



DATE: August 7, 2023

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council through City Manager

FROM: David Ward, Public Art Specialist

SUBJECT: Resolution to Approve PPAC Recommended Expenditure for Artwork Acquisition from the Mary Fuller McChesney Estate and Contract for Artwork Installation, Transportation, and Conservation from the City's Public Art Fund

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council adopt the attached Resolution to approve the recommended expenditure from the Petaluma Public Art Committee (PPAC) to use Public Art Funds towards acquiring artworks from the Mary Fuller McChesney estate to add to the City's public art collection. With Council's approval, the Public Art Committee and staff shall purchase the selected artworks and create a scope of professional services to execute a contract for the artwork's installation, transport, and conservation between a qualified contractor and the City.

BACKGROUND

Sculptor, author, and art historian Mary Fuller McChesney, who lived and worked in the Petaluma area for several decades, passed away on May 4, 2022, in Petaluma. McChesney's legacy as a renowned, local, female artist of the mid-century continues in her sculptures included as part of her estate. McChesney's friends, neighbors, and estate managers describe the artist's wishes for her works to be displayed for public enjoyment. The Public Art program has an opportunity to preserve the legacy of this local, influential artist by collecting and displaying McChesney's works for residents of and visitors to Petaluma. McChesney's artwork can educate about a unique and prominent voice in Petaluma's creative community and history, in addition to honoring McChesney's wishes.

Born Mary Fuller in 1922 in Wichita, Kansas, McChesney grew up in Stockton, California on her family's farm and moved to the Bay Area to study philosophy at UC Berkeley. McChesney became a self-taught artist and worked as a welder during World War II at the Richmond Shipyard. In 1949, Mary Fuller married a fellow artist, printmaker, and teacher Robert McChesney. From the radical political pressures of the 1950s anti-communist movement, McChesney and her husband faced increasing pressures from society and work that eventually pushed the artists to move abroad to an artist colony in Ajijic, Mexico, where they lived for the next few years. During her time in

Mexico, McChesney discovered Mayan and Aztec mythology that became the theme of her work, which until then was primarily influenced by modern abstract works. McChesney moved back to the Bay Area with her husband in 1952, settling on Sonoma Mountain, where they would live for the next several decades. McChesney developed a unique medium for her sculptures; a mixture of concrete and vermiculite that would be sculpted before drying, forcing McChesney to work quickly. Many of McChesney's works were not displayed beyond her home on Sonoma Mountain because of their size, scale, and weight.

In August 2022, staff was approached by Joseph Cochrane, former branch manager of the Petaluma Regional Library, about several opportunities to view and potentially collect McChesney's works to support both the City's public art collection and to raise funds for the McChesney estate. At the October 2022 regular PPAC meeting, staff informed the Committee about opportunities to view available artworks in the McChesney estate, the PPAC instructed staff to create a visual catalog of the McChesney works to begin discussion and selection of specific individual artworks that may be better suited and more desirable to collect for the Public Art Program. Between October and December of 2022, staff and an *ad hoc* subcommittee of the PPAC completed site visits to the McChesney residence on Sonoma Mountain, the Astro Motel exhibition, and the Jean Sinella and Dennis Calabi residences to view available works in the McChesney estate for potential acquisition.

At the November 29, 2022 PPAC meeting, the Committee directed staff to create an opportunity for feedback and ranking of individual artworks in the compiled catalog. The intended outcome of this ranking selection process was to reduce the number of artworks of interest for acquisition while supporting the creation of desired goals for collecting these artworks. The primary acquisition considerations included but were not limited to the aesthetic improvement of the artworks in the context of their surroundings, public and artwork safety, maintenance, storying telling and grouping these artworks in relation to one another, and the number of artworks to collect, which will inform the targeted project budget. The PPAC discussed the Mary Fuller Estate in the context of these topics to help guide the selection process.

At the January 26, 2023, PPAC meeting, staff presented the results from the Committee's ranking of 92 artworks included in estate exhibitions at the Astro Motel in Santa Rosa, CA, the artist's former residence on Sonoma Mountain, and the Sinella and Calabi residences in Sebastopol, CA. Of the 92 works, 21 works ranked higher based on an aggregate of high-low-medium rankings by the Committee's point values. The Committee discussed these works and instructed staff to identify possible site locations for the public display of acquired works and to be prepared to share these recommendations at the next meeting.

Staff provided a suggested locations list for future public artwork installations and opportunities for the Committee's consideration at the February 23, 2023, PPAC meeting. The locations list was generated for the PPAC to use in consideration of several different active and upcoming projects, including possible sites for the Mary Fuller McChesney acquisition. The Committee discussed several aspects of the acquisition, including timeline, possible sites for installation, ongoing maintenance, artwork curation, interpretation and engagement by the public, and spending expenditures from the Public Art Fund to account for associated costs for the overall acquisition. The PPAC directed staff to create a preliminary outline of the acquisition process and its primary

components to clarify the next steps in the project and its associated costs, tasks, and requirements for executing an artwork collection acquisition as discussed.

The PPAC invited Dennis Calabi and Jean Sinella, who are executors and representatives of the McChesney estate to the April 27, 2023, PPAC meeting with the intention to inform their selection and recommended project budget moving forward. At this meeting, the Committee passed a motion to recommend approval of a \$100,000 project budget expenditure from the Public Art Fund to secure funds for purchase, installation, and contracting costs for the project. Additionally, the Committee appointed a new *ad hoc* subcommittee to make final selection of artworks for purchasing given the Committee's previous discussion and feedback. The *ad hoc* subcommittee was also tasked in selecting preferred locations for the purchased artworks to be installed, working with staff to understand the preferred locations' constraints.

The final artwork selections for purchase have been made in addition to a list of recommended and preferred sites for their installation, which will be vetted with staff for their eligibility if Council approves the recommended action by the PPAC. Attachment 1 shows the selected artworks for purchase, the PPAC's preferred site locations to be considered by staff for installation, and the associated project budget to be used for these purposes.

DISCUSSION

The 2013 Public Art Master Plan (PAMP) calls for approximately 65 percent of annual Public Art Fund expenses to be allocated toward artwork acquisition and commissions. Any McChesney estate acquisition(s) would fall into this public art fund expense category, as well as fulfill and advance the following PAMP goals:

- **Aiming to foster a sense of beauty at the artwork site.**
- **Represent the diversity of our community.**
- **Activate neighborhoods that may not have existing public art.**
- **Be low maintenance and appropriate for public space.**

From PPAC's action at the April 27, 2023, regular meeting to recommend collecting 14 artworks from the estate and funding their associated costs, staff anticipates the total project budget of approximately \$100,000 funded through the Public Art Fund to be appropriate considering the scope of work included. This cost includes a project contingency though does not consider associated staff time.

Council is recommended to review and approve PPAC's recommendation to use \$100,000 from the Public Art Fund towards the project to fund:

1. Acquisition of selected artworks in payment to the McChesney Estate
2. Support contracting with a qualified art handling and installation company to provide services for installation, transportation, and conservation of the acquired works for City Council's approval. These services may need to be executed in separate Professional Services contracts or using subcontractors dependent on the level of services available by

qualified contractors.

The following categories shall be used to guide spending of the requested amount:

- **Purchase of Artworks' Title and Limited Copyright (60%)**
- **Installation of Acquired Artworks (20%)**
 - Includes labor, materials, transportation, rentals, City permits, any fabricated pedestals, pads, and/or mounts required for permanent public display of the sculptures. Potential lighting elements and interpretive didactics also included in this category.
- **Conservation of Acquired Artworks, As Needed (10%)**
- **Contingency (10%)**

These categories should be used as estimations to guide spending in this project. Any unused or remaining committed funds for this project shall be returned to the Public Art Fund.

If Council approves the recommended expenditure of \$100,000 project budget, the PPAC will facilitate the selection and installation process with Planning staff's project management, utilizing City resources and personnel to complete the project similar to past Public Art Program projects.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This project was itemized for discussion at the following Public Art Committee agendas in compliance with the California Brown Act:

- October 27, 2022
- November 29, 2022
- January 26, 2023
- February 23, 2023
- March 23, 2023

This project's expenditure was considered and unanimously recommended for approval by the PPAC on April 27, 2023 which was a publicly-noticed meeting.

City staff has additionally maintained a webpage on the City of Petaluma website for the purposes of updating the public and stakeholders on the prospective project's status. The webpage was published in February 2023 and can be found at <https://cityofpetaluma.org/mary-fuller-mcchesney/>.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Under the proposed project, Public Art funds will be committed with the intent of purchasing fourteen (14) Mary Fuller McChesney artworks ranging from approximately one (1) foot to nine (9) feet in height. Following acquisition, City-owned properties and rights-of-way will be selected to install the various artworks which may include, but is not limited to existing public parks, traffic circles, and community facilities. The final location of individual artworks will be approved by the

PPAC at a public hearing and will be subject to approval of applicable permits (e.g., building permit, encroachment permit, etc.). Based on the above, the City has determined that the Mary Fuller McChesney Acquisition project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 (Existing Facilities) which includes minor alterations to existing facilities that will involve negligible or no expansion of use, 15303 (New Construction) which includes installation of new small structures, and 15311 (Accessory Structures) which includes construction or placement of minor structures which are appurtenant to existing commercial, industrial, and institutional facilities.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

This expenditure's funding source is the Public Art Fund. The adopted FY 23/24 Public Art Fund budget is sufficient to cover the cost of this purchase. All monies collected and held in the Public Art Fund are limited to the following permitted uses as noted in Chapter 18 of the Implemented Zoning Ordinance:

1. The cost of installing public art on public property, including the cost of commissioning or otherwise acquiring and providing and preparing sites for public art;
2. The cost of public art lighting;
3. The cost of public art identifying plaques;
4. The cost of maintaining public art that is not subject to a privately funded maintenance plan on public property;
5. The cost of supporting publicly accessible art exhibits;
6. The cost of documenting the city's public art program and promotion of the program through education, publicity and outreach;
7. The cost of conserving the city's public art collection;
8. The cost of planning and administering the city's public art program consistent with the annual budget planning process, including the cost of staff support for the Public Art Committee.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution