For artists new to public art commissions, the opportunity can be both exciting and overwhelming. This document is a guide for these artists. The case studies tell of artists’ reflections while working on a commission for Edmonton’s public art collection.
Why Public Art?

Great cities are pulsing, breathing, living places that embrace vitality as they support their citizens and inspire their visitors. Public art contributes to this vitality while helping to define a city’s character, and provides opportunities for individuals to encounter and engage with many art forms as they go about their daily lives.

This vision is at the heart of the City of Edmonton and Edmonton Arts Council’s commitment to building and maintaining the City of Edmonton Public Art Collection – an urban gallery that engages and excites Edmontonians and visitors alike.

What is Public Art?

Public art exists in the public realm and is accessible to all. It can take many forms: a painting hanging in a public building, a discrete sculpture in a park; an artwork integrated into its architectural setting, or a functional bench set within a streetscape. Public art can also be transitory (or temporary) – examples include short-term interventions in public spaces and even non-permanent installations of film, video, light or sound.

Public art may have several purposes: to beautify public spaces and neighborhoods, address social issues, celebrate community or cultural identity and heritage, or commemorate an event. The City of Edmonton requires that municipal projects feature public artworks.
The artists spent countless hours in their Red Deer studio carving, firing and glazing the thousands of clay bricks that constitute Immense Mode. An internal armature was designed by a team of engineers to support the 42,000-pound legs that stand on the transit island at the Southgate Transit Centre.

Has collaborating with engineers changed your perception of the art pieces you can create?

We already knew we were capable of making large works given our experiences but the engineers worked creatively with us to achieve the goals for a failsafe outcome. The collaboration was necessary for the scale of our piece.

Describe your experience of assembling this labour-intensive artwork in a very public place.

It was quite challenging and rewarding at times. The biggest challenge was dealing with the exhaust and constant noise from the buses. We were happy to stop and answer questions about the piece but it sometimes took an hour or so out of our day during production to explain. In hindsight, we should have had a colourful didactic panel to describe the piece and its timeline so pedestrians could be informed. We got the occasional heckler but for every one of them there were 99 more positive people to back it up!

On a more positive note it was great to meet the people who actually spend a great deal of their time at that bus platform. We had regulars that would stop by either as they headed to work or on their way home. It reinforced the value of public art and how important it is to have an artwork like ours as an integral part of the peoples’ lives.

What advice would you pass on to other artists based on your public art experience?

- Tune out the negativity.
- In regards to criticism, your artwork can’t be everything to everybody.
- Don’t underestimate any costs.
- Don’t underestimate the time required to complete a task.
- Anything is possible.
- Working with a team is great; always try to have the best team possible, communication is key with all the players.
- The use of an onsite trailer was indispensable for a secure storage and shelter during breaks for lunches and dinners as well inclement weather.

The artists carved and assembled the bricks in their Red Deer studio before numbering, firing and glazing each brick. They carved the legs in three sections due to the height of the sculpture, and used hand-made tools to apply texture and leather-like folds in the clay.
Percent for Art

Many of the artworks in the City of Edmonton Public Art Collection were commissioned through the Policy to Provide and Encourage Art in Public Areas (C458C). The policy allocates one per cent (1%) of the construction budget for the publicly accessible portions of municipal projects for the acquisition of art. This is a common practice across North America. Edmonton City Council adopted the Percent for Art policy in 1991 (revised in 2007 and 2010).

Public artworks are usually selected through a juried process coordinated by the Edmonton Arts Council. Selection committees are usually composed of City of Edmonton personnel, the project design team, artists and community representatives.

The Edmonton Arts Council administers the Percent for Art program on behalf of the City of Edmonton.

New private sector developments are not required to participate in Percent for Art, but many do voluntarily contribute a public artwork to their project. In this case the Edmonton Arts Council is available to act as a resource.

Vision for the City of Edmonton Public Art Collection

The Edmonton Arts Council has adopted a set of guiding principles to support a vision for the future of public art in Edmonton.

- Diversity – a tapestry of mediums, genres, themes and ethnicities;
- Challenge – changing perceptions about art and the City of Edmonton;
- Engagement – building a sense of excitement and ownership in Edmonton’s public art via education and outreach;
- Care – conservation and maintenance of the City’s investment in art, artists, and creative communities;
- Momentum – increasing local capacity to position the work of Edmonton artists in a global context.

Stations of Reconciliation (2014) Aaron Paquette, Grandin LRT Station
The artist created patterns for cut and fold lines before assembling the paper sculptures. Once the figures were created, they were staged for photographs, and then digitally montaged into photographs of Alberta landscapes.

How did your background in film and animation inform your project for the Eco Station?
I came to be interested in sculpture because of animation. With this project I was able to focus solely on sculpture for the first time ever and I was able to think about sculpture in a whole new way. I didn't have to simplify the shapes or make things functional, I was able to focus on making things as visually powerful as I could, where with animation I am more likely to make things a little simpler so that they will function as a moveable object. But, now that I have done this ecostation series I don't want to make simple/functional objects! With the small film project I am working on right now I am interested in making fuller, more detailed images. Making the ecostation images has pushed my personal limits of what I think is possible. I will probably eventually go back to using incredibly simple imagery in my films though, these things always ebb and flow.

The artwork is very site-specific. How did the site inform or influence your process from proposal to installation?
As far as the form of the work goes it was part of the brief to create two-dimensional works that would be adhered to the surface of the building, so that part was already figured out for me. If I had to go back in time and redo it though I might have just covered one huge chunk of the building rather then covering five sporadic chunks - but just for simplicity's sake, and because I think the images have to really compete with the hyper green shade of the building's surface.

How do you intend the public to interact with your artwork?
I guess this isn't the most interactive public artwork; people can't walk through it, on it or around it. All they can really do is look at it. But I hope it makes the experience of going to the building a little more interesting than it would be otherwise.

What advice would you pass on to other artists based on your public art experience?
Don't sweat it, everything works out in the end.
Public Art MAP

Adopted by Edmonton City Council in 2008, the Edmonton Public Art MAP: Public Art Master Plan guides the vision of Edmonton’s Public Art Collection; encourages a diverse range of public art in the city, and supports excellence in urban design.

The Edmonton Public Art MAP can be downloaded here: http://publicart.edmontonarts.ca

Public Art Committee (PAC)

The Public Art Committee (PAC) serves as an advisory body to the City of Edmonton, and is comprised of community members who include (but are not limited to) art, architecture, and design professionals. PAC’s role is to maintain the vision of, and define objectives for, the Percent for Art program, provide periodic review of the City of Edmonton Public Art Collection, advise on accession and de-accession, and make recommendations regarding the City’s public art policy.

Public Art Programs

The Edmonton Arts Council administers three public art streams.

- Percent for Art
- Transitory Art (which includes the Transitory Art Program, and the Open Source Street Art Pilot)
- Temporary Sculpture Loan Program

Percent for Art

The Percent for Art program allows the City of Edmonton to acquire artwork for public spaces, in accordance with the percent for art policy. Works are placed both indoors and outdoors at sites like recreation centres, schools, libraries, transportation routes, LRT, parks and other municipal facilities.
How does your fabrication experience relate to your own artistic practice?

My fabrication experience has mostly developed from fabricating for various public artists in New York City, after I had finished my grad studies, and from creating my own artwork. Also, a good percentage of my experience has come from growing up in Edmonton, working in heavy industry or learning from the skilled tradesmen in my family. Fabrication is intrinsic to my artistic practice in that I embrace it as part of my artistic process.

You worked with the conservation department to research materials. Has this affected how you perceive the longevity of the artwork?

I did my preliminary research prior to consulting the EAC’s conservation department about the longevity of the materials that I had chosen. The conservation department then cross-referenced my research with a more intensive study, giving me the confidence that I needed to forge ahead.

What advice would you pass on to other artists based on your public art experience?

The two most varying aspects of making public art, in my experience, are budgeting and time. Always budget your project using the highest quality materials available because you’ll likely end up using those materials in the end and always include a contingency for unforeseeable expenses. Allow as much time as possible when outsourcing aspects of the fabrication because your job may not be another fabricator’s highest priority.

Overflow (2009)
Brendan McGillicuddy, Callingwood Arena

Overflow was created by Brooklyn-based Edmonton artist Brendan McGillicuddy, and is made of laminated sheets of polished acrylic cut to look like melting icicles. The artwork is attached to the exterior of the arena, and LED lights illuminate it at night, cycling through changes in colour and intensity.
Transitory Public Art

The Edmonton Arts Council implemented a formal Call to Artists and Curators for Transitory Art projects in 2013. The program supports the development and installation of larger scaled transitory (or temporary) public art events in Edmonton.

Open Source Street Art

The EAC partners with the City of Edmonton in specific projects where there is mutual interest. The Open Source Street Art pilot offers the public safe and legal settings where they can practice their art (Tweedle Place & Tirecraft Old Strathcona).

Temporary Sculpture Loan Program

The Temporary Sculpture Loan program is “housed” at Borden Park. This program allows rotating exhibitions of works by Edmonton artists. The MAP envisions more parks used as permanent sites.
Edmonton’s procedure to acquire and accession Public Art

The Edmonton Arts Council administers calls for professional artists to submit qualifications (RFQ) or proposals (RFP).

Once all applications have been received, a selection committee is convened. The committee reviews each application, and comes to a consensus.

Following selection, the successful artist is formally contracted to create an artwork that adheres to the project concept, budget and schedule. Edmonton Arts Council public art staff manages the process ensuring the work proceeds on budget and schedule.

After the installation is complete and accepted, the artwork officially becomes part of the City of Edmonton Public Art Collection. Following accession, the Edmonton Arts Council Conservation team ensures the proper maintenance of the artwork.
Tell us about the installation process and how you met its challenges.

Because the artwork was being hung at a two and three storey height, the installation was challenging. It is suspended from airline cable attached to three cast steel eye bolts on the transit centre i-beams. We needed to hire a rock climber to attach the hooks into the ceiling because we didn't have room to lift someone mechanically. The rock climber and the artwork were hoisted up to the ceiling using climbing ropes and manpower.

Describe the process of working with your fabricators.

We assembled the final artwork ourselves but hired fabricators for the artwork elements.

A company in the USA manufactured the sphere's struts. We had no way to personally oversee production quality but the company had an extensive website with photos and testimonials. We had several conversations with the owner and had to trust that he would complete our order. The crate arrived on time and the product was fantastic.

A local company that could provide us with a large range of colours, was contracted to powder-coat the leaves. Although we didn’t have to make a special order, the final product was not what we expected. In future, I would supervise more closely so the painters knew what the pieces were going to be used for, and what type of finish we were expecting.

What advice would you offer other artists?

Keep good records, and make sure to get everything in writing.
Public Art Call FAQ

Who is an Artist?
The complex requirements of Percent for Art commissions require the expertise of professional artists or artist teams. The City of Edmonton’s Percent for Art policy defines such an individual as: “A practicing professional art-maker recognized by peers, and as such commissioned specifically to create artwork or collaborate with the project designers to integrate artwork into a project. Project designers do not qualify as artists for public art commissions.”

What is the selection committee?
Public art selection committees are typically composed of City of Edmonton and project team members as well as community and artist representatives. Experts may sit in on the committee meeting to provide advice or insight. The committee members assess the proposals for artistic merit, the artists’ background and qualifications and portfolio, technical, logistical, and financial feasibility and the proposed work’s suitability for the surrounding environment or neighbourhood. Proposals and qualifications are also evaluated in context of works already in the Public Art Collection, to ensure diversity.

What is the difference between a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and a Request for Proposals (RFP)?

- RFQ: typically issued for larger projects. This type of call employs a two-stage process. Artists are invited to submit a letter of intent, and their professional qualifications - curriculum vitae (CV) and portfolio. The selection committee shortlists artists most suitable for the project. These individuals are paid a maquette fee to produce a full proposal, budget, and scale model. A second selection committee meeting is held to select an artist from the shortlisted submissions.

- RFP: typically issued for smaller budget projects. This type of call employs a single stage process. Artists send in applications that include a skilled rendering (or maquette) of the proposed artwork, a description, budget, curriculum vitae, and portfolio. A selection committee reviews the submissions and a fee is not provided to the artists. RFPs are useful in providing opportunities to emerging artists whose technical and creative capacities may not be evident through qualifications only.
How did the suggested themes in the Call affect you creative process?

Following the suggested themes of flow, waves and vertex, I produced an image of repetitive undulating lines that are suggestive of water, movement and energy. The lines close to the bottom of the image are gentle curves that develop into a wave-like form with higher and higher peaks as the lines repeat one above the other. I have chosen the colours of a pale and deep cyan or aqua blue and a vivid red on the pale grey colour of the brushed aluminum, as I am interested in the support material being part of the image while the blues reflect shallow and deep waters. The repetitive lines in red are intended to suggest a shifting beat of the pulse from calm to vigorous.

How did you create the image?

The initial line drawing for this piece was created with a modified version of the toy, Super Spirograph. A portion of the drawing was then enlarged digitally and became a template for a full size drawing. The drawing was traced onto the prepared metal surface with carbon paper. Then the piece was hand painted with enamel.
Creating an Effective Submission

Each call issued by the Edmonton Arts Council contains detailed information including total budget; designated artwork locations; deadlines and completion dates; city, community, and project descriptions; architectural renderings and site maps. Occasionally artistic themes are indicated as well as the preference for discrete, integrated or functional works.

Understanding Criteria

While the inherent quality of the artwork itself is the top priority, there are many other factors for evaluations:

- The work must be accessible to the public, and/or be visible from publicly accessible areas.
- The proposal should be appropriate to the installation site, including scale, material, form and content, and should have elements of design that enhance or define the space and establish focal points or a visual identity for the City of Edmonton.
- Creation of the artwork must be feasible within the parameters of the site, budget, deadline, and materials.
- The artist should demonstrate previous expertise in creating similar public artwork or related art exhibitions, or have a notable history of artistic practice.
- The committee will consider the proposal in the context of the existing collection, striving for diversity of media, style, and artists.
- Safety, durability, and legal considerations, such as liability, are also important criteria.

Relevance

Successful proposals are relevant to the site and surrounding area. Context can be determined by studying the architectural renderings, elevations, and maps provided as well as visiting the site, or by conducting independent research.
Clarity
Use clear, direct, and descriptive language to present your concept or proposal. You will be writing for a jury composed of individuals from many professions, so a general, non-"artspeak" approach is most effective.

Be specific and tell the jury precisely why the concept is relevant to the project, how you will utilize the project budget; why you are using specific materials; how the piece will be fabricated, and so forth.

Visual Documentation
Images chosen to support your proposal or portfolio should be relevant to the call. If you work in various media, present work that is similar to, or indicative of, your proposed artwork. Ensure your images reflect the quality of your body of work.

Budgeting
Your budget should include administration costs, artist fees, engineering and other specialist consultation fees, materials, fabrication, studio costs, insurance, general sales tax, artwork transportation, and installation fees as well as a 10% contingency. Consider every aspect of the work, and call consultants, fabricators and others as needed for estimates to build a sound budget.

Include all documents requested. For most calls, your submission package will include:
- Submission form
- Curriculum vitae
- Proposal package
  o For an RFP this will include an artist’s concept that includes size, materials, timeline, and budget as well as a rendering or image of the proposed work
  o For an RFQ this will be a letter of intent only
- Visual documentation of previous work (including photo credits, dates, size, media)
- Letters of reference
- Return postage if you wish to have your application returned

All submission documentation must be provided in both hard copy and electronic format (i.e. on CD, DVD, or data stick).
Always submit your application on or before deadline. Edmonton Arts Council staff is available to answer questions or assist artists in the application process. For more information, please call 780-424-2787 or email publicart@edmontonarts.ca.

**Next Steps**
If selected, the artist will be commissioned to create and coordinate all aspects of the artwork - including construction, shipping, and installation. Edmonton Arts Council Public Art personnel and the City of Edmonton project team will help to facilitate the process throughout.

A maintenance plan for the artwork will be created according to recommendations made by the City of Edmonton, the artist, and the Public Art Conservator.

**How do I find out about public art calls?**
The Edmonton Arts Council publishes its public art calls on its website, at publicart.edmontonarts.ca/calls/.

You can also subscribe to EAC Weekly, Public Art Monthly and Public Art Call newsletters at the link above. Public art calls are also shared via Facebook (Edmonton Arts Council) and Twitter (@artsedmonton).

**For More Information**
Edmonton Arts Council
10440 - 108 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 3Z9
p. 780.424.2787  |  f. 780.425.7620
publicart@edmontonarts.ca
edmontonarts.ca

Photography by:
R. Loro
D. Marko - DCM Photography
D. Martineau - Laughing Dog Photography