

ERIN MENDENHALL
MAYOR



LORENA RIFFO-JENSON
DIRECTOR

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CITY COUNCIL TRANSMITTAL


Lisa Shaffer (Jan 18, 2023 10:19 MST)

Lisa Shaffer, Chief Administrative Officer

Date Received: 01/18/2023

Date sent to Council: 01/18/2023

TO: Salt Lake City Council
Darin Mano, Chair

DATE: January 12th, 2023

FROM: Lorena Riffo-Jenson, Director, Department of Economic Development 

SUBJECT: Notification of deaccession of two artworks from the Salt Lake City Public Art Collection: *Sugar House Benches* and *Untitled at Bend in the River (Modesto Park)*

STAFF CONTACTS: Renato Olmedo-González, Public Art Program Manager, Salt Lake City Arts Council, renato.olmedo-gonzalez@slcgov.com, 801-535-6511

ORDINANCE CONSIDERATIONS: 2.30.050: ART DESIGN BOARD JURISDICTION

E. Recommending to the Mayor and the deaccession of works of art in the City's collection. If the Mayor accepts such recommendation, the Mayor will give notice to the City Council at least forty five (45) days prior to the deaccession of any work of art in the City's collection, unless it must be removed to mitigate an imminent safety hazard. (Ord. 7-21, 2021; Ord. 67-13, 2013)

DOCUMENT TYPE: Information Item & Ordinance

Mayor Erin Mendenhall approved the recommendation from the Salt Lake Art Design Board enclosed, made in consultation with the Public Art Program, in *favor* of deaccessioning the following artworks from the City's permanent public art collection:

- Bench sculpture of *Untitled at Bend in the River* by Paul Heath, Linda Nowlin, Louise Fischman, and Wayne Geary located in Modesto Park at Jordan River Parkway, 1550 S 1110 W;
- Three concrete furniture sculptures, *Sugar House Benches*, by Eric Thelander located in front of Fairmont Aquatic Center, Sprague Library, and 2005 South 1100 East.

This recommendation is based on the following programmatic priorities:

- Deaccession of both artworks has been recommended as a course of action by a professional assessment of our public art collection;
- Both artworks lack structural integrity;

- *Untitled at Bend in the River* has become a gathering space for vagrancy and a target of constant vandalism, which are factors detrimental to the safety and security of the general public;
- Efforts to clean and maintain *Untitled at Bend in the River* have failed in the past due to its location and the constant cycle of vandalism affecting the artwork and the area;
- The timeline to remove *Sugar House Benches* will coincide with the reconstruction of Highland Drive.

BUDGET IMPACT: There is no direct budgetary impact with the deaccessioning of these items, however, the approximate combined value of these public artworks is \$70,000, which will result in the valuation of the City's overall collection decreasing accordingly.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:

According to the Public Art Program's Artwork Deaccessioning Policy and Guidelines (adopted by the Salt Lake Art Design Board on December 2, 2021), an artwork can be removed from our permanent collection when:

- The work of art requires excessive or unreasonable maintenance on an on-going basis, exceeding the maintenance requirements anticipated at the time of accession;
- The artwork has been damaged or has deteriorated and the cost of repair is disproportionate to the aesthetic, monetary, and/or cultural value of the object as determined by Salt Lake City Arts Council staff, the Art Design Board, or by an expert ;
- It has been assessed to represent a physical threat to public safety and/or staff, or is hazardous to other items in the collection;
- The condition or security of the artwork cannot be reasonably guaranteed;
- The work of art lacks physical integrity.

***Untitled at Bend in the River* Analysis**

Untitled at Bend in the River is part of a 2002 collaborative project between four artists (Paul Heath, Linda Nowlin, Louise Fischman, and Wayne Geary) located along the Jordan River Parkway. The artists created a labyrinth (this part of the artwork was recently repaired in 2021 and remains in place in the Jordan River Parkway, north of Modesto Park) and a series of benches with low walls using pavers, colored concrete, and mosaic tile inlays depicting animals, fish, and vegetation native to the river. The artwork in question is the bench located at Modesto Park.

In 2020, a conservation assessment of our public art collection made the professional recommendation for deaccession of *Untitled at Bend in the River*. The bench has needed constant cleaning due to the prevalence of vandalism in the area. While the mosaic pavers and other portions of this artwork will remain at Modesto Park, the bench has become particularly unsightly and too difficult to maintain due to its obscured location. The Art Design Board noted during its discussion of this artwork that deaccession was necessary because of issues associated with people experiencing homelessness that are seeking refuge in City-built infrastructure. Earlier this year, the Public Art Program met with Public Lands and determined that removal is the best option, after repeated and costly repairs have proved ineffective. The artwork is currently being removed by Public Lands staff. This action was determined and permitted under the Public Art Program's Deaccessioning Policy and Guidelines.

Sugar House Benches Analysis

In response to a national call for proposals, artist Eric Thelander of Albuquerque, New Mexico, designed and fabricated *Sugar House Benches* for the sidewalks of the Sugar House Business District in 2008. Thelander designed these outdoor "sofas" as a tribute to the history of furniture sales that are an integral component of the character of Sugar House. The benches are located at Fairmont Aquatic Center, Sprague Library, and 2005 South 1100 East. These benches are made of concrete and epoxy coated steel.

Due to poor craftsmanship and lack of structural integrity, three of the six *Sugar House Benches* have already been removed from public view- two were removed due to safety concerns and are currently located in a City-owned storage facility and the last one was removed without authorization by the Public Art Program during nearby construction; the object is now considered to be lost/missing. In 2020, a conservation assessment of our public art collection found that the condition of the three remaining benches was very poor, noting them as unsightly, and deaccession was recommended as a course of action. Deterioration of the concrete and peeling of the rhino coating is evident on all frames. Additionally, there is graffiti on the benches. Other issues include cracks, rust, chips, discoloration, and staining.

Attachments: Images of artwork in current state; Public Art Program website links.

CURRENT IMAGES OF UNTITLED AT BEND IN THE RIVER



Untitled at Bend in the River by Paul Heath, Linda Nowlin, Louise Fischman, and Wayne Geary

Located in Modesto Park at Jordan River Parkway, 1550 S 1110 W

<https://saltlakepublicart.org/art/untitled-heath-nowlin-fischman-geary-2/>

IMAGES OF SUGAR HOUSE BENCHES



Sugar House Benches by Eric Thelander

Located in front of Fairmont Aquatic Center, Sprague Library, and 2005 South 1100 East.

<http://saltlakepublicart.org/art/sugar-house-benches-42/>