

Jim Glen Transcription
By Estevan R.
Interviewed by Andrea Polli

JG: My name is Jim Glen and I manage the public art and design program for the state of Utah.

AP: And can you tell us a little bit about that public art program?

JG: Sure the public art program in Utah was started in 1985. That statute allocates 1 percent of hard construction cost for new state buildings to commissioning and creating new public work for those state buildings.

AP: So you do stuff all over the state?

JG: Right, right now we have about eleven projects in process; most of them are in higher education or technical colleges. We also do court houses, state hospitals and any state facility that has enough public use to warrant public art.

AP: And how does this project compare to other projects that you have done?

JG: Well each project has its own committee and just because of that each project is so different and so unique and then you add on top of that if it's for the school of business for example or if it's a technical college where they teach welding and culinary arts. So each of those has an impact on how the project either develops or how it goes. This project, the committee was very succinct. They had an idea that they really wanted a contemporary college of business. They wanted something relevant and had a finger on the pulse of what was going on with business in a very now way. So the committee when they were looking at all of the applicant artists, I think they had that very much in mind. So the work that you do really appealed to them.

AP: I think it is really interesting the way that the committee is kind of involved throughout the whole process. I think that is different from some of the other public art processes I have been on like the committee will just be the jury.

JG: Right and like I say each committee is different, some really want to be involved and some are like ok we did our work and now you do yours but your right this committee is very committed and interested in the end product. As you can see from the building we just went through, they are very excited about it and want it to be as great as possible.

AP: So in terms of public art, what has been or what can be expected as some of the challenges with this piece?

JG: With this piece, to me it would just be the day-to-day maintenance and very wisely with your guidance we got a commitment from the college that they would dedicate someone to take care of if there is a crash or a power failure and rebooting. But the state program also has a maintenance and conservation fund set aside so in the future when the work does need maintenance and conservation we have the funding to do that. So contractionally we usually will contact the artist and see if they are interested in doing that work or recommend qualified conservators to do the work for us.

AP: Have you had other technology based works that you have been...

JG: No but it seems to be happening more now. I mean people are more aware of new media it seems. Often times my committees are not usually versed in the visual

arts but it seems they are becoming more aware of new media things that are going on which is great.

Marcus: So one percent of new construction is baseline for art funding, what is that approximately come out to annually?

JG: It is a permissive law. I mean they have to put it into the budget but the legislature can pull that money out or even the governors office can pull that out if they feel that they shouldn't be spending the money on art, which is what happened this year.

M: I mean I'm sure some years have more construction than other years but roughly what is the overall yearly budget for art and from that budget how many pieces approximately are commissioned each year?

JG: yeah it varies wildly. From when I started there might be one or two projects that are approved 2, 6 or 10 in a year.

AP: And you got 11 now that are pretty good.

JG: And I would never complain about it but just recently we did an average and last year marked the 25th anniversary of this program. So we did an average of what we have invested over those 25 years and it was close to five hundred thousand a year.

AP: So what impact do you think public art has on Utah?

JG: Boy that is a really big question well public art like any place, to me talks of place, what the people who live there, what they believe, what they value, the story they are trying to tell and also pride of place. To me public art demonstrates a desire for a livable community. One where they want to be and want to attract business or tourism or any of those things, to be that is what public art does. And I mean you are all going to see spiral jetty tomorrow. That is an icon of contemporary land art and is world famous and you'd be surprised how many people in the state don't know the value or that it is even here.

AP: Wow, well on the other hand coming from all over the world to see it and kiss the ground I imagine.

JG: That's true.

M: Who was the artist that did spiral jetty?

AP: Robert Smithson, there is a show actually called the Smithson Effect at the museum which maybe we will check out in the morning.

M: So Smithson was a contemporary that was very successful?

JG: He was. He died about two years after it was completed in 1977.

M: Oh wow it's been here since the 70's.

AP: He must have been young?

JG: Yeah, I don't know how old. And his widow Nancy Hull also created a piece called Sun Tunnels, which is in the west desert of Utah, which is actually pretty interesting, and important art piece, as well.

M: and what is the percentage of state residents that get to produce public art opposed to international or national artists?

JG: You mean the percentage of artists that do public work?

M: Do you tend to use local artists more or do you tend to look through the country or the rest of the world for artists?

JG: Right well the statue is written that it shows preference for Utah artists. We probably have about for every competition we have about, if it's open nationally

about a third of the applicants are Utah artists. So automatically Utah artists have the advantage because they don't have to deal with geography or shipping or any of those kinds of things so they get the same honorarium if they are announced as finalist as an out of state or a New York artist say would get so they have that advantage. And then our instruction to a selection committee is all things being equal if you get down to a Utah artist and a out of state artist and they can't make up their mind then it would go automatically to the Utah artist but that has actually never happened. The committee is usually pretty clear and honed in. I would say 99 percent of our calls are national calls. We typically don't do international calls but that is not to say that we haven't

AP: and what attracts you to doing this type of work?

JG: Well my whole life has been in the arts. It started in the visual arts and it kind of went away and went into the performing arts, which is what my degree is in and then while I was in NY I started working as a corporate consultant. So then I went back to the visual arts field and that is how I sort of ended up here. I used to do a lot of commissions for corporate clients and building those collections. So what it does for me is it feeds my soul which is what art has always been all my life.

M: What is the next big public art installation?

JG: The next big one?

M: Well the next one.

JG: We just dedicated one the old technical college just south of here by two Utah artists. They are two ten foot slabs of stone with sort of figurative elements of bronze representing the different colleges courses that they teach at the technical college. Our next big sort of big installation will be the new science and technology research initiative here on campus. And Cliff Garden is installing a piece along with four other artists, which is a pretty big project.

AP: There is a lot of public art on campus here.

JG: Yeah, it is interesting though the University of Utah most of their public art is interior. They have an aversion to what it seems as exterior work.