



MANSFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY DEPARTMENTAL POLICY MEMORANDUM

Approved by: Devon Andrews, Library Director
Effective Date: September 17, 2013, revised March 4, 2025
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 invites local artists to apply to exhibit their works at the Mansfield Public Library and/or its branch location(s) (MPL). An application form is available on MPL's website. Note that:

- Exhibitions will generally run for 1 month and usually will be located on the wall of the Children's area.
- Exhibiting artists assume responsibility for loss or damage and must sign a waiver to that effect. The Town does not carry insurance coverage for loss or damage to the artists' work(s).
- 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.

II. Application Process

- a. The Library 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 Library shall review applications, and approve or disapprove them 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 Library.
- d. If an application to exhibit is disapproved, the Library will notify the applicant in writing of the denial. Upon request of the applicant, the Library will explain in writing why it has been denied. **An applicant 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 Library will 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.

III. Guidelines

Applications to exhibit will be reviewed by the Library 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 Library.

- 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 Library 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 Library determines 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, but are not limited to:
 - 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 Library 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 Library may remove the work. In such a case, the Library will 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 Library 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 Library will view the new work or a photo thereof before approving a substitution.