

Linda S. Thibodeau

Director

Division of Libraries, Archives,
& Museums

lam.alaska.gov

SEAL OF THE STATE
STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: December 3, 2013

Percent for Art Public Artwork Selected for New Alaska State Library, Museum and Archives Complex

JUNEAU – The State of Alaska is pleased to announce the artists commissioned to create public artwork for the State Library, Archives & Museum (SLAM) building project in Juneau. Walter Gordinier of Portland, Oregon; Evon Zerbetz of Ketchikan, Alaska; and Martin Shelton of Bellingham, Washington (formerly of Juneau) were selected through an open call in coordination with the Alaska State Council on the Arts (ASCA) and the SLAM project Percent for Art advisory (selection) committee.

A ten-month design and concept development phase provided a unique opportunity for collaboration and dialogue with these three artists and the advisory committee representing ECI Hyer Architects; the Alaska Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums; Alaskan artists; the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities and ASCA. The total planned budget for the artwork development, fabrication and installation is 1% of the building construction costs, a total amount of \$1,000,000.

Kes Woodward, artist, historian, curator and Professor of Art Emeritus at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and artist assigned to the advisory committee, described the selection process:

I have been a part of more than three dozen Percent for Art selection committees in the four decades since the inception of this program in Alaska, and have never worked with a committee as uniformly excited about a project as this one, or one which worked so closely with the artists who applied and those who were selected. The committee started early in the process in order to select the artists and work with them to integrate the art with the building. The artists we eventually selected met with us in person, each of them proving not only open to, but extraordinarily welcoming of, collaboration with the committee. All decisions were made by consensus and every committee member has made key contributions to the outcome since the very start. In a perfect world, this is the way public art selection committees should work everywhere, every time.

The genuine excitement on the part of every member of the public art selection committee for SLAM and the extraordinary amount of time put in by committee members not only to select the artwork, but to collaborate on details of its character and siting with the artists, means that the public art for this building has been and will be curated, not just chosen. We as a committee feel that the artwork will not only enhance and work with this remarkable

facility, but will have a significant, positive impact on the look and feel of the entire downtown Juneau area. This building and its complementary artwork are something the people of Juneau and all Alaskans will be proud to call their own.

About the Selected Artwork Proposals:

The exterior artwork, designed by Walter Gordinier, is a confluence of two- and three-dimensional forms, material, and color. The plaza design and four accompanying art features are linked to create a dynamic sculptural arrival and gathering experience. Additionally, the plaza and art features will serve as an aerial painting to the community situated on the hills around the Willoughby District. The extreme downward vantages from the buildings above will allow the art to be viewed from a fresh, innovative perspective.

The interior cast glass sculptures by Gordinier will bring color and vibrancy to complement architectural details and other curated features co-located in the atrium lobby. Each artistic sculpture will be accessible to a diverse audience. Ten-foot-high cast glass sculptures will stand as “noble sentinels” from their integrated position within the reading room interior glass partition wall; an array of colorful “story bars” four feet high and four-inch-by-four-inch bars of glass will add color and punctuation to the glass railings on the mezzanine and second floor of the facility; “Glacial Ponding,” reminiscent of the many bodies of frozen water found throughout Alaska, will be a signature wall-mounted sculpture which will greet visitors as they enter SLAM.

Nimbus, by Robert Murray, an existing sculpture owned by the Alaska State Museum, has a prominent location on the plaza. The sculpture will be restored in consultation with the original sculptor and fabricator. Bob Banghart, SLAM Deputy Director, commented, “Nimbus will be part of the sculptural ensemble of the courtyard. The committee was pleased to have been able to work with Mr. Gordinier and Mr. Murray to present both artists’ works to their best advantages.”

A series of nine hand-built benches created by Martin Shelton and made from lustrous Pacific yew wood will be sited next to the glass railings on the mezzanine and second floor. Their functional forms echo the trees from which their material originated in the forest environment. They will be sculpted to create an inviting surface and grouped to encourage conversation and community. This is Shelton’s first Percent for Art commission.

“We are Written Between the Layers of the Earth,” by Evon Zerbetz, is a modern tale about the origins of making marks, recording and sharing our stories. In this dream-like sequence rendered in art glass and wood for the wall between the SLAM reading room and reference room, an Arctic fox observes a woman cutting through the fabric of the Earth; a sandhill crane receives a message drawn through the sky by a flying figure; and a kayaker writes his story in the sea with a giant pencil, creating a trail of phosphorescence. On a conceptual level, the piece considers the origins of the material for records, archives, and collections. It asks how we as humans make our marks on Alaska, and how Alaska makes its mark on us. With this piece for SLAM, Zerbetz will transition her art from her beloved medium of printmaking on paper to a large-scale whimsical style on glass and wood, yet retaining the look of her recognizable linocut originals.

About the Alaska State Council on the Arts and SLAM:

The Alaska State Council on the Arts oversees the State’s Percent for Art Program. Since the Percent for Art law was passed in 1975, Alaska has employed artists and benefitted from the cultural, social, and economic value of public art. Public art is a distinguishing part of our history and our evolving

culture. It reflects and reveals our society, adds meaning to our cities and uniqueness to our communities. Public art humanizes the built environment and invigorates public spaces. It provides an intersection between past, present and future, between disciplines, and between ideas. Public art is freely accessible and cities and towns with public art aspire to be places where people want to live and visit.

The construction of the SLAM project is well under way in Alaska's capital, for the Department of Education & Early Development's Division of Libraries Archives and Museums. Completion date for the SLAM project is the spring of 2016. Partial funding has allowed the multi-year construction project to begin in 2012. Additional funding, \$37.215 million, is necessary to complete the project on time and within budget.

For a slideshow of the SLAM project, including artists' designs:

<http://museums.alaska.gov/lam/slam.html>.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

395 Whittier, Juneau, AK

Phone (907) 465-2901 Fax (907) 465-2976

www.museums.alaska.gov