



Date: January 7, 2026

To: Members of the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions

From: Susan Evans McClure, Executive Director, Vermont Arts Council  
Michele Bailey, Senior Program Manager, Vermont Arts Council

Re: Art in State Buildings program updates

### **About the Art in State Buildings Program**

The Art in State Buildings Program commissions original artwork from Vermont artists for state-owned buildings and public spaces. With this program, the State of Vermont recognizes that public art improves the character and quality of State Buildings; enhances the workplace of State employees by creating an environment of distinction, enjoyment, and pride; and adds value to the cultural, aesthetic, and economic vitality of the State.

The program was established in 1988 with the passage of the Vermont Art in State Buildings Act ([No. 267 of 1988](#), updated [No. 50 of 2023](#)), with strong support from Vermont artists, communities and businesses. The Art in State Buildings Act requires that approved funds from the State capital budget be transferred to an Art Acquisition fund for the purpose of providing works of art in public buildings and facilities undergoing new construction or renovation, which may include an addition. The enabling legislation stipulates that a project may take place in “any State building or facility undergoing new construction or renovation, which may include an addition, with a total project cost of \$1,000,000.00 or more that is funded from an appropriation or appropriations in one or more capital construction act and has been recommended for consideration by the Commissioner.”

Since its founding, the program has commissioned artwork from over 60 artists to appear in 36 state-owned buildings and public spaces across Vermont, providing enjoyment and a source of pride for all Vermonters.

In 2023, Act 50 was signed into law, providing updates to the program, including a new funding mechanism that sets a minimum annual requested appropriation of \$75,000 (up from a maximum of \$50,000) in the State capital budget. This was the first funding increase since the program was established.

The program is administered by the Vermont Arts Council in partnership with the Vermont Department of Buildings and General Services.

### **Art in State Buildings Advisory Committee and the Art Acquisition Fund**

Per the statute (<https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/fullchapter/29/002>), the program is overseen by the Art in State Buildings Advisory Committee. The Committee provides final approval of project sites and works of art, and establishes guidelines for the selection, acquisition, and commission of works of art, and consists of the following (or their designees):

- Commissioner of Buildings and General Services
- Director of the Arts Council
- Chairs of the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions
- State Curator
- Chair of the Vermont Board of Architects

The Art in State Buildings Advisory Committee also establishes guidelines for management of the program. Per those guidelines, the Advisory Committee is the final authority on all matters regarding the Art in State Buildings program.

The statute also established an Art Acquisition Fund to finance the design, construction, integration, and purchase or commissioning of works of art for the Art in State Buildings Program. Per the statute:

- The Fund shall be composed of any amounts transferred or appropriated to it by the General Assembly.
- Use of funds: Amounts in the Fund shall be expended upon order of the Council for the acquisition or commissioning of works of art and administration of the Program.
- Fund balances: Any balance remaining at the end of the fiscal year shall remain in the Fund.

### **The Process of Creating Public Art in State Buildings**

- 1) The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services and the Arts Council staff meet to discuss possible project site(s) and determine site and budget. Using the following criteria for building selection
  - Public accessibility, in the context of building usage
  - Community or occupant agency interest
  - Potential for artistic innovation
  - *Regional* distribution of the funds *over the life span of the program*
  - Coordination with local or regional arts planning
  - Public use and visitation
  - Potential for occupant benefits for artwork that may be in facilities that are less accessible to the public
- 2) The Commissioner's recommendations (project site and amount) are made to the Art in State Buildings Advisory Committee for approval.

- 3) The Arts Council sends a memo to the BGS Commissioner requesting that the approved amounts be transferred to the Art Acquisition fund.
- 4) Arts Council staff coordinate with BGS Project Managers to develop timeline for the art selection project process etc.

From time to time, a previously approved building project does not move forward. Some examples would be that the project may be discontinued or significantly delayed, the building may be sold, or the scope of work has changed. In that case, the process starts again with discussions with the Commissioner and recommendation for re-allocation of funds already within the Art Acquisition fund. It has been within the purview of the Art in State Buildings Advisory Committee to review and approve/decline those recommendations.

For projects that continue to move forward, the process continues:

- 5) Arts Council staff administer the process for the identification of a Local Art Selection Panel, putting out a “call to artists” and contracting with the artist to design artwork for the site.
- 6) The Art in State Buildings Advisory Committee reviews final design of artwork for approval.
- 7) The Arts Council contracts with artist(s) to fabricate and install the artwork.
- 8) Upon completion, the artwork becomes property of the State of Vermont and is overseen by the State Curator’s office.

**Projects Currently in Process**

Art in State Buildings projects, aligned with Capital Bill construction projects, often take several years to complete. As with all construction projects, changes and adjustments are responsibility made along the way. Michele Bailey works closely with the team at Buildings and General Services to adapt to changes with projects as they happen. The past few years, with COVID and then flooding, changes and adaptations have been more frequent. Currently, the Council has several open Art in State Buildings projects that are approved and/or under consideration by the Art in State Buildings Advisory Committee.

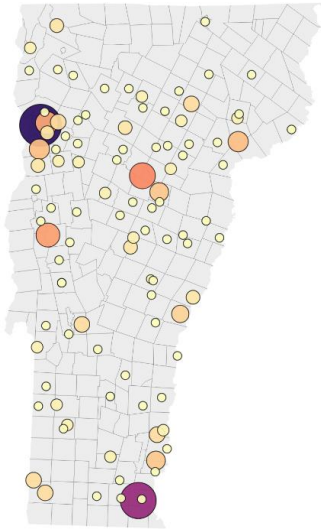
<b>Project</b>	<b>Award Year</b>	<b>Status</b>
Vermont Statehouse- Montpelier	FY15	Approved by Advisory Comm.; Commissioning new portrait connected to Statehouse Interpretive Plan
Supreme Court- Montpelier	FY17, FY18, FY19	Project no longer happening- Under consideration by Advisory Comm. to reallocate funds to other in process projects

Asa Bloomer State Office Building- Rutland	FY22	Approved by Advisory Comm.; moving forward
Supreme Court Windham- White River Junction	FY23	Approved by Advisory Comm.; Currently fabricating approved design for 2026 installation
NW Correctional Facility- St. Albans	FY24	Approved by Advisory Comm.; moving forward
Dept. of Children and Families Green Mountain Youth Services Campus- location TBD	FY25	Approved by Advisory Comm.; holding until RFP process for final location is complete
Newport Courthouse	FY26	Under consideration by Advisory Comm.

The Committee will be finalizing these recommended changes and any reallocation of funds that are currently in the Art Acquisition Fund to ensure that we can facilitate the creation of public art that will benefit all Vermonters. We look forward to sharing these incredible works with you in the coming years.

**About the Vermont Arts Council**

The Vermont Arts Council envisions a Vermont where artists thrive and everyone has access to creativity in their lives, education, and communities. Engagement with the arts transforms individuals, connects us more deeply to each other, energizes the economy, and sustains the vibrant cultural landscape that makes Vermont a great place to live. Since 1965, the Council has been the state's primary provider of funding, advocacy, and information for the arts in Vermont.



In FY25, the Arts Council awarded **\$1,444,302 in funding**. 225 total grants were awarded to **95 individuals and 139 organizations** in all of Vermont’s counties.

Grants directly support artists to create new work and deepen their practice, support communities to create public art connected with infrastructure projects, support educators to provide arts education to students in school settings, support arts organizations to add vibrancy to Vermont communities through projects that provide equal and abundant access to the arts, and much more. The Council also administers two grant programs on behalf of the state of Vermont- the Cultural Facilities grant program and the Art in State Buildings Program.