

Utility Box Art Program

Overview – Phase One

The Alameda County Arts Commission has launched the Utility Box Art Program for the unincorporated area of Alameda County. The overall goal of this program is to help support a positive and welcoming environment. The program was first launched as a related component to the Community Identifier Projects. Phase One focuses on the utility boxes close to the three Community Identifier Projects in Ashland/Cherryland, Castro Valley, and San Lorenzo.

Overview – Phase Two

Phase Two of the Utility Box Art Program focuses on placing art designs on 40 County-controlled utility boxes in the unincorporated community of Castro Valley. Installation of the art designs will begin in mid-July. The Alameda County Arts Commission administered the program utilizing the standard procedures of the Alameda County Public Art Program, which involves community engagement activities such as community members serving on Artist Selection Committees and community outreach. Phase Two features a group of professional artists providing a series of 5-6 designs related in style and theme. When possible, the boxes will be placed in the same general area (e.g. a neighborhood, shopping district, or along a pedestrian pathway and/or vehicle thoroughfare). Artists were allowed to create new artworks or use existing artworks. The County entered into licensing agreements with the artists to reproduce their original artwork for this program. The artists retain ownership of the original artwork. Artists who live, work, or rent/own a studio in Alameda County and who are currently in the Arts Commission's Artist Registry were considered for this program. The designs will be printed on a vinyl material which will wrap the utility boxes. Designs will be in place for approximately 3 years and may be replaced or reprinted depending on various factors such as community interest and available project funds. Installation will be conducted by professional, experienced installers and will be managed by the Arts Commission staff.

Program Background & Updates

The Artist Selection Committee comprised of Castro Valley community members and arts professionals met on August 13, 2018 to review the qualifications and past artwork of professional artists in the Project Pool. The Selection Committee recommended a group of twelve artists/artist teams as semi-finalists. The artist semi-finalists were reviewed and approved by the Alameda County Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) and the Members of the Alameda County Arts Commission.

The Artist Selection Committee members for Phase Two of the program in Castro Valley are:

- Karl Hodges, Community Representative
- Roxann Lewis, Community Representative
- Kimberly Overton, Artist & Community Representative
- Ashley Strasburg, Community Representative
- Leah Virsik, Arts Professional
- Linda Willis, Community Representative
- Cathy O'Dea, Alameda County Arts Commissioner (non-voting, advisory)

- Winda Shimizu, Alameda County Arts Commissioner (non-voting, advisory)

The artist semi-finalists learned about the special characteristics of Castro Valley and developed a brief proposal describing a series of artwork for the program. The artist semi-finalists' proposals were available online for community comments from October 11 to November 5, 2018. Community members were encouraged to submit comments describing why each of the artists' proposals were or were not be a good match for the whole community. The comments helped to inform the Selection Committee's deliberation when they reconvened in mid-November. The public comments were not considered a vote.

The Artist Selection Committee reconvened on November 16, 2018 to review and discuss the artist semi-finalists' proposals as well as the community comments to determine a recommendation of the final artists to receive contracts. **The Artist Selection Committee recommended the following artists receive public art contracts for this program: Kanna Aoki (Albany), Denise Hart (Berkeley), Karen Kramer (Oakland), Lisa Levine (Alameda), Bhavna Misra (Fremont), team Joaquin Newman and Jerarde Gutierrez (Oakland/San Leandro), and Ethan Snyderman (Berkeley).** On December 10, 2018, the Castro Valley Municipal Advisory Council officially supported the Selection Committee's recommended artists. The recommended artists were approved by the Alameda County Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) and the Members of the Alameda County Arts Commission in December 2018. The Alameda County Board of Supervisors approved the recommended artists on January 29, 2019.

On April 15, 2019, the Castro Valley Municipal Advisory Council voted to support the 40 final art designs and locations for the Phase Two of the Utility Box Art Program. The final art designs and locations were approved by the Alameda County Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) on April 25, 2019 and the Members of the Alameda County Arts Commission on May 8, 2019. Installation of art designs on the utility boxes is scheduled to begin in mid-July and will continue through the Summer and Fall.

More Information

For more information, please contact the Alameda County Arts Commission

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