



TOWN OF MANSFIELD POLICY MEMORANDUM

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

I. General Purpose

To recognize local artistic endeavor and to enrich the lives of community members, the Arts Advisory Committee (AAC) invites local artists to apply to exhibit their works at the Mansfield Community Center (MCC). An application form is available at the MCC reception desk; applications may be left at the desk or sent to AAC, c/o MCC, 10 S. Eagleville Rd., Mansfield, CT 06268. Note that:

- Exhibitions will generally run for 3 months (e.g., January 15 to April 15).
- Exhibiting artists assume responsibility for loss or damage and must sign a waiver to that effect.
- The MCC will not handle sales of displayed art, and prices may not be posted.
- Exhibiting artists may prepare a letter-size sheet with information about their works, including how purchases can be arranged, for posting during the exhibit.

II. Application Process

- a. The AAC shall consider any application to exhibit art at the MCC **or upon its grounds**. An application consists of a completed application form and photos (or samples) of the type of works proposed for display.
- b. The AAC shall judge applications, and approve or disapprove them **by a majority vote of the AAC members present**, on the basis of the guidelines below, after consulting with MCC staff. However, Mansfield artists shall be given priority.
- c. An application that does not include photos of *all* the works to be displayed may be approved provisionally. However, final approval shall not be given before all the works or photos thereof have been viewed by the AAC.
- d. If an application to exhibit is disapproved, the AAC 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**.
- e. If an application to exhibit is approved, the AAC shall negotiate the display area and period with the applicant and arrange for the exhibit's installation.

III. Guidelines

Applications to exhibit will be judged by the AAC on the basis of originality, artistic quality, and suitability for a family setting. While it is difficult to be very precise about these notions, the following considerations and examples are intended to suggest their meaning and scope, as employed by the AAC.

- a. *Originality.* A work need not be something new under the sun (few works of art can claim as much), but the artist's contribution to design and execution should be substantial. Paint-by-numbers paintings or fabrics woven according to someone else's pattern would not qualify as original in this sense. Jewelry merely assembled from ready-made materials (beads, settings, stones, etc.) is less original in this sense than jewelry in which these elements are designed and made by the artist.
- b. *Artistic quality.* The AAC takes a liberal view of artistic quality, but it may reject work that, in its judgment, falls short of acceptability for this reason. Poor draftsmanship, badly composed or printed photographs, muddy watercolor, and the like, can put works into this category. Commercial crafts, though original and well-executed, may nonetheless lack the expressive and aesthetic qualities associated with art, and for this reason be judged wanting in terms of artistic quality. Different standards of artistic quality may be appropriate for special exhibits (for example, of children's art).
- c. *Suitability for a family setting.* Works will not be accepted for display if the AAC judges that they are very likely to upset children or would likely trigger a warning that some viewers may find them offensive, were they to be exhibited in an art museum. These include:
 - Graphic depictions of sexuality or violence.
 - Works that appear designed to ridicule deeply held beliefs or to disparage others for their race, gender or sexual identity, ethnicity, nationality, etc. Since works of art are generally open to interpretation, it may be difficult to determine whether a work belongs in this category. Nonetheless, the AAC may reject works that it considers offensive for this reason.

IV. Removal of Art

- a. The artist is expected to remove his or her work at the end of the agreed-upon display period. Should the artist fail to do so, the AAC may remove the work. In such a case, the AAC shall take reasonable steps to reunite artist and work but assumes no responsibility for loss or damage. The MCC does not have facilities for storing art.
- b. Courts have ruled that works of art accepted by a public agency for public display are forms of expression protected from censure by the Constitution. Accordingly, no work accepted for display shall be removed from display for reasons related to its expressive character **before the artist has a reasonable opportunity for a hearing before the Town Manager, whose decision shall be final.** Works may, of course, be removed for other reasons, such as repainting walls.
- c. With the approval of the AAC and proper notice to the MCC staff, the artist may remove his or her works before the end of the display period or substitute other works for those displayed. The AAC shall view the new work or a photo thereof before approving a substitution.

V. Comments

Comment cards are available at the MCC reception desk for those who wish to comment on works displayed or on display policy.

- a. Comments relating to works may be shared with the artist.
- b. The AAC shall respond to signed written comments relating to policy with an invitation to their author(s) to appear before the AAC and elaborate. The AAC shall then consider the issue and report the result of its deliberations in writing to the author(s).