

18 May 2012

**Re: WCC Draft Public Art Policy**

This submission is from the Wellington Architectural Centre, a group which represents both professional and non-professionals interested in architecture and design, and in the promotion of good design in Wellington. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this proposal.

The Architectural Centre broadly supports the WCC's Draft Public Art Policy. We do however have the following comments to make:

1. We believe that a critical role of public art is to contribute to public debate, to test unpopular and controversial ideas, and to sometimes raise difficult and uncomfortable issues. We consider that this aspect of public art needs to be acknowledged in the decision-making which ascertains whether the council ought to fund public art. We strongly recommend that such a criteria be included in the list of criteria published on page 8 of the policy.
2. In the past there have been various mechanisms to incentivise the inclusion of public art in urban developments (e.g. based on plot ratios). While not all of the art produced has been exemplary, we strongly recommend that the Council implement some incentive to encourage the funding of public art in conjunction with urban and suburban developments.
3. "Artistic relevance" is noted as a criteria to be considered for the relocation and deaccessioning of public art (pp. 8-9). What does this mean? Might it mean anything? Is it really a criteria? Would "Historic relevance" be a better and more precise criteria to judge work by? By historic relevance we mean relevance to the time of its making.
4. Under "Deaccessioning public art" (p. 9) it is noted that "the decision will be made [to deaccession a public artwork] after consultation with the artist(s) (or the family of the artist(s) if necessary) and other relevant people or organisations involved in its establishment." We believe that this requirement should also be a requirement in the process for considering the relocation of public art.
5. The Architectural Centre broadly supports the stellar work of the Sculpture Trust and the support of the Council in their public art programme. We do however consider that some public artwork is not successful. We recommend the Council remove the Jeff Thompson "Shells" sculptures and the \$350,000 Rugby World Cup sculpture. Just because something is made by Weta Workshop does not automatically mean that it is good. We encourage the Council to support a wide range of public art ventures which engender a rich and layered understanding of our city, in addition to those which privilege a single aspect of Wellington's character (e.g. wind-sculptures).
6. In addition to the significance of the Wellington Sculpture Trust, the Architectural Centre also recommends that the WCC develop partnerships with the many tertiary institutions researching and teaching in the areas of the creative arts and design. These include: Massey University, Toi Whakaari, Victoria University, and Weltec Institute of Technology. We point to the partnership forged between the City of London and the AA School of Architecture (2005-2009) [http://designandmake.aaschool.ac.uk/?page\\_id=300](http://designandmake.aaschool.ac.uk/?page_id=300). We believe that such partnerships could additionally support the Council's aim for Wellington as a dynamic city, while supporting new opportunities for students at our creative institutions.
7. The description of the assessment process appears to contain errors. The Public Art Panel is described as both independent [of council] and to be "made up of art experts (not

employed by the Council) and relevant Council staff." We recommend that the Public Art Panel be independent and made up of art experts and that the members of the panel be listed publicly. Any involvement of Council staff ought to be only in administrative or advisory roles. The process states that Council staff make the final decision on all funding provided to projects (p. 7). The Architectural Centre recommends that decision on funding ought to be made by the Council, rather than Council staff, and publicly documented.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment on this Draft Public Art Policy. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

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