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THE ULTIMATE CAR



KNIGHT TYPE MOTOR  
1912  
TOURING

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6:00 AM - 5:00 PM

**EVENING RATE  
AFTER 5:00 PM  
\$5.00**

**BEFORE 5:00 PM  
SATURDAY & SUNDAY**  
0-2 Hrs...\$2.00  
2-4 Hrs...\$5.00  
All Day...\$10.00

PRIVATE  
PARKING

5 PM  
FRIDAY

## Civic Canvas

### The Art of City Planning

written by Erin Ryan

**W**hat is a city? A dot on a map. A freeway exit. A reason for streets. A miracle of unseen machinery. An escape from the country. A world of lights through an airplane window. A snack for Godzilla. A tax base. A home.

The difference between a dot on a map and a home is sense of place, an often subconscious connection to landscape and the story it tells. Written over 146 years, Boise's story is vividly recounted by a motor car painted on old brick, a pattern of leaves stenciled in steel, a river shaped with bits of recycled rubber, and the faces of local heroes cut from weathered bronze.

More simply, Boise would not be Boise without its unmistakable public art and underlying history. These are the immediate ingredients of culture, conjuring what American writer Gertrude Stein famously called the "there there."

#### The Conduit

Celebrated for its "there," Boise is now the 100th most populated city in the United States. More than 200,000 citizens call it home and nearly 400,000 more live in its metropolitan area, but few realize the passion and work that go into maintaining key contextual pieces.

One of the workhorses is the Boise City Department of Arts & History. Founded on the 30-year legacy of the Boise City Arts Commission (BCAC), the department was established by a city ordinance in 2008. Its mission is to enhance the community by providing leadership, advocacy, education, services and support for the arts and history, and its vision is to become a central conduit for the expression of the city's "diversity, depth and dreams."

"The city was committed to supporting culture writ large, but it needed sustainability, something that would cover everything from collection to advocacy to education," says Terri Schorzman, a seasoned historian, former BCAC commissioner and now director of the Department of Arts & History. "It was



**Welcome to the Afterfuture by Noble Hardesty,**  
acrylic on wood door, 2001  
photo by Department of Arts and History Staff

Part of the Boise Visual Chronicle, Hardesty's piece uses his distinctive comic book style to create a layered experience of Boise's evolving aesthetic. Various panels represent the foothills prior to development, the historic O'Farrell Cabin, the current cityscape and a glimpse of things to come in the so-called "Afterfuture."

**Kilgore Trout by Marcus and Skyler Pierce,**  
automobile paint and acrylic on aluminum, 2005  
photo by Otto Kitsinger

Pedestrians walking in the alley next to Tom Grainey's pub in downtown Boise can't help but notice the massive and vividly rendered fish on the side of the building. This is just one example of how public art, from subtle to eye-popping, works its way into unexpected parts of city life and culture.

**Alley History by Kerry Moosman,**  
ceramic, glaze and spray paint on brick, 1992  
photo by Otto Kitsinger

Prolific artist Kerry Moosman's piece in the 9th Street alley between Bannock and Idaho streets is a favorite of locals and visitors alike. It layers historical and popular imagery with an array of media, including ceramics, Chinese calligraphy, painted advertisements, graffiti and product memorabilia from the city's past.

Previous Page:

**Stearns Motor Car by the Letterheads,**  
acrylic on brick, 2000, photo by Otto Kitsinger.

The Letterheads, an international sign painters group, created this mural in three days on the side of the historic Adelman building in downtown Boise. The design is based on an old advertisement for the Stearns-Knight luxury automobile.



Mayor Bieter's idea to create a department, providing more permanence within the city structure and a stable foundation to build on the successes of the BCAC."

"The Department of Arts & History preserves and elevates Boise's identity by weaving culture into the civic life of our community," Bieter points out. "Though its budget is small compared to other city departments, its impact is significant and enduring."

In fact the department's share is less than half of one percent of the city's budget, but Schorzman and her staff understand that taxpayers are focused on basic necessities and that the city has an obligation to back up spending, however modest, with results.

"We're constantly asking if our work aligns with the city's strategic plan and evaluating whether we're meeting the markers," Schorzman explains. "Transparency is really important. We want the public to know where everything is going and its impact."

### Call to Artists

Public art existed mostly as architecture in Boise until 1977, when Mayor Dick Eardley appointed a committee to develop a visual arts program for City Hall. That committee became the BCAC, and the artworks it commissioned remain cardinal parts of the city's character.

Novelty became more of a trend in the 1990s, especially during the administration of Mayor Dirk Kempthorne. With help from community organizations including the Capital City Development Corporation (CCDC), the city initiated the Boise Visual Chronicle, an ongoing collection of works about Boise by Idaho artists that ranges from Noble Hardesty's cartoonish rendering of the O'Farrell Cabin to Michael Miller's photo-realistic painting of Club 44.

In 2000 the city supported Ward Hooper's dynamic redesign of the Basque Block entrance with sculpted flags in the colors of the old country. An additional \$25,000 for permanent public art was matched by CCDC, enabling such





**Club 44 by Michael Miller,**  
acrylic on Masonite, 2001  
photo by Department of Arts and History Staff

*Miller's photo-realistic painting not only provides a historical record of an iconic Boise landmark, it also makes a statement about human presence in the landscape. It is part of the Boise Visual Chronicle, a city-owned collection of more than 80 paintings, drawings, prints, photographs and other two-dimensional works depicting life in Boise, all by Idaho artists.*

**Foothills poster from Art in Transit by Ward Hooper,**  
2005, photo by Karen Bubb

*A series of fourteen posters by Ward Hooper demonstrates his vintage style, Boise's sense of place and the way public art is woven into the everyday fabric of cities. Displayed in the bus shelters and available for purchase at City Hall.*

**Aero Agoseris by Mark Baltes,**  
(stainless steel) 2008  
photo by Department of Arts and History Staff

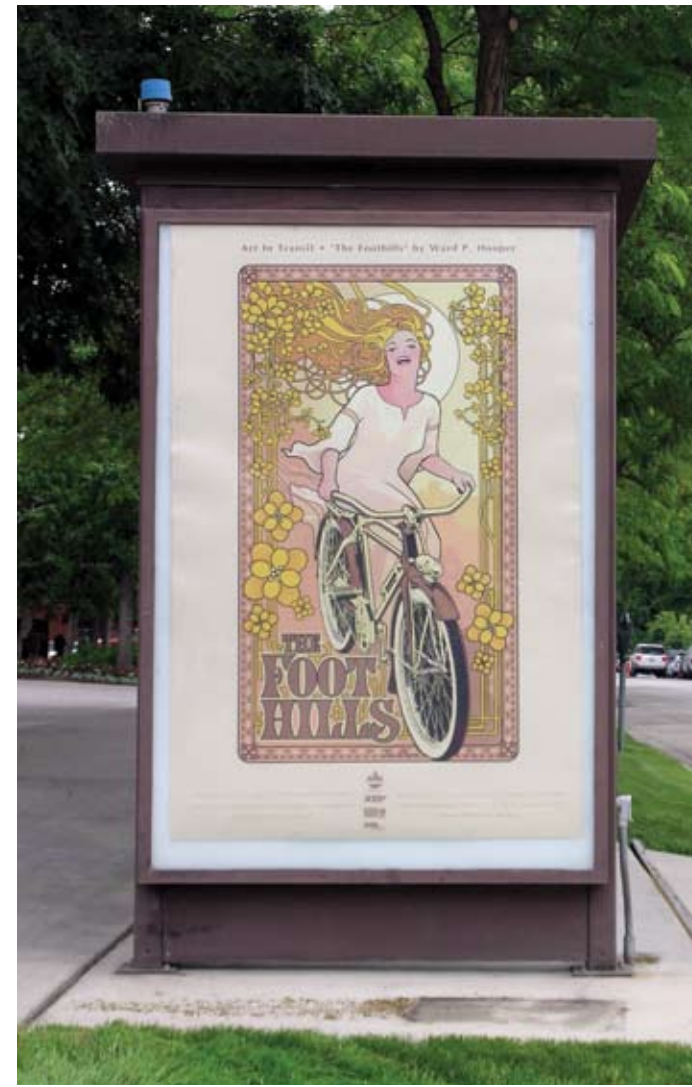
*Aero Agoseris is a sculptural / weathervane depicting a native Mountain Dandelion (Agoseris glauca) dispersing seeds. While the piece is moved by the wind, you may notice a few seeds that have already landed on the foothills learning center's roof. This artwork acts as a great opportunity for the community to be educated on both art and science as they participate in the programming at the center.*

projects as Dwaine Carver's trio of stationary binoculars featuring historical photos of Chinese settlers, and Michael Zapponi's whimsical Cassia Park gateway painted with the help of neighborhood families. While Boise was by no means a model for progressive city planning, these projects blazed an essential trail.

### Percent for Art

"In general, Idaho does not have a long history of providing public or private philanthropic funds for permanent public art. This lack of historical precedent was the largest hindrance to getting a public art program started," says Karen Bubb, public arts manager for the Department of Arts & History.

Bubb was one of the loudest celebrants when in 2001 the Boise City Council passed the "Percent for Public Art" ordinance, committing up to 1.4 percent of eligible municipal capital projects for public art. Since then, nearly 50 public artworks have been completed, including memorials, functional pieces and statements instilled with social, cultural and historical meaning. The collection of more than 80 works



is valued at \$2,725,000, a figure that doesn't take into account the appreciation of citizens and visitors and the dozens of rankings that Boise receives on national lists for quality of life.

"There was some initial resistance in some city departments," Bubb remembers, "but we overcame it and made great allies of our critics by listening to them, involving them in the process and hiring artists that enhanced their objectives and connected with the public."

One of these artists and perhaps the most seminal when it comes to Boise's urban landscape is Ward Hooper. In Boise alone, he is credited with seven major pieces. From retro illustrations of local landmarks decorating bus stops to a mod superhero mural painted under the freeway, Hooper's touch is everywhere.

"Great cities create great artists," he says. "I am fortunate to have come along at the right time in Boise's history to influence, in a positive way, its distinctive environment."

While Hooper admits that public commissions challenge artists to deal with "external forces" such as budget constraints and bureaucratic processes, he insists that they



can learn to balance these factors with their own creative vision. Bubb, who has managed more than 60 public art projects for the city, agrees.

"I've seen great creativity come from constraints," she says. "Given a set of parameters, artists have a problem to solve and must apply their creative energy to find a solution that reflects and meets the criteria of the opportunity. This can bring forth work unlike anything they have ever done before."

That is one of the reasons that Hooper continues to apply for and win public commissions—the thrill of not knowing what will spill from him next. The other reason is a desire to connect with his community and express what would be lost without support for the arts.

"It is public art that creates the biggest impact in public spaces," he explains, "telling visitors how much we care about our city and what we want it to become."

### Blueprint Boise

Artists would have a lot fewer outlets in Boise were it not for the Department of Planning & Development Services, which Councilman Alan Shealy calls "the point of the spear."



Director Bruce Chatterton plays a major role in where and how the spear flies. He is a veteran planner accustomed to working in much larger cities, but he says that Boise's approach to arts and culture is "mature and progressive."

While Chatterton's outlook also is progressive, it wasn't always. He recalled working on a project 15 years ago, a corporate bank plaza that included a massive piece of public art meant to enhance and welcome the public into the space. He said it was a classic case of planning not taking into account the feel of the site and the story of the surrounding area.

"It looks sort of like a deconstructed stegosaurus and is widely known as the exploding chicken," Chatterton admits. "It was one of the things that helped me find religion on this topic, as did a seminar I attended on public art. It opened my eyes to the idea of placemaking."

Chatterton explains that placemaking was once innate in the construction of American cities, but zoning abuses due to social inequities in the early 1900s followed by suburban flight in the 1950s eroded the cultural habit.

"We weren't doing it for so many years that we lost the awareness of *how* to do it, the components of great cities.

They have a public square, and in it are features that reflect the social mores, values and history of a community. We used to do this naturally, but now we have to think about it," he explains.

On the flipside, Chatterton says, the solution is not simply to weatherize a gallery piece and plunk it down in a place with foot traffic.

"More than anything else, public art is about process. The most successful public artists realize that engaging users is part of the piece. It should be an outgrowth of the place itself."

In growing cities, tax structures impede placemaking, as big-box retailers often provide the most revenue for use of public land. And while cities stand to lose historic resources such as the old schools that were recently demolished on the Boise Bench, their hands are tied by laws that require them to get the best return on their investment.

The bright side, according to Chatterton, is that such losses tend to mobilize the citizenry and bolster their support for city planning that includes more green spaces, cultural initiatives and mixed use developments. This outlook is



reflected in Blueprint Boise, a much-needed update that is underway on the city's comprehensive plan.

"It will lead us into the immediate horizon and 20 years into the future," Chatterton declares. "But our role at the city is one of facilitation, understanding the vision and enabling realization. The most local government can do is set the table and let the private sector come in and dine."

### Where We Are, Who We Are

Inviting the private sector to the table involves letting developers know how much the community values art, informing artists about creative opportunities, and reminding people that the places they love require love's demonstration.

The City of Boise is reaching out in all of these ways, the evidence as palpable as Alison Sky's 50-foot river sculpture on the Grove Hotel and as subtle as Amy Westover's interpretive watermarks in the concrete exterior of the Boise WaterShed Environmental Education Center. They are signs of a growing creative class that invigorates the economy, shapes the identity of the city and expresses the power of art *in situ*.

"Public art meets people in their own environment, making art more accessible and places more memorable and meaningful," says Bubb.

"Culture and the built environment are sort of like the mind-body continuum. What we are like as a people and a city and a society is reflected in the environment we build," adds Chatterton. "Like most cities, we have made mistakes, but we've also done some things right. Placemaking is a way of correcting the mistakes of the past and providing essential tools for the future." **B**

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**Artist-in-Residence Emily Wenner,**  
photo by the Department of Arts and History Staff

*The 8th Street Artist in Residence program matches artists in need of studios with available space donated by building owners. The program is facilitated by the department and co-sponsored by Adrian + Sabine and participating building owners, including 8th Street Marketplace, G. Square Companies, Renewal Consignment Homewares and Parklane LLC. Artist Emily Wenner worked in the basement of Renewal in 2009 on large-scale figurative and fantastical landscape paintings.*

**What Do You Want to Be by Grant Olsen,**  
porcelain enamel on steel, 2002, photo by Otto Kitsinger

*Public art often challenges the viewer not only to understand the context of the imagery but also to relate its messages to their own lives. Artist Grant Olsen encourages this exchange using images and text from Boise High School yearbooks from 1927 and 1939. His work reflects on the similarities between the aspirations of young people then and now.*