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Direct questions or concerns to the Commission Liaison at (310) 618-618-2937 or individual department head prior to submission to the Commission. Parties will be notified if the complaint will be included on a subsequent agenda.

**TORRANCE CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION AGENDA
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2022
REGULAR MEETING
7:00 P.M.
WEST ANNEX COMMISSION MEETING ROOM
CITY HALL, 3031 TORRANCE BOULEVARD**

**THE CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION MAY TAKE ACTION ON ANY ITEM LISTED
ON THE AGENDA**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

ROLL CALL: Commission members Cabrera, Carrasco, Hsiao, Klinenberg, Kraemer, Sargent, Chair Polcari

2. FLAG SALUTE:

3. REPORT OF THE CITY CLERK ON THE POSTING OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was posted on the Public Notice Board at 3031 Torrance Bl. and on the City's Website on Thursday, November 17, 2022 /s/ Rebecca Poirier

4. ANNOUNCEMENT OF WITHDRAWN, DEFERRED, AND/OR SUPPLEMENTAL ITEMS

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS (Limited to a 15 minute period)

This portion of the meeting is reserved for public comment on items on the agenda or on topics of interest to the general public. Under the Ralph M. Brown Act, Commissioners cannot act on items raised during public comment but may respond briefly to statements made or questions posed; request clarification; or refer the item to staff. Speakers under this Public Comment period will have no longer than 1 minutes per speaker. Your comment to the Commission meeting will be recorded as part of the meeting. By staying in the meeting and making public comment during the meeting, you are agreeing to have your comment recorded.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR

Matters listed under the Consent Calendar are considered routine and will be enacted by one motion and one vote. There will be no separate discussion of these items. If discussion is desired, that item will be removed by a Commissioner from the Consent Calendar and considered separately.

6A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Recommendation of Cultural Services Manager that your Honorable Body approve the Cultural Arts Commission minutes of October 17, 2022.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

7A. UPDATE ON UTILITY BOX PUBLIC ART PILOT PROGRAM

Recommendation of the Community Services Director that the Cultural Arts Commission review and approve the program files for presentation to the City Council. The City Council would then consider and provide direction to staff regarding the initiation of the public art utility box pilot program.

7B. CULTURAL SERVICES DIVISION UPDATES

Recommendation of the Cultural Services Division that the Cultural Arts Commission receive and file updates on the Cultural Services activities:

- Division Manager Recruitment

7C. CANCEL DECEMBER COMMISSION MEETING

7D. SCHEDULE FOR JANUARY COMMISSION MEETING

8. COMMISSION ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

9. ADJOURNMENT

- 9A.** Adjournment of the Cultural Arts Commission Meeting to MONDAY, December 19, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The Torrance Cultural Arts Commission convened in a regular session at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 17, 2022, in the West Annex Commission Meeting Room.

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Cabrera, Carrasco, Hsiao, Klinenberg, Kraemer, Sargent, and Chair Polcari

Absent: None.

Also Present: Cultural Services Program Coordinator Gia Jordahl and Community Services Director John La Rock

2. FLAG SALUTE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Carrasco.

3. REPORT OF THE CITY CLERK ON THE POSTING OF THE AGENDA

Chair Polcari reported that the agenda was posted on the Public Notice Board at 3031 Torrance Boulevard and on the City's website on Thursday, October 13, 2022.

4. ANNOUNCEMENT OF WITHDRAWN, DEFERRED, AND/OR SUPPLEMENTAL ITEMS:

Cultural Services Program Coordinator Jordahl presented Supplemental material which included certificates for the Commission to sign; signed certificates will get framed for the upcoming event.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

A member of the public requested a 3-week extension on a ceramics class.

Councilwoman Lewis requested that the Commission consider adding evening ceramic classes. Community Services Director La Rock replied that classes have several requirements which is not currently budgeted and will investigate the matter.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION: Commissioner Sargent moved to accept the Consent Calendar. Commissioner Klinenberg seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

6A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: SEPTEMBER 19, 2022

7. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

7A. UPDATE ON EXCELLENCE IN ARTS AWARDS EVENT

Cultural Services Program Coordinator Jordahl presented an update on the Excellence in Arts Awards Event:

The script for the event has been approved by the City Manager; script will be provided to the Commission via email.

Commissioners to arrive at 1:30 p.m. to walk through procedures.

Reservations totaled 80; historically, seats are filled with walk-ins. Invitations were provided to the Commission to distribute.

Slideshow has been created for the event.

Bouquet of flowers have been ordered for Eve Rappaport.

7B. UPDATE ON UTILITY BOX PUBLIC ART PILOT PROGRAM

Chair Polcari presented an update on the Utility Box Public Art Pilot Program. Subcommittee met and chose 2 utility boxes per district.

Utility boxes were chosen close to businesses for potential sponsorships.

Subcommittee chose utility boxes in locations that were well traveled and visible from all sides of the street.

The project will not be funded by the City of Torrance, sponsorships are welcomed.

MOTION: Commissioner Klinenberg moved to accept the subcommittees' recommendations as outlined / presented. Commissioner Hsiao seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

7C. CULTURAL SERVICES DIVISION UPDATES

Community Services Director La Rock gave updates on the Cultural Services Division.

Torrance Art Museum 2023 art exhibit, Uncivil War, has received positive press.

Chair Polcari received the Excellence in Arts Award.

Interviews for the Cultural Services Division Manager are underway, 7 candidates are being interviewed in the next week.

No action was taken by the Commission.

8. COMMISSION ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Commissioners Klinenberg and Cabrera spoke.

Chair Polcari spoke.

9. **ADJOURNMENT:**

MOTION: At 8:01 p.m., Commissioner Klinenberg moved to adjourn the meeting to Monday, November 21, at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex Commission Meeting Room. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kraemer; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

###

Subject to Approval

FOR COMMISSION MEETING

November 21, 2022

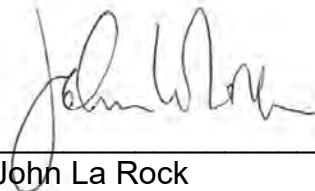
TO: CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION

FROM: JOHN LA ROCK, COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: PUBLIC ART PILOT PROJECT – UTILITY BOX WRAPPING

Recommendation of the Community Services Director that the Cultural Arts Commission review and approve the program files for presentation to the City Council. The City Council would then consider and provide direction to staff regarding the initiation of the public art utility box pilot program.

Respectfully submitted,



John La Rock
Community Services Director

Attachments:

- Sponsorship Form
- Artist Application
- Criteria and Installation Locations
- Artwork Template
- Title Box Example

CITY OF TORRANCE UTILITY BOX PUBLIC ART PILOT PROGRAM SPONSOR INFORMATION

The City of Torrance and its Cultural Arts Commission invites sponsors to fund the placement of original artworks by local artists to beautify utility boxes located throughout the City of Torrance. The program will place art in unexpected places and enhance the City's visual realm, contributing to the vitality and attractiveness of the City's streetscapes. This Application and Guidelines are accessible on the City website (www.arts.torranceca.gov/the-arts).

SPONSORSHIP FORM

Sponsors are welcome to envision how public art can transform our community, and support the work of artists that will showcase original art work on utility boxes located throughout Torrance. The Utility Box Pilot Program aims to upgrade unsightly utility boxes by bringing art to unexpected places and enhancing the beauty and vibrancy of Torrance for years to come. Sponsorships are \$2,000 per utility box and include a \$500 artist stipend as well as the cost to install a vinyl wrap of the selected artwork onto a utility box.

Utility Box Sponsors may request a specific location that may be in proximity to a business or similar connection as well as the artist and artwork. However, the Cultural Arts Commission and City Council will not guarantee the requested artwork as acceptable and may choose another artwork for the sponsored box at their sole discretion. All Utility Box art for consideration will be subject to the guidelines established in the Call for Artists and the Cultural Arts Commission will recommend final locations, subject to the approval of the City Council. Advertising or copy written material will not be considered. Sponsors will be recognized on the utility box art and on the City's Public Art website.

Sponsor Information:

Name of Person, Business or Organization: _____

Sponsor Information to appear on the Box (no logos are permitted): _____

Sponsor Contact: _____

Mailing Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Requested Box Location (not guaranteed): _____

Utility Box Sponsorship: \$2,000 (1% of sponsorship allocated to Utility Box Art Maintenance).

One or more individuals, an organization or a business can sponsor a Utility Box. The identified name(s) will be included on the Utility Box and will be listed under the Public Art section and Cultural Division section of the City's website.

Please submit a check payable to "City of Torrance" with this form to:

City of Torrance

Attn: Utility Box Program

Questions? Please contact the Cultural Services Department at (310) 618-2376

CITY OF TORRANCE PUBLIC ART PILOT PROGRAM

UTILITY BOX PUBLIC ART ARTIST INFORMATION

The City of Torrance and its Cultural Arts Commission invites artists to participate in the City's Utility Box Public Art Pilot Program. The City and the Commission are seeking artists to showcase their work to beautify utility boxes located throughout Torrance. The goals of the program are to use public art to contribute to the vitality and attractiveness of the City's streetscapes and bring art to unexpected places.

Please read this Program Announcement in its entirety before completing the application.

Eligibility

This Public Art Pilot Program is open to all Torrance residents. All entries must be of an original design and artwork must be suitable for viewing by people of all ages.

Description and Location of Utility Boxes

The City's Utility Boxes vary in size. Installation of artwork would be completed by a vendor chosen by the City, complete with necessary preparations including scraping, sanding and priming. The vinyl material used to wrap each box will include a UV-protective clear coat to protect against sun and other environmental damage. The boxes are located throughout Torrance, including major thoroughfares with traffic signals that are visible to pedestrian, cycling and automobile traffic. The locations of the utility boxes are listed at [WEBLINK TBD].

This call for artists is only for City of Torrance Utility Boxes. At some intersections where there are more than one utility box, the City's box is the only available box for public art installation.

Artwork Opportunity

The proposed Utility Box public art designs must be applicable and usable, covering all four sides and the top of a box. The artwork would be printed and installed by a vendor selected by the City who is contracted for vinyl wrapping services. Artworks should enliven the area, transform the street and reflect the neighborhood or area where the utility box is located. The artwork submitted should be family-friendly and suitable for viewing by persons of all ages. Artwork using a majority of dark colors may not be considered due to the potential for overheating the utility boxes. Certain locations will include subject matter consideration that showcases Torrance's cultural diversity, historic heritage, or acknowledges a key activity that takes place in the area. Artists can submit more than one concept for the same location or submit a concept that includes a continuous theme across multiple utility boxes and locations. The artwork design may not restrict any vents or airflow through the boxes, thus necessary layout edits to designs may be made by the City. The City must be able to fully access the box and the components inside the box at all times. In the event the utility box is mounted on a base of concrete or other material, the base shall not be included as part of the available area for a public art design. Any nearby protective poles, bollards, planters, etc. are not be included as part of the available area for a public art design. The artist is responsible for the design of the artwork to be printed on the vinyl and wrapped.

Entries that use a copyrighted or trademarked image will not be accepted. In addition, artworks must not be plagiarized, stolen, or copied from any other source. Entries must not defame or invade the rights of any person, living or dead. The artwork shall include the placement of a credit box containing the name of the artist and the financial sponsor of the box, which may be the City, the artist or another entity. The artwork is considered a long-term installation and will become the property of the City of Torrance. The artist will retain the right to reproduce and/or sell their original art.

How to Apply for the utility Box Public Art Pilot Program

Please go to [WEBSITE LINK TBD].

Application

All requirements listed below must be met or the application will be removed from consideration.

1. Application Form completed.
2. A concept drawing that shows all four sides and top of the utility box must be included in the application. Please note that utility boxes differ in size, so the diagram is for a concept drawing not necessarily to scale. Concept drawings may be hand drawn, however digital design is recommended.
3. The name of the Utility Box sponsor (sponsor may be the artist), if available, and the requested utility box location (location not guaranteed). Utility box artwork installations will only be completed when a location has a confirmed sponsorship. The City may connect a sponsor with an artist/artist submission in the event the sponsor has not indicated a preference for an artist.

Selection Criteria

When making the selection for the Utility Box Public Art Pilot project, the following will be considered:

Artistic excellence, innovation, and originality.

Does the art meet the goals of the project?

Does the art transform the project area?

Does the art relate to the area where the utility box is located?

Does the art portray the City's cultural diversity, historic heritage, or a key activity?

Artist Selection Process

The selection process will consist of a review and project recommendation by the Cultural Arts Commission to the City Council. Artists will be notified by the City if and when their designs are accepted. If selected to complete a Utility Box Public Art Pilot Project, artists must sign a liability release and artwork agreement before artwork will be installed. The artists will receive a

\$500.00 stipend when the artwork is installed. In order to receive payment, artists must submit a completed W9 form.

Once an artwork is selected, the following shall be submitted by the artist within (30) thirty days:

1. Final artwork and design. Artwork must be in hi-resolution digital format. If submitting a Photoshop, Illustrator, or InDesign file, please also submit a hi-resolution image file of the same artwork.

TORRANCE UTILITY BOX PUBLIC ART PILOT PROJECT

ARTIST APPLICATION

Artist Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number(s): _____

Email(s): _____

Web Site(s): _____

Title of Work (if applicable): _____

_____ I certify that I have created the above artwork (please initial).

Preferred utility Box Number(s)/Location(s):

Rendering for Utility Box

Please attach designs for consideration by the Cultural Arts Commission. Please submit designs using the Design Template form or a reasonable facsimile. Please sign, date and return with Artist Application.

I agree that: (1) my submission(s) and their contents will automatically become the property of the City of Torrance, with no guarantee of compensation to me; (2) The City of Torrance may use or redistribute the submissions and their contents for any purpose and in any way; (3) there is no obligation for the City of Torrance to review the submission; and (4) there is no obligation to keep any submissions confidential. Further, I agree to waive my rights of attribution out in the Visual Artists Rights Act, 17 U.S.C §§106A and 113(d) ("VARA"), the California Art Preservation Act, Cal. Civil Code §§ 987 and 989 ("CAPA").

ARTIST _____ Date _____

DISCLAIMER

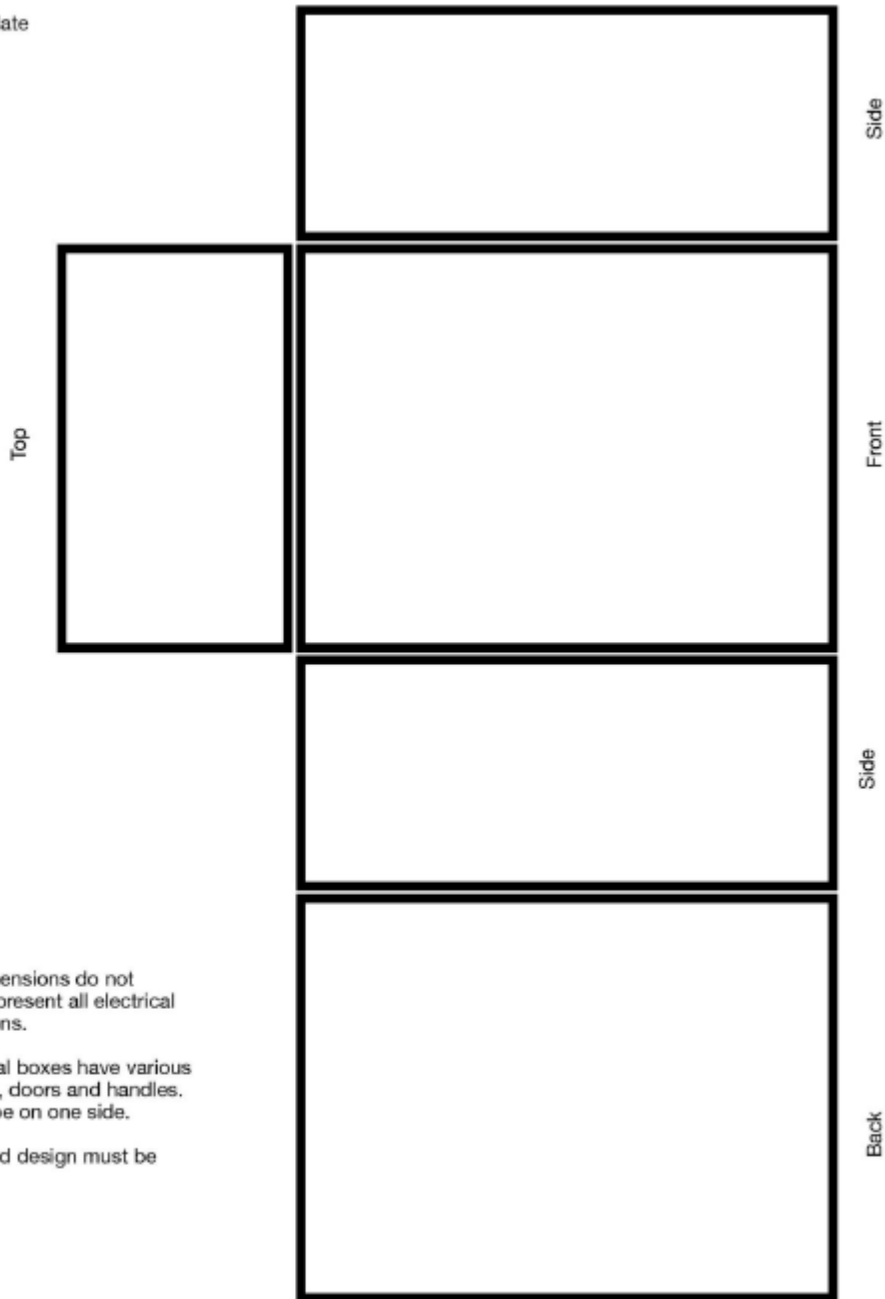
I have read the attached information and agree to the rules & regulations stated. The undersigned agrees to indemnify and hold harmless, the City of Torrance, Its Council, Officers, Boards, Commissions, Agents, associated Foundations and Employees for any loss or liability which results or is alleged to have resulted from my participation in this event, including any claim arising out of the applicants entry, acts, or omissions in said contest or any accident, injury or damage involved therein, including but not limited to attorney fees and court costs. I have read and fully understand these policies. I am an adult and my signature is below.

ARTIST _____ Date _____

Design Template Sample

This is a typical utility box diagram representing the four sides and top. Please use it to submit the utility box design/images as it would be wrapped. Unique colors and bold graphics work well, along with bright images that can be seen from a distance. Detailed images of each side must be submitted on 8.5" x 11" paper. Actual utility boxes vary in size shape and have various vents, seams, doors, and handles. Be prepared to adjust artwork to fit a unique utility box.

Design Template



Template dimensions do not accurately represent all electrical box dimensions.

Most electrical boxes have various vents, seams, doors and handles. Meters may be on one side.

Your proposed design must be adjustable.

Artist Name: _____

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are utility boxes receiving public art?

The City of Torrance is committed to public art as a means for vibrancy, cultural uniqueness, community building, improving the quality of life, and making the City a cultural destination.

Who is paying for the utility boxes to have public art?

The costs associated with utility box public art are being paid for by private sponsorships.

How can I sponsor or support public art for a utility box?

Donations for the utility box public arts pilot project can be made by completing a Sponsorship Form available at [\[WEBSITE LINK TBD.\]](#)

If I sponsor a box may I choose the artwork for the box?

Utility Box Sponsors may request a specific artwork be considered with support of their sponsorship, however, the Cultural Arts Commission will not guarantee that the requested artwork will be accepted and may choose any other artwork for the sponsored box at their sole discretion. All Utility Box art for consideration will be subject to the guidelines established in the Call for Artists.

Are the artists being paid?

Yes, an artist receives a \$500.00 stipend for their artwork per utility box design.

How did you come up with the design and how do you transfer it to the box?

Each artist has an idea that has inspired him/her which they create into a rendering and proposal. The rendering is submitted to the Cultural Arts Commission for approval. The rendering is then scaled up to fit the size of the utility box and is applied using a durable vinyl wrap.

What are the guidelines to what design is acceptable?

The criteria requires the artwork to be appropriate for the entire community to view and appropriate for its location.

Is this permanent?

The utility box would be finished with a UV/anti-graffiti coating and should last between 7-10 years. The City reserves the right to remove a utility box public artwork at any time for any reason.

What happens if a utility box gets tagged and or vandalized?

If the artwork is vandalized, the City will mitigate the graffiti or other damage to the utility box. The artist is not responsible for repair.

Are the artists from Torrance?

At this time all submitting artists are required to be from Torrance.

How long does it take to install public art on a utility box?

This varies based on the artist, utility box, location and design. Once an artwork is scheduled to be installed, a vendor will typically need one day for utility box prep and one day to install the vinyl wrap.

What does the city do to protect the finished design from being defaced?

Once the contractor has completed the vinyl wrapping, a UV/anti-graffiti coating will be applied. The City has contracted for graffiti abatement services that are ready to mitigate any tagging or graffiti that is reported in the City.

How can I comment regarding the art?

The public is welcome to send comments to [WEBSTIE LINK TBD.]

How do I submit an artist application?

Applications can be found on the City of Torrance website, Cultural Art Division section at: [WEBSITE LINK TBD.]

City of Torrance Cultural Arts Division

Utility Box Public Art

Pilot Program Criteria and Installation Locations (as developed by the Cultural Arts Commission)

Criteria for location selection

- Well-traveled street by pedestrians and vehicles
- Visibility of all sides of utility box, i.e. corner locations as compared to side street locations
- Proximity to middle and high schools
- Proximity to potential business sector sponsors
- Even distribution of locations across City Council Districts
- Priority use of midsize and large size utility boxes
- Visibility for sponsors to maximize the impact of their sponsorship investment

Proposed Pilot Program Installation Locations

District 1

Location Notes

- Crenshaw Blvd. & 166th St. (#50) Near El Camino College and 7-Eleven retailer



- Van Ness & Artesia Blvd. (#75) High volume corridor with Torrance Transit stop



District 2

Location Notes

- Anza Ave. & Carson St. (#2)

Corner location



- Anza Ave. & Torrance Blvd. (#22)

Near retail gas station



District 3

Location Notes

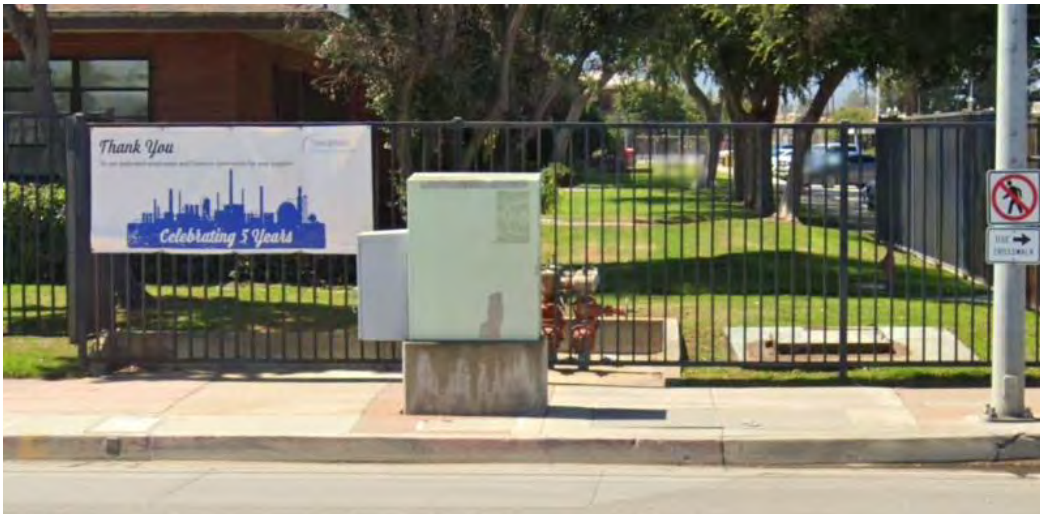
- Del Amo Circle & W. Carson St. (#23)

Near Del Amo Fashion Center



- Refinery Way & 190th St. (#27)

Near Torrance Refinery



District 4

Location Notes

- Sartori Ave. & Torrance Blvd. (#74)

High volume corridor



- Van Ness Ave. & Dominguez St. (#77)

Near Honda corporate headquarters



District 5

Location Notes

- 201 Paseo De La Playa (#10) Near Torrance Beach



- Anza Ave. & Lomita Blvd. (#55) Corner location



District 6

Location Notes

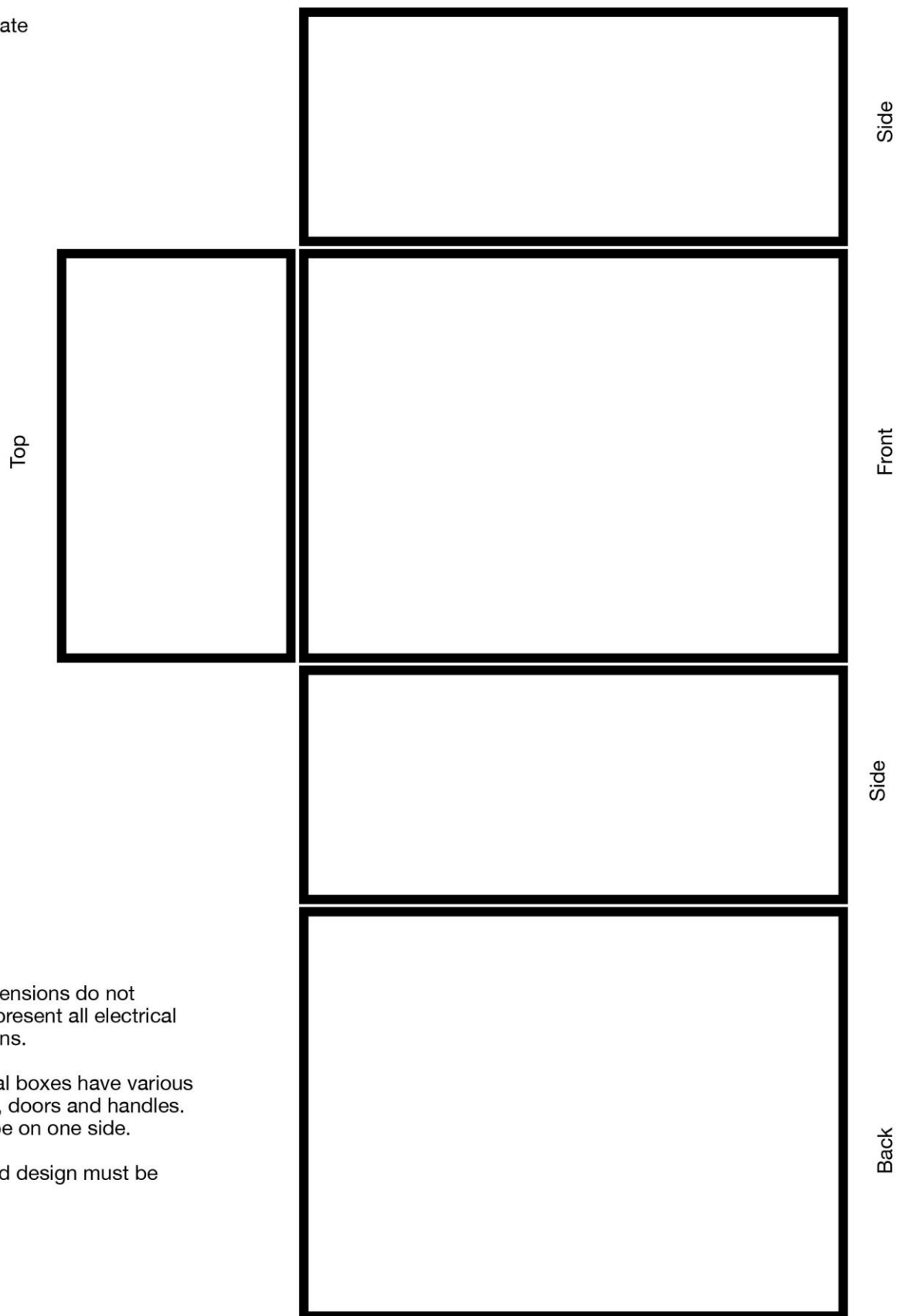
- Crenshaw Blvd. & Plaza Del Amo (#48) High volume corridor; Torrance Transit stop



- Crenshaw Blvd. & Airport Dr. (#58) Large utility box; high volume corridor



Design Template



Template dimensions do not accurately represent all electrical box dimensions.



Most electrical boxes have various vents, seams, doors and handles. Meters may be on one side.

Your proposed design must be adjustable.

Artist Name: _____

City of Torrance Cultural Arts Division

Utility Box Public Art Title Box Example

NAME OF ARTIST	
TITLE OF ARTWORK, YEAR	
SPONSOR INFORMATION	
WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ARTIST	
QR CODE FOR CITY PUBLIC ART WEBSITE/BROCHURE	 

For Commission Meeting
November 21, 2022

TO: CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION

FROM: JOHN LA ROCK, COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: CULTURAL SERVICES DIVISION REPORT – October 2022

Administration

Staff wrapped up Excellence In Arts. A new digital email list was created from the RSVP website. Staff has begun strategizing steps for next year's Excellent In Arts to get more nominees and exposure for the event.

Staff continues to create digital content for Cultural Services Division.

Nico Clifton, Performing Arts Program Coordinator

Fall classes continued throughout October with no issues. The spring 2023 Seasons was submitted on October 11. We are pushing to hold outdoor exercise classes, such as yoga, Zumba, etc., beginning the spring 2023 session – these classes would be held at various parks throughout the city. The final draft for the winter 2023 Seasons was submitted on October 25. Classes had a strong social media presence in October; highlighting our diverse class offerings with multiple posts each week. With the help of Uyen Fredericks, each post and story has included amazing pictures and video of students enjoying each class. Our social media pages also showcased the Halloween fun of the office decorations and costumes of both the staff and students.

Gia Jordahl, Producing Artistic Director, Torrance Theatre Company

Torrance Theatre Company

The Torrance Theatre opened the downtown season at 1316 Cabrillo Ave. with PARAGON SPRINGS by Steven Dietz, adapted from AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE by Henrik Ibsen. The show ran October 3rd through October 22nd. Auditions for the second show were held in October as well. That show is a new holiday comedy by Ryan and Sasha Miller titled THE CORDRAY CHRISTMAS VARIETY HOUR, which will run December 3rd-18th. Tickets are on sale at www.TorranceTheatreCompany.com.

The TTC currently has 400 season subscribers for the 22-23 season.

One of the LA County Arts Commission interns was hired in October. Jorge Macias, a recent technical theatre graduate from Cal Poly Pomona started with the City in late October, and will be on board until the end of February. The search for a marketing intern continues.

Torrance Civic Chorale

The Torrance Civic Chorale continues preparation for A Holiday Celebration concert on December 17th at 8 pm at the James R. Armstrong Theatre. The concert will feature holiday music from around the world, and cover various holiday traditions, including a special sing-along. Additionally, the Chorale will be joined by special guest South Bay Children's Choir. Tickets will go on sale in November, and more info and a link to purchase tickets will be available on www.torrancecivicchorale.net.

Additionally, the TCC is preparing for performances at the TMMC Festival of Trees, City Council meeting (12/6) and at the Torrance Women's Club. The Chorale will also appear in the Torrance Sister City Concert on Feb. 18th at the James Armstrong Theatre celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Torrance and Kashiwa's relationship.

Torrance Sister City Association

Torrance Sister City Association held its monthly board meeting on October 10th, and a 50th anniversary committee meeting on October 12th.

Rose Float Association

The Rose Float Association held their monthly meeting on October 4th.

Excellence In Arts

The Division assisted the Cultural Arts Commission at the 44th annual event on October 22nd at 2 pm at the Toyota Meeting Hall.

Max Presneil, TAM Curator and Director

Torrance Art Museum continues the run of the exhibition, UnCivil War, that opened on October 1st. We have had a very positive response from the public and we held a discussion panel, featuring 3 artists participating in the show – Michelle Jaquis, Allison Stewart and Keith Walsh – on Saturday October 29 which attracted a crowd of about 30 people. A lively debate was much appreciated.

Artillery, the premier art magazine in California, reviewed yet another TAM exhibition – this time it was Theodore Svenningsen's solo exhibition, Primitive Structures, which was presented this summer.

Attachment: Artillery Magazine Article

artillery

Theodore Svenningsen

Torrance Art Museum

by [David S. Rubin](#) | Sep 6, 2022

<https://artillerymag.com/theodore-svenningsen/>

Since 1985, Theodore Svenningsen has been working sporadically on “Primitive Structures,” an ongoing series of paintings, mostly black and white, that are seductive at surface level, yet purposefully unsettling upon closer inspection. When viewing the 12 works from the 36-year survey at the Torrance Art Museum, we are immediately drawn into each composition by quiet bursts of atmospheric light filled with tiny flecks of paint that suggest mist, fog, smoke or water, the presence of which serves to establish a mood of mystery and intrigue. Within these enigmatic settings, Svenningsen has staged a variety of ominous scenarios, most of which are seen behind architectural grids that bar us from entrance and thereby turn us into witnesses rather than participants. In some examples we seem to have stumbled upon strange apparitions of floating objects or anthropomorphic statues, while others provide encounters with abandoned ritualistic structures, the most recent of which house volcano-like eruptions.

Having earned BA and MA degrees in philosophy in his youth, Svenningsen approaches painting much like a philosopher would, by asking questions. Specifically, his position is that our universe is composed of more that we don't know than that we do know, and he represents this idea metaphorically or allegorically by making works that appear in some way illogical or quixotic. In *Structure* (1985), the earliest painting of the series, three details suggest that there is more than meets the eye and thus impel us to want to know more. In the center of the composition, the continuity of a purple cage-like structure is broken where a connecting strip has either come loose or was never finished. In the lower background, light visible through a pointed arch-shaped crevice in the wall suggests that something mystical or ritualistic is occurring behind it, while a similar effect is achieved at the top of the painting by the presence of a hanging thread that simulates lightning.

In a group of shaped paintings from 1986, Svenningsen forsakes elaborate details in favor of a more minimal approach, with three of the paintings themselves trapezoidal and another resembling an hourglass. In shaping the paintings as such, Svenningsen transforms each into an artifact from an unknown time or place. For the two examples painted in color, he employs the greens and oranges of popsicles or Kool-Aid, causing the contents of their interiors to seem liquefied. In the orange version, a caged funnel suggests a scientific experiment is taking place.

As reflections of the instability of the present-day zeitgeist, the newest black-and-white paintings offer a particularly effective wakeup call. Painted in 2021 during Covid lockdown, *The Lighted Tower* and *The Lighted Structure* both contain a central image of a conical tower within which an explosive emulsion is tumultuously rumbling as its fumes permeate their surrounding environments. In the latter, the turbulence is enveloped by a petrified forest of brittle vegetation stripped bare, a haunting reminder of current threats posed by climate change, political unrest and constantly mutating viruses.



Theodore Svenningsen, Structure, 1985. Courtesy of the artist.



Theodore Svenningsen, The Lighted Structure, 2021. Courtesy of the artist.