

Art on Transport

Cities which have become great centres of commercial and cultural success owe much to the quality of their art and architecture, to the vision of their artists and patrons." Since the 1960's there has been a renewed wave of commitment on many public transport systems to the involvement of the arts in the daily lives of the travelling public. There is recognition that a commitment to culture and environmental design quality is an intrinsic component of providing accessible, high quality and competitive transport services.

Public Arts Programmes need to engage with the contemporary art scene in order to attract work by the best artists regionally, nationally and internationally. Public transport as a site for cultural activity holds a genuine fascination for many artists that can be positively interacted with.

Objectives:

Some of the principle objectives of a Public Art in Public Transport programme are:

- to provide high quality infrastructure to attract and retain passengers to public transport.
- to support best practice in the public visual arts through adventurous commissioning embracing a wide spectrum of forms and media.
- to contribute to the local economy and the development of cultural industries.

Funding:

The necessary prerequisite for any public art programme is a budget – quite simply, without the willingness to commit financially there will not be the drive and momentum to make a programme work. A budget can be secured in a number of ways, utilising both internal allocations and external sources.

This fact sheet has been prepared by the UITP Design and Culture Group with the kind assistance of Nexus (Catherine Jiggins)



The Costs of a Commission - Capital costs of a project must be considered at the outset when defining a budget structure; it must be remembered also that no permanent installation is revenue neutral.

Percent for Art - In order that an art budget will reflect the level of investment made by a company in any one year, some transport agencies operate a 'percent for art' policy: a fixed percentage (sometimes 0.5 to 1 %) of all capital budgets for new developments is allocated to the purposes of art. This has the benefit of integrating commissioned public art into the development of capital programmes from the outset. This funding mechanism also allows for moneys to be pooled and to be invested into commissions within existing facilities.

Government - Some schemes are funded directly by local authorities or through national government. In some cases (see examples - San Paulo) this might require the securing of matched funding through other partner organisations.

Partners - Funding additional to the core budget may be generated through partnerships with other organisations such as cultural and regeneration agencies, charitable trusts and foundations and the private sector.

Project Management Teams:

Overseeing the life span of all projects, professional management by a small team combining the relevant skills and resources is crucial to their success.

Best practice management teams will combine individuals with a broad range of backgrounds, including both arts professionals with extensive current knowledge of the breadth of Public Art and senior transport staff with the necessary political will and support to deliver projects.

Wider Committees and Forums:

Beyond the management team lies the creation of appropriate forums so that artists, architects, engineers and planners - can work collaboratively on high quality schemes. Forums are selected according to the nature of individual projects and are best initiated at the earliest possible stage to establish appropriate commissioning, brief, selection and contractual procedures. The creation of a forum for the life span of individual projects means that a range of skills, knowledge and experience tailored to meet unique circumstances are 'on tap' throughout.

Commissioning:

The backbone of a good commissioning policy will be the willingness to strive towards examples of best practice in the field of public visual arts, with adventurous commissioning in all sectors embracing a wide spectrum of forms and media. The role of the artist may range from creating a new work to collaborating with design teams, including architects and engineers.

The procedures employed to identify, attract and select artists are the crucial frontline in the intention of securing quality.

Briefs:

A Brief is a document that provides a detailed description of the scope and intentions for individual public art projects. The construction of this document should be considered an essential stage towards clear and purposeful progression.

Contracts:

Professional artists should be dealt with in a professional manner, as in all spheres of business this includes a full and fair contract.

On professionalism - both the brief and the contract should outline relationships based on mutual respect and must also acknowledge with appropriate remuneration the professional status of artists.

Artists:

Artists can contribute a voice that is distinctive and unique, especially valuable in an age when the global spread of corporate identity can be seen to be eroding much that is unique and different about our cities. To outline what art and artists might contribute to passenger experience, we invited artist Ron Haselden for some thoughts:

"Travelling is one of the few occasions we have for quiet reflection and the passing of vacant time. It is an excellent time to reflect, quietly perhaps, on ideas that may be presented by the artist on the station or on the journey or voyage. There is time available to consider that which one may not normally be drawn to or perhaps at first glance may appear to be insignificant. It is surprising how ideas around an artwork can evolve and change and include people from all walks of life. The questions in a good work are always opening up, they never go away. You leave the train or the station and the idea travels with you, forever perhaps."

Permanent and Temporary Works:

Categories - Permanent works range from major three and two-dimensional artworks to more modest scale interventions such as signage, street furniture, objects and artefacts. Time based and temporary commissions may include documentary work such as poetry, video or photography, temporary exhibitions and poster works, installation and performance work, artists' fellowships and residencies.

Artists engaging with communities:

Commissioned artists can engage with local communities, developing creative capacity through opportunities for participation, and ensuring the reflection of community aspirations. This encourages environmental awareness and can help to reduce acts of criminal damage to which most systems are subject, through the development of a sense of pride of place. Such initiatives establish the perception and actuality of the transport provider as a fully engaged, socially responsible and dynamic presence within its communities.

What are the benefits for public transport?

Engagement with the wider cultural arena can have a direct impact on the reputation, image and public perception of public transport as a whole. When considering the ubiquity of 'sexy car' imagery it is clear that public transport in the 21st Century will need to carve out an identity that goes way beyond the 'functional' in order to compete.

It is important that the business case for art on transport continues to be measured, such as in the following example:

In 2002 the British Airport Authority estimated the value of publicity generated in the press (since 2000) by their own public arts programme at £98,000. Passenger complaints of walking distance dropped by 50% in an area where the artwork caught the attention of 86% of passengers; support for placing the arts in airports was measured at 4.65 on a 1 – 5 scale.

Public Art on Transport schemes that are at the forefront of best practice recognise the benefits of tapping into the rich variety of contemporary culture, and how art can transform ordinary public settings. The development of a broad range of opportunities to which artists can respond will enhance the scope and impact of a programme, leading to Public Art as a natural part of the landscape for the daily lives of customers. Best practice in public art on transport can manifest itself in schemes of any scale, provided the necessary resources, commitment and management structures and vision are in place to make it work.

Newcastle

Based in the North East of England, Nexus is the Passenger Transport Executive responsible for the Tyne and Wear Metro; for 25 years Nexus has been championing public art on transport.

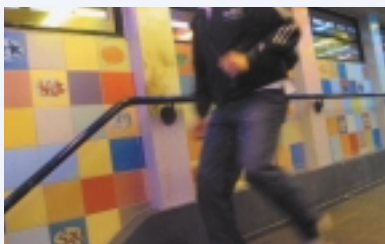
NEXUS adopted a 'Percent for Art' policy in 1996, allocating a small proportion of the capital budget for any new development as a contribution towards the cost of commissioning new artworks. It also works extensively with and receives funding from partner organisations including local authorities and charitable trusts.

The Art on Transport Team at Nexus is led by the Metro Communications Manager, delivered with assistance from a freelance Public Art Consultant and a Percent for Art Assistant. In place is a policy document supplemented by guidance notes defining objectives, financial principles, scope of public art, eligible costs and review procedures.

Since 1977 works both large and small, permanent and temporary have been created by artists 'keen to improve on the sometimes overly functional architecture of the transport system'. Recently it has been able to integrate public art works at an early development stage with the opening of 'Sunderland Direct' extension incorporating 12 new stations - most of the commissions being integrated into the construction programme. The input of artists into the network is wide ranging including permanent three and two dimensional works, new media installations and artists residencies.

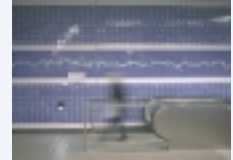
One Example

- Artist Morag Morrison was commissioned by Nexus in 2000 to consider a Colour Strategy – colour finishes for 12 stations along the new extension and their immediate environs. Morrison developed a palette of colours for the vitreous enamelled panels that line all internal platform and ticketing areas. She recommended that while a new colour strategy should bear a relationship to existing corporate colour schemes, it should seek to promote a more site-specific response to the environment of the stations on the new line. "I walked along the line to get a feeling of the landscape and it was amazing...I was struck by the beauty of it and the need to use colours much more sympathetic to the landscape."



Brussels

The Public Art on Transport programme in Brussels is run by the C.A.I.D. / A.C.V.I. / T.A.A.C. a government-designated body set up in 1990 by the Public Works Ministry to take the place of the 'Metro Art Committee' and extended responsibility for artworks to all transit facilities and sites in the Greater Brussels area.



Brussels C.A.I.D funds each public art project out of the overall spend of regenerating urban sites, this is sometimes complimented with additional government funding.

Like most transport systems, Brussels uses their arts programme for the enhancement of the environment to benefit the travelling public. Additionally: "Insofar as the metro is concerned, considering the fact that it is a place of passage for commuters (and not an experimental art gallery) and that one of the telltale signs of our times is the way in which nearly all things are continually being called into doubt, there is a pressing need here for powerful artworks informed by fundamental values."

The Brussels C.I.A.D focuses exclusively on a permanent programme with no temporary exhibitions. The C.I.A.D is present at the start of the planning process for any new facility to ensure that finished works are integral to the system. Artists are required to take into consideration the historical, social and geographical context of the work. In addition to making its own project proposals, the committee examines all projects submitted independently by artists.

Example

Being present at the start of the planning process allows the C.I.A.D to initiate projects on an ambitious scale. At Heysel metro station in 1998, Le Heysel was commissioned from artist Jean Francois Octave. A huge tile fresco ninety-eight metres long, it illustrates key dates, places and events in the Heysel area. Words are written in several languages and photographs of parts of the sky in Brussels complete the project. "This open work is a reflection on time, the universe and dreams, allowing everybody to find their own escape route."

Sao paulo



Art in the Metrô

The opening of the complex that united the largest Metrô station with the re-urbanized Praça da Sé resulted in the establishment of an actual open-air museum right at the landmark zero of São Paulo.

From 1978, sculptures, murals and panels signed by acknowledged artists spread over the square and the internal spaces of the Sé station, composing an unusual scenery for most of the people.

In addition of vivifying the cultural and artistic heritage of the city, this initiative of the City Hall had the merit of bringing a very important question to the attention of the Companhia do Metropolitano de São Paulo.

The proposition of introducing works of art into the architectural project of the stations resulted in a controversy that mobilised the technical staff of the Company, with coverage by the print media.

The Contemporaneous Art (Comtemporary) , São Paulo Metrô's permanent collection of the "Art in the Metrô Project", currently includes almost 100 works of art of well-known names of the Brazilian plastic arts.

Itinerary of Art in the Stations

Between one trip and the other you may enjoy the contemporary art collection in the São Paulo Metro stations.

There are sculptures, panels, installations and paintings created by the best known plastic artists. These pieces are incorporated into the setting, adding colouring your route and inviting you to contemplate.

Using the map of art in the subway system and you can prepare your cultural itinerary!

