



City of Emeryville

CALIFORNIA

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 21, 2025

TO: LaTanya Bellow, City Manager

FROM: Chadrick Smalley, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: **Resolution Of The City Council Of The City Of Emeryville Approving The Purchase Of Two Artworks For The City's Annual Purchase Award Program: *Search Party* And *Spinnaker*, By Steve Senter, With Funding Of Up To \$18,000 From The Public Art Fund (Fund 243) For The Purchase And Installation Of The Artworks And Acknowledging Cy Bowers' *Fortuna In The City*, *Capricio Of Love* As The Honorable Mention**

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt the attached resolution to purchase two artworks: *Search Party* and *Spinnaker* by Emeryville artist Steve Senter for the City's Annual Purchase Award Program with the cost to purchase and install the artworks estimated at \$18,000. Further, the attached resolution acknowledges Cy Bowers' *Fortuna in the City*, *Capricio of Love* as the Honorable Mention.

BACKGROUND

The 39th Annual Emeryville Celebration of the Arts Exhibition (Exhibition) opened on October 3, 2025, and will run through October 26, 2025. For the past nineteen years, the City's Purchase Award Program has supported the Exhibition through the purchase of artwork for display in City facilities. The intent of the City's Purchase Award Program is to build the City's permanent art collection through acquisition of art works on an annual basis from the Emeryville Celebration of the Arts Exhibition. The program is also intended to highlight the City's commitment to the arts and its local artistic community and improve visitors' experiences in public facilities. Potential sites for this year's Purchase Award artwork include City Hall, the Emeryville Center of Community Life (ECCL), and the Senior Center. As all participants in the Exhibition are either residents or employees working in Emeryville, the Purchase Award reflects the talents and abilities of those within Emeryville.

Selection Panel

On September 17, 2025, the City Manager appointed a five-person Selection Panel, with an alternate for each panelist, based on the September 11, 2025, recommendation of the Public Art Committee (PAC). The appointed members of the Selection Panel were: 1)

Christine Koppes, as outside arts professional; 2) David Ridenhuber as the PAC representative; 3) Dianne Martinez, as a community member; 4) Gwen Souza, as Emeryville Celebration of the Arts (ECA) Board Representative; and 5) Sharon Friedrichsen, as City staff representative. The Selection Panel alternates were: 1) Rowan Geiger, outside arts professional; 2) Taryn Walker as the PAC representative ; 3) Brooks Jessup, community member, 4) Kava Massih, ECA representative; and 5) Stephanie Herrera, City staff representative. The Selection Panel convened on October 2, 2025 to make a recommendation of artwork to be purchased by the City. The Panel's recommendation was presented to the PAC on October 2, 2025.

Selection Process

The Selection Panel began the process with review of the existing collection in City Hall, Senior Center and ECCL and available spaces in and around the facilities.

Potential sites at each facility include:

- City Hall –Lobbies and stairwells
- Senior Center - Large panels on the east and south walls of the second-floor multipurpose room, including a large wall (south side) and south wall of 1st floor multipurpose room
- ECCL – Building A

Panelists then convened at the Exhibition site to review all works available for purchase. The Selection Panel members provided a score on a sheet listing each artwork that was available for consideration. To avoid conflicts of interest, works being shown by current members of the PAC, City Council, and City staff or consultants were not considered for the 2025 Purchase Award. Other art not considered for purchase included works that were not available for sale, works created by artists whose work has been purchased through the Purchase Award Program in the last five years, and artworks which dimensions would not fit into the potentially available locations.

In the first round of selection, the Panelists individually viewed the eligible works among the over 200 artworks by 141 artists and selected their top ten choices, resulting in 43 works with at least one vote. Of the 43 pieces, only eight works had more than one panelist nominating them and three additional works were nominated by one person and reviewed based on the panelist's request for further consideration. These eleven were reviewed in a group walkthrough by all panelists prior to being scored. One work was eliminated from consideration for purchase but noted for a special award consideration. The group walked through the gallery space together and discussed the works' attributes and strengths and weaknesses.

This process resulted in a short list of ten artists ranked by panelists on a scale of one to five according to the following criteria:

- Aesthetic Quality
- Public Appeal
- Curatorial Focus
- Longevity

These artworks were scored individually by panelists. The highest scoring works among these was *Fortuna in the City, Capricio of Love* by Cy Bowers with 86 points, *Search Party* and *Spinnaker* by Steve Senter with 81 points, and *Pastry* by Adriana Fracchia with 77 points. After discussion, the Selection Panel could not identify an appropriate and complementary site for *Fortuna in the City, Capricio of Love* and thus recommended that work for First Honorable Mention and recommended *Search Party* and *Spinnaker* by Steve Senter for purchase and installation at Building A at the ECCL. For Second Honorable Mention, the Panel recommended *Pastry* by Adriana Fracchia and, further, the Panel recommended Packard Jennings receive a special recognition for the timeliness of his piece, *Our Glorious Leader*.

DISCUSSION

At its meeting held on October 2, 2025, the PAC discussed the Selection Panel's recommendations to purchase *Search Party* and *Spinnaker* by Steve Senter and acknowledge Cy Bowers, Adriana Fracchia and Packard Jennings and whether to forward these recommendations to the City Council for approval. After discussion of possible precedents and future purchase award processes, the PAC recommended reduction of honorable mention to one artist, and to consider special awards in future cycles with consideration of themes and/or considering a monetary prize, to be deliberated at a future meeting.

Artwork Description

Steve Senter's works *Search Party* and *Spinnaker* are Mr. Senter's latest works, each roughly 3' by 4' in differing orientations and shown below.



"Spinnaker", oil on canvas, 2025, 36"x45"



"Search Party", oil on canvas, 2025, 45"x36"

As described by ECA, the artist describes his process and the work as follows:

"When the canvas is mostly covered with color it becomes interesting to me. I may leave areas of raw canvas, but only if they activate and become part of the color composition.

From then on the shapes tend to become more definite, which allows me to create the drama, the flow, the story, the pauses, the transitions and the rhythm of the painting. I do this by putting one definite color next to another and so on until the composition begins to lead me to a new color that will stand in relation to the surrounding context—a relationship which can be one of harmony or dissonance, major or minor key, lighter or darker, loud or soft.

I started using the lozenge shape because I was seeking a non-representational shape that was definite—that had a sort of predictive pre-existence—where I could put one shape next to another, overlap, intersect and so on—but still maintain a boundary that would lead me to a specific color. I find that the lozenge shape can be endlessly manipulated—shorter, longer, wider, narrower, even becoming a disc or circle. The circle and the arch always lead me back to Rome and Florence.

I think the passage of time in a painting, both in the doing and in the viewing, is essential. Once, when I was talking to Gary Stephan, he said that he thought that cubism was invented to, among other things, slow the viewer down. It is interesting to me to create a painting that arrests the viewer's attention immediately. But a painting that does only that will not hold my or anyone else's interest for long. So I

end up interrogating what I have done, again and again, until the painting's internal references become layered, multiple, contradictory even, like your oldest friend or a grandfather who now exists solely in the memories of his grandchildren."

The artist's website is <https://www.stevesenter.com/>

Locations Considered

Search Party and *Spinnaker* are proposed for installation in Building A at ECCL. The artist and staff in Community Services will be consulted to determine preferred conditions for installation among a short list of options in this area with initial proposal for the south wall as shown below:



Honorable Mention

First Honorable Mention is recommended for *Fortuna in the City, Capricio of Love* by Cy Bowers. This work was the highest ranked by the most panelists but did not have an identifiable site for installation in City Hall, which was the only site deemed appropriate for the image's composition. Further, as a multimedia installation with music attached there was uncertainty of available installation options related to music in an office setting.



"Fortuna in the City, Capriccio of Love", digital painting, Giclee
with musical composition by artist, 2025, 36"x48"x2.5"

From ECA: "Cy Bowers works in numerous media, and his art spans multiple genres. He grew up in the diverse cultural gumbo of New Orleans, spent summers in the wild country near Kelso, Washington State, traveled throughout the South on a BSA 441 Victor, and founded, with his wife Kate, the acclaimed New Orleans arts broadside *The Arts Paper*, which featured audacious articles on the arts and interviews with icons such as Pierre Matisse, Andrei Codrescu, and John Waters. Cy Bowers is co-author, with Kate, of two pioneering multi-media Apple iBook thrillers: *Drifter*, *A New Orleans Noir*, and *Fade to Midnight*, which received accolades from Apple and excellent reviews from readers. Unwilling to be tied down by any one art medium, Bowers works in bronze (sculpture), photography, oils, watercolor, pastel, gouache, and digital. He also composes compelling orchestral music. When living in New Orleans, he was represented by the Tilden-Foley Gallery and the Wyndy Morehead Gallery. His work is in numerous private collections.'

'My work is born from an emotional feeling and acts of hope and imagination. The mediums of art, photography, and music have always been intertwined for me. The flowing line of paint on canvas, the play of light captured by the camera reflect and are rejuvenated by the confluence of music.'

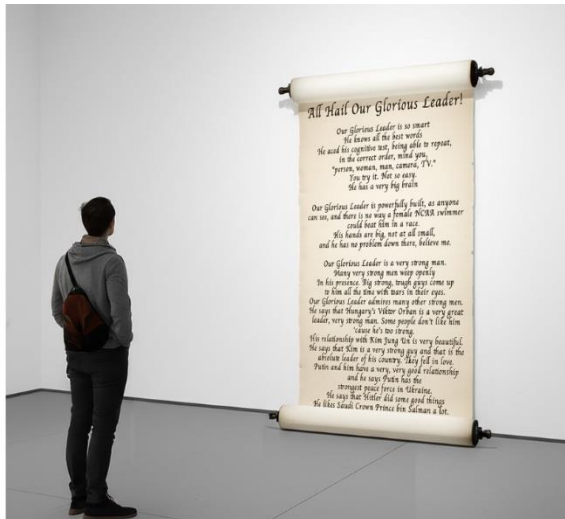
Additional Considerations

As described above, the Selection Panel nominated a Second Honorable Mention for *Pastry* by Adriana Fracchia as pictured below, as well as recommending Packard Jennings receive a special recognition for the timeliness of his piece, *Our Glorious Leader*. No such award has been granted before, but the Selection Panel discussed

recognizing a particularly relevant piece to the current geopolitical environment for which no funding would be eligible. The PAC declined to forward these recommendations of the Selection Panel to the City Council.



"Pastry", photograph, 2024, 24 "x20 "



"Our Glorious Leader", paper, ink, wood, 2025, 96 "x30"x6 "

Next Steps

Following the purchase of Steve Senter's works by the City and the conclusion of the Exhibition, staff will work with the artist to install the artworks. A plaque will be installed near the artworks naming the artist, artworks' titles, and medium, and indicating their inclusion in Emeryville's permanent art collection. A reception will be planned in coordination with the artist.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds from the Public Art Fund (Fund 243) are to be utilized for the purchase's costs. The cost of purchasing the art works is \$10,000. Installation may require the use of a lift given the potential for installation at a higher elevation on the elevator wall, and, an allowance of up to \$5,000 for this work is appropriate. Administrative costs include \$1,550 for the reception event and outreach, and \$1,450 in plaque and stipend costs, for a total of up to \$18,000

The Public Art Fund's (Fund 243) operating budget for Fiscal Year 2025-26 includes \$25,000 for the Annual Purchase Award, sufficient for the proposed purchase and installation.

STAFF COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

As noted above, on October 2, 2025, the PAC reviewed and made a motion consistent with the staff recommendation.

CONCLUSION

The Purchase Award of 2025 will continue a nineteen-year tradition of supporting local artists through purchases by the City. This program and the Sharon Wilchar Bus Shelter Art Program are the City's only art programs specifically supporting Emeryville residents and workers. Support for local artists was confirmed as a top goal in the 2016 Public Art Master Plan. Staff recommends that the City Council adopt the attached resolution approving the purchase of *Search Party* and *Spinnaker* by Steve Senter and acknowledgement of Cy Bowers' *Fortuna in the City*, *Capricio of Love* for Honorable Mention.

PREPARED BY: Amber Evans, Community & Economic Development Coordinator II

**APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO THE
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EMERYVILLE:**



LaTanya Bellow, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

- Draft Resolution