

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: JANUARY 9, 2019
TO: ARTS & CULTURE COMMISSION
FROM: ROCHELLE BRANCH, CULTURAL AFFAIRS DIVISION MANAGER
SUBJECT: 3452 E FOOTHILL – PANDA INN DEVELOPMENT
REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF SELECTED ARTIST AND CONCEPT ART PLAN

Preliminary Consultation: February 14, 2017
Concept Design Review Approval: August 29, 2018
Final Design Review Scheduled: February 26, 2019

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Arts & Culture Commission:

1. Approve the selected artist Jenna Didier;
2. Find that the selected artist's proposed art concept—for a kinegram mural and sculptural trellis that spans the length of the pedestrian corridor to the Metro Station—complies with the goals, objectives and eligible criteria outlined in the City's Public Art Guidelines as follows:
 - a) The selected artist currently works in the public realm, has demonstrated past experience and proven technical and aesthetic ability to successfully create artwork responsive to the site and community;
 - b) The selected artist is of the highest artistic merit, sensitive to the City's cultural diversity and can contribute to the aspirations and unique expressions of Pasadena's values;
 - c) The proposed art concept encourages public dialogue and interaction with art in public places, and is reflective of contemporary practice in the field of public art;
 - d) The proposed art concept supports a public art collection of varied genre, style, scale, media, form and intent, inclusive of trends that span the local, regional, national and international arts level; and

- e) The development of the proposed art concept demonstrates a collaborative approach to the project by the design team that includes the selected artist, project architects, and other design professionals.
3. Approve the selected artist's proposed art concept—for a kinegram mural and sculptural trellis that spans the length of the pedestrian corridor to the Metro Station—with the following considerations:
- a) The artwork shall remain publicly accessible during normal business hours without enclosure;
 - b) The artwork shall be sited without interference from commercial signage;
 - c) The developer shall submit structural plans for review by the City's Building and Safety Division to determine if a Building Permit is required;
 - d) The construction budget (materials and labor) for originally incorporated design elements that will be absorbed into the implementation of the approved public artwork must be integrated within the public art budget;
 - e) The Arts and Culture Commission shall conduct a review of the Final Art Plan that will contain a detailed public art budget, Final Art Plan narrative with the selected artist's fully developed concept, refined visual materials with dimensions and true to scale rendering/s of the artwork as it would appear in situ (via a maquette and/or digital simulation), material samples, and a detailed maintenance plan;
 - f) The final artwork shall be consistent with all aspects of the approved Final Art Plan. Any proposed alterations to the Final Art Plan must be submitted for advance staff review and approval. Those proposed changes to the Final Art Plan that are not approved at the staff level must be presented to the Arts and Culture Commission for review and approval;
 - g) The artwork shall be appropriately lighted and the developer shall submit a Final Lighting Plan to be reviewed and approved by Cultural Affairs Staff for Final Signoff;
 - h) Staff shall conduct a final site inspection after project installation and plaque placement for review & approval, prior to issuance of any Certificate of Occupancy/Final Sign Off;
 - i) Staff shall review for compliance and approve all final documentation materials including a detailed budget showing all actual expenses for design, fabrication and installation; a detailed maintenance plan including product & application methods, and any applicable warranty information; a project summary; and professional documentation (a minimum of six digital image files suitable for web and print); and
 - j) The developer shall record the artwork maintenance stipulations in the OPA or DDA under covenants affecting real property at the time of installation to ensure ongoing, permanent maintenance of the artwork and provide documentation of such to Cultural Affairs Staff within a period of one year from the Final Sign Off date.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On August 29, 2018 the Design Commission reviewed and approved the Concept Design for the 3452 E Foothill project. To fulfill the mixed-use development project's Public Art Requirement, the development team wishes to commission an onsite public artwork by selected artist Jenna Didier. The artist has proposed a site-responsive kinegram mural with a sculptural trellis—animating various animal imagery from Chinese mythology, folktales, and iconography—that spans the length of the pedestrian corridor leading to the Metro Station. The concept is the result of the selected artist's research into the culture of the local community, the site's history, its intended future uses, and specific goals of the project as outlined by the development team.

BACKGROUND:

Development Overview

The developer intends for this mixed-use development at 3452 E Foothill to be a contemporary hub that connects residents, professionals, and visitors to the neighborhood, especially via the nearby Gold Line Metro Station. The Panda Inn is the original anchor of the site and its renovated exterior is a highlight of the development. The first and second floors of the existing office building will be renovated as well, to complement the design of two new apartment buildings. The south residential building will have 160 units totaling 131,109 square feet, with an additional 7,221 square feet that includes lobby space, a courtyard, and roof terrace. The north residential building will have 72 units totaling 50,208 square feet, with an additional 11,502 square feet of lobby and amenity spaces, including a courtyard, multipurpose room, gym, and pool. Both buildings are six stories and will have below grade and above grade parking. The campus will be connected with walkable, open spaces and naturally landscaped settings.

Artist Selection Team and Goals for the Artwork

The artist selection team included the art consultant, and representatives for both the developer and architecture firm. They began the artist selection process by discussing the goals of the project, including public art's potential to enhance the architectural design, campus layout, pedestrian experience, and vehicular traffic. The addition of a residential component to the site, as well as the existing office space and restaurant, emphasized the need for the commissioned artwork to be versatile in its impact for a diverse audiences over time. Additional considerations included proximity to public transportation, the cultural history and impact of the Panda Inn restaurant, and how art on site could advance Pasadena's Public Art Master Plan.

Art Sites

The team studied and discussed the various sites on the campus, considering their uses and impact with the people inhabiting these spaces. The team identified several key areas that had the most potential to act as hubs and pathways—the long pedestrian corridor leading to the Metro station that the architects initially envisioned as a pedestrian corridor with a trellis to provide shade, the courtyard adjacent to that walkway, the green space outside the restaurant, and the open spaces near the residential buildings. The team decided that these outdoor spaces were essential to the ongoing energy of the development and prioritized that the commissioned artwork enhance one or more of these sites.

Artist Selection Process

After considering the project goals and prioritized sites, the art consultant compiled work samples of 32 diverse artists—mostly local—that she identified as well-qualified for the opportunity with potential for creating site-responsive artwork that is a strong match to the project goals. After review of each artist's work and lengthy discussion of how the different artists could potentially serve the needs of the project, the Artist Selection Team shortlisted three artists who were paid modest stipends to develop a concept: Kyungmi Shin of Shin Gray Studio, Cliff Garten, and Jenna Didier.

The team ultimately selected Jenna Didier after finding strong resonance with her approach to the project. Her concept for the long corridor activates a high pedestrian traffic area, encourages movement to and from the Metro station, appeals to visitors in cars and on foot, provides shade, and embraces the history of the restaurant. The team appreciates the versatility and excellence of her artwork, her professionalism, and her track record for creating durable artworks of large scale. They're also impressed by Jenna's attentiveness to cultural, environmental, and architectural elements and flow, and her plans to integrate meaningful community engagement with the development of her project.

Selected Artist

Jenna Didier's lifelong interest in the creation and use of public space led to her career in public art. With a background in robotics, engineering, metal fabrication, and water systems, her practice has evolved into an active engagement with place-making. In 2002 she founded the Los Angeles based Materials & Application (M&A)--a non-profit organization that continues to develop immersive public environments, and experiments with materials and techniques through socially-engaged programs—and remained its director until 2014. In recent years, her focus has been on several large scale public art commissions in the Los Angeles and San Francisco communities, with budgets ranging from \$100,000 - \$2 million. In addition, she has been immersed in several social practice projects in California and Minnesota, leading workshops and the development of diverse artworks that address social and environmental issues through community engagement.

ART CONCEPT:

Jenna's proposed artwork at 3452 E Foothill is a mural and sculptural trellis that runs the length of the long pedestrian corridor, from the center of the development to the Metro station. The artwork will employ the interactive optical illusion of a kinegram which, through the persistence of vision, will cause the imagery to appear animated as one moves past the artwork. The mural, set behind the trellis that has consistently placed vertical posts, will appear to move and shift relative to the viewer's vantage point and speed as they move along in either direction.

Site Responsiveness

Jenna's research for her proposed artwork included multiple visits to the site, meals at the Panda Inn restaurant, attendance at community meetings in the Council District, and conversations with the Councilperson and Council District Field Representative. She has thoughtfully planned for her project to reflect community involvement, partnership with the nearby A Noise Within Theater as well as with the Los Angeles-based East West Players, with a clear understanding of how art can meaningfully enhance the development. Jenna's proposed artwork will offer multiple perspectives from several vantage points, allowing for interactive experiences with its content that has cultural relevance responsive to the site.

Mural

The Panda Inn restaurant is central to the ethos and aesthetics of this mixed-use development. When Jenna began her initial research inside the restaurant, she was especially drawn to a collection of Chinese art objects that represent natural and mythic creatures. The animals are significant to Chinese mythology, folktales, and iconography, sometimes used as metaphors for Chinese ideals or character traits. The artist was inspired to further study the story of the Monkey King, the protagonist from 16th century Chinese classical novel *Journey to the West*, and his symbolism for transformation. Reflecting upon the development's transformation of the site, as well as its ensuing impact on the surrounding community, Jenna was compelled by the organizing theme of transformation, using Chinese animals to develop the content for her mural.

The proposed mural component will be comprised of a series of panels mounted in front of, but not attached to, the neighboring storage facility. The panels will be porcelain enamel, Material Exterior Grade (MEG), custom painted graphic panels.

Trellis

The design for the proposed sculptural trellis is Jenna's interpretation of the columns and roof structure of the Forbidden City in Beijing that she also observed echoed in the Panda Inn restaurant's interior design and plans for its new exterior architectural elements. Since the trellis was an original functional component of the architect's design concept, and the artist chose to rework it as an integrated component of her proposed artwork, the costs for materials and labor of the original functional trellis design have been added to the art budget. The lightweight steel trellis—275 feet long, over 10 feet tall and extending 5 feet overhead—will cantilever over the pedestrian walkway, providing shade from the midday sun. The trellis will be supported by structural footings that will also provide anchor points for the mural structure running its entire length.

Kinegram

To create the responsive, animated effect, Jenna's concept draws from an optical illusion called a kinegram that integrates visual elemental effects of both the moiré pattern and the zoetrope. With a moiré pattern, optical interference patterns are created when two similarly spaced sets of lines intersect. The zoetrope, an early cinematic machine, creates visual movement via a spinning cylinder that animates sequentially arranged images viewed through vertical slots. The kinegram effect the artist intends to activate uses a combination of the above techniques. Her mathematical and methodical implementation of the mural and trellis will create a large scale optical illusion of the animal imagery becoming animated. As a pedestrian or a vehicle passes by the artwork, their movement will trigger a visual effect which plays within the artwork itself, without any moving parts. The rate of the viewer's travel will affect the rate of the imagery appearing animated, with perception of the graphics changing relative to being viewed at different distances, angles, and speeds.

Jenna has experience creating trellises for pedestrian pathways—including two permanent artworks, each over 100 feet long and 20 feet tall—that extend over the 101 freeway in downtown Los Angeles. She has successfully installed a kinegram mural in San Francisco and is currently fabricating another with a project in Hollywood. Jenna has a deep experiential grasp of the theory and methodology required to create the optical effects of her proposed artwork.

Color

The proposed steel trellis will be painted a bold shade of red—considered auspicious in Chinese culture—resonant with the colors of the original Panda Inn, and recalling the columns and corridors of the Forbidden City in China. The kinegram palette will match the steel trellis to maximize the persistence of vision optical effect. The background color of the mural panels will be painted a complimentary color to the trellis and graphics.

Lighting

At night, the wall will be illuminated by LED lights from ground fixtures that will wash light up onto the mural, heightening the retinal impact of the work while also providing ambient light for the walkway.

Community Engagement

During the course of her concept development, Didier attended two Council District 4 events, meeting Gene Masuda, District Liaison Noreen Sullivan, and several local residents. She inquired what they found special about their neighborhood and their hopes for its future. She was inspired by these encounters to pursue discussions with A Noise Within theater, a promising avenue to engage the historic cultures surrounding the site. She also heard positive feedback about public art that will encourage people to traverse the corridor to and from the Metro station.

Didier approached Pasadena's A Noise Within theater and met with their Director of Education & Community Outreach. They discussed the co-production of a workshop where participants from the surrounding community will learn about the role of animals and transformation in Chinese culture and be guided to selection an animal transformation to learn, study, and perform. Jenna will then develop short shadow videos of the participants enacting their transformations, editing them into a series of imagery that will become the content for the kinegrams in the mural. Because A Noise Within has an active working relationship with East West Players, located in historic Little Tokyo, the two companies will potentially collaborate on this engagement. The groups are interested in leading a workshop that explores the Monkey King legend, as well as the astrological symbols embedded in the Chinese lunar calendar. The East West Players' mission to create educational programs that explore Asian Pacific American experiences and stories with youth in the Los Angeles area resonates with Jenna's themes for her proposed artwork at the site.

Maintenance

Routine maintenance of the proposed artwork will be minimal. The sculptural trellis and mural panels may be easily cleaned via dusting and/or washing with water. Due to the segmented nature and narrow gaps of the vertical trellis, its surface will not be an attractive one to tag with graffiti. If it is tagged, however, it may be cleaned or, if necessary, repainted in affected areas. Should any components of the artwork be structurally damaged due to catastrophe, the steel trellis has the ability to be removed and repaired/replaced in sections, as well as the panels with mural imagery. The LED lighting should only require maintenance when the bulbs burn out.

CONCLUSION

Staff finds that the selected artist, Jenna Didier, has demonstrated the ability to implement a large-scale site-responsive artwork that will thoughtfully strengthen a sense of place at 3452 E Foothill and make a significant contribution to the City's Public Art Collection. Her proposed artwork, with its uniquely interactive aesthetic, would complement the development's design. It will also meaningfully elevate its neighborhood surroundings, with the capacity to provide an engaging cultural experience for residents and visitors.


The proposed artwork is consistent with the Public Art Guidelines that are intended to "create a more unique and human city, engage our citizens and visitors, and enhance the built urban environment." Per the Guidelines, the proposed public art project by Jenna Didier is "responsive to the site and community" and can contribute to the characteristics, aspirations and distinctive expressions of Pasadena. In addition, the project is in alignment with the Public Art Master Plan which supports the incorporation and integration of civic art into private development to enhance community character, reinforce local identity, highlight qualities of place and assist visitor orientation. Furthermore, it contributes "to the cultural hub surrounding A Noise Within theater project in East Pasadena," and encourages dialogue through public art by "weaving together culture, people, and neighborhoods."

Respectfully Submitted,



Rochelle Branch
Cultural Affairs Division Manager

Prepared by,



Wendy Miller
Public Art Curator

Attachment A – Concept Art Plan submitted by Corinne Weitzman/Jenna Didier