



TOWN OF MANSFIELD POLICY MEMORANDUM

For: General Distribution
Prepared by: Arts Advisory Committee
Approved by: Town Council
Effective Date: February 25, 2008
Subject: Art Display Policy for Mansfield Town Buildings

I. General Purpose

The Council requested that the Arts Advisory Committee “develop a policy concerning local art displays in **and upon the grounds of** municipal buildings (exclusive of school buildings) for review and approval by the Council.” In doing so, the Arts Advisory Committee was to “consult with and solicit comment from various advisory committees, staff and other interested members of the community.” (03/05/07 memo from Town Manager Matt Hart)

This policy applies to Mansfield town buildings other than the Mansfield Community Center and schools. **No town building may be made available for use as a public forum for the display of art until an express determination of such designation is made by the Town Manager.** Artists interested in exhibiting their work in Town buildings (other than schools) are invited to discuss options with the Mansfield Arts Advisory Committee. Applications to exhibit in such a building must be approved by a Committee, which shall be the Arts Advisory Committee unless otherwise designated by the Town Manager.

II. Guidelines

- A. Exhibits shall not be approved until all the works proposed for exhibit (or photos thereof) have been viewed by the Committee.
- B. The Committee may give preference to exhibits by Mansfield residents, or to exhibits of special interest to users of the facility (e.g., work by seniors at the Senior Center, book illustrations at the Mansfield Library).
- C. Applications may be rejected if, in the judgment of the Committee, the work falls short in terms of originality, design, or execution. The Committee shall judge applications, and approve or disapprove each application **by a majority vote of the Committee members present**, on the basis of these guidelines, after consulting with building staff.
- D. Applications shall be rejected if, in the judgment of the Committee, the work is unsuitable for the venue. Exhibits suitable for an art gallery may be inappropriate in Town buildings, to which people come on other business. Such works include graphic depictions of sexuality

or violence, and those that appear designed to ridicule deeply held beliefs or to disparage others for their race, gender or sexual identity, ethnicity, nationality, etc.

- E. Should an application to exhibit be rejected, the Committee shall explain why, in writing, to the applicant **and inform the applicant that he or she may appeal the disapproval within ten days to the Town Manager, whose decision shall be final.**
- F. Should an application to exhibit be approved, the Committee shall negotiate with the applicant the display area and the start- and end-dates of the exhibit, and shall arrange for its installation.
- G. Exhibiting artists assume responsibility for loss or damage and must sign a waiver to that effect before installation.
- H. The artist is expected to remove his or her work at the end of the agreed-upon exhibit period. Should he or she fail to do so, the Committee may remove the work. In this case, the Committee shall take reasonable steps to reunite artist and work but assumes no responsibility for loss or damage.
- I. Courts have ruled that art accepted by a public agency for public display is a form of expression protected by the Constitution. Accordingly, no work approved by the Committee shall be removed for reasons related to its expressive character **before the artist has been given a reasonable opportunity for a hearing before the Town Manager, whose decision shall be final.** Work may be removed as necessary for unrelated reasons, such as building maintenance.
- J. With the approval of the Committee, the artist may remove work before the end of the display period or substitute other works for those displayed. Before approving any substitution, the Committee shall view the new work (or photo thereof).
- K. The public is invited to comment to the Committee on exhibits. Comments related to works may be shared with the artist. The Committee shall respond to signed, written comments relating to policy with an invitation to the author(s) to appear before the Committee and elaborate. The Committee shall then consider the issue and report the result of its deliberations in writing to the author(s).