



City of Austin

Recommendation for Action

File #: 25-1350, **Agenda Item #:** 4.

7/24/2025

Posting Language

Authorize negotiation and execution of an agreement with Rakhee Jain, d/b/a Unplain Jain LLC, for artwork for the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Sensory Lounge Art in Public Places Project in an amount not to exceed \$546,000. Funding: \$110,000 is available in the Capital Budget of the Aviation Department. Funding for the remaining years of the agreement is contingent upon available funding in future budgets.

Lead Department

Office of Arts, Culture, Music & Entertainment.

Fiscal Note

Funding in the amount of \$110,000 is available in the Capital Budget of the Aviation Department. Funding for the remaining \$436,000 of this contract 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, 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 June 9, 2025, the AIPP Panel approved the selection process recommendation for the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Sensory Lounge AIPP Project, naming Rakhee Jain, d/b/a Unplain Jain LLC, as the selected artist and Jamal Hussain as the alternate for the \$546,000 commission. (Motion by Panel Member Danziger second by Panel Member Diaz; approved 4-0-0, with one vacancy and Arts Commission Liaison Maldonado and Panel Member Davis absent).

On June 16, 2025, the AIPP Panel approved the selection process recommendation for the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Sensory Lounge AIPP Project, naming Rakhee Jain, d/b/a Unplain Jain LLC, as the selected artist and Jamal Hussain as the alternate for the \$546,000 commission. (Motion by Commissioner Maldonado second by Commissioner Medicharla; approved 6-0-0, with Commissioners Keys, Garza, and Kracheni absent).

Additional Backup Information:

This commission is part of Phase III of the City’s AIPP initiative, implemented in collaboration with the AEDP at the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS). Developed in partnership by the Office of Arts, Culture, Music, and Entertainment and the Department of Aviation, the phased AIPP plan was approved by the Arts Commission in August 2024.

Phase III prioritized artists local to Austin and Central Texas, building on Phase II which prioritized the inclusion of Texas-based artists, and on the nationally focused Phase I. All thirteen commissions awarded in

this phase were granted to Austin area artists, including this project. Phase III continues the City's focus on elevating local voices while delivering innovative, meaningful public art experiences in civic infrastructure.

Artist Selection Process:

These projects are part of a broader Phase III open Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process focused on talent based in the Greater Austin area:

Application & Outreach:

- RFQ released: February 28, 2025
- Submission Deadline: March 31, 2025
- Promotion included City newsletters, PublicArtist.org, social media, and community outreach
- Artist information and pre-submittal meetings were held on February 27 and March 10, 2025
- 173 total applications were received; 120 met the minimum qualifications

Panel Review & Interviews: Amenity Lounges & Spaces for Children

- The Amenity Lounges & Spaces for Children panel convened on May 15, 2025, to review applications
- Finalist interviews occurred on June 6, 2025

Final Recommendation: Sensory Lounge

- Recommended Artist: Rakhee Jain
- Recommended Alternate: Jamal Hussain

The recommendation was approved by the AIPP Panel on June 9 and affirmed by the Austin Arts Commission on June 16, 2025.

About the Artist:

Rakhee Jain is an Austin-based artist and designer whose work spans painting, installation, and experience-driven design. Guided by a deep understanding of sensory engagement and emotional well-being, Jain creates environments that emphasize calm, balance, and mindful interaction. Her use of soft forms, layered textures, and harmonious color palettes fosters a sense of tranquility while remaining visually engaging. Drawing inspiration from both nature and neuroscience, Jain's work encourages gentle exploration and grounded presence. Her thoughtful and inclusive approach makes her an ideal artist to design the Sensory Lounge at the airport-crafting a space that soothes the senses, supports neurodiverse travelers, and offers a restorative pause within the airport environment.

Project Context Within the AUS AIPP Plan:

This project is one of thirteen Phase III commissions within the AUS AIPP program. While Phase I focused on national artists, and Phase II emphasized Texas-based artists (particularly those living and working in Austin), Phase III was reserved exclusively for Austin-based creatives.

This phased model:

- Ensures a balance of excellence and equity;
- Prioritizes meaningful engagement with local artists; and
- Aligns with the AEDP infrastructure timeline.