

1. **Artistic Merit:** Artistic Merit may be judged by such measures as originality of concept and artistic vision; the mastery of skills, techniques and the quality of craftsmanship; the degree to which the work engages the viewer emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Artistic merit may also be credited to artwork that reflects a significant or direct relationship between the artist and distinct racial or cultural communities.
2. **Relevant Skills & Experience:** Review Panels and the Civic Arts Commission shall consider the assessed ability of an artist to successfully implement a proposed project; their ability to work constructively with other project stakeholders; willingness to resolve issues as they arise; manage the demands of the project to meet deadlines; cultural competency and/or significant connection between the artist and the project constituency; and experience that may particularly qualify an artist to meet project goals may also be considered.
3. **Meet Project Goals:** The proposed artwork (or the assessed ability of an artist to design a proposal) meets the specific goals of the project as defined in the RFQ:
 - To enhance the visitor's experience of Aquatic Park by beautifying its context, reflecting the multi-layered history of the site, and highlighting its ecological importance.
 - To create a durable artwork that can withstand public interaction and the natural elements.
4. **The Artwork is Appropriate to the Site:** The artwork or proposed artwork is appropriate for its intended display location in terms of scale, media, design or imagery and is judged to be relevant within the context of the surrounding area.
5. **Feasibility, Maintainability:** Proposed objects shall be evaluated relative to their feasibility and evidence of the artist's ability to successfully complete the work as proposed. Factors to be considered include, but are not limited to: project budget, timeline, and the artist's experience. Due consideration shall be given to the structural and surface soundness; inherent resistance to theft, vandalism and weathering; and the anticipated costs and amount of ongoing maintenance and/or repair.

Summary of Wall Art Selection Process

Wall Art Panel Meeting Date: September 13, 2023, 1:00-5:00 PM
Sculpture: September 15, 2023, 1:00-5:00 PM

The following finalists presented an overview of their practice and proposals for the Aquatic Park Wall Art Project:

- Liz Hernandez
- Phillip Hua
- Masako Miki

The panelists discussed the public comment results from the Berkeley Considers survey and additional public comment received from Aquatic Park stakeholders. Next, they discussed and evaluated each of the proposals based on the selection criteria. The panelist then ranked the artists: 1, 2, or 3 (1=highest rank) accordingly. The panel reviewed the results of the ranking and agreed with the results as the recommendation to the Civic Arts Commission.

Ranking Results

- Highest Rank: Masako Miki (Score of 6)
- Tied for Second: Liz Hernandez (Score of 12) and Phillip Hua (Score of 12)

Panel Recommendation for Wall Art:

The panel selected Masako Miki's proposal for the Aquatic Park Wall Art Public Art Project and recommends this selection to the Civic Arts Commission for approval at their September 27, 2023 meeting.

MASAKO MIKI ART PROPOSAL FOR THE AQUATIC PARK SCULPTURE PROJECT



CONTEMPLATING THE UNIVERSE
The imagery of *Contemplating the Universe* integrates elements of Berkeley's shorefront habitat and the history of the Ohlone tribes with mythological shapeshifters and animistic folklore. This concept illustration represents a ten-foot section of the full wall, finished in 10" x 10" porcelain tiles. The mural will first be painted with watercolor and then printed and baked onto corresponding tiles.



Example of watercolor painting



Sample of 10"x10" tile test print



Summary of Sculpture Selection Process

Sculpture Panel Meeting Date: September 15, 2023, 1:00-5:00 PM

The following finalists presented an overview of their practice and proposals for the Aquatic Park Sculpture Project:

- Jean Shin
- Forma Studio
- Walter Kitundu
- John Roloff

The panelists discussed the public comment results from the Berkeley Considers survey and additional public comment received from Aquatic Park stakeholders. Next, they discussed and evaluated each of the proposals based on the selection criteria. Due to concerns with all the proposals, the panelists declined to rank the proposals and decided unanimously to reject all proposals.

Panel Recommendation for Sculpture:

The Aquatic Park Public Art Selection Panel's Recommendation to reject all proposals for the sculpture opportunity will be presented to the Civic Arts Commission for approval at their September 27, 2023 meeting.