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## STATE HOUSE ART ACQUISITION GUIDELINES and CRITERIA

**General Laws, Chapter 6, Section 20:** *There shall be submitted to the art commission for its approval in an advisory capacity any plan relative to the creation, acquisition, construction, erection, or remodeling by the Commonwealth of any work of art, accompanied by designs, descriptions, specifications, drawings or models sufficient to enable the commission to determine the artistic character of such work of art....*

*THE MISSION* of the Art Commission is to care for and interpret the State House Art Collection; advise on the preservation of the historic building in which it is housed; oversee the acquisition of new works of art; and foster appreciation for the people and organizations that have made notable and lasting contributions to the Commonwealth and nation.

These guidelines are prepared by the Massachusetts Art Commission to define criteria, clarify roles, and explain procedures for adding new works of art to the State House Art Collection.

### Purpose and Nature of the State House Art Collection

The Fine Arts Collection commemorates significant historical events, elected officials and private citizens who have shaped the course of the Commonwealth. Service, sacrifice, and outstanding contribution are honored through paintings, sculptures, wall plaques, murals and historic artifacts. It is a unique collection, dating back more than 200 years to its beginnings at the Old State House, created by notable artists to illustrate the state's rich history.

### Responsibility of the Art Commission

The State House Art Collection is the property of the Commonwealth, and is overseen by the Massachusetts Art Commission which is charged under *General Laws* ch. 6, sec. 20, with its care and custody. As curators, it is the responsibility of the Art Commission to uphold the quality and integrity of the collection by insuring that all additions meet established conditions and criteria through the process described below.

## Acquisition Procedures

### A. Preliminary Steps

Any person, group, or member of the legislature considering a new addition should contact the Art Commission prior to taking any legislative action. The proposal will be discussed for its relevance, appropriateness, and feasibility, and the acquisition process discussed so that the sponsor understands the roles of all parties, time factors, and potential cost to both the sponsor and the state. Preliminary planning will usually speed the formal proposal and advising process, and will often save sponsors time and expense.

### B. Legislative Authorization

Permanent additions to the Art Collection are authorized by either:

An Act or Resolve of the Legislature (*General Laws*, Ch. 8, sec. 21) or  
An Order of the Governor (*General Laws*, Ch. 8, sec. 19A).

To add a new work of art, the sponsoring person or group must present a formal request to the Legislature, or the Governor, which drafts a Bill of Intent. Legislators should refer to the accompanying “**Criteria for Acquisitions**” which will describe in detail the many conditions and considerations that should be addressed with the constituent before drafting a bill, and further considered by each Legislative Committee to which the bill is assigned. The Art Commission should be advised of hearing schedules in order that it may attend and comment on proposed legislation.

Language should clearly state:

The person, group or event being honored, and a complete justification for the commemoration at the Massachusetts State House;

The source of the acquisition – whether by gift or purchase (state commission);

*That designs, plans, and specifications for the object must be submitted to the Art Commission for review and approval.*

The entity or agency responsible for installing the object. If by the Commonwealth, it will normally be installed by the Superintendent of State Office Buildings under the direction of the Art Commission.

That funds for the perpetual maintenance of larger memorials by the Art Commission be provided by the donor.

### C. Design and Review Process - Overview

As curators, the Art Commission is responsible for approving all specifications, and will provide the perpetual care and oversight of all permanent additions to the Collection. It is their responsibility to insure that works are germane to the collection, well designed, constructed of quality materials and exacting fabrication methods. The Commission is dedicated to working with the sponsor toward a memorial or other work of art that is unique, memorable, and of the highest aesthetic and commemorative nature.

1. Upon enacting legislation, the sponsor should contact the Art Commission to begin the planning and design process. The Art Commission members meet monthly to review submittals and provide recommendations on design questions and proposals. In addition, the Art Collections Manager is available to consult with sponsors, prospective artists, fabricators, etc. at any time.

2. It is important that the Commission be kept abreast of developments, and review all designs and specifications together with the sponsor to insure complete understanding of the procedures and expected results. Frequent reports, revised drawings, inscriptions, scale blueprints, and studio visits when appropriate, are all considered a necessary part of this process. The sponsor may request to meet with the board at any regularly scheduled meeting to present ideas and plans.
3. Legislative committees and sponsoring groups of larger memorials shall appoint a member of the Art Commission to their planning board as a voting member, who also will advise on design, specifications, and answer questions regarding the acquisition process. The Art Commission's representative will make regular reports to the full Commission and will generally serve as liaison between the planning committee and the Commission.
4. IN ALL CASES, the Commission must approve formal specifications before a fabrication order is placed in order to minimize errors and change orders, and to speed the review and final approval process. The Commission will assist in clarifying and finalizing specifications, but it is the responsibility of the sponsor to obtain all information necessary for a final review from artists and/or fabricators. (See form attached). The Art Commission may delay a final recommendation if satisfactory specifications have not been received.
5. The Art Commission shall conduct a final review of the completed artwork upon its arrival at the State House. The object shall be inspected for adherence to pre-approved specifications, fabrication, finish, and safe delivery. Any flaws, damage, missing elements, inappropriate or insufficient hardware, or other sub-standard fabrication issues shall be brought to the attention and corrected by the sponsor before final approval is given. The Commission will file its recommendation of acceptance with the Governor within thirty days.
6. The Art Commission will not authorize any object for installation, or schedule formal dedication or unveilings until the art work has been physically present for inspection at a regularly scheduled meeting. This will insure that art works have met all expectations, and will not be rejected prior to a ceremony. Sponsors should take note of this additional time required, and should not plan dedication events until they have received formal approval by letter from the Commission.

#### **D. Criteria for Acceptance**

The Commission will review and advise on the following:

1. Artistic merit. Seeking art works of distinction and quality, the Commission may reject a work from further consideration on artistic merit alone. The Commission may call on outside experts or authorities to advise on design, especially where controversy exists or is anticipated.
2. Uniqueness. Works of art proposed for the State House shall normally be a "one of a kind" creation. Replicas, items reproduced in multiple editions, commercially or mass-produced items normally shall not be considered unless their acquisition can be justified on historical or artistic terms.
3. Visibility. Works approved by the Art Commission will normally be executed in a scale and medium appropriate for public viewing. Works of an unusually large scale or ones requiring special conditions for proper viewing will be considered less appropriate for the Collection. The Commission does not recommend any object that requires excessive care or display on a rotating basis (e.g. works on paper) to insure its preservation.
4. Physical stability. A work of art will only be accepted if its physical properties are understood and are in such stable condition that the work can be properly cared for within the resources of the Art Commission.
5. Permanence of materials. The Commission will give high priority to artistic media that can be safely and permanently installed in the public areas of the State House. Hence, works in bronze and other common

metals, stone, stained glass, mosaic and tile, and framed oil or acrylics on canvas will be considered the most suitable materials.

6. Safe display. The artwork must be able to be reasonably secured from theft or vandalism and must not present a potential hazard to the public. However, no work may be installed in such a manner that will prevent its removal from the site. All works must be designed with a mounting system that will allow it to be removed and reinstalled by professional conservators, art handlers, or authorized building personnel. Blind mounts are not permitted unless objects are dry mounted and/or clipped. Detailed drawings of installation systems and duplicates of any special tools and/or hardware will be supplied to the Art Commission prior to acceptance of artwork.

7. Gift and bequests. Gifts and bequests of pre-existing (non-commissioned) works of art shall be submitted with clear, unrestricted and undivided title assigned to the Commonwealth, and shall be of a free and unrestricted nature. Works must be accompanied by proof of legal ownership, and deed of gift.

Unless location is stipulated in authorizing language, the Commission cannot accept any object on the condition of permanent attribution or perpetual public display. Other conditions of deposit including but not limited to identification, installation, reproduction, and copyright must be made known to the Art Commission so that an accurate assessment of the proposal is possible. Gifts not acquired under legislative authorization or G. L. Chapter 8, sec. 19A may be accepted for the Art Commission's Loan Collection for display on a rotating basis in offices or other spaces throughout the State House.

In cases where objects are, for whatever reason, not recommended for formal acquisition, the Commission may recommend other arrangements, including short or long-term or exhibition at the State House or other State building.

Acquisition of art from members of the Art Commission or employees or their families of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts may present a conflict of interest, and will be handled with particular care.

## **E. Additional Advisory**

The Art Commission may assist sponsors of art works and memorials by advising or making recommendations on:

1. Potential installation locations for new artwork, and procedure for the application for approval.
2. Commissioning works of art from an artist or fabricator, including review and evaluation of portfolios, recommendations on public competition practices, contracts, etc.
3. Long-range acquisitions policies for the collection and how the proposed work may complement them. The Art Commission will take an active role in assuring that issues of diversity are considered in memorials of broader commemorative purposes.
4. Appropriateness of proposed formats, dimensions, materials, inscriptions.

## **F. Responsibilities of the Sponsor or Donor**

Develop, after consultation with the MAC, a project description in order to solicit proposals from artists or fabricators. Larger memorials will necessitate the formation of an additional advisory committee, represented by several disciplines, to research and develop the project format and criteria.

Solicit proposals or conduct limited competitions in order to engage an artist to create an original work of art.

Deliver proposals, plans, artist's renderings, specifications, to the MAC for review. Consult with MAC on suggestions and recommendations for development and refinement of design and inscription.

Obtain sufficient funds to cover cost of project manager (if any), artist, fabricator, site preparation, transportation/delivery installation (in the case of larger memorials), dedication ceremonies, written support materials (brochures, etc), a future maintenance fund, and administrative costs over the life of the project.

### **G. Formal Acquisition Procedures**

Final approval is contingent upon the objects execution according to pre-approved specifications, and its safe arrival in good condition, as per item C-5 above.

An object will become the property of the Commonwealth upon formal presentation by its donor or sponsor to, and acceptance by the Governor or another State official. If a formal unveiling or dedication ceremony does not take place, the object will become the property of the Commonwealth upon its installation at the State House and receipt of a formal letter of gift.

Upon its installation, the Commission shall officially accession the work by registering it in the State House Art Collection, assign a permanent inventory number, and catalogue all pertinent data and donor information. The Commission will create and maintain permanent records that will include artist's contract and other records of the commission or gift, execution or provenance, delivery, installation, specifications for a permanent conservation file, and all relevant documents and correspondence.

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### Criteria for Additions to the State House Art Collection

The Fine Arts Collection at the State House is composed primarily of easel paintings, two- and three-dimensional sculptures and plaques, and wall murals that span the history of the Commonwealth from colonial times to the present. These objects commemorate service to the state and nation by elected officials, the military, and private citizens, and educate visitors about the role the honorees have played in the history of our state and nation.

Works of art are added through a two-part process: legislative authorization (Act or Resolve) for acquisition, whether by gift or purchase, and approval of design and content by the Art Commission. The Art Collection has never before been guided by a “Collecting Criteria” policy, but has grown as art works are proposed by individual or groups of legislators. The Art Commission has developed this policy, therefore, to serve as a guide for legislators, sponsors, and the Commission in managing the acquisition process by providing criteria and standards for proposed additions to the Collection, and to provide a basis for addressing long-range collection development. **This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Art Acquisition Guidelines, attached.**

#### I. Criteria for Commemoration

The initial challenge in this process is to consider carefully if the artwork, whether honoring a person, group, or event, merits permanent commemoration at the Massachusetts State House, and can be cared for within the resources of the Art Commission. As designated curators, the Art Commission should be contacted by the sponsoring legislator(s) as early as possible to discuss the suitability or appropriateness of proposed additions, and the wording of the legislation.

##### **A. All proposals should be evaluated in depth for their specific relationship to Massachusetts:**

- Degree of importance of persons and/or events being honored, and their impact on the Commonwealth and the life of its citizens.
- The lasting value of the contribution or service to the Commonwealth.
- Appropriateness for the State House Art Collection – would the subject of the artwork be more suitable in another historical site or venue?

## **B. Additional considerations:**

Subjects should be thoroughly researched and documented. The Art Commission will verify supporting materials and may consult scholars or other experts in the field. The following are likely to be considered inappropriate for inclusion in the State House Art Collection:

- Anniversary installations or installations that express gratitude to the Commonwealth as these often do no more than call attention to a particular interest group.
- Any installation recognizing persons or events having little bearing on Massachusetts history
- Works that honor persons or events because they were “first,” by accident of history, unless the occurrence has had a lasting impact or benefited the citizenry at large.
- Commemorative works of art whose primary focus is political advocacy
- Location. Due to the growth of the State House Art Collection, space is extremely limited in the historic areas of the building. Some artwork may be more appropriately placed within the offices most served by the honoree.

## **C. Funding**

- Sponsors and legislators should research and confirm the availability of sufficient funds to produce a commemorative work worthy of the honoree. Too often artwork is compromised because sponsors do not realize the cost involved, and thereby risk refusal by the Art Commission of a lesser design on aesthetic grounds.
- Whether gift or commission, sponsors and legislators should research the fiscal impact of proposals to be sure that funds are available to support the project. Artist’s fees, materials, fabrication, transportation, special engineering and installation, if necessary, and maintenance in the case of outdoor sculpture and those artworks that may require more frequent conservation, must all be considered when calculating the potential cost of realizing the artwork.
- The Art Commission encourages sponsors to commission artworks from practicing artists, architects or other designers in order to present to the Art Commission designs that are original and noteworthy. We recommend public competitions for commemorations of greater significance to the Commonwealth.
- The fact that an artwork is proposed without cost to the Commonwealth should have no bearing on the decision to accept.

## **II. Authorizing language**

### **A. The following information should be considered when drafting a bill:**

- 1) The subject being honored or commemorated.
- 2) The type of artwork being proposed
- 3) Name of donor or sponsor, and whether a gift or state commission. Standard language authorizing the “Superintendent to install...” has proven time and again to be misinterpreted by sponsoring parties who read this to mean that he will procure the artwork. This language should not be used to avoid confusion. This is also why the source of the artwork must be stated in the legislation. If a commission, the language should state the agency responsible for commissioning the artwork. This agency will be responsible for working with artists/fabricators, and presenting designs, specifications, etc. to the Art Commission for review. Legislative appropriations should be carefully considered, in that the design, review, and fabrication process usually extends beyond the fiscal calendar.
- 4) That the design and content are subject to review and approval by the Art Commission (*General Laws*, chapter.6, section 20)

**B Other considerations:**

Medium or location does not need to be identified – these criteria often limit sponsors in commissioning innovative artwork.

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### REQUEST FOR SPECIFICATIONS

General Laws, Chapter 6, Section 20: *There shall be submitted to the art commission for its approval in an advisory capacity any plan relative to the creation, acquisition, construction, erection, or remodeling by the Commonwealth of any work of art, accompanied by designs, descriptions, specifications, drawings or models sufficient to enable the commission to determine the artistic character of such work of art....*

As curators of the State House Art Collection, the Art Commission will oversee the future care and maintenance of the art proposed for and acquired by the Commonwealth. The Commission requests that specifications be submitted so that they may evaluate materials and fabrication methods as well as future conservation requirements. **IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SPONSOR** to obtain all information from the artist and/or fabricator and to forward both initial and final specifications to the Art Commission in a timely manner. The Art Commission will not approve the final design or completed artwork without these specifications.

Review of specifications by the Art Commission is conducted in two phases:

- 1) Specifications (as listed below) will be submitted together with designs and inscriptions for review and approval prior to placement of order with fabricator or artist.
- 2) Final specifications, which will detail any change or deviation resulting from review and consultation with the sponsor, will be submitted to the Art Commission with completed artwork for final review and approval before installation at the State House. If no change in specs, fabricator shall initial and date specifications accordingly.

DATE:

SUBMITTED BY:

OBJECT NAME:

ARTIST/DESIGNER (name, address, ph, contact – list all):

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**Design:**

Describe artwork: narrative, including background or historical information, imagery, symbolism, and message.

Describe art work: image(s), setting, logos, inscription, decoration, frames or borders.

Attach sketch or artwork. Is this a preliminary or final rendering? Is artwork to scale?

**Physical data: two and three dimensional sculpture:**

Material(s) and supplier(s) (foundry, quarry, etc):

Proposed dimensions: H \_\_\_\_\_ x W \_\_\_\_\_ x D \_\_\_\_\_

Other descriptive dimensions, including size or depth of relief, borders, or other ornament:

Composition of alloy: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Weight \_\_\_\_\_

Lettering: Font(s), upper/lower/combination, raised or incised lettering, painted/polished, other treatment

Describe surface treatment (composition of chemical patina, wax, or other protective coating):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Installation: measured drawings, detailed instructions, and all hardware to install object.

PLEASE NOTE: Blind mounts are no longer permitted by the Art Commission – front mount only.

**Physical Date: paintings**

Material(s) and supplier(s): canvas, stretcher, paints, paints, varnish, frame:

Proposed dimensions: canvas H \_\_\_\_\_ x W \_\_\_\_\_ x D \_\_\_\_\_  
frame H \_\_\_\_\_ x W \_\_\_\_\_ x D \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Weight \_\_\_\_\_

Will the painting be varnished when delivered? Y /N

If no, please indicate preferred schedule and whether the artist prefers to conduct this treatment.

Installation: paintings should be installed with two D-rings of sufficient load-bearing capacity spaced at an equal distance from the upper edge of the painting to allow for proper installation on two hooks. Wire is not used at the State House and need not be installed on painting.