

Creating Public Art: The Process Behind The Product



The Big Idea

Making site-specific public art is a multi-step process that is collaborative, technical, and creative.



For High School Arts or Career and Technical Education Classes

In this project, students work as art selection committees determining site and design recommendations for public art for their own school campus. The theme for developing recommendations for and designing this art is centered on “Education”. In response to design recommendations and site opportunities identified by the student art selection committees, student artists/design teams create a proposal and design for public art. Proposals include description of art concept and imagery, scale renderings from multiple perspectives, and a description of materials and construction methods.

There are many ways this project can be expanded across multiple disciplines and classes: math, language arts, science, social studies, photography, architecture, drafting/CAD, welding, woodworking, technology. Designs proposals may have potential to become real artworks.

Fractal Tree Archway, 2009 by Paul Sorey

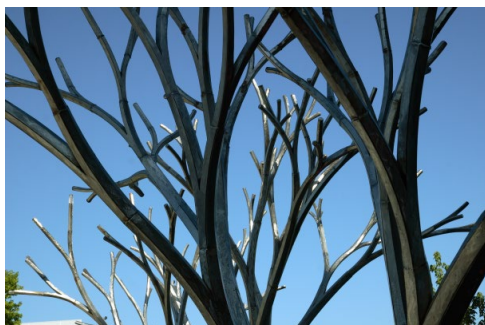
Endless, 2009 by Lead Pencil Studios

(Annie Han and Daniel Mihalyo)



Vocabulary

2-Dimensional
3-Dimensional
CAD design
Commission
Design
Engineering
Environment
Fabrication
Form
Installation
Proposal
Plan
Point of View
Scale renderings
Site specific



Introduction: the process behind public art

When you see a work of art at a school or a park or a public building, you might appreciate its forms or enjoy its relationship to the environment it is placed in. As both artists and part of the public who views and enjoys public art we are exploring the process of how it is made...who decides to put it in a place...who dreams it up...what are the steps in constructing it...how it is installed.

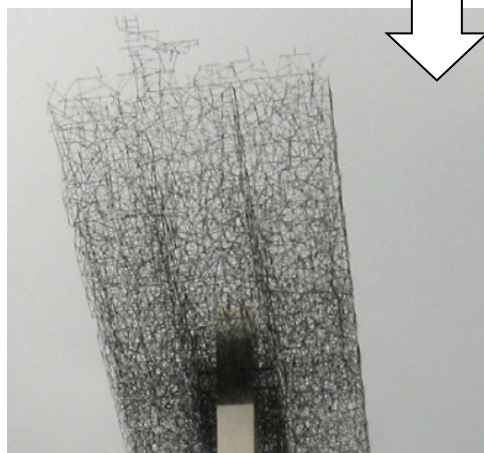
Every new state building and public school the State of Washington is required to spend 1/2% of the state funded portion of its construction budget on public art. We are going to look at two works of site-specific public artworks throughout this project: *Fractal Tree Archway*, 2009 by Paul Sorey and *Endless*, 2009 by Lead Pencil Studio (Annie Han and Daniel Mihalyo). **Site-specific** means that the art was designed and fabricated for a specific place with a specific audience (viewers) in mind. These public artworks are part of the Washington State Art Collection.

Fractal Tree Archway was created for Skagit Valley College and *Endless* was created for Bellevue College. Both works address math and science concepts and are adjacent to campus science buildings.

That might be where the similarities end--notice how different they are!

Committee Criteria for Lead Pencil Studio's *Endless*:

- Lightens/softens campus hardscape
- Responds to the building design, experiential with space and/or interactive
- More than decorative, causes discourse, visual connections of concept as teaching tool, stimulates curiosity and discussion (brain think / provocative)
- Suggests/echoes science, multiplicity of readings /interpretations



Part I: Art Selection Committees

Students first work collaboratively in groups as Art Selection Committees.

Fractal Tree Archway and *Endless* were developed by different artists in response to different art selection committees.

You will be part of an **Art Selection Committee** (teacher assigns or students form groups of 3-5).

The broad idea or theme for the art is focused on **Education** since it will be installed in a school environment. Please make a list of your ideas as you work through your responsibilities. An artist or design team will be developing a proposal for art based on your committee's recommendations. You will also be working as an artist or be part of a design team, but will be responding to a different committee's recommendations. Students must honor all voices in committee and design team groups and develop ideas and recommendations through a democratic, collaborative process.

Art Selection Committee Responsibilities: Record notes

☐ **Discuss the role of public art in society**

Is public art important? Why or why not?

Imagine public places without art—how does that change things?

What can public art accomplish? What can it give us?

Committee Criteria for Paul Sorey's *Fractal Tree Archway*:

- Addresses environment
- Something tall
- Lyricism; nice play off minimal building
- Community-gathering
- Environmental & natural focus
- Challenging – not provocative but intellectually engaging
- A signature work
- Nice site lines to other campus buildings



☐ **Develop broad recommendations for the future artwork**

These recommendations are developed to guide the artist /design team in shaping their ideas. Think about the concept of “Education” and how a work of art can address this idea within your school environment. Do you want the art to communicate ideas about transformation, transition or graduation, or perhaps facets of learning in different subjects? Would the art be literal, or would it be symbolic or metaphorical? Also, this is general, so words like “colorful” or “inviting” or “tall” or descriptions of how the art might interact with the site or audience (see criteria for Endless and Fractal Tree Archway) are appropriate. What size or scale do you imagine?

☐ **Identify target audiences**

Who ideally would be seeing the art: Students, Administrators, community members, parents?

How do you imagine people interacting with the art?

Would the art spark curiosity or conversation, soothe, entertain, delight, or possibly tell a story?

☐ **Identify a site on the school campus for the art**

Think about recommendations you have developed for the artwork: What it might be like and who you imagine will see it and interact with it. Identify a site for the art at your school campus with your criteria in mind.

Design Options

Proposals can be based on an artistic medium or process that is within the scope of class context and student knowledge whether painting, sculpture, mosaic, ceramics, glass fusing, or other.



Artist Statement

Endless represents fragments of an architectural structure characterized by indefinite conclusions within an open matrix. Reflecting on the culture of scientific inquiry driven to continually expand the boundaries of human knowledge, this artwork seeks to act as a template for furthering the open-ended imagination.

Part II: Artist Design Teams: Creating a Proposal

Students work independently as artist designers or teams to create a public art proposal

You will work independently, in pairs, or small groups to create a **proposal** in response to an art selection committee's recommendations (Committee and artist/design teams are matched to avoid overlapping members).

Artist/Design Team

☐ **Brainstorm design proposal ideas**

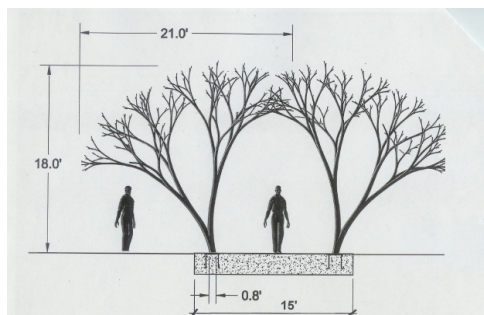
Think about the recommendations from committee that you have been assigned. Visit the site on your school campus the committee has identified. Sketch, take photographs, talk, write, think.

☐ **Measure and record site specifications**

Measure and record designated public art site information: dimensions, surfaces, lighting. Also consider existent environmental features such as trees, electrical components and irrigation of the site you will be designing public art for.

☐ **Create a design for a site-specific work of art**

Decide what the artwork will be in terms of **form**, materials and how it communicates the idea of "education" as broadly stated in committee recommendations. Create three **scale renderings**. These renderings can be drawings or **plans** made by hand or on a CAD program that reflect the location of the artwork in



Artist Statement

I am fascinated by the branching structure of trees found throughout nature, by the many roles of trees in ecosystems, and by their symbolic, psychological, and space-creating significance to humans. The form of these trees resulted from experimenting with fractal branching patterns.



the site, dimensions of the site, the scale of the artwork (size relative to the environment it will be placed), and how it will look from three different **points of view**. The **design** could show top, and sides. It could show close-ups. It needs to show as much information as possible to communicate what it will look like.

☐ Write about how the art would be fabricated

Imagine how this art would be built and who would build it. What sort of technical support and knowledge would be required? Would you need mechanics, welders, carpenters, masons, crane operators to **fabricate** and **install** the work?

☐ Write a description of art concept, imagery, and materials

Describe how the art reflects the theme of “education” what it will look like, and what it will be made out of.

Part III: Real World Requirements

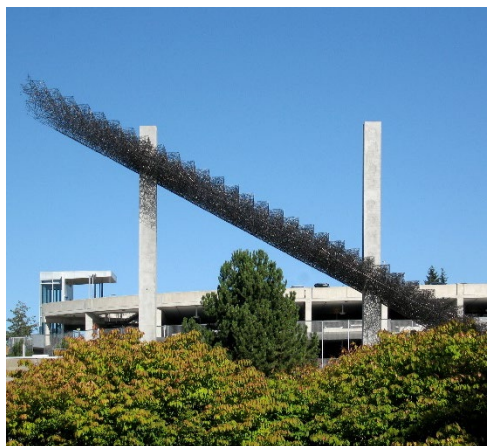
Artist proposals for public art also require timelines, budgets, and detailed technical information about how the art is constructed and who constructs it.

Engineers must be contracted by artists to evaluate safety and stability of design and installation.

Environmental stability in different climate and weather conditions is also evaluated.

In some cases artists fabricate the art themselves, or hire technicians who specialize in working with specific materials such as glass, metal, or stone.

The life expectancy and type of maintenance required for caring for the art are also requirements of proposals.



A look at the making of *Endless (or Fractal Tree Archway)*...

Slide show of plans, proposals, construction details and budget + actual construction sequence.

Part IV: Artist Design Team Presentations

Students present design proposals to class guided by the following questions:

- ☐ Share the committee recommendations that shaped your design proposal.
- ☐ Describe your creative brainstorming design process in response to committee recommendations and site requirements.
- ☐ Show your scale rendering/designs and read your description of art concept, imagery, and materials.
- ☐ Describe how the art would be fabricated.

Individual Student Reflection Questions:

What were some of the challenges and successes of collaborating as an art selection committee or artist/design team?

When you see a work of public art in a library, or school, or courthouse building, will you think about it differently now that you have completed this project? Describe.

Is public art important? Why or why not?



Washington State Arts Learning Standards: Visual Art

Anchor Standard 1 Creating: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.	Performance Standard (VA:Cr1.2.II): a. Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.
Anchor Standard 2 Creating: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.	Performance Standard (VA:Cr2.3.I): a. Collaboratively develop a proposal for an installation, artwork, or space design that transforms the perception and experience of a particular place.
Anchor Standard 3 Creating: Refine and complete artistic work.	Performance Standard (VA:Cr3.1.III): a. Reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art or design considering relevant traditional and contemporary criteria as well as personal artistic vision.
Anchor Standard 9 Responding: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.	Performance Standard (VA:Re9.1.III): a. Construct evaluations of a work of art or collection of works based on differing sets of criteria.
Anchor Standard 10 Connecting: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.	Performance Standard (VA:Cn10.1.I): a. Document the process of developing ideas from early stages to fully elaborated ideas.
Anchor Standard 11 Connecting: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.	Performance Standard (VA:Cn11.1.II): a. Compare uses of art in a variety of societal, cultural, and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary and local contexts.

Washington State Common Core Standards: English Language Arts

Writing: Text Types and Purposes	<p>W.9-10.2. Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.</p> <p>a. Introduce a topic and organize ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.</p> <p>b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.</p>
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Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration	SL.11-12.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. b. Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed. c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives. d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas	SL.9-10.4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

Washington State Next Generation Science Standards

Engineering Design	HS-ETS1-2. Design a solution to a complex real-world problem by breaking it down into smaller more manageable problems that can be solved by engineering. HS-ETS1-3. Evaluate a solution to a complex real-world problem based on prioritized criteria and trade-offs that account for a range of constraints, including cost, safety, reliability, and aesthetics, as well as possible social, cultural, and environmental impacts.
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Research and project expansion ideas to explore across disciplines...

Physics: How safe?

Loads, Limits, Stability...

Chemistry: How long?

Materials, Maintenance, Compatibility



Math: How much?

Amounts, Measurements, Costs, Budgets...

Language Arts: What will it look like?

Descriptions, Statements, Proposals...



Social Studies: Who does it reflect?

Time, Place, Community, Culture...