



City of Austin

Recommendation for Action

File #: 25-1067, Agenda Item #: 1.

6/5/2025

Posting Language

Authorize negotiation and execution of an agreement with Saya Woolfalk Studio, LLC, for artwork for the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Tunnel Art in Public Places Project for a total agreement amount not to exceed \$5,800,000. Funding: \$1,450,000 is available in the Capital Budget of the Aviation Department. Funding for the remaining \$4,350,000 will be added as the construction phases begin.

Lead Department

Office of Arts, Culture, Music, and Entertainment

Fiscal Note

Funding in the amount of \$1,450,000 is available in the Capital Budget of the Aviation Department. Funding for the remaining \$4,350,000 will be added as the construction phases begin.

For More Information:

Angela Means, Director, Office of Arts, Culture, Music & Entertainment, 512-974-1624; Morgan Messick, Assistant Director, Office of Arts, Culture, Music, and Entertainment, at 512-974-7873.

Council Committee, Boards and Commission Action:

In August 2024, the Art in Public Places (AIPP) Panel and Arts Commission approved the “Art in Public Places Sites and Opportunities Plan for Austin-Bergstrom International Airport,” which identified and scoped three phases of AIPP opportunities within the current Airport Expansion and Development Program (AEDP).

On January 13, 2025, the AIPP Panel approved the selection process recommendation for the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Tunnel AIPP Project, naming Saya Woolfalk as the selected artist, Jean Shin as the first alternate, and Carolina Caycedo as the second alternate for the \$5,800,000 commission. (Motion by Arts Commission Liaison Maldonado, second by Panel Member Shaer; approved 7-0-0).

On January 27, 2025, the Austin Arts Commission approved the selection process recommendation for the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Tunnel AIPP Project, naming Saya Woolfalk as the selected artist, Jean Shin as the first alternate, and Carolina Caycedo as the second alternate for the \$5,800,000 commission. (Motion by Commissioner Gray, second by Commissioner Garza approved 8-0-0, with Commissioner Keys and Commissioner Medicharla absent).

Additional Backup Information:

The artist for the Airport Tunnel AIPP project at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS) was selected through a competitive national invitational process that included a local applicant pool managed by the City's AIPP program, in collaboration with the Department of Aviation.

This process was developed as part of Phase I of the AEDP's public art strategy, which includes large-scale, highly integrated public art commissions embedded within airport infrastructure.

The AIPP plan was designed to reflect AUS's status as a global gateway while ensuring the voices and talents of Austin-based creatives are interwoven throughout. The program features a tiered three-phase structure with opportunities for national, Texas-based, and Austin-based artists, ensuring both excellence and inclusivity.

The year-long process was transparent and available for public input.

Here is a breakdown of the selection process:

1. National Invitational Call (October 2024):

- A seven-member selection panel composed of arts and design professionals nominated artists from across the United States.
- A total of 37 eligible nominations were received, several of which were Austin-based artists.

2. Request for Qualifications (RFQ):

- Nominated artists were invited to submit qualifications via PublicArtist.org.
- An online information session was held to explain the opportunity and submission expectations.

3. Application Review:

- 22 eligible applications were received by the October 31 deadline.
- The selection panel reviewed all submissions and selected 8 finalists to interview.

4. Finalist Interviews (December 2024):

- Pre-interview orientations were conducted with all finalists.
- Finalist interviews took place December 19-20, during which the panel evaluated each artist's experience, vision, and alignment with the project's goals.

5. Artist Recommendation:

- Saya Woolfalk was selected as the recommended artist for the Tunnel Interface project.

6. Panel and Commission Approval:

- The selection was unanimously approved by the AIPP Panel on January 13, 2025.
- The Austin Arts Commission formally approved the recommendation on January 27, 2025.

7. Local Artist Participation Requirement:

- As part of the project, the selected national artist is required to subcontract at least 10% of the total commission award to Austin-based artists or creative professionals.
- Additional roles for local professionals may include but are not limited to community

engagement, design support, fabrication, or installation.

This process reflects the City's dedication to artistic excellence, transparency, and opportunity, ensuring that even nationally-selected commissions serve as a platform for local artist collaboration and community representation.

About the Artist:

Saya Woolfalk is a New York-based interdisciplinary artist known for immersive multimedia environments that blend science fiction, fantasy, anthropology, and mythology. Her vibrant and thought-provoking work examines cultural hybridity, identity, and imagination, making her uniquely suited to develop an ambitious installation that reflects Austin's creativity while engaging a global audience.

Project Context Within the AUS AIPP Plan:

This commission is one of three major Phase I AIPP projects, alongside the Barbara Jordan Terminal-Tunnel Interface and the Concourse B-Tunnel Interface. While Phase I opportunities were nationally competitive, Phases II and III are reserved for Texas-based and Austin-based artists, respectively.

This phased approach:

- Promotes excellence through national talent,
- Prioritizes inclusion by integrating local creatives, and
- Aligns with the overall capital project delivery schedule.

All AIPP commissions are expected to be completed by 2030, coinciding with the full opening of the new AUS terminal expansions.