



Date: January 14, 1999

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Buschlen Mowatt Exhibit Review

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board grant the request of the Buschlen Mowatt Foundation to hold a second International Sculpture Exhibit in 1999 along the seawall between Stanley Park and the Aquatic Centre subject to the receipt of financial statements from the Foundation on transactions related to the 1998 exhibit and with all arrangements to the satisfaction of the General Manager.**
- B. THAT the exhibit be required to allocate two sites to works by local or regional artists;**
- C. THAT staff review the project and develop a process for the allocation of exhibit space on an annual basis**

POLICY

In 1988 the Park Board adopted the Acceptance Guidelines for Long Term Gifts of Public Art developed by the City of Vancouver's Art in Public Places committee (now the Public Art Committee)

In 1998 the Board adopted revised Site Review Guidelines and a process to assist the Board in considering the site considerations for proposed donations of public art and memorials in parks.

In 1993 the Board adopted the Park Board Arts Policy Report and Recommendations which recommends facilitating temporary art installation in parks.

BACKGROUND

In December, 1997, the Buschlen Mowatt Foundation approached the Board with a request to install an international sculpture exhibit in honour of Don Buschlen. The Board gave approval requesting an evaluation by both the City's Public Art Committee and the Park Board. The exhibit was installed over the summer of 1998.

DISCUSSION

In December 1998 the panel, which originally reviewed the work for content, was reconvened to review the exhibit. This was done through looking at the following:

- the comments received from the public
- the media response
- the question of the intent of the project
- the advice of the Public Art Committee
- the request for future exhibits
- the potential request for an exhibit of local artists

Public response received by the Park Board was largely positive. (appendix 1) Besides 32 letters, faxes, e-mails and phone calls, Park Board staff received many favourable verbal comments. Many, both tourists and residents, indicated that the exhibit enhanced their experience of the park. Comments were received on the value of the sculptures in providing a catalyst for making contact with other park users. Others expressed the value in providing a positive experience with art.

Negative comments referred to parks remaining natural and the lack of relationship to Vancouver of the work exhibited.

Print and broadcast media gave the exhibit considerable coverage. There was a range of reaction to the exhibit but the coverage indicted the wide interest it held.

The panel discussed at length the question of the intent of the exhibit and the need to evaluate it based on this. The Foundation's stated objectives for the exhibit were:

- To provide the citizens of Vancouver with the opportunity to experience works by major International Sculptors and to be able to do so in an outdoor setting conducive to viewing and to maximize on the natural beauty of the city from May to October 1998.
- To provide visitors to the city with another cultural venue to enjoy and in so doing possibly encourage their stay in the region/to encourage and promote tourism in Vancouver.
- To expose the citizens of Vancouver to sculpture and broaden their understanding of this art form through lectures and guided walking tours.

An objective to sell the works became apparent through media reports after the work was installed. The review panel indicated that, if this is a stated objective, a concern might stem from a need to open the process to other interested galleries or organizations. Information has been requested on the financial transactions of the Foundation related to this exhibit. The Board regularly requires this information from organizations which have obtained exclusive use of parks for their purposes. This information will enable the Board to consider whether providing sites for this exhibit provides unusual support to the Buschlen Mowatt Gallery and Foundation through name recognition and commissions from sales. Upon receipt of the financial reports from the Foundation, staff will ascertain whether future exhibits after 1999 should be opened for bids and make a recommendation to the Board.

The panel also raised the question as to whether the Board should receive a percentage of any revenue over costs. A recommendation will be made to the Board on this following receipt of financial documents.

The Public Art Committee commented on the lack of contemporary and local work and the lack of curatorship and recommended that these be considered for the future. It also raised the concern about the commercial nature of this event.

Future exhibits were discussed. The panel recommended that permission be given to the Buschlen Mowatt Foundation to install an exhibit in 1999 under similar conditions to those in 1998.(Appendix 2) The role of the panel will change to that of addressing the exhibit as a whole and not the individual works. Staff will assume responsibility for working with Buschlen Mowatt to ensure that the subject matter of the work is acceptable for public siting. The park will again be posted with signage indicating the intent to hold another exhibit in the area.

It is recommended that a number of sites (approximately 5) between Stanley Park and the Aquatic Centre be established for the exhibit and that Buschlen Mowatt be permitted to install, at their own expense, some bases, similar to park bench bases, dedicated for the purpose of installing sculpture. These bases would need to be designed so that they don't detract from the park when not in use. Other sites would be selected to suit the individual works.

The panel recommended that consideration be given to work by local or regional artists. The Arts Policy has a goal to develop a broader role for artists within communities and the City arts policies states the importance of developing opportunities for local artists. Two spots out of a potential for ten to twelve total locations would be assigned to local work. The Public Art Committee would assist Buschlen Mowatt in determining a suitable process for the selection of local work.

Staff have been approached by two Vancouver sculptors exploring the possibility of an exhibit by local artists. Staff felt that, if a formal application is made by local artists for a separate sculpture exhibit that, while the proposal would need to be assessed on its merits, there are additional parks and spaces where this might prove feasible.

SUMMARY

The International Sculpture Exhibit in 1998 enhanced park enjoyment for many and provided a positive experience in the arts. When staff have worked with the Buschlen Mowatt Foundation to resolve concerns identified in this report, there is reason to believe an exhibit in 1999 will prove to be equally successful.

Prepared by:
Stanley District Office