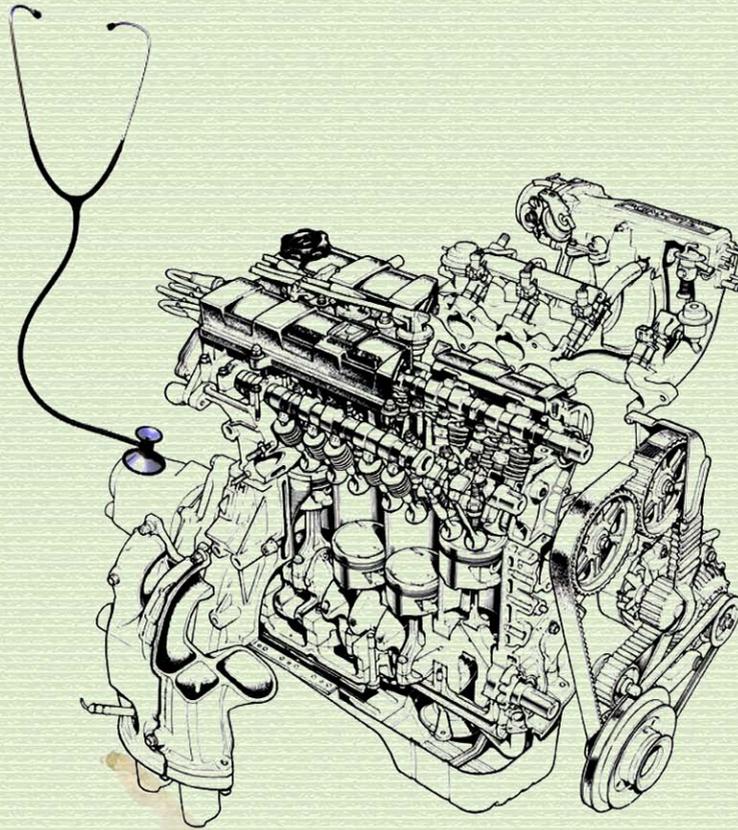


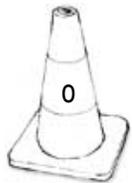
# BOOK I: *the diagnosis*



Mayor's Office of  
**ARTS &**  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

 LEAD PENCIL STUDIO

# SDOT ART PLAN



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This Art Plan has been tailored for the Seattle Department of Transportation by its Artist-in-Residence in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs

My residency with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) proved to be endlessly fascinating and rich with opportunities for theorizing about art, aesthetics, culture and the future of Seattle. I had the sincere pleasure of working closely with the Capital Projects and Roadway Structures management team for the better part of a year (part-time) and enjoyed every minute of it.

I would like to extend a special thanks to members of the executive steering committee, Barbara Goldstein and Frank Yanagimachi, who did heavy lifting during the early and most active phases of the residency, though they have since moved on to do more lifting for other agencies. My project manager for the duration was Ruri Yampolsky, who deserves an award of some kind for being both patient and supportive. Richard Miller provided valuable advice, important criticism, and strategic guidance throughout. Grace Crunican immediately embraced the ideas of this plan and therefore deserves the "Un-bureaucrat Medal of Honor".

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the 100+ people throughout the department who shared their thoughts and original ideas on art in the transportation system. This plan and the benefit it may one day bring is the direct result of those conversations and owes a debt to their generosity.

Daniel Mihalyo  
SDOT Artist-in-Residence  
April 2005



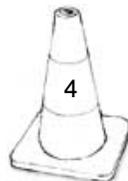
## Acknowledgments continued

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"...the singular most important element for inventing the characteristics that make a city successful and unique is the artistic".  
- Michael Sorkin, author and urban theorist

Two years in formulation, the SDOT Art Plan is written to be both critical and visionary. It is focused as a plan of action, comprehensively detailing how Seattle can become a national leader in creating a more humane, layered, beautiful and relevant transportation system. It offers a completely new methodology for rethinking the practicality and use of our shared right-of-way. By employing the work of artists, the creativity of citizens and the ingenuity of SDOT employees, the gradual implementation of this plan will contribute significantly to a Seattle whose streets and sidewalks celebrate life, discovery and creativity.

The structure of this art plan has been subdivided into three distinct books, each with its own audience and specific intent:

- BOOK I: *The Diagnosis* – the big picture of art in the right-of-way
- BOOK II: *The Toolkit* – a reference for project managers and special projects ideas
- BOOK III: *Sidewalk Survey* – a visual encyclopedia of creativity in the right of way

Each book can stand-alone as a reference manual and many pages have been designed in "cut-sheet" format for ease of duplication, information trading and later additions/subtractions.

For those who are familiar with the history of public art, it will come as not surprise to learn that Seattle is no stranger to innovation in the arts. Back in the early 1970's, Seattle can take credit for establishing the first comprehensive system for assuring that creativity would be a part of civic life in perpetuity by instituting the progressive *1% for Art* ordinance and the Seattle Arts Commission (now the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs). Now an international model, Seattle has gone on to expand the reach of the public art program by embedding artists within its utilities to open up greater possibilities for improving the quality of life for its citizens.



## WHY SDOT?

With an estimated 30 percent of Seattle's gross area under its jurisdiction, SDOT is the largest single influence on the public sphere, affecting every corner of the city. The formation of this network has been a 150-year evolution. During that time every piece of this network has been rebuilt at least once and generally many times over. This historical fact exposes a rather remarkable opportunity for the city to re-imagine the future network in its rebuilding. While all SDOT staff would outwardly agree with this statement there exists an institutional memory and "engineer-mind" undercurrent that chaffs at the idea of modifying the status quo. After all, if the way SDOT does things works, why tamper with it? The problem is twofold. The first is that the public has little awareness of what the department is accomplishing on a daily basis. This is likely due to the perceived difficulty in marketing the unsensational benefits of routine maintenance, permitting, safety inspections and planning. In a second and related problem, while much of what SDOT does construct functions adequately, the department has not traditionally concerned itself enough with the aesthetics and design of most of what the public experiences. In both instances the department is missing easy opportunities to make meaningful advances in improving both outlook and product.

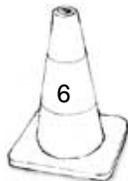
Fortunately, since nearly all transportation infrastructure will eventually require re-building, there will be many opportunities in the near future to improve on the current condition. The SDOT Art Plan was written to take advantage of this phenomenon by encouraging every upcoming transportation capital project, whether new, major maintenance, replacement or modernization, to make an effort to incorporate the ideas presented herein. In so doing, creative thinking can become second nature within the department's normal work process. Although this will seem unlikely at the outset, SDOT is well positioned to become an advocate for quality design in the urban environment, proactive in regard to creativity and a sustaining force for Seattle artists of all types.

To accomplish this it will be important to respond to the complexity of getting everybody on the same page. Book I: *The Diagnosis* was developed for that purpose and offers a series of brief essays that outline the context and background of creativity in the right-of-way. Where did public art come from, how is it financed, how much does SDOT contribute, what projects qualify for public art, who else puts art in the Seattle right-of-way and what are we to make of graffiti and guerilla art? These and other questions will be answered in full, followed by a complete list of specific recommendations for major project types produced by SDOT.

The Roadway Structures and Capital Projects Division is the largest influence on the way that SDOT construction is manifested and therefore the project managers in this division (and several in PPMP) are a critical influence on the implementation of this plan. Book II: *The Toolkit* was specifically developed for these staff members as an ongoing reference in the formation of future transportation infrastructure. *The Toolkit* presents 24 specific ideas for creatively incorporating artwork, fostering citizen initiative and increasing aesthetic opportunities on every upcoming Capital Project type.

Book II also contains a bonus section titled *Special Projects* that details a host of creative ideas that resulted from the research of this art plan. Many of these are one-off art related concepts that can only happen through SDOT support and development. Others are annual grant opportunities that invite artists to become creatively involved in the transportation system by engaging the unique opportunities available only through SDOT's vast system of infrastructure.

Finally, this art plan places an emphasis how all SDOT employees provide essential services that result in a product; and that product matters far too much in the fabric and life of the city to be merely functional and efficient. The SDOT product has the potential to be the outward expression of Seattle's creatively inspired citizens and each employee has authority to contribute meaningfully toward that future.





## INTRODUCTION TO THE DIAGNOSIS

*“The main thing governments must do to foster creativity is remove barriers to creative people. They will then subsidize themselves, with their youth and their time.”*

--- Jane Jacobs, Author

*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

### ORIGINS OF THE SDOT ART PLAN:

The conceptual beginning for the SDOT Art Plan grew out of recent landmark efforts by the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs. Already a preeminent model for a municipally directed public art entity in the nation, the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs hired artist **Lorna Jordan** in 1996 to develop specific project-based ideas for what was then the Seattle Water Department. The integration of an artist into the planning for a public utility was a pioneering achievement and the success of this led to the placement of other artists within municipal departments:

1997 Buster Simpson, drainage and solid waste divisions of SPU

1998 Dan Corson, Seattle City Light

2000 Carolyn Law, Seattle Parks Department Community Center Levy

2001 Carolyn Law, Seattle Parks Department 2000 Pro Parks Levy

In these earlier art plans the artists were encouraged to develop a set of specific proposals for art projects that they and others artists could complete. While these residencies in municipal public utilities were both popular and productive, the Public Art staff began to see the possibility for the utility to be proactive in developing opportunities for artists. In this way, ideas for new projects for public art could begin to be generated within the utilities at the same time that the Office of Arts &

Cultural Affairs handled coordination of larger case-by-case Public Art projects.

In November of 2002, the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs put out a public call seeking an Artist-in-Residence for the Department of Transportation. The RFQ called for a three-part residency involving a minimum of a one-year commitment within the department. The time was to be apportioned with research, writing and the development of a pilot project demonstrating a portion of the final plan.

The development of this residency has two “firsts” associated with it:

1. To the knowledge of all those involved, this is the first time an artist has been placed within a department of transportation nationwide.
2. This is also the first art plan where a public utility encouraged recommendations to the institutional culture in an effort to include art and aesthetics as part of day-to-day operations.

The SDOT Art Plan is intended to fill a gap that exists between the fast moving and fluid pragmatism of SDOT Capital Projects and the mission of the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs to “stimulate(s) a lively arts environment for everyone in Seattle so their lives are enriched every day”. The plan develops around the notion of a “toolkit” that would be used internally within the department to help guide the artistic and aesthetic development in all manner of future Transportation Capital Improvement Projects (TCIP).



## STRUCTURE & AUDIENCE:

This document is broken out into three books that can be separated from one another and remain useful to specific interest groups. Readers of this plan are encouraged to freely reproduce this information for interested parties. Many of the sections herein have been design as single subject sheets in “cut sheet” format to facilitate duplication and dissemination. The three books are as follows:

**BOOK I: *The Diagnosis*** - This is the big picture opinion paper that outlines the history of art in SDOT, the history of Public Art, the major issues, the big ideas and recommendations for basic project types and each division with the department. This portion will be informative for Division managers, the SDOT Director’s Office, TCIP managers, and the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs.

**BOOK II: *The Toolkit*** - This is the main resource for project managers department-wide but particularly those in the Capitol Projects & Roadway Structures division and the Policy, Planning and Major Projects (PPMP) division. This will be both a reference book and index of specific ideas for incorporating artists, aesthetics and creative thinking into qualifying projects. Book II also contains a bonus section titled Special Projects that provides further information one-off creative projects, grant opportunities for artists and property enhancements for SDOT facilities. Special Project will be useful as guide for the Director’s Office, project managers, and the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs.

**BOOK III: *Sidewalk Survey*** - This is a visual reference encyclopedia for all those interested in right of way issues and creativity. Street Use, City Attorney, TCIP managers, Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs staff, and artists will look to this book for historic precedence, anomalies and inspiration. This book also contains excerpts from writing about Public Art issues to flesh out the background of this art form.

## PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:

The SDOT Art Plan advocates for the following objectives:

### For SDOT

1. Aid the inner workings of SDOT to become more proactive with regard to the integration of art and aesthetics in the right-of-way.
2. Describe the system for creating a more vital pedestrian experience by assigning responsibilities to specific positions and divisions with the department.
3. Illuminate the ways SDOT projects critically impact the urban landscape and provide positive examples of turning eyesores into civic assets.

### For Artists:

4. Expand the frequency of artist involvement in Capital Projects while reducing the overall size of artworks produced.
5. Increase opportunities for emerging artists, develop creative opportunities where there previously were none and expand the public art repertoire.

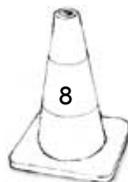
### For Citizens:

6. Encourage citizen involvement and stewardship in developing the creative uses of remnant SDOT land.
7. Identify methods for funneling public art and aesthetic investment to underserved communities and outlying pocket business districts.
8. Establish a system that encourages eclectic diversity over ordered unity for public artwork in the right-of-way.

### For Taxpayers:

9. Accomplish these objectives without adding to the considerable financial burdens already faced by the department. Identify sources for new revenue streams that can help fund creative initiatives in the right of way.

The overall approach for this plan would quietly supplement SDOT’s excellence in regard to efficiency and functionality with changes in outlook that would perpetually encourage the artistic, creative and aesthetic sensitivities to find their way into all divisions of SDOT operations.





Seattle circa 1952



Seattle circa 2004

## EMERGING SEATTLE:

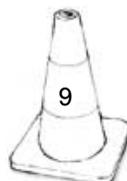
All cities grow in fits and starts and in the process of “becoming” a major metropolis there are clear epochs along the way that are precipitous in determining the possibilities for the future. One such moment in our history was the era of the Regrades. Faced with an imposing topography the Seattle Engineering Department (SDOT), under the directorship of earth artist extraordinaire Reginald H. Thomson, embarked on a pathologically ambitious plan to level a hilltop, fill valleys and create essential industrial real estate out of clam beds. Had his plan failed, Seattle would not likely be in the position it finds itself today.

Other ambitious plans came and went in the form of proposals to redevelop Pioneer Square, Pike Place Market, Belltown (The Bogue Plan) and South Lake Union (Seattle Commons). Though only hindsight will provide the final determination, we are in the midst of an epoch marked by the simultaneous explosion of at least two dozen major civic gestures. What else could explain the dramatic detonation of the Kingdome and the corresponding civic construction boom? A list of the most prominent projects underway in a 10-year period centered around 2005 would undoubtedly include:

- Pro Parks Levy 2000
- Safeco Field
- Qwest Field
- Key Arena Retrofit + Expansion
- Libraries for All (including the Central Library)

- Community Center Levy - 1999
- Regional Light Rail
- Seattle Monorail Project
- Seattle Art Museum tripling
- SAM Olympic Sculpture Park
- MOHAI relocation
- EMP
- Gates Foundation Headquarters
- Municipal Civic Center campus
- Alaska Way Tunnel
- Sea-Tac runway expansion
- Mercer Fix
- Trans-Lake Washington
- Lake Union Street Car
- Biotech Re-zone
- Blue Ring Strategy
- Central Waterfront Plan
- Zoning Density Increase

For those who wish for a return to old quirky Seattle, there’s always Tacoma. For the rest and though it may take 10 years for the dust to settle, the future is upon us and it is a modern, intentional place. All this is to say we are at a point where we can determine if the network of roads and bridges will be a byproduct of the engineering mentality or a considered place to celebrate the flowering of civic life.



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to gather the necessary information to produce a plan for improving the overall transportation aesthetics and quality of artwork, it was necessary to conduct a thorough audit of the current conditions within the department. This was accomplished through multiple channels over a six-month period that included staff interviews, site visits, attendance in project meetings, presentations with feedback opportunities, and research into transportation history.

The research focused on obtaining a general understanding of all of the principal elements affecting the department, since little was known about the inner workings of the department from the outside. This included a general inquiry into the essential roles, responsibilities, procedures, management systems, public interfaces, consultant processes, outside influences, decision making mechanisms, staff attitudes/opinions, project successes/failures, inter-departmental communication, intra-division collaboration, and funding systems. In full disclosure, the Mayor's Office and the Office of Planning and Management were out of the jurisdiction of the artist-in-residence and are therefore two important influences on the functioning of SDOT that were not thoroughly explored during the research phase.

### INTERVIEW PROCESS:

Over the course of six months, approximately 125 interviews were conducted with key staff within SDOT and with staff in related departments. Interviews were typically conducted at the interviewee's cubicle, out at maintenance facilities or in the field. Each interview took anywhere from 30 minutes to three hours, with the average being 90 minutes. Repeat interviews were conducted with all TCIP managers approximately six months after the initial interview for clarification and follow-up. Interviewees received a general

introduction to the goals of the SDOT Artist-in-Residence program and were asked a series of questions regarding their job description, type of work performed, who they managed, thoughts on right of way issues, thoughts on public art, previous experience, interests and how SDOT could improve its public image.

### ON-SITE + FIELD RESEARCH:

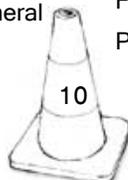
Field visits were made to all major and minor SDOT facilities including the "Sunny Jim" sign + signal shop, Fremont Bridge Maintenance shop, Charles Street maintenance facility, Haller Lake maintenance yard, West Seattle maintenance yard, Spokane St. storage yard and the Harrison St. storage yard. Tours were conducted at several major bridges owned and operated by SDOT including Ballard, Fremont, University, Montlake, First Ave South, 14<sup>th</sup> Ave South, 16<sup>th</sup> Ave South, W. Galer, Airport Way, Princeton, Queen Anne Dr., and Spokane Lift/Turn. More than 25 individual site visits were conducted at ongoing or upcoming Capital Projects ranging from traffic circle construction to bridge replacement. Photographic surveys of art and right-of-way conditions were conducted in all neighborhoods within the city with a special emphasis on Queen Anne, Downtown, Belltown, International District, Capitol Hill, Ballard and the University District.

### CITY & COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

Three presentations were given to the Design Commission regarding the status and progress of the SDOT Art Plan. Additionally, the artist attended approximately six Design Commission meetings, three City Council Transportation Committee meetings and one Waterfront Forum meeting involving major Capital Improvement Projects. The artist also made formal presentations to the



On-site traffic interview by Seattle Engineering employee, circa 1946. Neg. #40581



Uptown Alliance community group (2), Greenwood Community (1), SDOT T-staff meeting (2), Capital Projects and Roadway Structures project managers (2), and Seattle Arts Commission Public Art Advisory Committee (2).

#### CAPITAL PROJECT PARTICIPATION:

During the research phase there were many opportunities to actively participate in team meetings regarding Capital Projects under development including the Interurban Trail (5), Burke-Gilman Trail (2), Leary Way TIB (1), Phinney Ave N. TIB (2), Airport Way bridge painting (1), Fremont Approach Replacement (6), 5<sup>th</sup> Ave Northgate (4), 2003 Arterial Major Maintenance contract #1 (2) and the Thomas St. Pedestrian Bridge (7).

CITY INPUT: Interviews were also conducted with staff in other City departments regarding creative work in the right-of-way including the Department of Neighborhoods, Office of Policy and Management, City Design, Fleets + Facilities (photo department). and the City Clerk.

### PRIMER ON PUBLIC ART

Many within SDOT, for whom this Art Plan is written, have expressed an interest in the origins of Public Art. For them, a brief summary on the history and relevance of Public Art is in order so that we may place the proposals made in the SDOT Art Plan in better context. Further reading on this subject is provided at the end of **Book III: Sidewalk Survey.**

Most art historians begin a discussion about the origins of public art naturally enough with examples since the cradle of civilization. Buildings since at least the Mesopotamian era and cultures throughout the East and West have been adorning blank surfaces with language, iconography and decoration. This ancient tradition of the artist involvement in the building continued for thousands of years right up to the period marked by the Industrial Revolution, where craft and artistry gave way in a remarkably short period of time to economy and mass production. In the years between the wars, the forces of industrially produced building materials and increases in labor

costs conspired with a number of changes taking place in the profession of architecture to gave rise to the *International Style*. The vogue in both Europe and America, this style sought to eliminate all vestiges of surface ornament and detail in favor of clean sanitary surfaces and an abundance of large plate-glass openings.

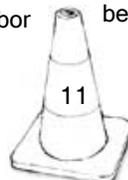
From the architect and engineering perspective, the more severe and taut the surfaces, the better. The buildings and structures created as a result of these architectural



Mies Van der Rohe, Farnsworth House, circa 1951, Plano, Illinois

currents resulted in what was largely felt by the public to be a sterile and inhumane civic environment.

In 1965, the Richard J. Daley Center (courthouse) was completed in Chicago by CF Murphy and SOM architects. The building was a massive slab of Cor-ten steel and glass and was heralded as a landmark of the *International Style*. While the architectural community was enthralled with the achievement, the politicians were eager to fill the enormous windswept plaza that flanked the entrance. To the surprise of all, Pablo Picasso, understood at the time as the greatest artist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, offered to donate the plans for a monumental sculpture. The final work was installed in 1967 and has since been regarded as the rebirth of public sculpture and the consequently the beginning of the Public Art movement.



This was the period in which the federal government was moving closer to the formation of a group that administered and directed public funding towards the support of artwork nationwide. It was President Kennedy who established by executive order the *President's Advisory Council on the Arts*. However, his assassination occurred before a board was selected.

*"I see little of more importance to the future of our country and our civilization than full recognition of the place of the artists. If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him"*  
- President John F. Kennedy, Oct. 1963

In 1964, President Johnson picked up the baton and signed into law the establishment of the National Council on the Arts, which had under its umbrella the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA).

*"Art is a nation's most precious heritage. For it is in our works of art that we reveal ourselves, and to others the inner vision which guides us as a nation. And where there is no vision, the people perish."*  
-- President Lyndon Johnson September 1965

The NEA developed a program in the first year called *Art in Public Places*, establishing a competitive grant-based fund for placing artwork in federal projects. In 1967, Grand Rapids Michigan was the first successful recipient of the grant and arranged for the purchase of a monumental Alexander Calder sculpture in bright red steel. The work was installed in 1969 and formed the centerpiece of a new four square block civic center designed by the Chicago architecture firm of SOM. It was widely felt by the citizens who arranged for the purchase of the sculpture that it would assist in inviting the public back downtown who had evidently fled to the suburbs. It is not certain if the sculpture accomplished its goal, but it did eventually become the logo for the city letterhead and was even emblazoned on the side of city garbage trucks.

At this point a veritable explosion of art in public places occurred nationwide, driven equally by a citizenry eager to bring art (life) back to public places and architects who wanted to have colorful counterpoints to their austere Cartesian plazas. In 1969, it was Seattle that was the next recipient of the NEA's *Art in Public Places* grant for the purchase of Isamu Noguchi's *Black Sun* at Volunteer Park. In a remarkable move during the same year the Port of Seattle voted to invest \$300,000 of revenue

bond money into the purchase of art to adorn the expansion of Sea-Tac Airport.

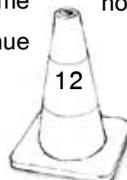
With the encouragement of the citizen-based arts advocacy group *Allied Arts* in 1971, the Seattle Arts Commission was born. This commission, in turn, lobbied for the 1973 enactment of the City of Seattle *1% for Art* ordinance. King County reciprocated the same year and enacted a similar law requiring that one percent of local dollars spent on public projects be set aside for the selection and installation of artwork in public spaces.

The programs developed here have become a model for metropolitan areas throughout the nation, Europe and beyond. Even today, the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs continues to be at the leading edge in developing innovative programs for funding the public display of artwork.



Celebration of Alexander Calder sculpture in Grand Rapids, Michigan

While the existence of public art may have been largely formulated here, it has gone on to develop a checkered history over time and a vocal set of critics. Ironically, chief among the critics has been the architectural community who routinely decry how public art disfigures the art of building. The public, too, has had a few things to say about the way tax dollars have been directed over the years toward the commissioning of certain artworks. Aside from the occasional public art gaffe, the public itself has nonetheless come to embrace the life that art brings to all



manner of public spaces ranging from sidewalks and hallways to plazas and sub-stations.

Although the genre of public art in its modern incarnation has only been around for 31 years, it has spawned a cottage industry and generation of career public artists. Since the selection process is by nature competitive, those artists with experience and successful work behind them have become experts at succeeding in an environment that is fraught with compromise, budgets and politics. To succeed in this new field requires the acumen of a construction manager, a cost estimator, a materials expert, a skilled salesman and a public relations specialist, to say nothing of the skills of a traditional artist.

## SDOT ART HISTORY

Even though the *1% for Art* ordinance has been in effect since the early 1970s, there is a relatively small body of public art pieces physically placed in Seattle's right-of-way. There are two principal reasons for this phenomenon.

The first has everything to do with the institutional memory of SDOT coupled with several significant organizational shifts that took place beginning in the late 1980s through the 1990s. The most significant re-shuffle in the history of the department occurred in 1996 with a dramatic extraction of the water and waste divisions into the newly formed Seattle Public Utilities. The transportation planning division remained and was named *SeaTran*. All along, the mission for the transportation staff was the safe and efficient movement of people and goods around the city. Since the department has traditionally been led by senior engineers and transportation planners whose principal concerns were safety and getting the most done with the least amount of money there has not historically been a departmental concern for the aesthetic impact of the roads and bridges that were being built.

The tradition largely continues to this today. While the department has made recent strides in committing funds toward improving the aesthetics of transportation infrastructure, the effort is typically reactionary due to the urging of the Seattle Design Commission and concerned citizens. This is not to say

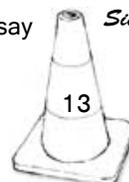
that the will to improve on the tradition does not exist. In fact, the SDOT Art Plan audit process discovered dozens of staff within the department who share aesthetic concerns but feel hierarchically conflicted with lean budgets taking priority.

The other explanation for the conspicuous lack of art in the right-of-way has been the difficulty experienced by the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs in keeping up with the ongoing structural and project changes afoot within SDOT. Staying informed on the political status of dozens of projects, their funding status, their schedule, and their shifting position within the division structure is, at the very least, a half-time position to which nobody within SDOT is currently assigned.

In the past, the approach for incorporating public art into transportation projects has been accomplished on a case by case basis with results that have often been good, other times lackluster. Many projects that would have been excellent candidates for public art developed too quickly or anonymously for the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs to catch during the design phase which can typically make the difference. Despite the difficulties, the combined years of experience have demonstrated that the right-of-way can be an effective and compelling location for public art. Indeed, some of Seattle's most beloved works of art, public or otherwise, were created in the right-of-way, not least of



which include the *Dance Steps on Broadway* (1982 J. Mackie) and the *Fremont Troll*, pictured above. (1989 S. Badanes w/others) (for more examples see Book III: *Sidewalk Survey*).



## OTHER GENERATORS OF PUBLIC ART

The Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs and SDOT are not the only local government entities responsible for developing art in the right of way, The Department of Neighborhoods and Transit agencies are also a major source of public art funding and production.

The *Neighborhood Matching Fund* is a City grant program through The Department of Neighborhoods that provides cash grants to neighborhood and community organizations for a wide variety of neighborhood-based projects. The program was started in response to calls from neighborhood leaders to assist them with neighborhood self-help projects. The grant rules specify that proposals must have a “distinct product” as part of the outcome, rather than ongoing support, making it a particularly useful tool for developing citizen generated public art projects. The *Dragon Pole* project in the International District (H.Presler, M.Huang 2000) and the *Growing Vine Street Cistern Steps* (B. Simpson 2002 - with Seattle Public Utility *1% for Art* funds) are recent examples of artwork in the right of way developed as part of the Neighborhood Matching Fund (for more examples see BOOK III: *Sidewalk Survey*).

Metro has for decades utilized a bus shelter design that, to put it generously, lacks design inspiration. A near universal disdain among citizens to the neutral brown box has generated numerous inspired attempts to beautify the humble hut. The result has been a long running and successful history of adornment with artist and citizen-based artwork. Since 1989, Metro has supported a tremendously popular *Bus Shelter Mural Program* that claims to have contributed over 700 artistic treatments throughout King County, with hundreds in the Seattle right of way. For cost reasons, the majority of the murals were designed and executed by primary and secondary school student groups. A few shelters every year are given over to public artists who were given license (and more importantly, a budget) to more radically alter the design. The results from this program have, on the whole, been of high quality and enthusiastically embraced by the community. Funding for these creative interventions has come largely from Metro, but the shelter itself exists in the right-of-way, thereby contributing to the life of the public pedestrian environment. (for examples see BOOK III: *Sidewalk Survey*). The days of the little brown Metro hut are numbered (at least in the urban core), as the city and

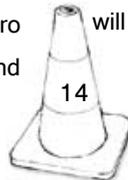
transit agencies negotiate to introduce a more sophisticated shelter design that is maintained by a prominent outdoor advertising company in exchange for street level advertising space and reductions in billboards. It would be wonderful if other City departments organizing this contract could advocate for the inclusion of artwork as part of that plan.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

The many public transit projects in design and construction will contribute an enormous amount of public art to the right-of-way over the next decade and much of it will be of the highest quality. Since each governed by its own regulatory agency, there will be several distinctly different approaches to incorporating public art that are worth differentiating to better understand the range of possibility.

Sound Transit’s light rail station design has embraced a pattern of stand-alone sculptural interventions consistent with many transit based art plans nationwide. These are typically large gestures that activate station platforms and pedestrian plazas with artwork that is whimsical or otherwise iconic in an apparent effort to help distinguish one station from the next. This is a markedly different than the more pluralistic downtown Metro transit tunnel approach that peppered each station with a mixture of small and medium sized artworks at each station, providing for more discrete individual experiences throughout the station experience.

The Seattle Monorail Project has yet to formally announce a plan for incorporating public art as part of its transit system. None the less, initial discussions appear to be leaning towards an approach that would direct the art budget primarily towards an artistic treatment to the elevated track itself. This could take the form of a continuously running LED light scheme or a unified design treatment to the support columns. It is envisioned that this approach would enhance the ribbon-like nature of the transit system and provide a repeating visual reference for citizen way finding. This approach may result in little to no stand-alone artwork at station platforms. Whether or not this approach will be implemented, remains to be seen.



At the time of this writing the South Lake Union Streetcar project is just beginning design. The scope of this project will likely have a much lower impact on the streetscape than either the monorail or light rail. Portland's streetcar has been suggested as the likely model for how Seattle will approach its streetcar design. Like Portland, Seattle's streetcar will run through a rapidly developing former warehouse and light manufacturing district. In Portland, the shelter design is comparable in scale to an urban bus shelter and the art takes the form of one-off bicycle rack sculptures and several small stand-alone sculptures. Since the overall budget of the streetcar project is miniature in comparison to other transit projects, the *1% for Art* will be modest when spread over the approximately dozen station locations. The approach will most likely follow ideas developed in this plan and will be smaller scaled gestures that add pedestrian interest and historical/site observations to station stops.

### **GUERRILLA ARTWORK:**

If you consider that artists are primarily concerned with communicating ideas to viewers, it follows that the street is one of the most compelling venues for reaching the most diverse audience possible. This is not to say that museums and galleries are not an appropriate forum, but rather the viewing audience spectrum is considerably narrowed from that found on the city sidewalk. No wonder then, that artists the world over have correctly identified the street as a potent location to display their ideas. The problem, of course, is that there are precious few opportunities to legally display artwork in the right-of-way. Cities, in-turn, often find themselves in the difficult position of being the naysayer to the same group of people that give the city a vitality that attracts talent and investment. In response to this cultural conundrum, the guerilla art movement has slowly evolved into an ever expanding series of art forms.

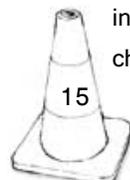
Seattle is blessed - some would say cursed - with a large and thriving community of guerilla artists who are actively placing work out in the right-of-way without civic approval. It is important for us to briefly discuss the various sub-categories and their motivations in order to formulate a proactive approach and

respond positively. (see *SDOT Divisions: Specific Recommendations*).

Of all the unsanctioned creative impulses, none is more publicly reviled than the *graffiti* artist. While many of these nocturnal artists are gifted and generally respectful of property rights, there remains an unfortunate majority within this art form who willfully destroy public and private property in the process. Confusing the issue and the genre is an entirely separate set of people known as *taggers*. These mostly young middle class individuals thrill at the defacement of public and private property with markers and spray paint in the nefarious intent of claiming territory and visibility. The response by communities and governments internationally has been a zero-tolerance policy on all forms of spray paint based marking. Studies and experience have proven that the best way to minimize the illegal urban blight of graffiti and tagging is to eliminate the offending work as soon as it appears. Seattle is no exception and with an estimated annual budget of \$1 million, the city shoulders a considerable sum in combating the fun.

During the last decade the rising popularity of graffiti art has been buttressed by canonization within the commercial and institutional art world. Dozens of books and countless museum exhibitions have been dedicated to the subject, serving to elevate and legitimize the art form. As the quality and popularity of graffiti art has increased, there has been corresponding confusion of boundaries created for those concerned with issues of property destruction. Determining legitimate mural painting from actions that promote illegal property destruction is suddenly an ill-defined territory.

Unfortunately, officials have been slow to understand that the legality of outdoor painting has less to do with style and more to do with property owner approval. This issue recently came to head in Seattle when a group of University of Washington students were awarded a 2004 *Neighborhood Matching Grant* to develop a retaining wall mural on University Parkway underneath the University Bridge. The final product was the result of 40 artists working independently with several hewing closely to the style characteristics of both graffiti and tagging. Concerns were



raised publicly and some hard lessons learned, but ultimately the mural was allowed to remain after a level-headed on-site summit was held in October.

Closely related to the motivations of graffiti art is the underground movement known as *stenciling*. This involves the production of carefully carved negative templates for spray paint-applied positives at multiple locations. Since this artwork is both higher quality and smaller scaled than graffiti it has not attracted the same ire that other guerilla art movements have. It should be noted as well that this art form has garnered a large cult following nationally, with dozens of books dedicated to excellence within the movement.

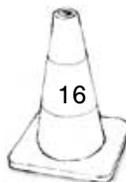
*Postering* has been another hot button issue for the City over the years and one that has seen some rather dramatic turn-of-events recently. The act of placing a poster for a lost dog, a garage sale, a music event or a political gathering has been around since civilization began. Unlike *graffiti* and *stencils*, the concern over property damage with *postering* is less of an issue, since it doesn't typically result in permanent damage. Instead, the issue is strictly one of visual blight among those preferring a more manicured streetscape to the messy vitality of the free public forum. In 1994 the City Council, Mayor and City Attorney collaborated to pass a municipal ordinance making *postering* punishable with a \$250 fine. Despite considerable public opposition to the ruling, the poster ban was enforced for seven years before coming to a head in 1999 when a moving company was sued by the City for advertising on utility poles. The case went to the Washington State Court of Appeals in 2002 and eventually resulted in overturning the poster ban with the help of 15,000 citizen signatures and pressure from Seattle's influential music industry.

In its place, the City has adopted a set of standards, to formulate an acceptable code of conduct in using utility poles for postering. Just when the public felt that the issue had been settled, a City appeal in September 2004 to the State Supreme Court ruled that the Seattle poster ban was, in fact, legal. This would make postering illegal again on City property should the Mayor or Council decide to enforce the ruling. In the meantime, postering continues amidst the current political climate.

The postering issue is a complex one since there are legitimate freedom of speech issues involved, particularly in relation to forms of creative and political expression. With regard to the SDOT Art Plan it should be noted that there exists a vibrant and provocative culture of posting artwork for its own sake. Hidden amidst the visual fracas of rock shows and garage sale signage the work of the *poster* artist is often intelligent and artfully produced, sharing many of the same qualities as *stencil* artists. While not officially sanctioned by the city, this is one form of artistic expression that has found a way to thrive quietly in the right-of-way in the crevices produced by unresolved political and legal circumstances. At some point in the future the city will likely need to distinguish posters for commercial interests from those that are protected by freedom of speech. For those interested in the likely outcome of this debate, it may prove worthwhile to study the distribution of newspapers in the right-of-way that shares a nearly identical First Amendment defense.

For pedestrians with an eye for detail, the city sidewalks offer another unlikely forum for citizens to express themselves creatively. With no intention to do so, the City provides this opportunity by requiring landowners to be responsible for the upgrade and maintenance of the sidewalks adjacent to privately owned property. When that property is owned by creatively inclined individuals, what sometimes results is a surprising quantity of artful seating and sidewalk mosaics around town. Street Use inspectors at SDOT would have something to say about most of these since they could theoretically pose a safety hazard for pedestrians, but for the most part these minor flourishes exist to the delight of community and art enthusiasts (for examples see BOOK III: *Sidewalk Survey*).

The last and most difficult *guerilla* artwork in the public right-of-way to be noted in this study involves large-scale stand-alone sculptural works that appear mysteriously and confound both City employees and citizens. The underlying motivation for these public gestures is as varied and individual as the artists who produce them. Mostly though, the artists producing these works are primarily interested in the unmediated public reaction to a piece.



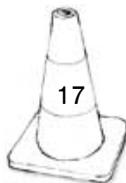
Take for example the acclaimed “Seattle Monolith” that showed up without warning on New Year’s day 2001 atop Kite Hill in Magnuson Park. The public response was immediate and mostly enthusiastic. Amazingly, the 350-pound, 11 foot tall steel block was mysteriously stolen the following night by an unknown rival art group and secretly moved to the island in the middle of Green Lake. The Seattle Parks and Recreation discovered the perpetrators and arranged to have it moved to a warehouse before being quasi-sanctioned for temporary placement back at Kite Hill for the season. The project made international headlines and the wonder of its origins and movement across town proved to be endlessly intriguing to a curious public.

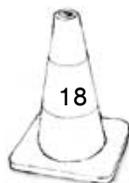
While the “Seattle Monolith” did not occur within the right-of-way, a similar project occurred in 2004 consisting of a series of large plaster busts on the sidewalks of Capital Hill. The busts remained for several days as the City decided whether or not they presented a

public safety risk. Eventually the work was trucked away without event but not before the local papers published dozens of opinions about the sculptures’ origin and artist’s intent. These and other unofficial guerilla art works suggest that there is fertile territory to be explored. If no other outlet is allowed, perhaps there is a way to loosen up the Street Use Permit process to allow for the temporary placement of citizen-generated artwork in the right of way. This would allow for a safety check at the minimum and potentially save SDOT from over reacting to an otherwise harmless creative gesture.



Image of the mysterious Seattle Monolith  
Photo courtesy of the Seattle Union Record







## TUNE-UP RECOMMENDATIONS:

*"Between two products equal in price, function and quality, the better looking will out sell the other."*  
-- Raymond Loewy

### OVERVIEW OF SDOT:

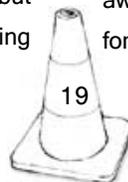
During the course of research and interviews for this study, some general observations were noted that should be detailed for the purpose of establishing a benchmark to measure against future progress. These comments are also intended as an introduction to specific recommendations for each department and remain general in the sense that additional qualitative research would be necessary to establish the certainty of these observations.

As a whole, SDOT is doing outstanding work in delivering products and services given the climate of ongoing budget shortages and belt-tightening. Morale is good and complaints were few among those interviewed. Evident across the entire department was a surprisingly high sense of pride in the work that is accomplished annually. In the area of customer service, the department is doing excellent work and presents itself well; staff who work the public counters are always courteous and helpful. Generally, the individuals within product-oriented departments share an earnest desire to improve on future projects in terms of quality and quantity. Much of this optimism is, of course, due to excellence in character of the individuals who fill the ranks of this 900 person organization, but a lot can be attributed to the department's recent re-training commitment, making for a more service-oriented approach.

A clear example of the willingness to improve is no further away than the embrace of this SDOT Art Plan. The enthusiasm and excitement generated during interview discussions were universal. It seems that most within SDOT management have long felt that the department can do better in supporting art, aesthetics and a more pleasant pedestrian environment.

In contrast, a long-term problem for the department is the public's general lack of comprehension in what SDOT does. The response of many is "Oh, Seattle has a transportation department? I didn't know." Moreover, the public satisfaction about the appearance of the right-of-way is often lackluster. It is true that most of what SDOT produces is concrete and there is little to no consideration for either the appearance of these surfaces or how they might combine additively to make for inspired urban environments. In this area of aesthetics, the department as a whole has a considerable opportunity to improve.

Evidence supporting charges of the public's poor outlook on transportation infrastructure is never very far away; usually as far away as the morning paper. Take today for example:



RAVENNA PARK AND RIDE MAY GET ARTISTIC TOUCH

Creative proposals to transform ugly, dreary park and ride at I-5 to be sought

By Kerry Murakami

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

*"In the concrete jungle on Northeast Ravenna Boulevard lurk commuters and the homeless and the occasional knight. The thicket of concrete columns under Interstate 5 is dark and dreary. The neighborhood associations of Roosevelt and Green Lake once voted the Ravenna Park & Ride lot one of their most hated places..."*

While this story references a federal interstate, it should come as no surprise that sentiments are not all that different with regard to many of the transportation projects built by the City.

The reasons for this are numerous, but perhaps one plausible explanation can be deduced from the following often quoted rule of thumb among high ranking division project managers: "95 percent of CIP budgets are directed toward the proper function of a project (the engineering) and five percent is spent on the things that people experience". Put another way, the planning, engineering, contractor profit, signage, electrical, mechanical, hardware, rebar, columns, beams, slabs and foundations account for 95 percent of a project budget. The remaining five percent is the topping slab, guardrails, stairs, lamp posts, seating, bike racks sidewalks and traffic islands. Yet, it is this five percent that the citizens see and care about the most. As the Seattle PI article alludes, the community takes for granted the fact that I-5 is functioning beautifully as a transportation workhorse, but instead they are enraged and defeated by the deleterious consequences of the oppressive structure.

Another plausible explanation for low public opinion likely comes from the history of the department that is derivative of the engineering mentality, one that is steeped in practicality and function. The influence of institutional memory, staff experience, lean project budgets and eternal value engineering contribute to a history of function trumping appearance time and again.

During the interview and evaluation period there was a concerted effort to uncover where and/or who was responsible for making aesthetic decisions and recommendations. It is telling that out of the entire department staff, there wasn't any particular individual or group of individuals whose job description

included the aesthetics of the built environment (with the exception of the SDOT landscape architect). While there area several project managers in PPMP and Roadway Structures who demonstrated a clear interest and concern for aesthetics, direction on SDOT design is made largely by outside forces. The list of outside influences includes the Design Commission, community/neighborhood groups, and consultants (usually major engineering firms). The primary difficulty with this process is that it is not proactive. The result is that SDOT finds itself regularly in a reactive position in which it is defending an engineering/industrial product rather than a defensible design approach. Late-stage attempts to visually enhance projects in an after-the-fact manner are never as effective or harmonious as a more integrated design approach.

## RE-THINKING REPEATING PROJECTS:

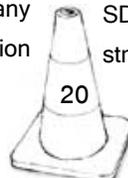
Separate from the discussions in BOOK II: *The Toolkit*, this section offers a forum to theorize more generally on the profound influence certain repeating capital projects have on the formation of the City. These are:

1. Roadway Structures (bridges, etc.)
2. Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails
3. Streets and Sidewalks

### 1. Roadway Structures

*Bridges, Bridge Approaches, Pedestrian Bridges, Tunnels, Retaining Walls*

Bridges rank at the top of the City's most expensive repeat investments. Bridges require replacement from exposure and corrosion approximately every 100 years and, according to the City Council Transportation Committee, 37 percent of Seattle's 150 bridges are in poor condition. With lean City budgets we are replacing bridges at a rate of one every three to four years when the rate should be one per year. As bridges continue to be replaced, it is essential that SDOT adopt a big picture view of how these enormous structures impact the neighborhoods they occupy.



Each bridge SDOT builds has the de facto quality of being an economic and transportation link for neighborhoods. But in many urban conditions around the city, bridges are also barriers to the community fabric running perpendicular to the bridge structure. The Alaskan Way Viaduct is the supreme example of the divisive nature resulting from unintentional design. Other qualitative impacts of a bridge structure can positively or negatively affect people living and working nearby, including numerous difficult-to-measure aspects like views, air quality, urban planning, neighborhood spirit, noise, light, traffic, homeless encampments, graffiti, visual blight, personal safety, and engineering excellence.

What makes an amazing bridge? There are at least a thousand profound examples around the world and what they share in common is much more than the safe and efficient movement of goods across a divide; they lift the spirit and appeal the highest ideals of human creativity. A great bridge is a work of art, enhancing and elevating every aspect of the community it serves. Does Seattle have such a bridge? One candidate would certainly have to be the WSDOT-owned Montlake Bridge (1925), designed by University of Washington campus architect Carl Gould and on National Register of Historic Places and the Washington Heritage Register. The structure fulfills its function linking previously divided neighborhoods and does so with profound artistry, economy, craftsmanship, and elegance.

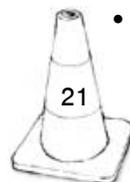
It is true that not all bridges need to be engineering and architectural masterworks. Many bridges are only visible topside by traveling over them due to steep topography and vegetation. Still other bridges have no use for aesthetic consideration because of their industrial use or location. But many bridges sit squarely in the middle of neighborhoods or are along major pedestrian routes that demand a greater level of design, detail, craftsmanship and artistry beyond those sad cost-effective lumps of concrete built since the 1950s.

In order to determine which upcoming bridge projects deserve an *intentional design* approach, at least one of the following criteria should be met:

- (a) A pedestrian component above, below or alongside - [min. 10 pedestrians per day].
- (b) Within 500 feet of residential structures or within the view-shed of a residential zone.
- (c) Crosses a public waterway.
- (d) A demonstrated history or likelihood of encampments below.

The city should require this threshold not only on SDOT bridges, but on WSDOT projects that impact Seattle citizens in the same way. Once a proposed structure qualifies for *intentional design* it must then respond creatively to the following checklist:

- General Design
  1. Explore alternatives to the concrete "T" beam.
  2. Eliminate all ledges for roosting pigeons - do not rely on spikes.
  3. Create hierarchy of bridge elements.
  4. Artist and architects to be part of the design team (can be associated with consultants).
  5. Prioritize refined structural elegance over brut efficiency.
  6. Require a scheme for bridge structure illumination - in addition to pedestrian lighting.
  7. Design for uses to take place below bridge structures.
  8. Develop view platforms for pedestrians - on bridge deck and stair landings.
  9. Bridges over waterways to include pedestrian access to water.
  10. Demarcate special architectural treatment at bridge entry points.
- Guardrails and handrails
  1. On next large bridge project, develop new AASHTO approved guardrail design that will be the new Seattle standard template.
  2. Set budget and separately bid non-crash related handrails and guardrails to local artisans.
- Graffiti and postering
  1. Texture, detail or otherwise modulate flat surfaces within human reach.



2. Clear coat concrete surfaces with clear or matching bridge color below eight feet.
  3. Use chain link as a last resort against problem areas (vinyl or galvanized architectural grade with maximum one-inch spacing).
- Encampments
    - Lay field of four to 12 inch diameter river rock on end to form imperfect surface.
  - Pedestrian Safety and Public Sanitation
    1. Design stairs in straight runs.
    2. Provide no blind corners.
    3. Minimize column size near pedestrian crossing (increase quantity, decrease diameter).
    4. Encourage athletic uses under bridges such as basketball, squash, tennis and strength training.
    5. Provide brighter and higher quality lighting.
    6. Develop program to rent space under approaches or viaducts for non-storage related uses.
  - Columns, Piers and Retaining Walls
    1. Avoid smooth round or square bulk.
    2. Clad with patterned metal.
    3. Develop faceted surfaces.
    4. Provide painted or otherwise colored surfaces.
    5. Develop structurally expressive form.
    6. Embed conduit for up-lighting.
    7. Consider steel - locations are dry and corrosion proof.
    8. Require artist or artisan designed surfaces.
  - Sidewalks - neighborhood identity, color, texture, poems, ceramic inlays (See B O O K I I: *The Toolkit*).
  - Storm Drains - educational component (green bio-swale under bridge?).
  - Street Furniture - seating, lamp posts, view shelter.

Because the undersides of bridges offer dry protected spaces, they are convenient places for the proliferation of encampments. Nobody needs reminding that these spaces pose ongoing safety, sanitation, Police + Fire Department maintenance and legal liabilities for the City.

The examples of the “Fremont Troll”, “Wall of Death,” “Painted Carp Columns”, and “Wave Rave Cave” are all recent

examples of how the underside of bridges have been retroactively reclaimed by artistic interventions, creating civic assets out of public eyesores.

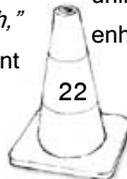
**Resolution:**

*Let every SDOT bridge be an opportunity to positively address the experience of the pedestrian, the neighborhood, and the general quality of life around the structure. When bridges have pedestrian interface, consider by commission or competition the installation of a major artwork to physically and/or psychologically claim leftover space and create a civic asset.*

## 2. Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails

Several bicycle and pedestrian trails under design and construction in the City of Seattle will be realized over the next decade. To a large extent, the trail routes, names and plans for implementation have already been defined. The routes for these trails tend to ribbon through the city along former railroad beds and utility, water, or arterial street right-of-ways. At some point, most will pass through dense and often confusing urban areas. With budgets as low as they are for these projects it is difficult to imagine accomplishing much besides a stripped asphalt roadbed with gravel shoulders. However, if budgets miraculously increased through grants or political will, it would be possible to create a something really special. The City of Shoreline has already accomplished just that with its recently completed segment of the Interurban Trail and has provided Seattle with an extremely high quality precedent that may prove inspiring.

Regardless of the budget status, SDOT can request to employ *1% for Art* funding to bring an artist on board to develop work that will enhance the trail experience. Bike/Pedestrian trails are excellent places for artist involvement due to their high level of civic engagement, diversity of locations, viewpoints, changes in context and unlimited creative opportunities. A list of ideas for trail enhancement could include:



## TRAIL SURFACE

Material selection is limited due to concerns of slippery surfaces but with an artist on a willing design team there is a host of ideas for trail uniqueness and consistency:

- edge treatment,
- curbstones,
- reflectors,
- stamped/colored concrete,
- metal inlay (cast iron?),
- mica sprinkle,
- pigmented gravel, and
- core sample w/glass or urethane cast.

## WAYFINDING

It is not so difficult to get lost through 90 degree turns, railroad crossings and arterial street crossings when traveling through dense urban areas. To counteract the potential to lose site of the trail, there are several ideas that improve trail connectivity:

- cast aluminum bollards with sculptural images,
- solar and LED colored lighting,
- stamped/colored concrete or running inlay,
- unique repetitive signage or brightly colored poles.

## ART and CREATIVITY

High use and accessibility make these trails excellent candidates for percent for art investment.

- Prioritize smaller work over large signature sculpture.
- Work that reappears or runs the entire length is optimal.
- Land art and earthwork.
- Sound art +and lighting.
- Mosaic, stamping or inlay.
- Artist designed fencing.
- Imbedded linear poetry or fiction.
- Rest stop seating and plazas.

## 3. Streets and Sidewalks

There are four general project categories affecting the character of the right-of-way that regularly repeat within SDOT.

1. CIP street improvements (examples: The Ave Project, 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. Project, Leary Way to 46<sup>th</sup> Project).
2. Arterial major maintenance (example: Rainier Ave S. Resurfacing).
3. Transit-related street improvements (example: South Lake Union Streetcar, Lake City Multi-model).
4. General spot bike and pedestrian improvements (examples: miscellaneous curb bulbs, new sidewalks, traffic circles).

The system of streets and sidewalks in the city is a gigantic networked landscape that remains largely invisible to the citizens who use it. Concerns about who is responsible for its construction and maintenance are rarely considered unless a pothole develops or a sidewalk heaves. Even though the network is entirely background, it plays a major role in the character of a place. All we must do to recall the importance of the system is imagine Pike Place Market without cobblestone streets, New York's SoHo without bluestone slate sidewalks, or Westlake without its granite mosaic surfaces.

The nature and quality of great urban places is wholly dependent on the contribution of all the individual elements and the surfaces that comprise the city streets and sidewalks are no exception. By making a slightly greater effort in the design of a single neighborhood street, SDOT can begin to dramatically improve civic ownership and pride of place.

A great deal of work has already been accomplished to encourage the intelligent development of street character, as detailed in the 1993 Green Street Program ordinance. Since then, there have been several excellent examples of the *Green Street* principles developed. The City has also produced two other plans that further direct developers in rapidly developing target neighborhoods; the Denny Triangle Green Street Program (City Design) and the Terry Avenue Plan (SDOT). Ironically, all three of these



plans were intended primarily for guiding the work of private developers, while the City has not officially adopted a similar set of rules.

Nonetheless, there have been several recent general street improvement projects that have come a long way from the street and sidewalk designs of the 1950s, most notably “*The Ave. Project*”.

*The Ave. Project* rebuilt the entire street and sidewalk system of the core retail section in the University District. This long overdue project has been hailed as a breakthrough in Seattle civic design and was recently recognized with an award by the Puget Sound Regional Council for being “an exceptional effort that promotes a livable region ...” The completely rehabilitated streetscape has several strong features including a widened sidewalk, bus stop indents, curb bulbs, benches, antique style street lighting, wayfinding kiosks, tree pit drainage swales, decorative metalwork, pre-cast horse hitches (?), concrete streets, sidewalk brick inlay at intersections and a UW student sculpture garden in the Campus Parkway median.

For Seattle and the regional partners that contributed to *The Ave. Project*, it is clearly breakthrough work that has established an impressive benchmark. From this new position, there should be increased willingness among future stakeholders to make additional aesthetic gains on the next Urban Village CIP Street Improvement (refer to the SDOT Art Plan **Book II: Toolkit** for further detail).

Other work on streets and sidewalks performed by SDOT may not ordinarily arouse interest in project managers or community members to include artwork, but there is literally no project too small to work in a gesture of creativity. Even the humble curb bulb could be a candidate for a community-generated mosaic project (see 20<sup>th</sup> + Madison in **BOOK III: Sidewalk Survey**), an unusual landscape treatment or an artisan designed bench.

### 1% FOR ART: Understanding the Finances

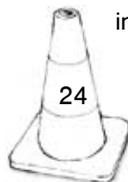
Many within the department have wondered where the 1% for Art funding comes from and where it goes. Ongoing misconceptions have resulted in tensions, thereby warranting a brief summary in order to lift the veil of mystery surrounding the flow of money regarding public art.

One of the most persistent questions comes from project managers who wonder why 1% for Art money is deducted from their project budgets and not later returned in the form of artwork. In a related observation, some capital projects seem to have an adequate art budget while others have no art component at all. What explains these oddities?

The 1% of Art ordinance rarely ever results in a full one percent of an SDOT project budget. This is due to the way that SDOT projects are funded and the language of the 1% for Art legislation. It is already widely known that SDOT functions without an adequate municipal revenue source to accomplish its mission. Instead, the bulk of most medium and large project budgets is derived from multiple federal

and state grant sources. The various percent for art laws or lack thereof, are entirely different for these agencies and do not overlap or contribute in any direct way to the City’s public art funds. As a result, the small sums of general fund money on SDOT capital projects are generally not enough to generate artwork. Fortunately, our ordinance allows “pooling” of a department’s percent for art money into an account called the Municipal Art Fund. This fund

is administered directly by the staff within the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs with oversight by an citizen advisory group known as the *Seattle Arts Commission*. The pooled resources are then dispersed annually toward upcoming capital projects based on a document called the Municipal Art Plan. This explains why a small paving project on Leary Way may not immediately result in artwork, but several paving projects could eventually lead to a sidewalk treatment in a neighborhood pedestrian zone.



Though rarely, if ever implemented, federal funding on capital projects allows for up to three percent of grant amounts to be put toward “beautification”. While the exact wording of these rules was not found during the writing of this plan, the definition has been loosely described by several grant and financial managers as (a) aesthetic treatments, (b) “undergrounding” of utilities, and (c) landscape design. Although evidence is scarce, there appears to be a soft determination on the part of federal funding for project results to be aesthetically pleasing. With Seattle, the more common outcome appears to be that projects are so desperately under-funded from the outset that resources are simply not set aside for aesthetics. It may also be true that aesthetic considerations are deemed expendable until outside influences exert pressure to act otherwise. While federal funding generally does not provide funding for public art, there remains no practical impediment to hiring an artist to complete a functional component of a capital project; typical examples might include a guardrail, railing, wall treatment, concrete formwork, light fixture or seating element.

The federal TEA-21 funding source frequently used in SDOT grant-based funding has a 1992 era provision titled *Transportation Enhancements* that now allows for 17 percent of funds to be applied toward



a whole range of “beautification” plans. The list of specifically approved enhancements includes street furniture, lighting, bus shelters, native vegetation and, most importantly, public art. While it does not appear

that SDOT has pursued these funds for artistic purposes, there remains a fantastic untapped potential. As an example, the Cultural Corridors Project in New Mexico used nearly \$1 million in *Transportation Enhancement* funds to enhance and celebrate the communities along historic Route 66, resulting in several major public art commissions.

State funding for public art is generated at a rate of one-half of one percent on all capital projects in excess of \$200,000. The state law also allows for “pooling” and this

generates an average of \$3 million dollars annually, primarily through arts organizations, state buildings and schools via the Washington State Arts Commission. The law does not allow for spending “pooled” public art dollars on transportation related capital projects.

**1% FOR ART:** The Goal

The opening paragraph of the 1973 City of Seattle percent for art Municipal Code states:

**20.32.010 Purpose**

*The City accepts a responsibility for expanding public experience with visual art. Such art has enabled people in all societies better to understand their communities and individual lives. Artists capable of creating art for public places must be encouraged and Seattle's standing as a regional leader in public art enhanced. A policy is therefore established to direct the inclusion of works of art in public works of the City.*

The code is clearly about providing the financial means for artists to create art for public places and to enhance Seattle as a “leader in public art”. The language of this inspired and forward thinking piece of legislation draws a connection between “art” and “understanding” of community. These terms are intentionally broad and imply inclusiveness in terms of content, medium, location and style.

Since much of Seattle’s public space is largely sidewalks and roadways, it follows that the ordinance clearly intended artwork to be integral to as much of the “public” portion of the transportation infrastructure as practical. In other words, artwork should be placed on City property wherever it can be enjoyed (without sacrificing public safety). Since roads and sidewalks extending to all corners of the city, it is essential to balance the placement of artwork around the city so that we do not inadvertently prefer downtown neighborhoods over others. In selecting appropriate locations for future artwork, extra care should be taken to include economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and pocket business districts, since these are often among the last to receive transportation dollars and the populations that could most benefit.

Since the law also embraces a diversity of “visual art” styles, mediums and content, we must be cautious about



bias toward one type of artwork to the exclusion of others.

Although this may seem like an obvious conclusion, it is one aspect that remains difficult to overcome. A review of the

past 30 years of public art in Seattle reveals a history of support for large-format permanent sculpture such as those seen underneath the new convention center canopy along Pine Street. With a fresh approach, SDOT has the ability to support a greater diversity of compelling art forms including small scale, two-



Example of stand alone sculpture - Artists: M. and C. Baden, "The Wall of Death"

dimensional, temporary, written, performance, and film/video artwork (reference new ideas in BOOK II: *The Toolkit*). John Chandler, a Boston writer and critic, writes:

“... (a) former commissioner of the Department of Environmental Management in Massachusetts, made it a policy to always include artists on the design teams for new state parks. He said that artists treat each place ‘as though it were the center of the universe,’ and as a result, ‘the places they create are very special places, which say to the visitors who use them that they too are very special people.’”

This statement does the best job of any in articulating the civic goal for the 1% for Art program. The concern for place, meaning and aesthetics is a service that public artists offer and they need only be invited to the design table in order to begin counteracting the anonymity of the built environment. And as with any other professional, it is important that artists are given authority, team support, a reasonable budget for the scale of the project and a clear set of givens in order to succeed at their job. The quote above also mentions “center of the universe”, which should sound familiar to neighborhood denizens, perfectly describing the effect of decades of citizen-based artistic contributions in Fremont. The ongoing investments by the citizens of Fremont have been enormously beneficial to the City. Not only is it the shining example of neighborhood identify, but it has attracted job growth, a tax base and additional talent to the

city, via several significant companies that recently established headquarters there.

One small, but important, distinction to make regarding the intention of the 1% for Art legislation, prioritizes opportunities for artists first, from which benefits will accrue for the city; not the other way around. While SDOT can expect to improve its public image from adopting a leadership position in art support, this should be considered a benefit, not a goal. The goal is to create greater meaning in the lives of citizens by inviting artists to contribute in the making of the future Seattle right-of-way. With this as our goal, the entire city will benefit, in ways impossible to predict.

For those needing reassurance, we need only look to San Diego, which has already begun the process of formally linking public art and capital projects. Its policy requires that all City department capital projects must integrate an artist into to the design team at project outset. Here is the text of their 2% for Art ordinance:

*“This policy is intended to promote the cultural heritage and artistic development of the City to enhance its character and identity, to contribute to economic development and tourism, to add warmth, dignity, beauty, and accessibility to public places and to increase opportunities for City residents to experience and participate in the visual, performing, and literary arts by directing the inclusion of public art in Capital Improvements Program projects initiated by the City and other public improvement projects undertaken by the Redevelopment Agency.”*

This remarkable creative investment has already resulted in the execution of 26 public art projects in the few short years of its adoption.

