

Staff Report

Report To: Tom Thomson Art Gallery Advisory Committee
Report From: Aidan Ware, Director and Chief Curator
Meeting Date: November 7, 2024
Report Code: AG-24-010
Subject: Public Art Condition Assessment

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report AG-24-010 respecting Public Art Condition Assessment, the Tom Thomson Art Gallery Advisory Committee recommends that City Council receive the report for information purposes.

Highlights:

- Condition assessment of 19 public art works reveals that the works are in generally good condition.
- Many of these public art works however lack proper signage. There is an opportunity to enhance public engagement with public art through a branded signage project.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: This report supports the delivery of Core Service.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

Report: [AG-22-003 Update Public Art Policy](#)

Policy: [Public Art Policy AG10](#)

Background:

In June 2022, Council approved an update to the Public Art Policy AG10. This policy guides the selection and placement of art in municipally owned public spaces and facilities and outlines the long-term care and maintenance of these cultural objects. It applies to all permanent and temporary displays of art in municipally owned public spaces, including art placed in partnership with the general public, the arts community, arts service organizations and institutional and private sector partners. It does not apply to previously installed plaques, archival collections, or heritage assets already supported by other budgets, committees, and policies.

Within the Policy, under Maintenance and Inventory, sections 18-23, it outlines that it is the City's responsibility to care for and maintain Public Art following industry best practices. It also sets forth the requirement for a biennial condition assessment of the Public Art works included within the City's inventory.

Analysis:

In spring 2024, the Curator of Public Projects and Education completed a Condition Assessment of the City's 19 Public Art installations. The results of the assessment are attached to this report. Overall, the works are revealed to be in generally good condition, but many are lacking proper signage.

Summary of notable condition deficits:

- Barrie Shaw-Rimington's *Children at Play* (1977) located outside the TOM and Library building does demonstrate some slight chipping.
- Billy Goodkat's mural *Window to the World Mural** on the back of the Roxy Theatre demonstrates some fading and paint deterioration due to sun damage.
- Nyle Migizi Johnston's piece *Thank You Thunderbird Spirit* located on the back of the TOM's loading dock door exhibits some slight damage and weather deterioration.
- Alyson Mulvaney Courtois & Charlotte Hicks *Morning* (2016) at the Bayshore shows a slight bowing of the 2nd panel which could be rectified with two screws.
- Stephen Hogbin & Alan Glicksman's *Campsite-Campsite* (2012) at Harrison Park demonstrates some weathering of the wood and lifting of paint.

(* denotes private ownership)

Many sites currently lack adequate signage, which limits the artworks' impact and public engagement. The importance of updated signage includes:

Enhanced Engagement: strengthens community connection and fosters pride among residents by promoting local art.

Educational Value: provides valuable insights into the artists and their work, enriching the viewer's experience and understanding.

Recognition: acknowledges the contributions of artists and sponsors, thereby promoting support for local talent and initiatives.

Tourism Benefits: well-documented public art enhances cultural tourism, resulting in increased foot traffic, digital engagement with the website, and support for local businesses.

Preservation of Intent: maintains and communicates the narrative behind each artwork, ensuring that its context and significance are preserved for future generations.

Future Recommendations and Options for Signage and Design Elements

Material Selection

- Coroplast: lightweight, weather-resistant, and cost-effective for outdoor signage.
- Vinyl: weatherproof vinyl stickers can be applied to various surfaces, offering durability and versatility.
- Metal and Wood: for a more permanent and aesthetic option, consider using metal or treated wood for a robust appearance.

Design Elements

- Cohesive Branding: standardized design template that incorporates community branding elements, colours, and fonts.
- Readable Typography: clear, legible fonts with appropriate sizing for visibility from a distance.

Interactive Features

- Develop a map and self-guided tour of the artworks through the STQRY Tourism app.

- QR Codes: linking detailed information about the artwork, artist bios, and websites for the Gallery and Owen Sound Tourism. This can enhance visitor engagement and provide additional context while increasing analytics and traffic.
- Augmented Reality (AR): allows visitors to interact with the artwork through their smartphones, potentially developing a virtual walking tour connecting all public artworks.

Placement and Visibility

- Strategic Locations: position signage at eye level and in high-foot-traffic areas to maximize visibility and engagement.

Financial Implications:

Undertaking new signage and/or design elements to enhance the public art pieces would require an investigation into costing. Staff will provide this information through a report in 2025.

Public art works requiring minor conservation would have some costs associated with repair and touch-ups as well as the dedication of staff resources/time.

Communication Strategy:

The importance of the public art works in our community would be better communicated through updated and branded signage. Currently many of the works exist on the City's website.

Consultation:

Heather McLeese, Curator of Public Projects and Education

Attachments:

Public Art Condition Assessment 2024

Recommended by:

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

Aidan Ware, Director and Chief Curator – Art Gallery, Culture and Tourism

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Aidan Ware - Director and Chief Curator – Art Gallery, Culture and Tourism at, aware@tomthomson.org or 519-376-1932 Ext. 5001.