

ERIN MENDENHALL
MAYOR



LORENA RIFFO-JENSON
DIRECTOR

DEPARTMENT *of* ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Salt Lake Art Design Board Meeting

Wednesday, November 6th, 2024

5:00 – 8:20 pm

PRESENT:

Meggie Troili
Angela Dean

Colour Maisch
Michael Mejia

Jen Lopez
Tiffini Porter

EXCUSED:

N/A

STAFF MEMBERS

Felicia Baca, Executive Director, Arts Council
Laurel Cannon Alder, Deputy Director, Arts Council
Renato Olmedo-González, Public Art Program Manager, Arts Council
Amy Childress, Public Art Program Coordinator, Arts Council
Xhantall Aguilar, Intern, Arts Council

GUESTS:

Nancy Monteith, Senior Landscape Architect, SLC Public Lands
Jon Ruedas, Senior Landscape Architect, SLC Public Lands
Kat Andra, Public Land Planner, SLC Public Lands
Dane Hess, Community Stakeholder
Wisam Khudhair, Community Stakeholder
Jared Martinez, Community Stakeholder
Ivan Depeña, Finalist Artist, Depeña Studio
Donald Lipski, Finalist Artist
Paula Castillo, Finalist Artist
Matthew Mazzotta, Finalist Artist, Social Space Studio

Mission: To amplify art in Salt Lake City to enrich, enhance, and build a dynamic city where art and artists thrive.

AGENDA

Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Ms. Colour Maisch welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated the Art Design Board's mission. Mr. Renato Olmedo-González had everyone in attendance introduce themselves.

Approval of October 2nd, 2024 Minutes

Ms. Meggie Troili put forward a motion to approve the October 2nd, 2024 meeting minutes, Ms. Angela Dean seconded the motion; all Board members present voted in favor.

Glendale Park public art opportunity

During the meeting today, the four finalists for the Glendale Park public art opportunity, who were selected during the September Art Design Board meeting—Ivan Depeña, Donald Lipski, Paula Castillo, and Matthew Mazzotta—will give their presentations to the board and stakeholders. To prepare for their presentations, each artist was asked to address two specific questions: 'How does your personal approach to community engagement inform your artistic process, and can you provide a specific example of how this has shaped a past project?' and 'Given the Artwork Goals for this Project, if commissioned, how would you approach the Project to ensure it reflects the diverse cultural heritage of Salt Lake City's West Side, fosters a sense of community, and aligns with the park's goals of sustainability and inclusivity?' Each artist will have 20 minutes to present. Following each of their presentations, the board and stakeholders will ask each artist two additional questions, as well as any other questions they may have. The two additional questions each artist will be asked are: “How do you adapt your artistic vision and process when collaborating with diverse community members, especially when there are different opinions or cultural perspectives?” and “What strategies would you use to ensure that West Side residents feel a sense of ownership and pride in the final artwork, and how will you measure the success of community involvement in this project?” The board has the option to recommend one of the finalists to the Mayor for this commission, but they can postpone the decision to the December Art Design Board Meeting.

Mr. Olmedo-González gave a quick overview of the park and the project. Glendale Park is 25 acres and is the largest Public Lands investment in more than 60 years. Glendale Park is the signature project for the Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces General Obligation Bond. This project seeks to commission an artist to design a public art project with community members. The artist will work with a community consultant to help them implement engagement with the West Side community so that their values are reflected in the final artwork. The total commission is \$425,000 and includes both the community engagement as well as the fabrication and installation costs of the artwork.

Mr. Olmedo-González went over the timeline. There are two phases for this project. In phase one, the selected artist will conduct engagement and present their final design, which is informed by community engagement, by May/June of 2025. In phase two, fabrication and installation will be completed by Spring/Summer of 2027. All individuals present took turns reading the Artwork Goals and Finalist Selection Criteria. This artwork should demonstrate a strong artistic vision that enhances placemaking and fosters pride in Salt Lake City's West Side. It should reflect the area's diverse cultural heritage, highlight unique identities, and serve as a welcoming gathering space. The design should align with Glendale Park's goals of equitable outdoor access, environmental enhancement, and social connectivity, using community-centered strategies that celebrate the West Side's resilience. The project should incorporate sustainable design practices, meet public safety and structural standards, and comply with ADA and other city regulations. The artist or artist-led team will be selected based on their proven experience with site-specific public art projects of similar scope, commitment to engaging Salt Lake City's West Side community, and ability to develop community-centered designs. They must demonstrate professionalism in meeting deadlines and budgets, collaborate effectively with the Salt Lake Art Design Board and stakeholders, and have a strong understanding of 'sense of place' and design.

Mr. Ivan Depeña of Depeña Studios was the first finalist to present. Mr. Depeña has over 20 years of experience in the field and a background in architecture. In his presentation, he showcased a range of his public artworks, many of which involved direct community collaboration. Notable projects include "Surface" in Cornelius, NC, where the community was involved from the start, and the public space was designed around the artwork, which uses glass to create dynamic light effects at a bus stop. Another project, "Arc" in Miami, FL, is a steel sculpture inspired by wind data from Hurricane Wilma, reflecting the library's history and incorporating real-time wind data.

Depeña's portfolio features large-scale works with a focus on sustainability and technology, often integrating lights, sensors, and even music. His "Photon/s" project in Charlotte, NC, features massive illuminated sculptures, and his recent work, "Breaking Barriers" at Iowa State University, commemorates Jack Trice, the school's first African-American athlete. He also presented "Dreamcaster," an MLK memorial in Atlanta, GA, which incorporates sensors to project the word "Dream." His designs use computer models and sustainable materials, and he frequently collaborates with architects and landscape architects.

In addition to his large-scale projects, Mr. Depeña highlighted his emphasis on creating art that connects deeply with local communities. One of his notable community-driven works is an installation for an animal shelter, where he designed metal panels featuring representations of shelter animals. The community helped decide which animals to include and how they would be depicted, fostering a sense of shared ownership and connection to the artwork. Depeña's creative process often involves working closely with residents to understand their interests in both form and material, ensuring that his pieces reflect the unique spirit of the places they inhabit. His dedication to collaboration and sustainable practices are key elements in his approach to public art.

When asked how he adapts his artistic vision while working with diverse communities, Mr. Depeña highlighted the importance of engaging in conversations and workshops with community members. He emphasized an open design process, where the community is actively involved through meetings and workshops, and noted that he enjoys having a discourse with both the community and the design team. He also values input from students, encouraging them to share their ideas. As a Cuban and Dominican artist, Mr. Depeña has a personal understanding of diversity, which informs his approach to incorporating different perspectives and fostering collaboration.

During his visit to Salt Lake City, Mr. Depeña drew inspiration from the elements and remnants at the site park. He expressed interest in creating an artwork that is not only functional but also connected to the park's history and current features. He stressed the importance of being physically present on-site when designing artwork to better understand the local culture and environment. If chosen for the project, he plans to have ongoing discussions with community members to ensure their input is reflected in the final design, ensuring that the piece resonates with the West Side community.

Mr. Depeña explained that he often merges his ideas with community feedback by first presenting his past work to help people understand his approach, which encourages open dialogue and a sense of ownership over the final design. In terms of project budgets, he has experience working on projects ranging from \$30,000 to \$1.2 million. When incorporating technology into his artwork, he acknowledges that while some technological components have a lifespan, proper infrastructure can mitigate these issues. Drawing from his extensive experience with technology-based projects, Mr. Depeña has learned how to navigate potential challenges and ensure the longevity of his work.

Mr. Donald Lipski, the next finalist to present, shared that while he has never been specifically asked to use the community as a starting point for a project, he is very excited by the idea. Although new to this approach, Lipski has involved communities in many of his past projects. For instance, in his "Texas Star" sculpture, he engaged the community by hosting a party where attendees contributed cowboy hats, which he used in the final artwork.

Similarly, in Minneapolis, he worked with the city's violin program to incorporate students' signatures into a sculpture made of violins. In San Antonio, after learning about the Longear Sunfish's significance to locals, he redesigned a sculpture to reflect this fish instead of his original goldfish concept. His projects

often adapt based on community input, as seen in his NYU Children's Hospital work, where he changed the design of a giant stuffed animal into a 30-foot dalmatian based on feedback from hospital staff.

Lipski also described other projects where he deeply involved local residents. In Arlington, Virginia, for his "Columbia Pike" project, he incorporated over 5,000 community-donated coins from 118 countries into a sculpture made from a wind turbine blade. For a sign in Bloomington, Minnesota, he engaged local bird enthusiasts to choose the species represented in the artwork, ultimately creating a 12-foot American Goldfinch based on community votes. In Philadelphia, at Penn Treaty Park, he collaborated with community members and the Lenape Nation to create sculptures inspired by the tribe's three clans (Turkey, Wolf, and Turtle). These examples show Lipski's commitment to creating artworks that reflect the local culture and engage with the people who live there.

When asked about his approach to collaborating with diverse community members, Lipski emphasized his commitment to listening to everyone's ideas and continually seeking feedback. He likens this process to an architect working with a client, where communication and input guide the design process. His strategy for ensuring West Side residents feel ownership of the artwork includes presenting visual ideas, gathering feedback, and repeating the process until the community feels the work truly reflects their values. He values the input he receives, as it often inspires new directions in his projects.

In terms of inspiration for the park site, Lipski noted that he draws energy from reimagining existing elements. He appreciated how the landscape architects are repurposing features of the old waterpark into new designs and expressed particular interest in the pylons as a potential artistic element. While unfamiliar with the park's stories and culture, he is eager to learn more if chosen for the project. His research process involves listening to everyone involved, reading about the history and culture of the place, and being open to new ideas, ensuring that the final artwork is both meaningful and resonant with the community.

Mr. Matthew Mazzotta of Social Space Studio was the next finalist to present. Mr. Mazzotta is an artist and educator, who focuses on engaging communities in their public spaces through research-based artwork. His process begins with a site analysis, followed by a community engagement initiative called the "Outdoor Living Room," where he sets up domestic furniture in public spaces to foster open, agenda-free conversations. This method allows him to gather unique histories and insights from community members about their neighborhood and what they desire in a public art piece. Through these informal conversations, Mazzotta believes he reaches people who may not usually have a voice in such projects. His community engagement also includes town hall meetings, surveys, workshops, and one-on-one discussions with local stakeholders.

Mazzotta presented several of his past projects that emphasize gathering spaces and community involvement, aligning with the desires outlined in the "West Side Public Art Project: 2023 Mayor's Goal Engagement Report." One example is his "Open House" project in York, Alabama, where he created a foldable, open-air theater for community events based on the community's request for a gathering space. Another project, "Cloudhouse," features an open structure with a cloud that "rains" on a tin roof, serving as both a sound installation and a communal space. His artwork "Gentle Breeze" in Boise, Idaho, reflects the community's connection to nature, featuring a large pink tree sculpture with swings that has become an iconic artwork and gathering space for the community.

Mazzotta's projects often incorporate local input and celebrate the unique identity of each place. For example, in his "Rising Together" artwork, he combines murals, sculptures, and collaboration with local artists, addressing key elements that West Side residents identified in the engagement report. He also discussed his current project, "Beyond," in Wichita, Kansas, which honors civil rights leader Chester I.

Lewis and involves the local community and family in preserving Lewis' legacy through art. These projects reflect his commitment to creating spaces that resonate with the community and reflect their values.

In response to questions about working with diverse community members, Mazzotta emphasized his focus on listening and collaboration. He explained that as an outsider, he often learns important information from the community and adapts his projects based on their feedback. He aims to create artwork that the community feels ownership of and has experience working with diverse populations. When discussing the Glendale Park site, Mazzotta was inspired by the remnants of the former waterpark and the ways the landscape architects are repurposing the space, particularly noting the park's hill as a point of interest.

Ms. Paula Castillo, the final finalist to present spoke about her artistic approach, emphasizing that artists do not create meaning but rather uncover it. She spoke about her New Mexico upbringing, particularly how the cultural and physical landscape shaped her curiosity and continues to influence her work. Castillo believes public art should be rooted in community engagement and connected to the cultural and physical landscape to ground communities in a shared story. She shared her Denver Art Museum project, where she created three beacons that tell untold stories about Denver's Latino and Hispanic communities. Her research and engagement revealed that these communities felt unrecognized, which inspired her final designs.

For Salt Lake City's West Side, Castillo acknowledged the cultural divide between the city's East and West sides. She referenced her research on the area, noting her interest in preserving the West Side's character amid ongoing developments. For her tentative design proposal, she discussed incorporating the concept of a "palimpsest" as a metaphor for sustainability and inclusivity, representing the community's resilience and ever-changing identity. Castillo highlighted the challenges the West Side faces, particularly feeling excluded from previous conversations, and expressed her intention to meet people where they are, honoring their time and perspectives if selected for the commission.

In response to questions about working with diverse communities, Castillo emphasized the importance of listening, being human, and approaching the work with tenderness and generosity. She aims to achieve broad inclusivity by partnering with local institutions and ensuring the community has a sense of ownership over the final artwork. For her, collecting stories embedded in specific places is essential to her creative process, and she values building partnerships to ensure successful community involvement. When asked about her experience with public art, Castillo shared that since 1990 she has completed about 20 public artworks, many in New Mexico. Each project holds deep meaning for her. At the Glendale Park site, she was inspired by the park's vast 25-acre scale and the remnants left behind from its previous life as a waterpark, as well as by the artifacts that people have left behind over time.

The Art Design Board and community and city stakeholders discussed the presentations of the four finalists for the Glendale Park public art project. They expressed overall admiration for all the finalists but were particularly impressed by Matthew Mazzotta's approach to community engagement, which they felt was well-suited for this project. While Ivan Depeña's use of technology excited the board, there were concerns about his community engagement process compared to other finalists. Donald Lipski, though recognized for past projects with strong community engagement, was not a standout in this competition, and Paula Castillo's heartfelt connection to her work impressed the board, but they wished to see more breadth of her public art work.

The board noted differences between Depeña and Mazzotta. Depeña's technology-focused artwork was seen as creative and interactive, but there were concerns about how well it would fit into a park setting. In contrast, Mazzotta's work was perceived as warm, playful, and deeply engaged with the community, which resonated strongly with both the board and stakeholders. Castillo was appreciated for community engagement process and felt like it would resonate with the West Side community, but there were doubts about her experience with large-scale outdoor works. Both Mazzotta and Depeña were regarded as strong finalists.

Community stakeholders found Mazzotta to be genuine and responsive to community needs, praising his flexible approach and the examples he provided from previous projects. While they felt Castillo had a good understanding of the West Side community, Mazzotta's engagement with local artists and mural projects aligned with important elements to the West Side community for this project. The board valued Depeña's fabrication skills and aesthetics but expressed concerns about the potential maintenance challenges of his technology-driven work.

Ultimately, the board and stakeholders narrowed the decision to Depeña and Mazzotta. They debated which finalist could create an artwork that would be "beloved" by the community for generations. While both had strong references, Mazzotta's extensive body of work and community-centered process left a lasting impression. The board felt ready to vote on the finalists.

Ms. Angela Dean made a motion to select Mr. Matthew Mazzotta to be recommended to the Mayor to be the commissioned artist for the Glendale Park Public Art Project, Ms. Tiffini Porter seconded, all board members present voted in favor.

Art Design Board Vacancy

Mr. Olmedo-González discussed the upcoming vacancy on the Art Design Board, as this was Ms. Dean's final meeting. David Shear and Nate King, both architects, were interviewed by Salt Lake Arts Council staff and board members. Following the interviews and reference checks, it was determined that Nate King was a better fit for the Art Design Board. Ms. Dean agreed.

Ms. Maisch made a motion to recommend Nate King to the Mayor for a position on the Art Design Board, Ms. Porter seconded, all members present voted in favor.

Public Comment

No public comment was received.

Other Business / Adjourn

At the December Art Design Board meeting the board will be approving the FY-25 CIP site selection for public art. The Salt Lake City Arts Council continues to work on and fundraise for "Wake the Great Salt Lake" project.

Ms. Dean made a motion to close the meeting