Public Art: Context & Process in San Luis Obispo, CA

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Abstract
Public spaces are noted by historians, philosophers, planners, etc. as being the lifeblood of civic centers, spaces that bring people in community together for a myriad of reasons. Recalling the ancient Agricola’s of ancient Greece to the modern version of malls and pedestrian plazas, these spaces are where social interactions occur, ideas are spread, and are open for all people to enjoy. Beautifying these spaces with public art and well-thought out design encourage the use of these spaces and work to empower those who use them. While the mode in which public art populates public spaces has changed, the notion that they exist to benefit a public good, act as a civilizer, create character and a distinct environment endures. The idea of public art is unique and is noted for doing something that neither a public space without art nor a museum with art can do: it can capture the eye and mind of individuals passing through public spaces. Making people pay attention to the civic environment around them, creating a sense of “civic vitality” in cities, towns and communities. Public art prompts vital questions about our environment and ourselves, encouraging a broad range of learning opportunities. Public installations of art celebrate culture and the environment, providing connections to history and the natural world. It makes space interesting and different from another. Public artwork is celebrated and condemned for its ability to challenge, delight, educate, and illuminate. Establishing written policies and programs for the arts solidify their place in communities, enacting a set of codes and a process for which artistic endeavors are woven into the complex urban landscape.

The role public art plays in communities is unique in the marrying of two very different sectors of civic life: art and aesthetics with the political planning process. This study examines how political decisions impact the installation process for public artwork in cities. How do written policies and programs support opportunities for installations, ways to empower the community and brighten the streetscape, and where are there gaps in knowledge and information that make the process more convoluted and difficult to navigate? Through studying the public art installation process in the City of San Luis Obispo from the perspective of the administrators working with the public art programs and policies and comparing the process with the ways in which the community is empowered by public art a number of recommendations are made to increase transparency and encourage artistic opportunities in the town with an already robust Public Art Program.
Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, California, scored among the worst public schools in the state when it comes to serving black students, according to a new report from USC’s Race and Equity Center. Cal Poly SLO Week of Welcome students participated in a diversity workshop led by Jamie Patton, associate vice president for diversity and inclusion in Student Affairs at the start of the 2018 school year.

Designed for the student who wants a broad education in music, the Bachelor of Arts degree offers a balanced program of study in a wide range of subjects. In addition to the traditional emphasis on music theory, history and performance, Cal Poly’s program includes American music, music of non-Western cultures, and the application of sound design. This specialized music curriculum is set within a liberal arts context ensuring that music students receive a broad education in the arts and humanities as well as their highly specialized professional training in music.