



RON GALPERIN  
CONTROLLER

June 17, 2020

Honorable Eric Garcetti, Mayor  
Honorable Michael Feuer, City Attorney  
Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council

**Re: A More Modern Approach to City-Owned Art**

The City of Los Angeles is a global hub of art and culture. Regionally- and even world-renowned painters, photographers, sculptors, and lithographers call our City home and produce groundbreaking artwork in our midst. The art created in Los Angeles helps shape our communities into richer, more vibrant spaces: from public museums and locally owned galleries to murals on freeway walls and neighborhood art centers.

The City itself owns thousands of pieces of art, some of which were commissioned, and others donated by artists, patrons or local organizations. There are three distinct categories of City-owned art: Proprietary Department Art (owned by the Airport, Port and Department of Water and Power); Public Art; and the City Art Collection. The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is the designated caretaker of the latter two categories of art, including the 2,500-piece City Art Collection. The works in this collection have been approved for display on City property or were acquired by donation or gift with approval from the Cultural Affairs Commission. My latest report covers the management and maintenance of this collection and urges the City to make changes that will improve art conservation and oversight.

At present, management of the City Art Collection is rooted in the past. While DCA does important work — managing art centers, historic sites, the Percent for Public Art programs and Citywide Mural Program, among other things — persistent budget limitations and staffing have made it challenging for DCA to serve as an effective steward of the City Art Collection. My report found that DCA has suspended its ongoing monitoring and management of the City Art Collection, leaving management to a series of databases that are outdated, ineffective and decentralized. In addition, there is currently no regular inventory process for City art, no regular condition assessment to determine art conservation needs, no enforcement mechanism to ensure that works out on loan are properly displayed and stored, and no ability to release or donate art that is valueless or damaged beyond repair.

Inadequate oversight has led to a City Art Collection that is both shoddy and incomplete. Specifically, 18 percent of the collection is currently missing (with some reported stolen) and 41 percent lacks identifying photographs. Of the 867 artworks with collection data, 25 percent (or 221) are damaged or in poor condition. And only half the collection has appraisal information — with a total value of approximately \$19 million — but most of the appraisals were done 16 to 18 years ago and more than 100 pieces were appraised more than 40 years ago.

### **Visualizing better art management**

Modernizing the City's art management program will not only improve the City Art Collection, but also enhance DCA's art oversight across all City departments. My report makes the following recommendations:

- **Develop a comprehensive inventory of City-owned art**, including the City Art Collection, Public Art and Proprietary Department Art. Updated conservation needs and appraisal information should be part of the inventory.
- **Implement a modern collection management system** using updated technology to track the location, loan history and condition of all City-owned art.
- **Create an online catalog and map of City-owned art** that will allow people to learn about the collection and where it is displayed, increasing transparency and accessibility of the City's collection.
- **Develop a policy on releasing art** that is damaged or too costly to maintain.
- **Establish a loan monitoring program** to certify that the City's art is accounted for and maintained while on loan.
- **Leverage the know-how of local arts organizations, academic institutions, and community experts** on better ways to evaluate and showcase City art.

I urge City leaders to adopt these recommendations to ensure that Los Angeles takes the necessary steps to protect and preserve City-owned art. Angelenos should be able to access and enjoy the City's cultural heritage now and in the decades to come.

Respectfully submitted,



RON GALPERIN  
L.A. Controller

A MORE

# MODERN

APPROACH TO  
CITY-OWNED

# ART



**RON**  **GALPERIN**  
LA CONTROLLER

# A MORE **MODERN** APPROACH TO CITY-OWNED **ART**



<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>I. Improving Stewardship of the City Art Collection</b>	<b>9</b>
A. Weak Inventory Management Practices Put Art at Risk	10
B. Hundreds of Artworks Are Unaccounted For	10
C. The Value of the City’s Artwork is Not Fully Known	11
D. Many Artworks Are in Need of Maintenance or Restoration	12
E. The City Does Not Have Process to Remove Art from its Collection	13
<b>II. Modernizing the City’s Artwork Management Tools</b>	<b>13</b>
A. DCA’s City Art Collection Database	14
B. DCA’s Public Art Database	15
C. Proprietary Department Inventories	15
D. Technology Can Make Art More Accessible and Easier to Curate	16
<b>III. Lessons from Other Jurisdictions</b>	<b>17</b>
A. City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture	17
B. Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture	18
<b>Conclusion and Recommendations</b>	<b>19</b>

# A MORE **MODERN** APPROACH TO CITY-OWNED **ART**



## Executive Summary

The arts are an essential part of what makes Los Angeles such a vibrant city. The City’s Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) plays an important role in ensuring that Los Angeles remains a global center for art through its various community art programs and its grant programs that support local artists. DCA also operates art centers and historic sites such as the Watts Towers, Los Angeles Municipal Arts Gallery, and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Hollyhock House – which was recently recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

As the lead department for promoting arts and culture, DCA acts as the primary steward for City-owned art. The City owns thousands of artworks that can be seen in public spaces and in City buildings throughout Los Angeles. **The City’s collection of artwork is incredibly diverse, and includes paintings, photographs, sculptures, murals, and artifacts such as rare furniture.** City-owned works of art are important because they support the development of creative spaces and communities, and help to ensure Angelenos can experience art in their daily lives.



Description: *Historical Photo of City Hall*  
Medium: *Photo*  
Artist/Date: *Unknown*



Title: *History of Science*  
Medium: *Oil Paint on Linen*  
Artist/Date: *Hugo Ballin; 1934*



Title: *Right Action-Wrong*  
Medium: *Acrylic on Canvas*  
Artist/Date: *Norman Schwab; 1969*

**The City also maintains thousands of historical artifacts that provide insights into world events and Los Angeles’ own rich history.** The Los Angeles Public Library has over **22,000** volumes of rare books and materials dating back to the fifteenth century, as well as thousands of photographs, maps, and other printed materials. Other City departments, such as the Port of Los Angeles, maintain archives with photographs and artifacts which preserve the history of the departments, and shed light on their unique contributions to the development of Los Angeles.

**Due to its inherent cultural and historic value, the City Art Collection – which consists of approximately 2,500 works of art managed by DCA – is the primary focus of this review.** However, this report also examines how DCA can better track, maintain, and care for other types of art under its care, and support the artwork management programs of the City’s

proprietary departments (Los Angeles World Airports, the Port of Los Angeles, and the Department of Water and Power).

## What We Found

**The City has not done enough to ensure its artworks are properly cared for. Approximately 18 percent of works in the City Art Collection are unaccounted for, some of which were reported as stolen. In addition, the lack of publicly-available information about City art makes it more difficult to access. The City Art Collection Program is effectively on hiatus, severely limiting DCA's ability to serve as an effective steward of City-owned works of art.**

- **No regular inventories** – DCA does not conduct regular inventories of City-owned art.
- **No regular condition assessments** – DCA does not regularly evaluate the condition of artworks to identify maintenance and conservation needs.
- **Lack of loan enforcement** – The department is unable to enforce the terms of loan agreements, such as the length of time items are on loan or conditions related to the display and storage of loaned items.
- **Inability to downsize the collection** – DCA has no formal deaccessioning policy allowing it to release or donate artworks which no longer add value, or are too heavily damaged to restore.

Insufficient oversight of City artworks greatly increases the risk of art being misplaced, damaged, or stolen. Our review of DCA's Art Collection Database identified the following issues.

- **Missing art** – City Art Collection Database records indicate that **444** artworks (**18 percent** of the collection) are unaccounted for.
- **Damaged art** – Condition data is available for only **867** works of art. DCA's condition assessments indicate that **646** are in excellent, good, or fair condition, while **221 (25 percent)** were in poor condition or had some type of damage.
- **Outdated appraisals** – Although it may be unnecessary to appraise each item, appraisal information currently exists for just half of the City Art Collection. The vast majority of the appraisals (**1,061**) occurred between 2002 and 2004, and nearly **100** appraisals occurred prior to 1980.
- **Lack of identifying photographs** – The City Art Collection database lacks an identifying photograph for **1,030 (41 percent)** artworks. Photographs of collection items not only help to facilitate inventories by helping staffers to identify works of art, but are vital in helping law enforcement officers investigate and recover stolen pieces.

**DCA has also struggled to keep information in the City Art Collection database current, and information about other types of art – such as public art and proprietary department art – is spread out across multiple databases and spreadsheets, some of which are maintained by proprietary departments.**

While other public agencies have shifted toward using modern art collection management systems with integrated inventory tracking and maintenance management features, DCA has relied on Microsoft Access databases which are not designed for collection management. DCA's reliance on older systems makes management of both artwork data – and the artworks themselves – more difficult.

## **Recommendations**

**The City must take steps to fully account for what it owns, care for those works of art on an ongoing basis, and make the art more accessible to the public.** Maintaining City artworks, and ensuring the public can easily learn about and visit collection items, will help connect Angelenos to art and the City's history.

As City policymakers make funding decisions related to arts programs, it is important to recognize the need to re-establish and modernize the City's artwork management program. This report makes several recommendations aimed at reviving the City Art Collection program, and improving the way DCA manages art across all City departments.

To improve its management of City-owned art, DCA should:

- 1. Develop an updated, comprehensive inventory of City-owned art** which includes the City Art Collection, public art, and artworks belonging to proprietary departments. In developing an updated inventory, the department should evaluate the condition and conservation needs of artworks, and update appraisal information.
- 2. Implement a new collection management system** to improve DCA's ability to track artworks' location, loan history, and condition. The technology should also include the ability to integrate digital images, as well as track maintenance lifecycles, and artwork loan lifecycles.
- 3. Make artworks more accessible by developing an online catalog and map of City-owned artworks** which enables the public to learn about artworks and artifacts, and where those items are on display.
- 4. Develop a formal deaccessioning policy that allows art managers to identify and release art which no longer adds value,** or has become too costly to maintain. When

deaccessioning items, DCA should consider whether the artworks or artifacts should be donated to an organization that will serve as a responsible conservator and steward.

5. **Establish an inventory monitoring program** which certifies on an ongoing basis that the City's artworks, especially those on loan to City departments and external organizations, are accounted for and maintained in accordance with loan agreements.
6. **Leverage the subject matter expertise of local arts organizations, academic institutions, and other experts within the community** as it works to inventory, evaluate, and showcase City works of art.

**From murals to museums, art helps Angelenos connect with culture and history, and fosters an environment of creativity and imagination. Protecting and preserving the City's art – as well as making information about art as accessible as possible – will help to ensure that Angelenos can connect to the City's cultural heritage for years to come.**



*Description: A Mural of Mary McLeod Bethune in the Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Regional Library in Exposition Park  
Artist/Date: Charles White; 1978*



## Background

The arts play a key role in helping Los Angeles thrive by creating a sense of community, highlighting the value of cultural diversity, and supporting the region's ever important creative economy. According to a recent [study](#) by the Otis College of Art and Design, creative industries employ an estimated **415,000** workers in Los Angeles County, making it the largest center for creative professions in the United States.

Publicly-owned works of art and art in the public realm are especially important because they activate neighborhoods and engage residents outside of formal settings like museums or galleries. Given these benefits, it is essential that the City do its part to support the development of arts programs and creative spaces.

**One of the lesser known components of the City's overall arts program is its expansive art collection, which consists of paintings, photographs, sculptures, historical artifacts, and other items. Many of these items are unique and reflect our cultural heritage.** This report examines how the City manages its art, and makes recommendations on how the City can improve its stewardship practices.

### The Department of Cultural Affairs

The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is the City's lead department for promoting arts and culture in Los Angeles. DCA works in conjunction with the Cultural Affairs Commission, an advisory board appointed by the Mayor, which is responsible for reviewing and approving all architecture and artwork on City property. The Commission may also approve or disapprove of the provision of arts and culture services, as well as the construction of arts and culture facilities.

**With an FY 2019-20 budget allocation of approximately \$17.8 million, DCA has one of the smallest operating budgets of any City department. It is also the only department that does not receive any of the City's \$5.3 billion in unrestricted revenue.**<sup>1</sup> Instead, DCA is funded through the Arts and Cultural Facilities and Services Trust Fund. The Arts and Cultural Facilities and Services Trust Fund receives one percent of Transient Occupancy Tax revenue (i.e., hotel and vacation rental taxes), and a portion of Public Works Improvements Arts Program funds.

Despite being one of the City's smaller departments, DCA enriches the lives of many Angelenos. The department manages various community arts programs and **35** arts facilities, including community art centers, theaters, historic sites, and art galleries. The department also

---

<sup>1</sup> DCA's proposed budget for FY 2020-21 is \$16.3 million.

administers hundreds of grants each year to individual artists and nonprofit organizations. **DCA estimates the department's arts and culture centers serve approximately 500,000 people each year.**

### Examples of DCA Arts and Culture Centers Open to the Public



#### Lincoln Heights Youth Arts Center

*The Lincoln Heights Youth Arts Center hosts music education programs where few or no arts education programs exist.*



#### Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery

*The Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery focuses on artists whose work may not otherwise have found a platform.*



#### Hollyhock House

*Hollyhock House was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, America's most important 20th-century architect.*

**Within DCA, the Public Art Division is responsible for the creation and maintenance of various types of art in the public realm.** As part of this role, the division acts as the steward of art owned by the City, and is responsible for loaning, tracking, storing, and preserving art and artifacts. **However, most of the Public Art Division's resources are dedicated to management of the City's Percent for Public Art programs, which includes the Public Works Improvements Arts Program and the Private Arts Development Fee Program.**

- The Public Works Improvements Arts Program mandates that **one percent** of the total cost of all construction, improvement, or renovation projects undertaken by the City is set aside for public art projects. Departments often work with DCA to commission works of art at the site of the project.
- The Private Arts Development Fee Program requires owners of private development projects valued at **\$500,000** or more to pay an arts fee, which DCA then administers to support art programs that provide benefits to the local community. Known as developer-led projects, a developer may also administer its own art project to fulfill the program's requirements. Developer-led art projects are subject to DCA approvals.

**The Public Art Division's artwork stewardship and Percent for Public Art programs highlight the important role it plays in ensuring that art is a part of Angelenos' daily lives.** The division estimates it will complete more than **200** public art projects and events in FY2019-20, including permanent public art installations, temporary art exhibitions, and arts and food festivals.

## City-Owned Art

There are several ways in which the City becomes the owner of artwork. For example, some art is commissioned by the City, while other works of art are donated by artists, arts patrons, or local organizations. City art typically falls into one of three categories.

**City Art Collection** *The City Art Collection consists of works of art that have been approved for siting on City property or acquired through donation, gift, or loan. Donations and gifts go through a formal application process that is intended to accept works that achieve artistic excellence, and represent the City in a meaningful manner. The Cultural Affairs Commission approves these donations and gifts.*

**Public Art** *Public art consists of City art in the public realm, such as sculptures, murals, and other installations. Its public display means it is among the most accessible forms of art, promoting creative environments across the City. The City typically commissions public art as part of Percent for Public Arts programs.*

**Proprietary Department Art** *The City's proprietary departments – Los Angeles World Airports, Port of Los Angeles, and Department of Water and Power – are each under the control of their respective Boards of Commissioners. Proprietary departments own works of art, and participate in the City's Public Works Improvements Arts Program.*

The amount of art under the City's care is constantly changing. For example, the City recently took control of art managed by the Community Redevelopment Agency/Los Angeles (CRA/LA). CRA/LA, the successor agency to the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles, transferred **19** public art installations that were commissioned as part of the redevelopment agency's public art program.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond caring for City-owned art, DCA manages the Citywide Mural Program, which is working to register, preserve, and restore Los Angeles' large network of murals. Although many of these murals are displayed on private buildings and are not owned by the City, DCA sponsors the development of new murals to re-engage communities and create opportunities for artists.

---

<sup>2</sup> The Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles was one of many redevelopment agencies across the state which supported housing, commercial, neighborhood, and economic development in economically underserved areas. In 2011, the California State Legislature enacted legislation which dissolved the state's redevelopment agencies. CRA/LA was named as the successor agency tasked with winding down redevelopment agency operations.

It is important to note the City also owns tens of thousands of culturally and historically significant items – many of which could be considered art – that tell stories about our local history and global events. For example, the Los Angeles Public Library has over **22,000** volumes of rare books and materials dating back to the fifteenth century, as well as thousands of photographs, maps, and other printed materials. The Port of Los Angeles also maintains an archive preserving documents, photographs, maps, and artifacts documenting the development and history of the port.

While all of these assets are important, stewardship of the City’s Art Collection is the primary focus of this review. The City Art Collection consists of approximately **2,500** works of art and artifacts that represent the cultural fabric of Los Angeles. Many items in the City Art Collection are moveable objects, like paintings and smaller sculptures. Specifically, the collection includes watercolor paintings, oil paintings, photographs, bronze sculptures, lithographs, silkscreen prints, unique furniture and textiles, and many other forms of art. The following images highlight some of these unique pieces.



Description: *Historical Beach Photo*  
Medium: *Photo*  
Artist/Date: *Unknown*



Title: *Power of Water*  
Medium: *Concrete*  
Artist/Date: *Henry Lion, Jason HERNON, and Sherry Peticolas; 1934*



Title: *George Washington*  
Medium: *Needlework on Canvas*  
Artist/Date: *Rosaline Hirschinger; 1881*



Description: *Double-Sided Desk*  
Medium: *Oak*  
Artist/Date: *Frank Lloyd Wright; circa 1946-48*



Title: *Olvera Street*  
Medium: *Oil on Canvas*  
Artist/Date: *Alice Larsen; Unknown*



Title: *Signing of the Constitution*  
Medium: *Bronze*  
Artist/Date: *Roger Burnham; Unknown*

DCA’s Public Art Division makes a portion of this collection available to City officials and employees through an interdepartmental loan program. These items can be found in City art centers and government buildings throughout Los Angeles. Some of this art is displayed in work

spaces, while other artworks are in common areas for viewing by the public. In addition, a limited number of items are available for loan to non-City entities.

**City art is an important asset that requires effective oversight.** The City of Los Angeles Administrative Code (LAAC) vests DCA with the custody and supervision of all paintings, documents, and records in possession of the City of historic or artistic value, and entrusts the department with preserving art and artifacts in a manner which prevents deterioration.

DCA's efforts to safeguard and preserve the City's art is directly tied to its ability to track its whereabouts and condition. **Beyond the overall responsibility outlined above, the LAAC requires DCA – when funding is available – to conduct an annual inspection and inventory of all paintings, murals, inscriptions, and other sculptures which are under the care and control of the City. In addition, DCA is required to establish and maintain a complete and accurate inventory of City art assets.**

The size and diversity of the City's collection presents unique challenges. Unlike some other assets owned by the City, artworks and historical artifacts cannot simply be replaced when they become old and worn down. Artwork requires consistent, ongoing monitoring to ensure effective maintenance and conservation, and it is critically important that DCA work with all departments to guarantee that the City's art is preserved well into the future.

**The following section details the current condition of the City's Art Collection. Later in this report, we discuss how improvements in these areas should be paired with a larger effort to better safeguard and showcase *all* types of City-owned art.**

## I. Improving Stewardship of the City Art Collection

With approximately **2,500** artworks and historically significant artifacts, the City Art Collection is a central component of DCA's art portfolio. Managing the City Art Collection is inherently difficult because many of the artworks are portable, on loan to other departments and external organizations, and susceptible to theft or damage.

**DCA's Public Art Division has temporarily suspended its ongoing monitoring and management of the City Art Collection, citing budgetary and staffing constraints.** The Public Art Division has not had any staff dedicated to managing the collection since 2018. Even prior to 2018, there was only one part-time employee managing the collection on an as-needed basis. **As a result, several artwork stewardship gaps have emerged.**

## A. Weak Inventory Management Practices Put Art at Risk

A lack of dedicated staffing, as well as insufficient program controls and collection monitoring, has placed City-owned art at risk for theft and deterioration. Currently, the Public Art Division does not:

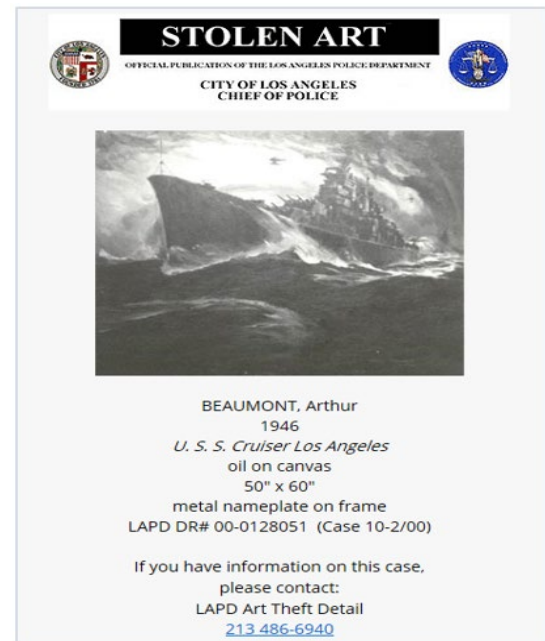
- Conduct regular inventories of City-owned art;
- Monitor the status of artworks that are out on loan;
- Regularly evaluate the condition of artwork; or
- Enforce the terms of loan agreements, such as the length of time items are on loan or conditions related to the display and storage of loaned items.

Insufficient oversight of artworks greatly increases the risk of items being misplaced, damaged, or stolen. Regular inventories which evaluate the condition of art are needed to ensure the City's collection is accounted for and well cared for.

## B. Hundreds of Artworks Are Unaccounted For

The lack of dedicated staffing resources, as well as inadequate safeguards for protecting City art assets, has led to a large portion of the City's art to become unaccounted for – **City Art Collection Database records indicate that 444 artworks (18 percent of the collection) are missing.**<sup>3</sup> DCA managers believe it is likely that City employees in possession of loaned artworks have taken items home with them upon retirement or separation from City employment. They also believe that some of the missing works are in storage closets or other hidden areas within City buildings.

The City has also been the victim of theft on several occasions. **Of the more than 444 works classified as missing, 185 were reported stolen to the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD).** The circumstances under which art has been stolen varies. For example, DCA staff reported that



Source: Los Angeles Police Department

<sup>3</sup> City Art Collection Database records are not fully reliable, as DCA has not been able to keep all of the information up to date. This database will be discussed in greater detail later in this report. The number of missing items was estimated using records with a location identified as "Unable to Locate," "Missing," "Not Found," "Stolen," or "Unknown." An additional **110** artworks have no location identified in the database's location field, but are not confirmed as missing items.

bronze sculptures have been stolen in the past, presumably for the value of the metal materials. One such sculpture was even recovered by the LAPD at a scrap yard.

It is also likely that thieves have targeted City artworks due to their potential value. In 2000, a 1946 painting by Arthur Beaumont titled *U.S.S. Cruiser Los Angeles* was cut out of its frame and stolen while on display in City Hall. Beaumont is a well-known painter recognized for his portrayals of U.S. Navy accomplishments. The artwork, which is still listed in the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Stolen Art File database, has never been recovered.

### C. The Value of the City's Artworks is Not Fully Known

Appraisal data in the City Art Collection database shows that **1,293** items – approximately half of the collection – have some form of appraisal information. The total appraised value for those items is listed as approximately **\$19 million**. **However, most of the appraisals are dated, and do not reflect the true value of the artworks.** Public artworks commissioned through Percent for Public Arts programs have never been formally appraised, though the Public Art Division maintains records on the value of the contract with the artist at the time the art was commissioned.

More than **80 percent** of the appraisals occurred between 2002 and 2004, and nearly **100** items were last appraised before 1980. **Insufficient or outdated appraisal information can impact the ability of the Public Art Division and partner departments across the City to make informed collection management decisions.** For example, outdated or incomplete appraisal information can make it difficult to determine:

- Whether certain artworks require special safeguards, or whether the division should refrain from loaning certain items;
- The value of City artworks which have been lost or stolen; and
- Whether the City carries a sufficient level of insurance coverage for City-owned art, which is a critical aspect of ensuring the art is protected.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note that many items in the collection – though they may provide value to the community or reflect the City's heritage in some way – have little to no financial value. **As such, appraisal information for all artworks and artifacts in the collection is likely unnecessary. Regardless, the department should have a formal and strategic methodology for determining which artworks should be appraised periodically, and how often those assessments should take place.**

---

<sup>4</sup> City-owned art is insured up to **\$15 million**, with some exceptions. The City Administrative Officer administers the City's fine art insurance policy.

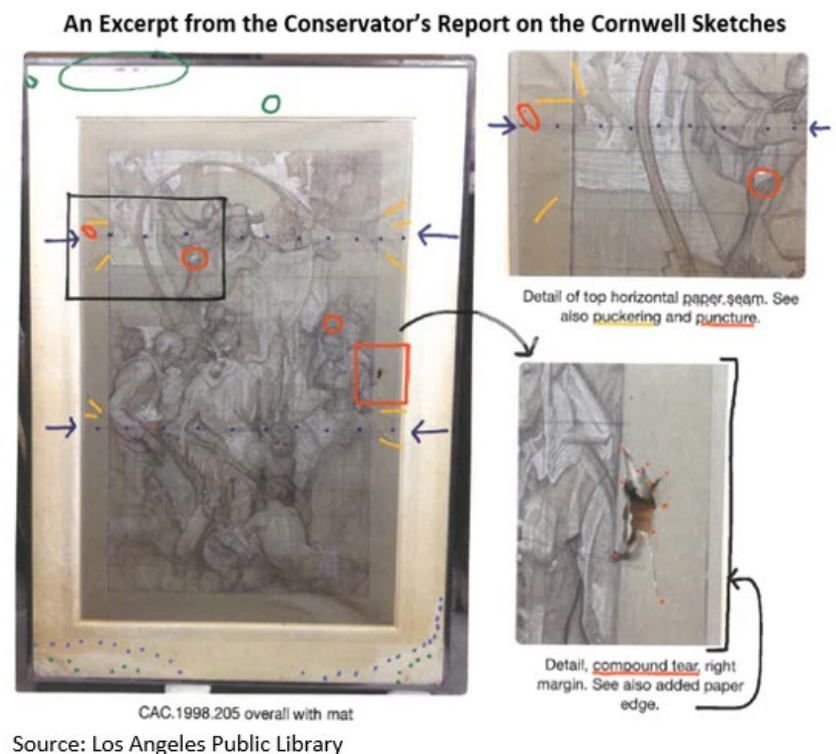
## D. Many Artworks Are in Need of Maintenance or Restoration

DCA's Public Art Division has been unable to conduct regular assessments of artworks' condition. Regular assessments of City art assets would allow the division to: (1) improve its understanding of the condition of artworks; (2) evaluate whether restoration efforts for particular artworks are necessary; and (3) estimate the potential costs associated with completing restoration projects. Restoration efforts would also highlight the need for updated appraisal data. This is to ensure the Public Art Division can determine whether restoration costs would exceed the value of the artwork.

**Although the condition of art is not regularly evaluated, existing condition data from the City Art Collection Database shows that many of the City's artworks are in need of repair or restoration.** Condition information exists for **867** works of art. Of those artworks, **646** artworks were in excellent, good, or fair condition. However, **221 (25 percent)** were in poor condition or had some type of damage. Examples of damage to artworks include holes, tears, stains, warping, and water damage. For some artworks, materials have deteriorated over time, while some works are dirty or worn down.

**While resource constraints make it unlikely the City will ever be able to restore all items in the collection, special care should be taken to ensure the City's most valuable and historically significant collection items are in good condition, and available for public display.** For example, in 2015, the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL), working in conjunction with the Public Art Division, sought to restore eight preparatory sketches by Dean Cornwell. The sketches are associated with the murals in the Grand Rotunda of the Los Angeles Central Library.

The Cornwell sketches are charcoal, graphite, and chalk sketches on paper, and were likely completed sometime between 1927 and 1932. Prior to 2015, these sketches





were stored in the City Art Collection storage room in City Hall. **Despite these sketches being both valuable and historic, conservation experts hired by LAPL and the Public Art Division found the sketches to be in poor condition. The drawings had suffered compound tears and punctures, as well as extensive water damage, acid degradation, and mold damage.** None were deemed suitable for public display.

The estimated cost to restore the eight sketches was approximately **\$16,000**. The cost to professionally frame the artworks in plexiglass and moldings was **\$17,500**. These sketches, which highlight the need to restore and protect significant artworks, will soon be on display at the Central Library.

### **E. The City Does Not Have a Process to Remove Art from its Collection**

Currently, no formal policy exists which allows for the deaccessioning of City artworks. Deaccessioning is the process by which an organization, typically through sale or donation, officially removes art or artifacts from a collection. According to DCA managers, some of the City's art may be suitable for deaccessioning. **The development of a formal deaccessioning process would allow DCA to remove items from the collection that no longer add value, or are damaged to a degree where restoration is either cost prohibitive or not possible.**

Several factors should be considered when determining whether to remove an item from an art collection. The Association of Art Museum Directors advises art managers to consider whether items are:

- Of sufficient monetary value to retain;
- Of sufficient historical value to retain;
- Of poor or modest quality; or
- In such poor condition that restoration is impossible.

**A deaccessioning policy could increase the efficiency of DCA's management of art assets because staff would no longer need to dedicate time and resources – whether it be for inventories, loans, or restoration – to art of little or no value.** Any formal deaccessioning process should involve the Cultural Affairs Commission, as the LAAC stipulates that no existing work of art may be removed, relocated, or altered without the Commission's approval.

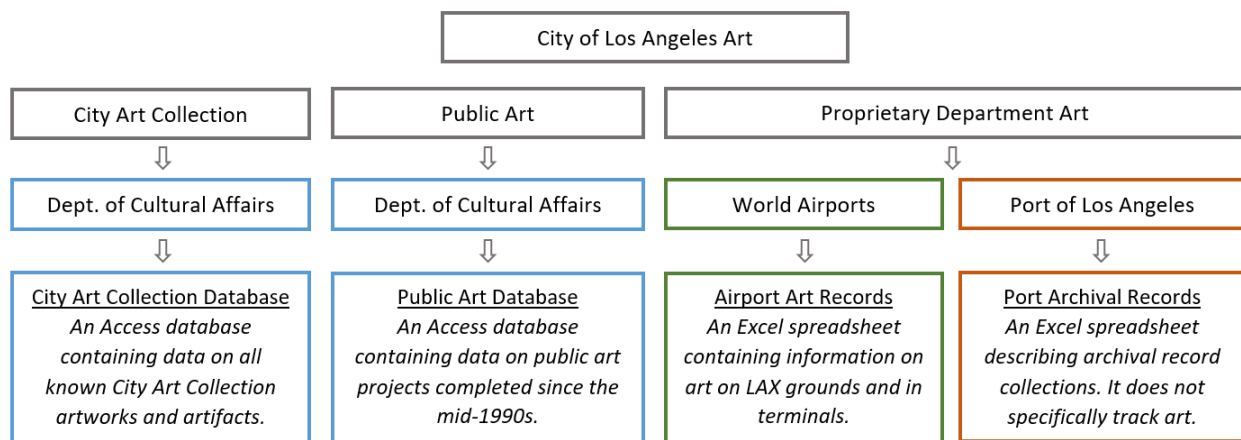
## **II. Modernizing the City's Artwork Management Tools**

**The ability to maintain accurate, current data about the City Art Collection, as well as public art owned by proprietary departments, is central to establishing an effective stewardship program.** When art managers have information about the location, history, and qualities of a work of art, it allows them to develop tailored maintenance and care plans which conserve and

protect the artwork. It also enables art managers to hold organizations in possession of loaned artworks accountable for keeping artworks in good condition.

The importance of current and reliable information about artworks highlights the need for DCA’s art managers to have tools which allow the department to easily track art asset data. **DCA acknowledges that their current approach to managing information about the City Art Collection is inadequate and creating information gaps. Information about other types of art – such as public art (e.g., sculptures, murals, and other public installations) and artwork controlled by the City’s proprietary departments – is spread out across multiple databases and spreadsheets.**

The chart below describes where the City houses its art data, as well as the department responsible for maintaining the information and the type of application used to track the data.<sup>5</sup>



**The reliance on older systems makes management of both artwork data – and the artworks themselves – more difficult.** In contrast, other public agencies have shifted toward using modern art collection management systems with integrated inventory tracking and maintenance management features.

### A. DCA’s City Art Collection Database

The DCA Public Art Division has struggled to keep the City Art Collection Database up to date. There are **2,512** artworks and artifacts reflected in the City Art Collection Database. This database contains large amounts of valuable information, such as artworks’ title, age, medium or material, measurements, and last known location. It also contains information about the artists, and the person, organization, or government entity that gifted the art to the City.

<sup>5</sup> The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power did not provide any art collection records at the time of this review.

**Although the database provides useful information about the City’s art, some fields are either incomplete or outdated.** More than **2,000** artworks have no acquisition date listed, and approximately **1,030** records contain no identifying photograph. Photographs of collection items not only help to facilitate inventories by helping staffers to identify works of art, but are vital should art be stolen. According to the LAPD, photographs of stolen or missing pieces are often necessary in order to investigate and recover art.

**The City Art Collection Database is a Microsoft Access database which was configured to manage and store City art data.** According to Public Art Division managers, some of the gaps in information were caused when data from the preceding collection tracking system, known as I/O, was transferred into the Microsoft Access system. Public Art Division managers have considered replacing the City Art Collection database with a newer collection management software. **However, DCA managers said they did not have sufficient resources to carry out the implementation of a new art management application.**

## **B. DCA’s Public Art Database**

The DCA Public Art Division also maintains a separate Microsoft Access database, known as the Public Art Database, to track public art installations commissioned through the Public Works Improvements Arts Program. The Public Works Improvements Arts Program was established by ordinance in 1989. DCA’s Public Art Database contains information about the artist, location, type of work, and when the artwork was completed. The database also tracks project management information, such as the value of the contract with the artists, the funding source, and copyright ownership.

There are **231** public art installations listed with a status of “active” or “completed” in the database for projects dating back to 1995. **This database does not include public art commissioned prior to the establishment of the City’s public art programs, and therefore is not considered to be a comprehensive database reflecting all of the City’s public art.**

## **C. Proprietary Department Inventories**

Both Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) and the Port of Los Angeles (POLA) have some inventory information related to artworks and artifacts owned by their respective departments, but the inventories are somewhat informal.

LAWA maintains its art inventory records in an Excel spreadsheet which lists the artworks in each LAX terminal, as well as artworks on LAX grounds. The inventory spreadsheet contains **17** records, and includes information about the artworks’ location, qualities, and condition. LAWA’s art program also facilitates temporary art exhibitions to improve travelers’ airport

experience. These exhibitions typically feature loaned artworks, which are not listed in LAWA's inventory spreadsheet.

According to POLA managers, the department owns very few portable works, with the exception of approximately half a dozen paintings displayed in the POLA Administration Building. POLA does not maintain an art inventory, but it does maintain records for its archives. The archives house a variety of the Port's historic records, maps, photographs, and other artifacts, though these items are not considered to be art by the department.

#### **D. Technology Can Make Art More Accessible and Easier to Curate**

The City's art managers would benefit from the implementation of a new, comprehensive art collection management application which would make it easier to track the location, condition, and care needs of artworks. **The ability to manage this information within one application, as opposed to multiple databases and spreadsheets, would improve the ability of DCA staff to manage art data, and make informed decisions on how to best care for works of art.**

Many local jurisdictions are opting to purchase off-the-shelf collection management applications which are available to museums and arts organizations. Specifically, a centralized application would facilitate:

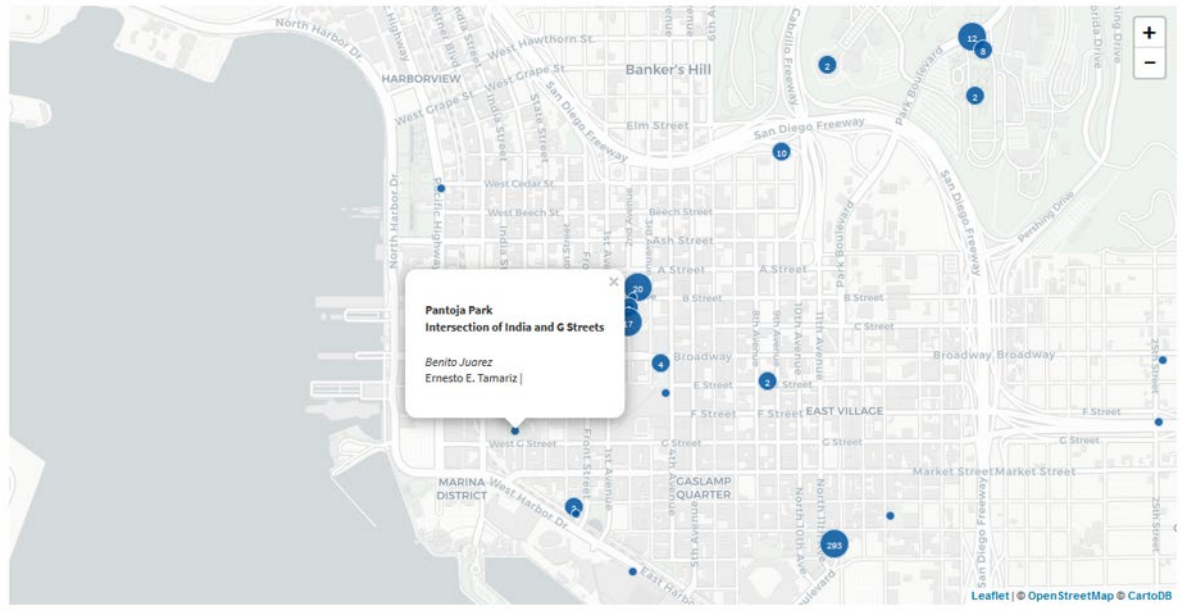
- Consolidation of information for each work of art into one reference tool;
- Tracking artwork loan lifecycles;
- Tracking artwork locations, including location histories;
- Tracking maintenance and restoration needs;
- Management of artwork images; and
- An improved ability to curate and display artworks for public viewings.

**A new collection management system would also facilitate the publication of interactive, web-based inventory tools which would allow members of the public to learn about City artworks.** Currently DCA does not have any kind of online database which would allow the public to explore what art is owned by the City, and where the art is showcased. Currently, DCA's method of providing artwork information to Angelenos and other members of the community is via phone and email. Other jurisdictions with art collections are transitioning to collection management systems that allow for publication of online inventories of publicly-owned art.

## City of San Diego Residents Can Explore an Online Civic Art Collection Map

### Explore the Civic Art Collection

Managed by the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, the Civic Art Collection has grown since 1909 to include paintings, sculptures, works on paper and prints that are exhibited primarily in the working environments of municipal buildings. The Civic Art Collection is further distinguished by integrated artworks in the City's libraries, parks, public safety facilities, civic buildings and other public spaces throughout San Diego. Use this map to plan your own tour of civic artwork in San Diego. Further information about the Civic Art Collection can be found at [www.sdcivicartcollection.com](http://www.sdcivicartcollection.com)



Source: City of San Diego

DCA needs to consider how it can best make information about City-owned art available to the public. Making information about publicly-owned artworks accessible is a key aspect of ensuring members of the community can enjoy City-owned art, and learn about the City's rich history.

### III. Lessons from Other Jurisdictions

Other jurisdictions offer lessons in what steps DCA can take to re-establish the City Art Collection program, as well as improve oversight of public and proprietary department artworks. The City of San Diego and Los Angeles County have taken major steps to reshape the way they manage art and rare items. **The organizations have undertaken a methodical effort to evaluate their collection of artworks and rare items, and are taking steps to improve the way they collect and manages data.**

#### A. City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture

The City of San Diego's Commission for Arts and Culture has completed several phases of a multistage project to inventory and evaluate all items in its Civic Art Collection. San Diego's

Civic Art Collection is comprised of approximately **800** works, and includes both public art installations and portable works. Although the city had existing records and information regarding its art, Commission for Arts and Culture Managers sought to build a new inventory from the ground up.

San Diego enlisted the assistance of a contract registrar to build its new art inventory. Contract registrars typically manage the movement of art in museums and galleries, and implement policies related to collection management. San Diego's contract registrar worked with the commission's art managers to inventory each collection item, create a comprehensive digital photograph record for all artworks, and evaluate the condition of all public art installations. As part of the initiative, art managers also selected an off-the-shelf digital collection management system. According to the city's art managers, the collection management application costs less than **\$10,000** annually, and includes cloud based storage of collection data.

The completion of a new inventory and implementation of the new collection management system took approximately two years. A map of city artworks, as well as information about the artworks and artists, is now publicly available on the city's web page. The city plans to begin a condition assessment of all portable artworks in early 2020.

Currently, a Senior Public Art Manager is responsible for managing the City of San Diego's Civic Art Collection, and the commission continues to employ a contract registrar to support day to day management of the collection. The Commission for Arts and Culture reported that its annual budget for managing the city's art collection is approximately **\$280,000**, which includes funding for its collection management system, collection maintenance and conservation, transportation and handling, and the storage of select artworks at an offsite facility.

## **B. Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture**

Beginning in 2015, the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture sought to create a new baseline inventory to account for artworks owned by the County, and make the information accessible to both employees and community members. The initiative has progressed in two major phases.

During the first phase, a contract registrar conducted field research to: (1) document the condition of known works of art; (2) identify the County's uncatalogued art assets and document the condition of those artworks; and (3) develop a prioritized list of conservation needs. Between 2015 and 2017, the contract registrar visited all County properties likely to contain artworks, and used an electronic tablet to collect data about the identified works of art. The registrar identified more than **1,500** new artworks, and updated the condition information for nearly **200** known pieces. County staff will continue to research the origins and artistic value

of the newly discovered works. They will then determine whether artworks should be added to the Civic Art Collection based on the department's Civic Art Criteria guidelines.

In its second phase, County art managers are working to implement a risk management and artwork preservation program to support the sustained preservation of County-owned art. This includes:

- Leveraging the County's existing maintenance management systems to support artwork maintenance planning;
- Developing a crowdsourcing strategy to assist with artwork monitoring; and
- Training County staff on how to care for collection items.

Artwork restoration will take place subject to available funds, and in accordance with maintenance priorities established during the first phase.

Similar to the City of San Diego, Los Angeles County's Department of Arts and Culture is using an off-the-shelf collection management application to track its Civic Art Collection. Two County employees, a Civic Art Conservation and Collections Manager and a Civic Art Registrar, are responsible for managing the Civic Art Collection and the ongoing baseline inventory and conservation initiative. The department funded its inventory project through a one-time budget allocation of **\$240,000**.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

To ensure DCA can continue to connect Angelenos to accessible, high quality artworks and cultural items, the City should focus on reviving the City's art collection program, and improve the way it manages these unique items. As City Policymakers make funding decisions related to arts programs, it is important to recognize the need to re-establish and modernize the City's artwork management program.

To improve the City's ability to protect and care for City-owned art, DCA, in collaboration with Proprietary Departments, should:

- 1. Develop an updated, comprehensive inventory of City-owned art which includes the City Art Collection, public art, and portable and public artworks belonging to proprietary departments.**
  - a. In developing an updated inventory, the department should evaluate, to the greatest extent possible, the condition of each work of art and the associated conservation needs.**

- b. **DCA should also update appraisal information for City artworks to ensure art managers have an improved understanding of the value of items, and whether any special precautions are necessary for particular works. DCA should focus on items known to have a higher value, and should also take steps to determine which artworks that are currently not appraised may warrant a formal appraisal.**
- 2. **Implement a new collection management system to improve DCA's ability to track artworks' location, loan history, and condition. The technology should also include the ability to integrate digital images, track maintenance lifecycles, and monitor artwork loan lifecycles.**
- 3. **Develop an online catalog and map of City-owned artworks enabling the public to learn about artworks and artifacts, and where those items are on display to increase transparency and make works more accessible.**
- 4. **Develop a formal deaccessioning policy that allows art managers to identify and release art that no longer adds value, or has become too costly to maintain.**
  - a. **When deaccessioning items, DCA should consider whether the artworks or artifacts should be donated to an organization that will serve as a responsible conservator and steward.**
- 5. **Establish an inventory monitoring program which certifies on an ongoing basis that the City's artworks, especially those on loan to City departments and external organizations, are accounted for and maintained in accordance with loan agreements.**
- 6. **To the greatest extent possible, leverage the subject matter expertise of local arts organizations, academic institutions, and other experts within the community as it works to inventory, evaluate, and showcase City works of art.**



Number	Summary of Recommendations	Responsible Entity
1	<p>Develop an updated, comprehensive inventory of City-owned art which includes the City Art Collection, public art, and portable and public artworks belonging to proprietary departments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. In developing an updated inventory, the department should evaluate, to the greatest extent possible, the condition of each work of art and the associated conservation needs.</li> <li>b. DCA should also update appraisal information for City artworks to ensure art managers have an improved understanding of the value of items, and whether any special precautions are necessary for particular works. DCA should focus on items known to have a higher value, and should also take steps to determine which artworks that are currently un-appraised may warrant a formal appraisal.</li> </ul>	DCA, LAWA, POLA, LADWP
2	<p>Implement a new collection management system to improve DCA's ability to track artworks' location, loan history, and condition. The technology should also include the ability to integrate digital images, track maintenance lifecycles, and monitor artwork loan lifecycles.</p>	DCA
3	<p>Develop an online catalog and map of City-owned artworks enabling the public to learn about artworks and artifacts, and where those items are on display to increase transparency and make works more accessible.</p>	DCA
4	<p>Develop a formal deaccessioning policy that allows art managers to identify and release art which no longer adds value, or has become too costly to maintain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. When deaccessioning items, DCA should consider whether the artworks or artifacts should be donated to an organization that will serve as a responsible conservator and steward.</li> </ul>	DCA
5	<p>Establish an inventory monitoring program which certifies on an ongoing basis that the City's artworks, especially those on loan to City departments and external organizations, are accounted for and maintained in accordance with loan agreements.</p>	DCA
6	<p>To the greatest extent possible, leverage the subject matter expertise of local arts organizations, academic institutions, and other experts within the community as it works to inventory, evaluate, and showcase City works of art.</p>	DCA