

## Staff Report

**Date:** January 17, 2012  
**To:** Honorable Members of the Visual Arts Committee  
**From:** Mary Chou  
**Re:** Fire Station Artwork for Public Safety Building

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Arts Commission staff is requesting direction from the Visual Arts Committee (VAC) on the development of an artwork proposal by the artist team Merge Conceptual Design (Merge) for the fire station for the new Public Safety Building.

### Background

In June 2011, Arts Commissioners approved the selection of Merge to develop a site-specific proposal for the fire station at the new Public Safety Building. Over the next four months, Merge developed five proposals for review by SFAC staff, three of which were presented to the Project Team (includes DPW project manager, architects HOK/Cavagnero Associates, SFRD representative, SFPD representative, and SFFD representative). One of the proposals was based on the form of cisterns that support the auxiliary water supply system in San Francisco. At the time of presentation, the architects expressed concern that the artwork on the façade compromised the design of the building and SFFD staff stated that the concept of the cisterns was not one their department supported. The artists then created an additional proposal based on the concept of fire alarm boxes that was presented to the Project Team for review. SFFD was not in support of this proposal and in a recent meeting with Chief Hayes-White and other members of the SFFD, the Chief expressed her support for the previous cistern concept (proposal design attached as explanatory document on 1/18/12 VAC agenda item #2).

### Action Item

While SFFD has expressed support for the cistern concept, the architects, DPW and Redevelopment have expressed a strong aesthetic preference for the artwork to be removed from the façade of the building; the architects are also concerned about the technical aspects of embedding brick elements into the concrete façade. The artists and SFAC staff are concerned that eliminating the graphic element of the artwork on the building's façade will compromise the original design of the artwork. The artists also have conducted research into possible techniques that will allow for integration of the brick elements into the concrete façade. Prior to moving forward with the further development of the cistern concept, SFAC staff would like feedback and approval from the Commissioners on the following:

- (1) support of the cistern concept for the fire station artwork; AND

- (2) (a) support of further development of the cistern concept as originally conceived with graphic elements on the building façade; OR (b) support of further development of the cistern concept focusing only on sculptural and graphic elements on the sidewalk along Mission Rock Street.

If Commissioners are not supportive of the cistern concept, staff would like Commissioners to consider approval of the following:

- (1) Compensate Merge Conceptual Design for work completed on the development of the proposals and use remaining funds for the fire station artwork to manage a selection process for the purchase of an artwork for the landscaped area on Mission Rock; OR
- (2) Compensate Merge Conceptual Design for work completed on the development of the proposals and allocate remaining funds for the fire station artwork to the two other public art projects for the Public Safety Building – the police memorial and the community plaza artwork.