



TOWN OF MANSFIELD
MANSFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY DEPARTMENTAL POLICY MEMORANDUM

Approved by: Leslie McDonough, Library Director
Effective Date: September 17, 2013
Subject: Mansfield Public Library Art Display Policy

I. General Purpose

To recognize local artistic endeavor and to enrich the lives of community members, the Library Arts Committee (LAC) invites local artists to apply to exhibit their works at the Mansfield Public Library (MPL). An application form is available at the MPL circulation desk; applications may be left at the desk or sent to Library Arts Committee, c/o Mansfield Public Library, 54 Warrenton Rd., Mansfield, CT 06250. Note that:

- Exhibitions will generally run for 1 month and usually will be located in the library's program room. If the exhibition takes place in the program room, only art able to be mounted on the walls can be considered.
- Exhibiting artists assume responsibility for loss or damage and must sign a waiver to that effect.
- The MPL will not handle sales of displayed art, and prices may not be posted.
- Exhibiting artists may prepare a letter-size sheet with information about their works, including how purchases can be arranged, for posting during the exhibit.
- The Library Arts Committee is a staff-only committee that consists of the Library Director, Public Services Librarian, Youth Services Librarian, and Outreach Librarian.

II. Application Process

- a. The LAC shall consider any application to exhibit art at the MPL **or upon its grounds**. An application consists of a completed application form and photos (or samples) of the type of works proposed for display.
- b. The LAC shall judge applications, and approve or disapprove them **by a majority vote of the LAC members present**, on the basis of the guidelines below. Mansfield artists shall be given priority.
- c. An application that does not include photos of *all* the works to be displayed may be approved provisionally. However, final approval shall not be given before all the works or photos thereof have been viewed by the LAC.
- d. If an application to exhibit is disapproved, the LAC shall explain why, in writing, to the applicant, **and inform the applicant that he or she may appeal the disapproval within ten days to the Town Manager, whose decision shall be final**.
- e. If an application to exhibit is approved, the LAC shall negotiate the display area and period with the applicant and arrange for the exhibit's installation.
- f. Applications are available on the library's web site, www.mansfieldpubliclibraryct.org, or in paper format at the library.

III. Guidelines

Applications to exhibit will be judged by the LAC on the basis of originality, artistic quality, and suitability for a family setting. While it is difficult to be very precise about these notions, the following considerations and examples are intended to suggest their meaning and scope, as employed by the LAC.

- a. *Originality.* A work need not be something new under the sun (few works of art can claim as much), but the artist's contribution to design and execution should be substantial.
- b. *Artistic quality.* The LAC takes a liberal view of artistic quality, but it may reject work that, in its judgment, falls short of acceptability for this reason. Different standards of artistic quality may be appropriate for special exhibits (for example, of children's art).
- c. *Suitability for a family setting.* Works will not be accepted for display if the LAC judges that they are very likely to upset children or would likely trigger a warning that some viewers may find them offensive, were they to be exhibited in an art museum. These include:
 - Graphic depictions of sexuality or violence.
 - Works that appear designed to ridicule deeply held beliefs or to disparage others for their race, gender or sexual identity, ethnicity, nationality, etc. Since works of art are generally open to interpretation, it may be difficult to determine whether a work belongs in this category. Nonetheless, the LAC may reject works that it considers offensive for this reason.

IV. Removal of Art

- a. The artist is expected to remove his or her work at the end of the agreed-upon display period. Should the artist fail to do so, the LAC may remove the work. In such a case, the LAC shall take reasonable steps to reunite artist and work but assumes no responsibility for loss or damage. The MPL does not have facilities for storing art.
- b. Courts have ruled that works of art accepted by a public agency for public display are forms of expression protected from censure by the Constitution. Accordingly, no work accepted for display shall be removed from display for reasons related to its expressive character **before the artist has a reasonable opportunity for a hearing before the Town Manager, whose decision shall be final.** Works may, of course, be removed for other reasons, such as repainting walls.
- c. With the approval of the LAC and proper notice to the MPL staff, the artist may remove his or her works before the end of the display period or substitute other works for those displayed. The LAC shall view the new work or a photo thereof before approving a substitution.

V. Comments

Comment cards are available at the MPL circulation desk for those who wish to comment on works displayed or on display policy.

- a. Comments relating to works may be shared with the artist.
- b. The LAC shall respond to signed written comments relating to policy with an invitation to their author(s) to meet with members of the LAC and elaborate. The LAC shall then consider the issue and report the result of its deliberations in writing to the author(s).