

## Public Art

### Commissioning Guidelines

**Public art can amplify the cultural value of a site, space or building. It can significantly contribute to the aesthetic and sensory quality of a construction project and strengthen a site's connection to place and identity.**

**Public art is a broad term that refers to a range of artistic works in the public realm.**

Works can be in the form of:

- enduring iconic pieces or stand-alone works
- temporary installations
- performative works or media works
- integrated artistic elements.

Works might include custom designed sculptural wayfinding and building signage, special seating in public areas, land art, art designed to be portable between sites, and specially designed functional public realm items such as recycling bins, bollards, drinking fountains, seating, retaining walls, lighting and planting.

The intent of public art may be to provoke a particular sentiment, express a certain narrative, be decorative, interpretive or commemorative.

The South Australian Government, through Arts South Australia, encourages the commissioning of high quality public art by South Australian professional practising artists. High quality and artistic merit relate to innovation, creativity, vision, originality, the power to communicate as well as the highest standards of production, presentation, research and professional development.

The strongest public art outcomes are achieved through the commissioning of artists to develop site specific works. The response and concept of such works will consider location, scale, form, and materials. In contrast, the purchasing of works for installation is not responsive to site or context and is, therefore, less likely to make an integrated contribution to place.

Public art, craft or specialist design that is site-specific has an inherently direct relationship with the fundamental principles that support the intent of a project overall. Ideally, works of art should be commissioned as part of a carefully considered process of place-creation that is targeted and specific to a particular place.



Image 01 – 14 Pieces

## **The commissioning process**

**Generally, the earlier artists are engaged in the procurement process for a project, the more successful the outcome. Early engagement is particularly important where the commissioner or design team seeks to understand and identify the extent of opportunities for integrating public art on a particular development or site.**

## **Preliminary planning**

The degree of stakeholder engagement varies significantly from project to project. In some circumstances the intentions of the public art work may be determined, or significantly influenced, by a specific community and may require preliminary stakeholder engagement.

There are cultural principles and protocols that exist when commissioning public art. An example of this is where the public art work involves working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or interpretation of their stories.

For further information visit:

<http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-arts/>



Image 02 – *Glow*

## **The Artist's brief**

A high quality public art brief informs an artist's response to the commission opportunities and includes a clear indication of the motivations behind the project and the intended outcome of the work.

A typical artist's brief outlines:

- background, context and intentions
- project scope
- information for proposed site
- availability of utilities to the site
- anticipated community engagement process
- the artists and concept selection criteria and process
- commissioning process and intended timeline
- proposed budget and
- key contacts list.

## **Artist selection**

Matters to consider in the selection of the artist might include:

- demonstrated evidence of their artistic merit
- ability to work on significant projects within timelines and budget
- capacity to develop concepts and communicate ideas that engage a broad public
- ability to consider and integrate the commissioned work within its physical and cultural setting
- ability to contribute towards the distinctive and special sense of place of the public realm or building within which the commissioned work is sited
- ability to work with a client, specialist public art consultant, and other discipline professions who may be engaged on the project.

## **Open call**

The most common artist selection process relating to building infrastructure or open space projects is an open call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) that are considered and shortlisted by an Advisory Panel comprising visual artist representatives and key project stakeholders. This generally enables the commissioner to assess the full range of available and interested artists in the market.

As this is a fundamental step in influencing the quality of the final outcome, it is strongly encouraged that several highly regarded artists in the relevant field of practice be invited onto the Advisory Panel, to enable full consideration of the artistic integrity of the EOI applicants and subsequently the concept design proposals.

The shortlisted artists are then contracted and paid an artist fee to each develop concept design proposals. They will usually be formally briefed and invited to a site visit. Interaction with stakeholders often occurs at this stage to further inform the artists' research, thinking and ultimately their concept design proposals.

### **Limited selection or direct commission**

An alternative selection model is to bring together an Advisory Panel, including several highly regarded artists in the relevant field of practice, to generate a shortlist of suitable artists who are then invited to each develop and submit concept design proposals for evaluation and selection.

### **Concept selection**

The shortlisted artist's concept design proposal may be evaluated against criteria that relate to:

- high quality and robust artistic integrity
- the alignment of the proposed concept design with the intentions of the brief (aesthetically, conceptually, functionally, of suitable scale and materials)
- be safe and inclusive for the general public including those with a disability
- indicative costing for design, fabrication and installation
- proposed timeline
- information relating to durability, ongoing maintenance and cleaning requirements, environmental impact and whole-of-life energy use.

### **Design development, fabrication and installation**

Artists are contracted and paid to develop the preferred concept design proposal. A commissioning stage follows that includes continuing to pay the artist/ to fabricate and install the work.

### **Intellectual property and moral rights**

Intellectual property and moral rights are referred to in the *Copyright Act 1968*.

Intellectual property rights remain with the artist. Licence arrangements to extend the scope of works, such as the reproduction of the works as a series or use of the works as a marketing tool, can be negotiated and defined in the contract.

Artists' moral rights include the right to attribution, a right not to have authorship falsely attributed and a right of integrity (the right to not have the work subject to change without permission and notified of intended de-accession).

### **Contact and further information**

Arts South Australia provides advice to the private and public sector on all matters relating to public art.

To speak to an Arts South Australia staff member, phone: (08) 8463 5444.

Arts South Australia  
GPO Box 2308  
Adelaide SA 5001

[www.arts.sa.gov.au](http://www.arts.sa.gov.au)

#### **Image credits**

##### **Image 01**

*14 Pieces*

Hossein Valamanesh and Angela Valamanesh  
North Terrace Adelaide

Commissioned by the Adelaide city Council  
2005

Open Call  
Enduring work

##### **Image 02**

*Glow*

Michelle Nikou and Jason Milanovic

Commissioned by the City of Port Adelaide, Enfield  
2009

Open Call  
Enduring work