

# PARMLY BILLINGS LIBRARY ART COMMITTEE

Committee Meeting

Thursday, 3 January 2013, 4:00 p.m.

*Meeting location: Louis W. and Louise Menk Board Room  
at the Yellowstone Art Museum*

## Minutes

Present: Bill Cochran  
Mark Moak  
Lynda Moss  
Shari Nault  
Robyn Peterson, Chair  
Bernie Rose  
Cara Schaer

Absent: Patricia Vettel-Becker

- I. Ms. Peterson opened the meeting at 4 p.m. and introductions were made.
- II. The committee's charge was reviewed, i.e., to agree on assumptions that will guide the crafting of an art policy for the Parmly Billings Library and move on from this scope of activity to defining logistical, or management, guidelines for the staff.
- III. Mr. Rose began the discussion by noting that the new library is not designed to accommodate most types of art and shared his view that the works currently owned by the library should be sold with the proceeds restricted. After some discussion, the committee agreed that its scope of work was more to focus on a role for art going forward than recommending disposition of existing collections; however, it was suggested that after Mr. Cochran has an opportunity to investigate whether the library is at liberty to dispose of any of the high value works, the committee might revisit this topic toward the end of its schedule of meetings. Harley O'Donnell was mentioned as a potential source of historic information.

Brief discussion followed about certain limitations affecting any potential to collect, commission, or exhibit art (permanently or temporarily), including the site's design and the lack of funding.

Ms. Schaer noted that art (permanent or temporary) should enhance the aesthetic of the new building and have a meaningful connection to the library's mission and existing programs. A request was made to review the library's mission at the next meeting. The committee did not agree that there should necessarily be favoritism toward local artists or local subject matter, and did agree that there should be no restriction on style (f. ex. traditional vs. abstract).

Ms. Nault stated that it will be helpful to staff to have standards of acceptance or decline when faced with offers of art. Ms. Moss made reference to the Bozeman library's temporary exhibition program and it was observed that their program filled a niche not otherwise filled in Bozeman; she asked the committee why the Parmly Billings Library would collect art given the existence of other art venues in Billings. The

committee concluded that further discussion of an art policy will go forward on the assumption that, given the site's limitations and programmatic demands, the library should be a non-collecting institution with the exception of appropriate permanent site art that is incorporated into the construction phase planning calendar (noting, f. ex., the architect's conviction that a Butterfield is possible). "Appropriate" includes considering everything from theme/content to management issues such as works needing to be durable and not light-sensitive. It is important that any art work not impinge on the space devoted to the library's core functions.

Discussion followed about the mechanics and possible scope of a temporary exhibition program, including sources of such exhibitions. The committee agreed that any such exhibitions should stem from rather than lead existing library programming plans. The concept of "relevant locally" was discussed, which was broadly interpreted.

The ongoing need for an Art Committee also came under discussion, with the conclusion that aesthetic decisions differ in many respects from other kinds of decisions and that it was advisable to maintain an Art Committee that meets as needed.

- IV. The meeting was adjourned shortly after 5 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 5 February 2013, 5:00 p.m., at the Yellowstone Art Museum

Respectfully submitted,

Robyn G. Peterson