

How does a community benefit from art?

The value of art is something every municipality struggles to quantify and then justify as maintenance and public discourse puts the endeavor in question. Recently, Dallas and Frisco have struggled with the issue of budgeting to properly maintain the cost of upkeep and placement of millions of dollars of art projects placed throughout their respective cities. In each case they continue to fund the arts because the overall benefit to the city and communities exceeds the costs.

The first question to ask is what is art and then how does it benefit a community?

Art is a creative expression of ideals, emotions and events which are not always easily captured or displayed. Fine art is never created to be liked or disliked; it is the artist's attempt to reflect the values of society back to itself. Art has the ability to tap into our imagination, evoke emotions and inspire critical thinking. Art engages the mind and heart.

Art is powerful; it can divide and incite people, or create a connection and emotional bond that is not easily articulated. It expresses common ideals, such as love and family, which can be the catalyst for strong connections and deep conversations. Art will always be an esoteric endeavor in introspection; yet, a vital pursuit as it reflects the soul of humanity. It is subjective; it will always resonate uniquely to each individual.



*Water Lace, Pascale Pryor, 2014*

The one certainty about art is some will love it and others will hate it. There are very few products or projects which evoke such passion.

Public art distinguishes a space and exhibits a degree of quality that is truly unique. A landscaper places shrubs and bushes to enhance an environment; a public art curator installs works of art to engage people within the environment. It doesn't matter what the art looks like, public art shows a higher level of thinking beyond the basic maintenance of landscaping, streets, pot holes or trash pickup. It reflects a collective thinking and level of collaboration that most communities lack. It's easy to focus on litter in the parks, local ordinances or regulations; but, to consider the effect of an open space, the calming influence of greenery instead of concrete or the emotional impact of art on our psyche is the sign of an intelligent, high functioning collection of people, who care about their community. It reflects the highest level of thinking.

Generally speaking, an ideal work of art for a residential community does not incite controversy or invoke negative feelings. The art should inspire dialog amongst neighbors. It should pull people off their porches, grab their attention in passing and promote some degree of unity in sharing and discussing the art. The artist becomes an invited guest into the neighborhood and an honorary member of the community. It is very important to note that the discourse inspired is much less important than the fact that a collective dialog occurs and there is a common connection between neighbors.

The HomeTown community is a special place. As an outsider, I see the caliber of resident, and the attention given to the smallest details within the neighborhood. The level of community participation and passion for this neighborhood is truly impressive. I know the high value of this neighborhood is reinforced every time a home sells and affirmed by the steady rush of buyers lined up to get into the community.

Recently, we placed two works of art: *Water Lace* and *Eternal Love*. Pascale Pryor the artist who created *Water Lace* hoped to express the fluidity and form of flowing water in the hard, structured form of steel. If you view the work at different times of the day, you'll notice the shadows created from the spaces throughout the piece, create the illusion of shadows on water which changes as the position of the sun moves across the sky. The piece, although firmly secured and stationary, appears to flow out of the ground and be pulled back down by gravity. The artist attempted to reflect impression of constant motion. This piece is placed next to a road, in a median. This placement dictates a work of art which is more shape and color and less a literal interpretation of something we recognize. This space lends itself to an abstract work of art that does not have details which are easily lost as a car passes by at twenty miles an hour. There is no place to sit and reflect on the art, and the work will mostly be viewed from a distance. All these factors are considered as the art is selected and placed. Finally, Pascale is an emerging artist who has been creating art for the past twenty years in the Dallas area. She has a strong body of work, publicly and privately, and continues to produce work at a prodigious rate. Not only is Pascale Pryor an artist that the community can be proud to own her work, she is a sweet person and someone you'd be proud to have associated with the community. Her work will almost certainly appreciate in value, and rise in appreciation for the value it adds to the neighborhood.

HTC community purchased a second work of art, titled *Eternal Love*, by Eliseo Garcia. Eliseo is an internationally accomplished artist, with national recognition. He has public art placed in every city in the metroplex area, and three works permanently placed in North Richland Hills alone. His art placed in Sherbert Park sits next to a common area within the park. It occupies a space beside two benches. It feels as though his stone sculpture is part of any conversation which happens in this intimate space. The theme for Eliseo's piece is mother and child love, and the value of family. Eliseo's prestige, scale of the work, and theme of the piece, reflects the strong value of the residents and the outstanding quality of the community as a whole. And, I will quickly add that Eliseo is also a quality individual and an ideal ambassador for the neighborhood.

As the curator, my challenge was to find a work of art which first complements the space where it is placed, then reflects the residents' expectations, and finally that it is safe, durable and appropriate for its setting. The viewer can choose to understand the artist's intentions and find an appreciation for the

artist's work, or simply ignore the psychological impact a work of art will always have on its environment. Either way, it's a very good thing for your community.

There are attributes about HTC which encourages community, promotes families and supports healthy living. The placement of art in public spaces inspires people to look at their surroundings differently. It engages the mind and promotes conversation within the neighborhood. The community should be proud of their commitment to integrating art into their lives. It speaks very highly of you.