

CITY OF GOLDEN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AUDIT AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Presented by Kendall Peterson, ThereSquared LLC
March 22, 2021



Introduction

From murals to monuments, fountains to stained glass, public art is an important element of cities and towns around the world. Art that is available and accessible to everyone can enrich our main streets, our parks and other areas where the public gathers. Art memorializes important historic areas and anchors main tourist destinations. Public art enhances the quality of life for all residents, increases access to art experiences for all and educates residents on an unlimited number of topics from history and nature to modern social issues.

Americans for the Arts reports that public art can be a powerful economic tool, attracting new businesses to cities, drawing and engaging a new workforce and inspiring creativity leading to innovation (Americans for the Arts, "Why Public Art Matters," 2018). Public art has the possibility of offering one-of-a-kind experiences specific to that location. Art in public places gives our communities an opportunity to discover layers of meaning, enjoy the vibrancy of enhanced spaces and witness the history and aspirations of the community. Public art is an essential component of a thriving community.

WHY PUBLIC ART MATTERS

Art in public spaces plays a distinguishing role in our country's history and culture. It reflects and reveals our society, enhances meaning in our civic spaces and adds uniqueness to our communities. Public art humanizes the built environment. It provides an intersection between past, present and future between disciplines and ideas. Public art matters because our communities gain cultural, social and economic value through public art.

("Why Public Art Matters, 2018," Americans for the Arts).

Nearly half of people with college degrees and a majority of millennials say they would strongly consider whether a community is "rich in the arts" when deciding where to locate for a job.

("Speak Out Art", 2016, Americans for the Arts).

CITY OF GOLDEN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AUDIT AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Overview of Public Art in Golden and the Case for Planning

Public art comes into our communities in a variety of different ways. In some cities and towns, the public art was acquired primarily through generous donations of existing artwork, purchase, or loaned works. Such is the case in Golden. That the City was able to secure prominent works of art through donations is a testament to the community's commitment to cultural vitality.

In many cities, public art is commissioned and installed as part of a planned public art program (funded via public funding, non-profit foundations or public/private partnerships). A planned program, with an open and competitive commissioning process, can guide the public art collection over time according to goals and motives set out by the commissioning entity.

Purpose and Methodology of Audit and Analysis

This Public Art Audit and Analysis report for the City of Golden is intended to examine the entire Golden public art collection (both donated and commissioned artwork) with an eye toward a summary analysis and audit of the entire collection and the artwork's relationship to the community and culture of Golden.

The purpose of this Audit is to assess the entire collection of thirty-seven works to ascertain the following:

- Media/Methods contained in the collection;
- Dates of artwork and manner of acquisition;
- Subject matter/genres of works;
- Artists (location, gender, race, age, etc.);
- Locations of artwork (distribution/accessibility/gaps/areas with no artwork);
- Ownership/loans vs. permanent;
- Gaps in collection and under-representation in the collection; and
- Additional analysis as needed/requested.

The following Audit and Analysis of the collection began in December 2020 with in-person visits to gather data on each of the works of art over several weeks. Each work of art was noted for many different features, listed above. A spreadsheet of these findings is listed in Addendum A.

The purpose of this report is to audit and assess the existing collection. It will not give recommendations for the future of the collection. However, the report will conclude with some Data/Graphs and observations and questions for the Public Art Commission to grapple with during future public art planning or cultural planning.



CITY OF GOLDEN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AUDIT AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Golden Public Art Program Collection Background and Guiding Documents

Golden's public art collection is literally a "public museum" of art collected from 1993 to the present, predominantly via donations. This collection is viewable free-of-charge for the residents of Golden and all its visitors. However, art is a nonverbal form of communication. It is entirely appropriate to then inquire, "What does the public art collection communicate about the City of Golden?" If a visitor arrives in Golden and experiences its art, including the placement, subjects and materials of the art, what can be learned about Golden as a community?

The answer to these questions must begin with an analysis of the stated guiding principles behind the collection and guiding documents that have been used to create the collection.

For many years, Golden's collection accumulated through generous donations to the City without guidance from a Public Art Master Plan or strong guiding documents. During this period of collecting, there were no overarching goals or criteria for the collection.

In 2017, Golden's Public Art Commission developed a *Public Art Handbook* which has given the public art acquisition and commissioning program more structure and guidance. In the introduction to the *Public Art Handbook* (2017) the following purposes for the program were outlined (emphasis is for the purpose of establishing themes):

- The City of Golden's Art in Public Places Program create[s] a **healthy, vibrant** atmosphere that contributes to the **quality and cultural identity** of our community. It is inspired by a variety of goals including encouraging **cultural expression** and inspiring a sense of **civic pride**.

- Artists bring a **unique perspective** to design development. They provide an **aesthetic balance** to capital improvement projects and **create memorable spaces** for residents, businesses and visitors.

- **Enhancing the character** of our community through public art directly supports **cultural tourism** and **economic development**.

In the next section of the *Public Art Handbook* (2017), six goals for the public art collection are stated. They are as follows (emphasis is for the purpose of establishing themes):

- I. **Enrich** the public environment for residents and visitors through the incorporation of the visual arts;
- II. Increase the **livability and artistic richness** of the Golden community;
- III. Enable the City to attain **recognition on state and national levels** as a leader in the visual arts;
- IV. **Increase public access to artwork** and to **promote understanding and awareness of the visual arts** in the public environment;
- V. **Make the mundane interesting, fun, playful or inspiring**;
- VI. **Promote diversity and pluralism** in public art and to **reflect a wide range of multicultural expression**; and
- VII. Contribute to the **economic vitality, quality of life, and civic pride** of the Golden community.

CITY OF GOLDEN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AUDIT AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Themes Emerge

Based upon the guidance from this 2017 document, we can see some themes developing. Each of these themes served as ways to access, observe and analyze the collection further. For the City of Golden, the stated purpose of the public art collection can be simplified and assessed according to the following seven statements:

- 1. Quality of Life:** Public art can enhance quality of life through creating vibrant, memorable spaces. Public art enriches public spaces and increases livability in the community.
- 2. Enhancing Public Space:** Public art can make the mundane “interesting, fun, playful, inspiring.”
- 3. Arts Access:** The public art collection can increase access and awareness of visual arts for residents.
- 4. Economic Development:** Public art can play a role in cultural tourism and help with economic development, tourism and vitality within Golden.
- 5. Expression of Culture:** Public art can reveal aspects of the community’s identity and character; it can increase civic pride.
- 6. City Stature:** Public art can enable recognition of Golden on state and national levels.
- 7. Diversity and Inclusion:** Public art can promote “diversity and pluralism ... and reflect a wide range of multicultural expression.”



CITY OF GOLDEN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AUDIT AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Theme 1: Quality of Life

Public art can enhance the quality of life through creating vibrant, memorable spaces. Public art enriches public spaces and increases livability in the community.

Key Observations:

- Sculptures are a very visible feature of Golden's downtown and downtown-adjacent locations along Clear Creek. Artwork is everywhere you look and accessible to most. Artwork is well-sited and placed prominently on street corners, pathways and generally presented in areas frequented by tourists and downtown customers and pedestrians.
- The artwork is generally in good condition, giving visitors a sense that they are in a safe and blight-free community.
- Artwork that is prominently sited as it is in Golden gives visitors and residents a sense that this artwork is a valued and cherished part of Golden.
- People clearly enjoy interacting with the artwork: taking pictures of sculptures and murals, taking selfies, and letting children touch and interact with the artwork. Even passive interaction with the art occurs as people walk or bike past.
- The Creekside "art walk" is a memorable destination and attracts people for jogging, walking or as an outing with the kids. Art is integrated well in this location and heightens the enjoyment of these activities.
- It is hard to assess how people are interacting with the artwork outside the downtown area, but artwork placed in medians and in parks signals that Golden believes artwork is integral to their community.
- The themes of the artwork tend to complement Golden's "small western town" feel. The art contributes to a specific cultural sensibility, a lack of blight, visual dynamism and interactivity within the downtown area.
- Artwork is mostly located downtown (see Graphs); so, interaction with artwork in areas outside of downtown isn't possible without traveling.
- In downtown, there are many visual conflicts for the artwork (signage, utilities, advertising and seating elements). However, the general sense is that Golden is a vibrant, safe, accessible and art-filled community.



CITY OF GOLDEN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AUDIT AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Theme 2: Enhancing Public Space

Public art can make the mundane “interesting, fun, playful, inspiring.”

Key Observations:

- The artwork that is placed along the Clear Creek park/walkways turns what is a beautiful natural area into an art exhibition. People enjoying the park can run, walk or bike through the park, taking in the artwork if they care to.
- Similarly, the visitor to the main commercial area of downtown can experience a “western history lesson” through the experience of the artwork.
- The collection in Golden can be moved, which could enable a sense of dynamism and constant change in the collection and the downtown area.
- As mentioned earlier, the art collection is a group of “selfie-stations” where people can interact and take pictures with the artwork. This increases the visibility of the collection through social media. One sculpture even encourages posing with a hand on the cowboy’s derriere.
- The City has elected to place several sculptures in traffic circles, which is certainly a “mundane” place converted into a pedestal for artwork. It signals Golden’s positive attitude toward art when it is placed in places like this. However, placements like this can encourage dangerous pedestrian access.



CITY OF GOLDEN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AUDIT AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Theme 3: Arts Access

The public art collection can increase access and awareness of visual arts for its residents.

Key Observations:

- The City of Golden has some top-notch figural bronze sculptures. Visitors to the city experience a terrific Western art collection featuring some very large sculptures by accomplished artists.
- Most of the collection is moveable, so the city has the ability to re-arrange artwork on occasion and create more of a “rotating exhibition” for visitors, especially as the art collection gets larger. This is an advantage, as many collections in other cities are permanently located.
- The collection is predominantly located in the downtown area, which has free parking and is highly visible. This makes the collection accessible and available to all who frequent the downtown, including numerous tourists. However, the scarcity of artwork outside of downtown makes it harder for residents who don’t frequent downtown as often to experience artwork owned by the City.
- The public art pamphlet/guide is terrific and encourages people visit the entire collection. However, during the site visits, the pamphlet was not available outside of the Main Visitor’s Center. As of the time of this audit, the pamphlet does not include artwork that is not owned by the City, which is artwork tourists and residents might be interested in knowing more about.
- There is no audio tour or walking/guided tour of the collection as of the time of this audit.
- It is evident from the site visits, that the community adores its public art collection. During the holidays, the public “dresses up” some

of the sculptures with festive decor. Several of the figural sculptures were wearing Santa hats or even bows or beaded necklaces. By not removing these items, the Public Art Commission tacitly condones this activity. Similarly, the sculptures are touched, rubbed and climbed on, and there are no barriers or signage to prevent this activity. None of this is unusual, but the Public Art Commission should be aware that this could cause higher costs for maintenance and repairs to the artwork.

- Placement of the artwork in traffic circles and parks outside of downtown has increased public access to artwork outside the center of town. However, this might cause traffic slowing/crashes if people are viewing the artwork while driving. One of the works of art also had a plaque (an incorrect plaque, as well) on the inside of the traffic circle, which might encourage pedestrians to cross traffic to view the plaque. The Public Art Commission should consider the removal or moving the plaque to a safer viewing area.



CITY OF GOLDEN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AUDIT AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Theme 4: Economic Development

Public art can play a role in cultural tourism and help with economic development, tourism and vitality within Golden.

Key Observations:

The majority of the collection is placed in downtown or near Clear Creek. This adjacency of the collection promotes exploration and walking around these areas. The sense that there is “art on every corner” promotes the city in a positive light: Golden is a safe, intimate, thriving small city where you can take a short walk and see numerous works of art.

- The centralized location of the artwork is terrific for tourism and visitors. However, the lack of artwork in outlying areas might mean that tourism is being directed to this area only.
- The public art pamphlet is a great asset for the City. However, the Public Art Commission might consider including other murals, artwork, elements of the built environment and historic sites that people might be curious about. If the artwork is connected more to the entire downtown site, it could be a great economic development tool. Recorded tours with stops at local restaurants and stores to promote businesses close to the artwork should be considered as well..
- Based on the overall makeup of the public art collection (See Data/Graphs), the collection contributes to visitors’ understanding about the history of Golden and its predominant identity as a historic western town. This is great for tourism. If there are other focuses for Golden’s current economic development, it is not evident from the public art collection.

- Through planning, the Public Art Commission could consider other public art opportunities in developments outside of downtown, to contribute to the economic development and placemaking in these areas.
- Selfies and pictures of art interactions might go viral and people might seek out the City from social media posts.



CITY OF GOLDEN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AUDIT AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Theme 5: Expression of Culture

Public art can reveal aspects of the communities' identity and character; it can increase civic pride.

Key Observations:

- As mentioned earlier, it is evident that residents adore and enjoy their collection of public art. Overall, the collection is welcoming, hospitable and accessible. The collection is thoroughly family and kid friendly.
- Based on the collective themes in the artwork (See Data/Graphs) one can conclude that Golden is a place that cherishes and promotes its western heritage, it's natural setting and local wildlife. It is a place that encourages outdoor activity. Golden is proud of its heritage, industries and leaders; history is important here.
- Looking at the placement of the artwork, Golden has great pride in its downtown, natural settings and abundance of natural spaces near the town.
- Based on the overall makeup of the public art collection as figural bronzes (See Data/Graphs) focusing on western culture and nature, the collection contributes to visitors' understanding about this aspect of Golden and its identity as a traditional, historic western town. Alternatively, the collection does not communicate very much about who lives in Golden now or what Golden aspires to be in the future.
- Based on the historic and allegorical themes of the collection of art, one might conclude that the City has fairly conservative, traditional or even "old-fashioned" taste in artwork. Could this also lead one to believe that the population of Golden is conservative and "old-fashioned?" This is something for the

Public Art Commission to consider further and research.

- Based on recent mural and sculpture commissions, it does seem that the Public Art Commission is striving to diversify its collection and art themes.
- Golden is a changing, developing city. To make sure that the public art collection reflects the current and future cultural values, the Public Art Commission might revisit this goal/theme from the Public Art Handbook through a Public Art/Cultural Plan. What are the current cultural goals that reflect the community?



CITY OF GOLDEN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AUDIT AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Theme 6: City Stature

Public art can enable recognition of Golden on state and national levels.

Key Observations:

- As mentioned earlier, the City owns a very good western bronze collection. If the City chooses to continue to build on this type of collection and make it something that could rival other collections around the state and nation, they should consider planning ahead for this. Golden might look to other cities who have made a name for themselves for superior collections of traditional bronze art. The nearby city of Loveland has focused on collecting major works by major international bronze and stone artists. In addition, they are known internationally for hosting the acclaimed “Sculpture in the Park” event every summer.
- Some pieces in the collection have been identified as lesser-quality or mass-produced works. These pieces will not help gain “clout” for Golden’s collection. This type of acquisition is not recommended if the City wants recognition for its collection across state and national levels.



CITY OF GOLDEN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AUDIT AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Theme 7: Diversity and Inclusion

Public art can promote “diversity and pluralism in public art and...reflect a wide range of multicultural expression.”

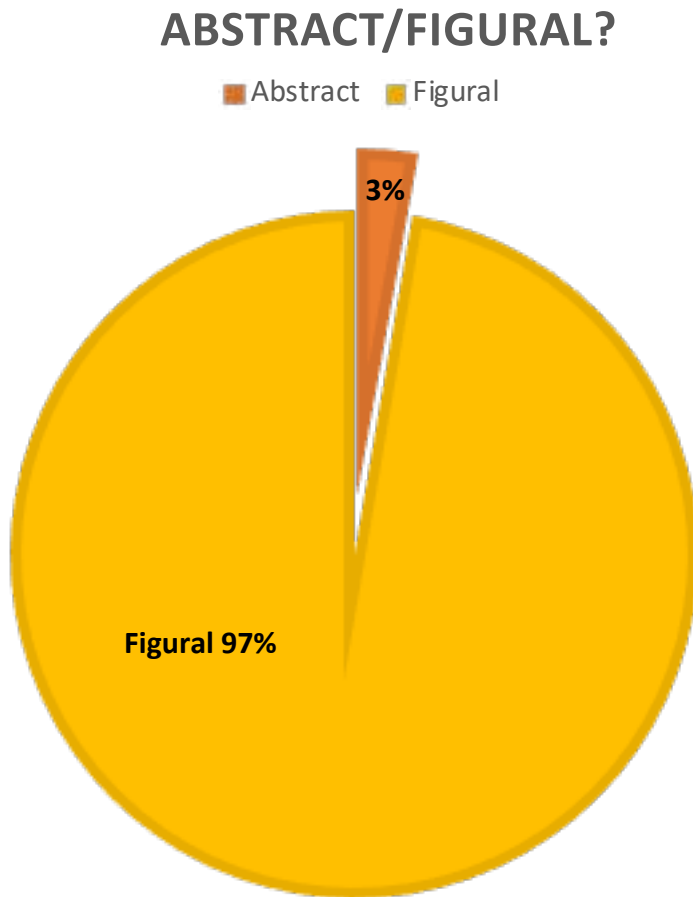
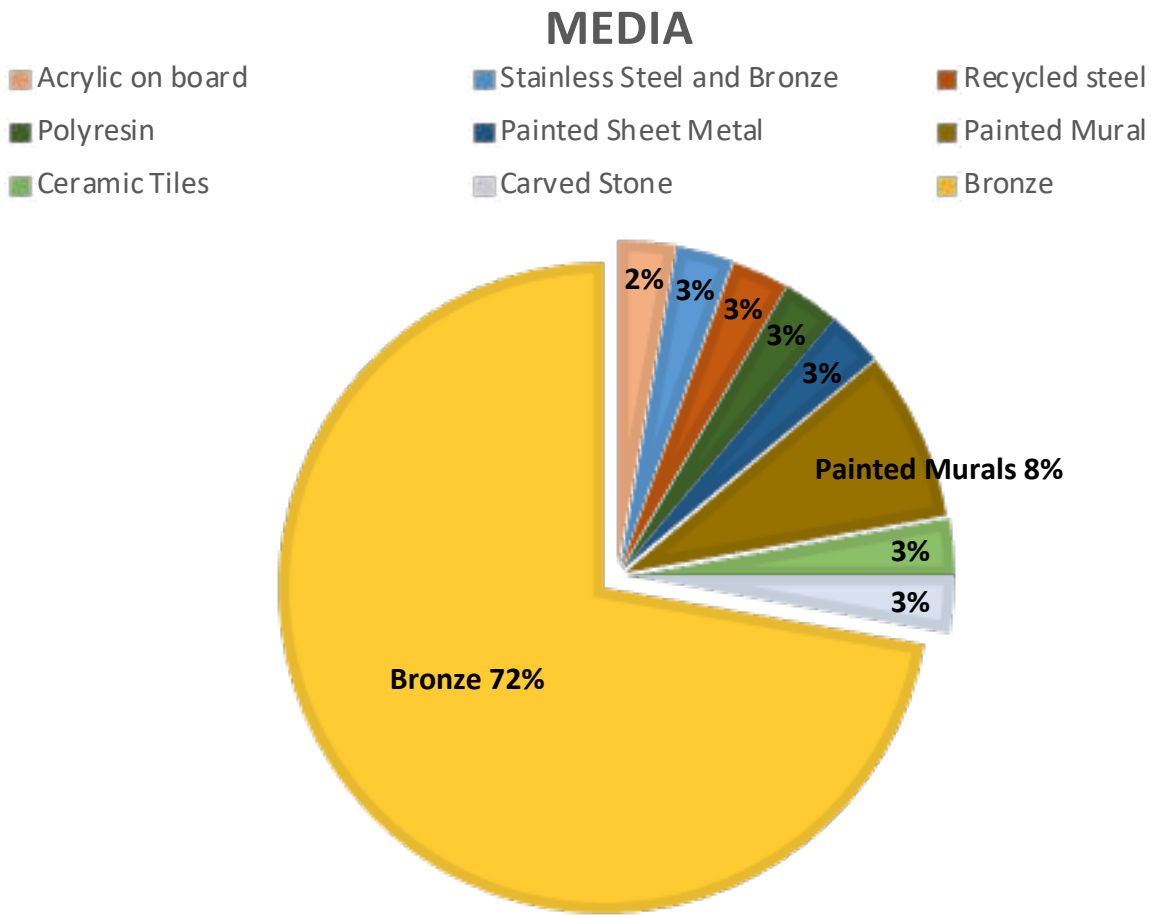
Key Observations:

- Until most recent sculptures and murals were commissioned, it is clear that the collection was not particularly diverse nor does it “promote diversity and pluralism.” The Public Art Commission must contend with this fact in future planning for the collection if this is a goal for the collection.

Based on the collection analysis (See Data/Graphs), Golden’s public art collection is:

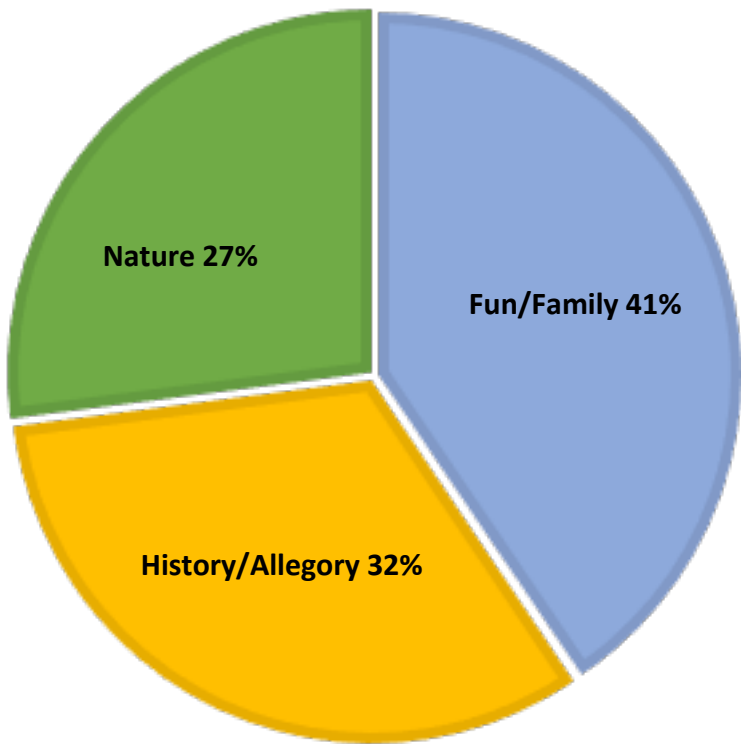
- Predominantly Bronze
 - Predominantly Figural
 - Predominantly White
 - Predominantly Male
 - Predominantly Western
 - Sited nearly entirely Outdoors
 - Located predominantly in Downtown
 - Permanent (no temporary works of art were listed)
-
- Not only should greater diversity in medium and subject matter be considered, but which artists’ voices speak through the public art program and what diverse themes are presented is equally critical to being representative of an entire community. Again, this is something for the Public Art Commission to consider in future planning efforts.





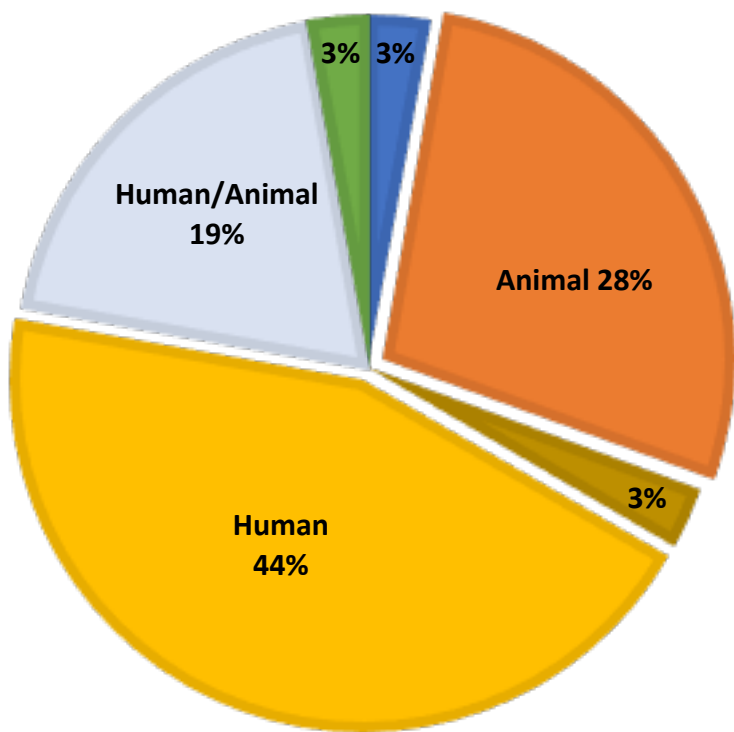
GENRE

Fun/ Family Friendly History/Allegory Nature



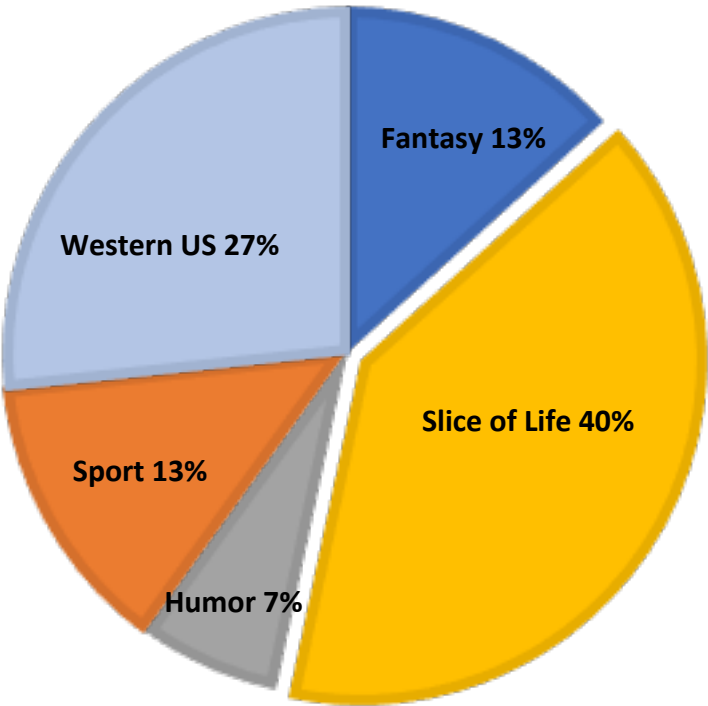
FIGURAL SCULPTURES

Mythical Animal Animal Historic Sites
Human Human/Animal Mythical Aliens/Animals



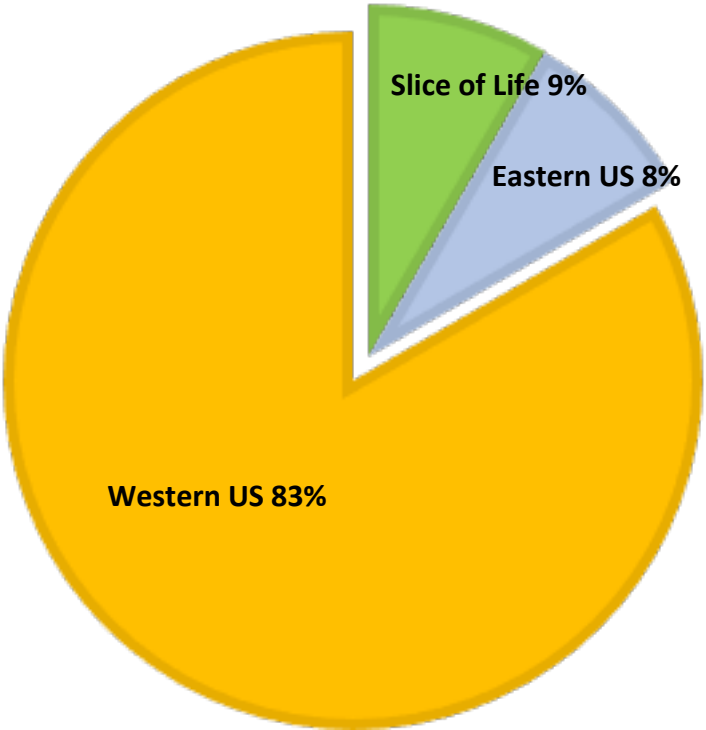
FUN / FAMILY

Fantasy/Myth "Slice of Life" Humor/Fantasy Sport Western US



HISTORY / ALLEGORY

"Slice of Life" Eastern US Western US



FIGURAL SUBJECT MATTER: GENDER AND RACE

- Alien

■ White Male and Female

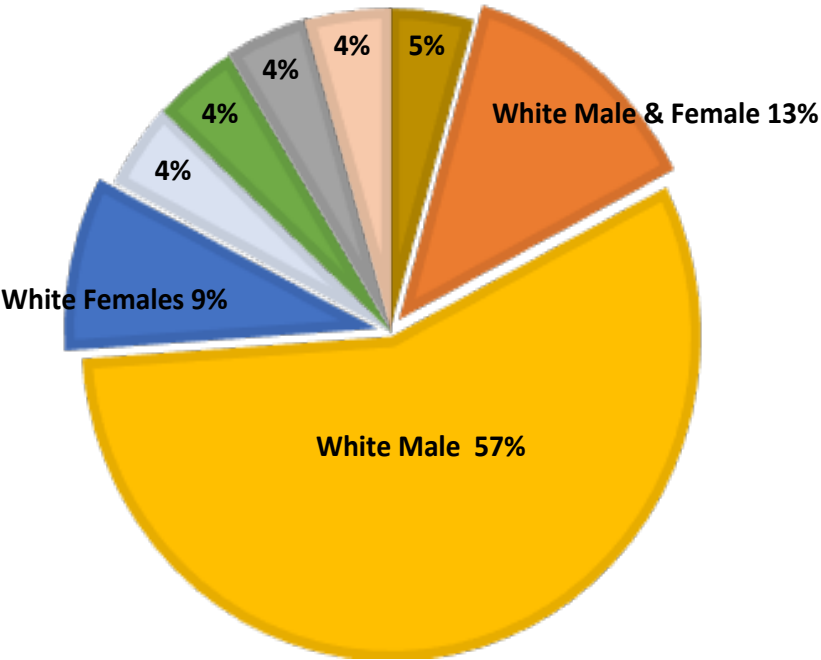
■ White Male

■ White Females
- Unkown Gender/Race

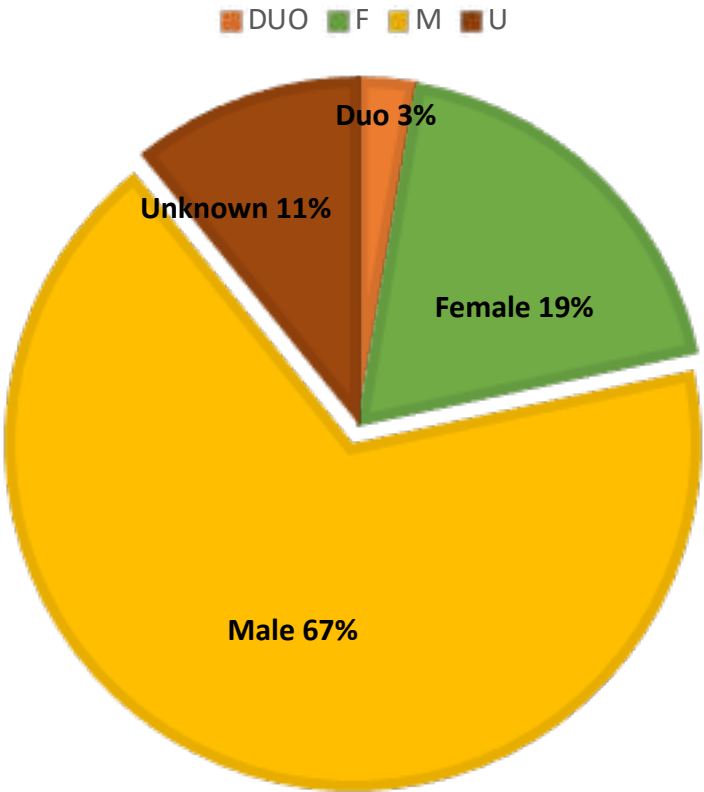
■ Native American Male

■ Native American Female

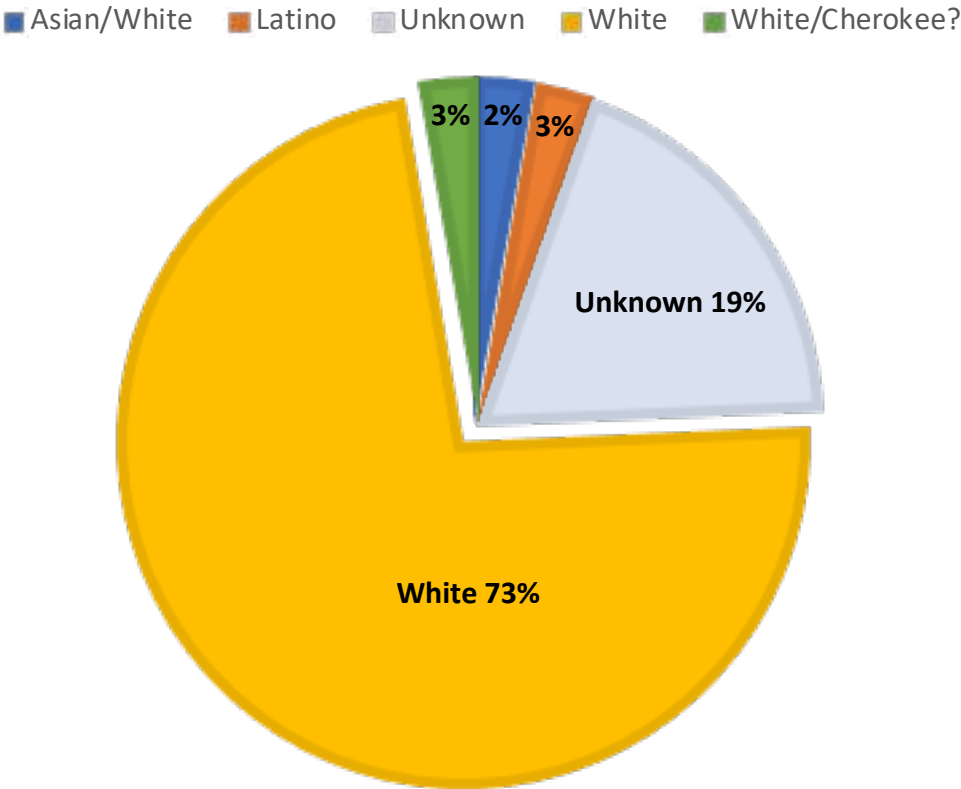
■ Mixed Race Female



ARTIST GENDER



ARTIST RACE



CITY OF GOLDEN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AUDIT AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Questions and Key Issues

Based upon the audit and assessment of the current collection, it is clear that there are some questions and key issues for the Public Art Commission to plan for in the future.

Public Art Handbook Updates

Revisit goals from Public Art Handbook. Are these still accurate? Are there new goals that are more accurate for the Golden Community of today? A more robust planning effort is recommended to get a better sense of the community's overall opinions about its public art collection and its future development.

Accessibility

Artwork is accessible in downtown and Creekside areas. Other areas are predominantly drive-by and not pedestrian accessible. How can the collection be spread into other communities and areas where people gather or other parts of the City that are being developed?

It is clear that the sculptures in the center of the City are engaging people and causing some social media interest. The Public Art Commission could consider moving around some of the smaller sculptures on occasion to generate new interest.

Lighting

A lighting program along the creek would add to accessibility at night and during winter, and make the area feel safer.

Plaques

The Public Art Commission should consider a program to fix several issues:

- Awkward placement: some plaques are placed awkwardly, including in areas where you might sit to view the creek or the sculpture.
- Dangerous placement: the plaque at Nighthorse on the Mesa is incorrect and placed in a traffic circle. It should be corrected and

moved to a safer place for people to read it.

- Incorrect information: several of the titles do not match the title given by the sculptor, and or have incorrect attribution.
- "Copies" and Attribution: with the artwork that has been identified as mass-produced or "knock-offs," the PAC could consider that the plaque show the title only, or unattributed, or "Artist Unknown." This would help to address possible copyright issues.
- One plaque asking people to touch the derriere of the Cowboy. Is that appropriate in the "Me Too" era?



Questions and Key Issues (cont.)

Removed Sculptures

A formal deaccession process is needed to permanently remove sculptures from the collection or determine them irreparable.

Wind on the Mesa

The rocks placed on the sculpture are clearly meant to be a water feature. The Public Art Commission should consider removing the rocks, or the sculpture looks incomplete.

Promotional Materials

Tourists do not care who officially owns and maintains the artwork. The PAC should consider Inclusiveness for tourists visiting Downtown and develop guides and a tour to promote the collection as well as other items and areas of interest.

Triceratops Fossil

The Triceratops fossil should not be considered a work of art in the collection. The PAC should consider putting it under the purview of the historical society or School of Mines. However, including it in a tour of artwork is appropriate.

Lion in Lions Park

There is a bronze sculpture in Lions Park that is not included on the current collection list. The PAC should consider “adopting” this work, since it can be considered bronze sculpture and needs care and maintenance in the future.

Short-term and Long-term Acquisition Goals

Unsolicited proposals and donations can be cumbersome to manage. PAC should establish a process and set of criteria for reviewing potential donations or unsolicited proposals. Also establish program-wide goals that guide acquisitions to ensure any accepted donation is suitable and appropriate for the collection as a whole.

Diversity

Until recent murals were commissioned, it is clear that the collection was not particularly diverse, inclusive, nor does it “promote diversity and pluralism.” The Public Art Commission must face this fact in future planning for the collection if this is a continued goal for the collection/City.

