

J O Y W U L K E

Studio of Art & Design

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March 6, 2011

Re: SB 148-To Eliminate the Art in Public Spaces Program

Dear Senator Slossberg + Representative Morin and the Honorable
GAE Committee -

I have been a Connecticut citizen for nearly 40 years working as a public artist and founding director of an art/science/ecology non-profit creating educational collaboratives across the state and representing Connecticut with projects in New York state and Montana. I am involved nationally with the American for the Arts with their Public Art Network (PAN). I attend national conferences focused on public art most often being the only Connecticut constituent. I have gotten several messages of late announcing new Percent for Art programs across the country, which have energized entire cities and local communities.

The possibility that Connecticut may eliminate the Art in Public Space program, a bonded 1% of construction cost for commissioned artworks in community public spaces, lacks an understanding of the importance of the creative industry to create jobs, revenue and, most importantly, educate our young population to the cultural treasures of CT. We are all aware that Connecticut is losing its most educated and brightest to other locations throughout the US. As a culturally rich state we need to herald existing historical public spaces and offer new opportunities for public icons that reflect the rich cultural history of Connecticut. The quality of our public spaces represents Connecticut's commitment to the quality of life for ALL of our citizens. The Art in Public Spaces program gives community members the opportunity to participate in creating works of integrated artworks of historical note into the architectural infrastructure, which the Connecticut chapter of the American Institute of Architects supports enthusiastically.

Commissioned public artists engage the community where the art will be placed involving the users of the space, the architects and administrators as well. The Art in Public Spaces program gives

communities access to quality additions to their familiar neighborhoods giving people a new way of seeing their environment and creating a sense of pride, an invitation to learning, and curiosity for what is possible not only in the built environment but also within ones self and ambitions. The community owns the work upon completion. Many public artworks are educational prompts used in school curriculums for science, math, and literature.

The suggestion that the bonded 1% for the arts be eliminated/suspended then reborn as an expanded Connecticut Collection loan does not acknowledge that the "on-loan" program is part of the 1% for the arts, if expanded would incur added expenses for shipping, installation and insurance fees. From the 1% allocated for the Art in Public Spaces program 10% is reserved for purchases for the Connecticut Collection, 5% is reserved for the Public Art maintenance fund, and 5% for administrative fees for the Art in Public Spaces program, which includes paying jurors and very modest presentation fees for commission finalists. Most importantly the Connecticut Collection is artwork, which hangs on the wall or displayed on a sculpture pedestal. Discrete works of art, which are beautiful as passive decoration but not intended to speak to a community or call for educational discussions. These passive works have their place but do not offer community participation and ownership, as do the commissioned works through the Art in Public Spaces program. Also, the remark suggesting that if the Art in Public Spaces program is "suspended" then to be reconstituted when there are "unlimited" funds is not realistic in that there are never unlimited funds in any government and does not acknowledge America's need for continued cultural heritage. I appreciated the mention of the WPA program during the depression of the 30's and the projects from that program that continue to be major American icons.

As a practicing commission artist I work across the country as is necessary in my field. My fabricator and materials suppliers are here in Connecticut. Each project I have contributes to the tax base of our state and supports five tax paying workers and a variety of suppliers. I would hope that my home state would support this industry and continue to commission Connecticut artists for public art projects thus supplying a broad supportive economic engagement for our state.

As you are well aware the % for art, a bonded program, is a very small amount of money which, if eliminated, would have a great impact on

the Connecticut creative, education, and civic communities while not offering a return to the state budget. The % for Art program gives BIG with a very small budget.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joy Wolke', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joy Wolke
Principle – Joy Wolke Studio of Art & Design, Inc.
Founding/Creative Director – Projects2k