



PUBLIC ART PROSPECTUS – RFQ

A Nebraska One Percent for Art Project

ARTWORK PROJECT SITE:

Nebraska State Historical Society Headquarters -- Rotunda

DEADLINE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18th, 2009

BUDGET: \$44,000

THE NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1% FOR ART PROJECT

ARTWORK SITE: NSHS Headquarters: Main Entrance Rotunda

ELIGIBILITY:

This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) project competition is open to all professional public artists or artist teams, including those who are new to the field of public art, from throughout the United States. Artists from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply for this project.

The Nebraska State Historical Society, a Nebraska State agency, operates under the Nebraska Fair Employment Practice Act and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, or national origin.

RFQ SUMMARY:

RFQ SUBMISSION DEADLINE: 5 P.M., FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18

The Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) and the Nebraska Arts Council (NAC), in accordance with the State of Nebraska One Percent for Art legislation, seeks artwork for the NSHS Headquarters Building Renovation Project, at 1500 R Street, Lincoln, Nebraska. The NSHS Headquarters Artwork Selection Committee has been formed to administer this process. The artwork project site is located in the entry rotunda of the 1953 National Register of Historic Places-listed NSHS Headquarters building. The project plan is to create work that focuses on the Nebraska historical resources housed and used in the building, welcomes visitors, and is sympathetic to the historic features of the rotunda space. See www.nebraskahistory.org for a description of the NSHS, its services and collections.

ARCHITECTURE/ENVIRONMENT OF ARTWORK SITE:

The Nebraska State Historical Society Headquarters Building (NSHS Building) is located in central Lincoln, Nebraska, on the southern edge of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln downtown campus. The NSHS Building is positioned at the northern terminus of what was once (and continues to be in other parts of the city) Fifteenth Street, now part of Centennial Mall. Opposite the NSHS Building at the southern terminus of this pedestrian mall is the spectacular Nebraska State Capitol, a National Historic Landmark. From the front steps and southern office

windows of the NSHS Building one encounters a majestic view of the over four-hundred foot tall State Capitol seven blocks due south. The two buildings form unique and virtually antithetical architectural bookends to Lincoln's linear institutional hub.¹ Indeed, it is this architectural contrast with the Nebraska State Capitol that forms some measure of the NSHS Building's significance.

The NSHS Building, designed by Ellery Lothrop Davis in a spare Modern Movement style, is a rectangular two-story structure with a windowless raised basement. Structurally steel and concrete, the NSHS Building has a flat roof and a poured concrete foundation. The entire exterior, front to back and ground to parapet, is enveloped in an Indiana limestone veneer. Accentuating the yin and yang with the State Capitol, the limestone was harvested from the same quarry as the stone used in the Capitol building. The blocks of limestone veneer are mortared with extremely thin, smooth mortar joints. The color, composition and configuration of the mortar joints, coupled with the homogeneous limestone blocks creates a monolithic, continuous surface quality to the Building. This smooth, nearly featureless surface is in direct contrast with the ornate, intentionally irregular surface of the State Capitol.

The primary (south) façade of the NSHS building sports a stepped, curved two-story bay that relieves the otherwise stark rectangularity of the building. The bay is raised slightly above the roof of the building, and continues through to the rear past the north wall, having the effect of creating a stunted cross in plan. At the top of the bay on the primary facade, the words "Nebraska State Historical Society" are formed in unadorned relief completely across the top course of limestone blocks. In direct sunlight, these words nearly fade into the stonework. Viewed in oblique sunlight, they appear to leap at the viewer. A band of steel casement windows is centrally located directly below these words. Steel casement windows also flank the central bay on at the second floor level, six on the east side, five on the west. The horizontal orientation of the windows, viewed in relation to the vertical nature of the Capitol, once again accents the contrasting architectural relationship of the two buildings.

The main entrance to the building is centrally located in the curved bay. Flanking the entrance are two broad, low-rise limestone stairs attended by brushed-steel handrails. A concrete platform projects outward from the doorway the width of the stairs. Entry into the building is gained through a recessed double glass door.

The entry is flanked by door-height dark green marble panels. On the left (west) panel is inscribed "The Spirit of a People Lives in its History," and on the right (east) panel "Here Open to All is the History of This People." Directly above the entry, deeply inscribed in the limestone, are the words "Nebraska State Historical Library and Museum" and "Archives of the State of Nebraska." A sense of visual depth to the entryway is created by the combination of its location at the horizontal apex of the curved bay, the glass doors, the dark, recessed marble panels and the deeply inscribed words above. This visual depth in turn creates an image of entering an important space. The entry design is, once again, in direct contrast with the State Capitol's north entry, which faces the NSHS building. The Capitol's north entry, the main, grand entry for that building, is dominated by an immense limestone stairway flanked by enormous carved limestone walls. The effect is of the Capitol building reaching out to the viewer, whereas the NSHS Building's entry draws a viewer's eyes toward the inner sanctum of the building.

¹ A partial list of institutions along Centennial Mall include the Nebraska State Office Building, the former Security Mutual Life Insurance building (now UN-L's College of Journalism and Mass Communications Andersen Building) the State Historical Society Museum, the Lincoln Children's Museum, Alltel corporate offices, and the Denney Federal Office Building.

When entering the Building, a visitor steps first into a terrazzo-floored, low-ceiling rotunda. The rotunda occupies the first floor space created by the curved bay, and is a key public space in the Building. This space was designed as a display space with built-in glass exhibit cases lining the circular walls. A low raised terrazzo viewing step and brushed steel handrail parallels the curved display case glass on either wall. A domed ceiling rises in the center of the space. Two square dark green marble-veneered support columns form a visual colonnade that leads the visitor to the glass and blond wood entry doors (permanently open) that mark entry into the first floor functional area.

This 1953 building housed all operations of the NSHS under one roof for the first time. Designed specifically for the NSHS, great care was taken to incorporate all manner of new technology related to the care and storage of collections. Today the building no longer includes museum exhibits, but serves as repository for library, manuscript, newspaper, and photographic collections. Researchers investigating historical resources for student projects, from grade school through doctoral dissertations, as well as family historians and journalists pass through the entry rotunda on their way to the first floor reference room.

While the aesthetic statement made by the artist is more important than an identifiable allusion to a particular idea or theme, the desired artwork should contain sufficient literal reference to the themes of Nebraska history to allow the average observer to comprehend and enjoy the work. Artwork which retains a timeless quality and is sympathetic to the Moderne aesthetic of the space is highly desirable.

Artwork of any media fitting the above stated goals and space will be considered, other than those in the following list: works involving water, mechanical devices, or electronic media.

The Selection Committee strongly encourages an artistic solution that takes advantage of the distinctive curved glass and wood paneling on the circular walls.

BUDGET: **\$44,000** (to include installation by the artist)

SAFETY/MAINTENANCE

Artwork must satisfy reasonable standards of permanence and safety, meeting all relevant codes required for public places, and offering reasonable proof of soundness against theft, vandalism or excessive maintenance and repair.

Artwork for this project must meet the following specifications:

- All work must be safe, tamper-resistant, and easily maintained, regardless of ease of public reach.

- Artists should approach the project as a permanent installation when considering materials.

- All work must be of an appropriate size and design so that it will not create a hazard for impaired pedestrians or use of maintenance equipment.

SITING

Artists are asked to think creatively about the use of the rotunda entry space. Curved glass and wood paneling, brushed steel hand railings, terrazzo flooring, and marble-veneered columns

should be used to advantage. The domed ceiling was originally illuminated with fluorescent lighting and electrical service to the dome is available.

Because the rotunda serves both as an entryway to the building and provides emergency egress, the central pathway running from south to north (from the exterior glass entry doors to the open glass and wood doors leading into the first floor hallway) must remain unobstructed after installation of the work.

SELECTION PROCESS

Selections will be made solely by the NSHS Headquarters Art Selection Committee, composed of staff, trustees, and community representatives in consultation with the Nebraska Arts Council.

The committee will review submissions from this RFQ and either select an artist based on preliminary submission materials, or pursue more detailed proposals from a short list of selected applicants. Minimal honoraria for costs associated with proposals will be provided.

The following factors will be considered when reviewing submissions:

- Quality of work
- Appropriateness of subject/concept for the site
- Past exhibition/public art record
- Previous commission experience, including evidence that past commissions were produced in accordance with agreed-upon timelines and within budget
- Permanence and safety, meeting all relevant codes required for public places, and offering reasonable proof of soundness against theft, vandalism or excessive maintenance and repair

PROJECTED TIMELINE *(the NSHS Headquarters Artwork Selection Committee reserves the right to change or extend timeline without notice):*

October 29, 2009:	RFQ public notification/announcement
December 18, 2009:	Request for Proposals (RFQ) receipt deadline
Dec 18-31, 2009:	NSHS Headquarters Artwork Selection Committee review
January 2, 2010:	Review results announced

Pending Outcome of Review:

January 2, 2008:	Notification of results; Finalists receive RFP
January 2-23, 2010:	Finalist site visits/initial interviews
Jan. 30- Feb. 2, 2010:	Finalist proposal deadline/final interviews
February 2, 2010:	Project Artist Selected
April/May, 2010:	Artwork Installation

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Online Application Process:

The NSHS Headquarters Project application review will be conducted using *SlideRoom*, an online review system. All applicants will register and submit their application materials on the *SlideRoom* website using the Nebraska Arts Council's portal. *SlideRoom* is web-based, so all applicants need is an Internet connection and a modern web browser. There is nothing to download or install. Applicants with prepared digital files can quickly upload their submission within minutes.

Applicants must submit their portfolios online at: <https://nebraska.slideroom.com>.

SlideRoom requires particular file formats: applicants may upload images (jpg), and/or video (mov, wmv, flv). For good image quality and fast upload, image (jpg) files should be sized no larger than 1220px @ 72 dpi. Video files must be kept under 60MB each.

Visual Arts *SlideRoom* Application Requirements:

Letter of Interest

Not to exceed one page: Describe your interest in the project, and general vision or plan for the artwork, outlining the relevance to the theme, and the style of art to be produced. Explain any relevant details to your involvement, such as your schedule, process, medium, and method by which you will create your work.

Visual Support Materials

Digital Images (20)

Twenty (20) digital images of relevant completed artwork projects.

Video

Optional: A video file of artworks up to 5 minutes in length; esp. for any artwork involving moving parts, video, time-based work, etc.. Video should demonstrate the artwork, its functionality and mechanics. Video should not exceed 60 MB.

Image Descriptions

Complete image descriptions directly online as specified on SlideRoom. Include project budgets where applicable.

Professional Vita/Resume

Provide in pdf format, which will be uploaded with your images.

Three Professional References

Provide at least three professional references (commissioning agency/organization, architect, etc.) who have an intimate knowledge of your work and methods. Include complete address and phone/email for each reference.

The Nebraska Arts Council's *SlideRoom* portal offers complete instructions for submitting work. For technical assistance, a video tutorial is available at *SlideRoom* and applicants may access the *SlideRoom* help desk at <http://slideroom.zendesk.com>.

There is a nominal \$5 application fee required of applicants for this program review. The fee is paid by the applicant using a secure system via *SlideRoom* online as the final step in submitting the application.

PROJECT CONTACT:

J.D. Hutton, Artist Services and Communications Manager, Nebraska Arts Council, 1004 Farnam Street, Plaza Level, Omaha, NE 68102-1885, (402) 595-2142/FAX (402) 595-2334, jayne.hutton@nebraska.gov

Bahr, Vermeer, Haecker Architects of Lincoln, NE is the project architect for the current renovation work. Contact project architect Jim Smith: jsmith@bvh.com or 402-475-4551 for architectural questions.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS:

The prospectus and National Register Nomination for the site are available as viewable and downloadable files on the NSHS website homepage at:

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/RFQ.htm> and at the Nebraska Arts Council website at : www.nebraskaartscouncil.org.