

Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Artwork on SR-94

Meet the Public Art Finalists and Give Your Input

June 27, 2005

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Malcolm X Branch Library

5148 Market St., San Diego, CA 92114-2209

Meeting Summary

[Brief Review of the Process to Date](#)

Scope of the Art Project

- \$200,000 art budget
- 1400 linear feet
- Artists are responsible for: lighting, landscaping, site preparation, traffic control, insurance, design, fabrication and installation

Background

- Former councilmember Rev. George Stevens and Caltrans District Director Gary Gallegos directed Caltrans staff to place a commemorative artwork on SR-94
- Caltrans acquired a federal Transportation Enhancement Act grant to create artwork
- Caltrans selected a site for safety and prominence
- Caltrans partnered with the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture (Commission) to administer the art project
- Commission staff consulted staff from Council District 4, Council District 3, the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation and community members to create the public art process

Public Art Process

1. Determine values and goals for artwork via vote from community members
2. Determine which artists are eligible to apply via vote from community members
3. Determine which community members sit on Artist Selection Panel via vote from community members
4. Release Request for Qualifications
5. Artist Selection Panel meets and shortlists three artists or artist teams
6. Community members give input to artists
7. Shortlisted artist teams develop proposals
8. Proposals are presented to community members for feedback
9. Artist Selection Panel makes final decision

Early Community Input Opportunities

Input Sessions #1 and #2

1. Orientation
2. Decision making
 - Values and goals for artwork
 - Which artists are eligible to apply
 - Which community members sit on the Artist Selection Panel

Artwork Values and Goals

- Create a prominent landmark
- Artwork should teach Dr. King's message
- Artwork should reflect diversity
- Artwork should be long-lasting and easy to maintain

Which Artists Were Eligible to Apply

- All professional artists or artist-lead teams permanently residing in San Diego County or the city of Tijuana

Artist Selection Panel

- Patrick Ambrosio, Community Representative
- Starla Lewis, Community Representative
- Jihmye Collins, Community Representative
- Victor Ochoa, Community Representative
- Rev. George Stevens, Community Representative
- Betti-Sue Hertz, Visual Art Expert
- Bennett Peji, Commissioner
- Iris Strauss, Commissioner
- Sharon Black, Caltrans Representative

Who Competed?

- Twenty-two eligible artists and artist teams were reviewed by the Artist Selection Panel
- Three teams were shortlisted

What Step in the Process is Happening Today?

- Step #6 - Community members give input to artists

Next Steps

- Step #7 - Shortlisted artist teams develop proposals
- Step #8 - Proposals are presented to community members for feedback
- Step #9 - Artist Selection Panel makes final decision

[Introduction of the Three Finalist Artist Teams](#)

Artist Team Leader: Wick Alexander, San Diego

Team Members: Robin Brailsford, Gerda Govine, Luis Ituatre

See websites for:

Wick Alexander www.wickalexander.com

Robin Brailsford www.publicaddress.us/Brailsford.htm

Artist Team Leader: Philip Matzigkeit, San Diego

Team Member: Judy Baca

See websites for:

Philip Matzigkeit www.publicaddress.us/Matzigke.html

Judy Baca www.sparcmurals.org

Artist Team Leader: Lynn Schuette, San Diego

Team Members: William Bulkley, Christopher Lee, Neil Kendricks, Ricardo Islas

See websites for:

Lynn Schuette www.lynnschuette.com

Christopher Lee www.cleesculpture.com

Input Given to Artists

Think about and research the demographics of the neighborhoods surrounding the site. Samoans, Laotians, Somalians, Filipinos, African Americans, Chicanos, and people from the Ivory Coast are just some of the ethnic groups who live here.

Think about “youth empowerment” as a theme or an intention. This community has a lot of up and coming artists. The teams should consider tapping into that energy and those resources.

The art should be about passion and commitment. That’s what MLK was about. Americans are lucky to be able to do public art. People in many other countries don’t have this opportunity.

Does the concept of diversity leave some people out? Or is that unavoidable? Quincy Troupe has said that we should all focus on what we have in common, not what makes us different. Don’t get caught up in trying to show everyone’s face.

Culture colors how people see and view other people in this neighborhood.

The size of the wall is more than five single family lots set side-by-side.

The artwork should be well integrated into the site.

The artwork should be about a global symbol. It’s about a dream; it’s about MLK.

Don’t forget that rush hour traffic is often stopped along the site. It isn’t always going to be a speed-by experience.

Don’t forget about MLK’s heritage as an African American.

Think about the aerial view of the artwork for the planes that fly overhead on their way to the airport.

Don’t allow the public input to change your course as artists.

Create a sense of history, a sense of life.

The artwork should be transformative, beyond the cliché, and it should transcend all borders.

Remember that MLK adapted Ghandi’s ideas.

MLK was rebel. Don't get caught up in a sanitary representation of him. Portray him as a man. Don't keep him in a box.

What about an MLK radio station?

Remember that MLK sacrificed his family and he sacrificed his marriage for his cause.

Think about lighting for the artwork. Create something durable that also has color, texture, and rhythm; something dynamic.

Create something that conveys fluidity, movement, and evokes emotions.

Find a way to convey, experientially, artistically, or metaphorically, two or three of MLK's messages and methods.

Create something other than a mural.

The artwork should be subtle, yet powerful.

Concentrate on the durability of the artwork and its resistance to damage and vandalism.

When I saw him speak in person, I was struck by the power of the rhythm and cadence of his voice.

Is it possible to create artworks that address social/political issues without impinging your personal aesthetic on the local landscape?

What distinguishes diversity from difference?

The aspects of MLK's message that are most important to me include mutual respect and personal dignity (civil rights), freedom and "brother"hood.

How do you create a complex "text" without using words?

Dr. King was not a saint but a complex human being with strengths and weaknesses. How do we honor that complex humanity as well as the historic/political figure?

Dr. King was a radical: for peace and for social and economic justice. How can the artwork help transcend the superficial images of Dr. King?

How can the project capture the "cadence" of Dr. King in all aspects of the project.

How can the artwork be rich and sustaining if you pass by it so quickly when driving? If you see it everyday from your backyard?

How can the work transcend the usual vertical treatments of tile, murals, etc.?

Can the work be abstract? It seems like people do not want to see easy representations of Dr. King himself.

The work should be transcendent, informative without being obvious or didactic, technically experimental, unexpected, and a revelation.

Create some powerful captivating images of Dr. King teaching the youth about positivity against racism. There are many of works like this throughout San Diego and behind these images are strong, power phrases and scenes, which include depth of perception and strong colors that illuminate the area as well as Dr. King.

I live his message and his dream. I live it with my husband. My children live it with their children who are Austrian and black. I believe if there is a way to create art that projects his message and have a suggestion of his image, it would satisfy more people than anything without his image at all.