



CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

## City of Palo Alto Staff Report to Public Art Commission

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**Title: Approval of artist Peter Wegner as the project artist for the new Public Safety Building.**

### **Background**

The City intends to construct a new Public Safety Building at 250 Sherman Avenue and a new California Avenue Area Parking Garage on 350 Sherman Avenue. Under the California Environmental Quality Act, these are considered as a single project as the garage will mitigate the loss of approximately 310 existing public surface parking spaces on both sites.

On April 3, 2017, Council directed staff to proceed with full preliminary design of a new 636-space parking garage concept with four levels of above-ground parking, two levels of basement parking and no retail space, and to design enhancements to the Birch Street frontage, creating an appealing interface between the garage and pedestrian sidewalk. Council discussion served to prescreen preliminary review and direct staff to prepare revisions to the Public Facility zoning ordinance to specifically accommodate public parking garages ([Staff Report #7738](#)). The proposed design of the PSB is a 3-story structure over an operational basement per previous Council direction ([Staff Report #6069](#)).

### **Discussion**

On April 18, 2017, staff submitted a preliminary application to the Architectural Review Board (ARB) for the project. Because the project is comprised of two physically separate properties, two applications were required. Application number 17PLN-00136 was for the PSB at 250 Sherman Avenue, and application number 17PLN-00135 was for the new garage at 350 Sherman Avenue. Additional application information is available through the “Building Eye” website at <https://palocalto.buildingeye.com/planning>.

### **Art Budget and Art Selection Process**

The current budgeted amount Public Safety Building is \$55.5M, yielding an art budget of \$555,000. Due to the specialized nature of the facility, staff launched an open call for artists for this particular opportunity, highlighting several potential opportunities for art integration. Sixty-three artists submitted their qualifications for consideration. Staff pared the list down to twenty-two potential artists for the commission. The selection panel made up of key stakeholders and arts professionals included:

Colette Chew – Engineer, Public Works

Geoffrey Blackshire – Deputy Fire Chief, PAFD

Kenneth Dueker – Director, Emergency Services (OES Chief)

Loren Gordon – Public Art Commissioner

Mallory Cusenbery - Principal Architect, RossDrulisCusenbery Architecture

Michael Ekwall - La Bodeguita del Medio owner, California Ave

Patty Lum – Assistant Police Chief, PAPD

Rhyena Halpern – Director, Arts & Sciences Division / Assistant Director, CSD

Shelly Willis – Public Art Consultant

Yoriko Kishimito – Former Palo Alto Mayor, Artist, Palo Alto Resident

The selection panel convened December 18<sup>th</sup> and selected four finalists for the project. Those artists traveled to Palo Alto to give public presentations about their work January 29<sup>th</sup> at the Community Room of City Hall. Based on the presentations and interviews, the panel selected Peter Wegner as the project artist for the Public Safety Building.

As stated on his website: Peter Wegner is an American artist and graduate of Yale University. Wegner's practice focuses on systems – of color, language, architecture and mapping. For Wegner, systems are rarely systematic. They are contingent, ad hoc, incomplete. Hence his paradoxical artwork: walls made of paper, buildings made of sky, monuments to the process of change itself.

His CV and artist statement he submitted with his application are attached to this report (ATTACHMENT A). His works are in prestigious private collections and museums worldwide, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Guggenheim Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the J. Paul Getty Museum.

#### **Timeline**

The Parking structure must be completed prior to beginning construction on the new Public Safety Building. The tentative timeline for the parking structure is to begin construction in summer 2018 and construction lasting approximately one year. The new Public Safety Building is expected to begin construction immediately following completion of the garage and is anticipated to be complete in 2021.

If approved as the project artist, Peter Wegner will enter into a design contract with the City and begin meeting with key stakeholders and the design team in the coming weeks. Staff plans to return to the Public Art Commission once there is a conceptual design for approval prior to entering the detailed design phase.

# Current Resume

PETER WEGNER

1986 BA Yale University

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS (SELECTED)

The Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo NY  
The Folkwang Museum, Essen DE  
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles CA  
The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York NY  
The Henry Art Gallery, Seattle WA  
The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles CA  
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles CA  
The Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, Leipzig DE  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York NY  
The Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix AZ  
The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco CA  
The San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose CA  
The Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara CA  
The United States State Department, Kabul AF  
The Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven CT  
The Yale University Sterling Library Special Collection, New Haven CT

## PRIVATE COLLECTIONS (SELECTED)

Sammlung Rosenkranz, Berlin DE  
The Lever House Collection, New York NY  
The Panza Collection, Varese IT

## COMMISSIONS

2018 PERPETUALLY PERPLEXINGLY, private residence, Ross CA (March)  
2014 HELL-WHISKEY-GUNS-MUD-MICHIGAN, MSU, East Lansing MI  
2014 SPECTRUM STADIUM, SJ Earthquakes MLS (proposed), San Jose CA  
2013 RED ROOMS, Hall Wines, Napa CA  
2011 MONUMENT TO CHANGE AS IT CHANGES, Stanford Univ., Palo Alto CA  
2011 MONUMENT TO CHANGE AS A VERB, Stanford Univ., Palo Alto CA  
2011 MONUMENT TO THE UNKNOWN VARIABLES, Stanford Univ., Palo Alto CA  
2011 MONUMENT TO THE FUTURE OF DREAMS, Stanford Univ., Palo Alto CA  
2010 IN [ ] VERITAS, SFMOMA, San Francisco CA  
2010 WALL-TO-WALL-TO-WALL, CUAM, Boulder CO  
2010 BRAVE W [THE WINNEBAGO PROJECT], CUAM, Boulder CO  
2009 DAY FOR NITE, NITE FOR DAY, MGM City Center, Las Vegas NV  
2007 TERRA FIRMA INCOGNITA, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin NZ  
2005 LEVER LABYRINTH, Lever House, New York NY  
2005 SHADES OF GREY (DEWEY DECIMAL) private residence, Los Angeles CA  
2004 LABYRINTH OF RED, The Bohlen Foundation, New York NY  
2004 SPACE, TIME & THE WEATHER, The Bohlen Foundation, New York NY  
2004 WALL-TO-WALL REDS, The Bohlen Foundation, New York NY  
2004 FLOOR-TO-CEILING BLUES, The Bohlen Foundation, New York NY

2004 A,N,S,W,E,R,S,&Q,U,E,S,T,I,O,N,S, The Bohen Foundation, New York NY  
2002 96 GREENS, private residence, San Francisco CA

#### SOLO EXHIBITIONS & PROJECTS (SELECTED)

2018 Galerie m, COLOR CORRECTIONS, Bochum DE (February)  
2015 Galerie m, COLOR WHEELS, Bochum DE  
2012 Galerie m, IF & WHEN, Bochum DE  
2012 Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, PETER WEGNER, Leipzig DE  
2012 Kayne Griffin Corcoran, BUILDINGS MADE OF SKY, Los Angeles CA  
2010 SFMOMA, THE UNITED STATES OF NOTHING, San Francisco CA  
2010 Griffin, ABSENCE OF FIELD, Los Angeles CA  
2009 Griffin, TERRA FIRMA INCOGNITA, Los Angeles CA  
2009 Galerie m, P,E,T,E,R,W,E,G,N,E,R, Bochum DE  
2008 Akira Ikeda Gallery, AN EMPTY SPACE, New York NY  
2007 Griffin, THE UNITED STATES OF NOTHING, Los Angeles CA  
2006 Griffin, WHAT & WHERE, Los Angeles CA  
2006 Akira Ikeda Gallery, WHY + BECAUSE + WHY, Taura JP  
2005 Griffin, WALL: PAPER: WALL, Los Angeles CA  
2005 Akira Ikeda Gallery, PETER WEGNER: NEW WORK, Berlin DE  
2004 Griffin, A,N,S,W,E,R,S,&Q,U,E,S,T,I,O,N,S, Los Angeles CA  
2004 Henry Urbach Architecture, COLOR & OTHER CONTINGENCIES, NY NY  
2003 Griffin, WALL WORKS & COLOR BARS, Los Angeles CA  
2003 Baldwin Gallery, 300 SUNSETS & OTHER WORKS, Aspen CO  
2002 Rhona Hoffman Gallery, PETER WEGNER: NEW WORK, Chicago IL  
2002 Printed Matter, PETER WEGNER: FIVE YEARS/FIVE BOOKS, New York NY  
2001 Griffin, PETER WEGNER, Los Angeles CA  
2001 Mary Boone Gallery, PETER WEGNER: GRIDS, New York NY  
2000 Griffin, PETER WEGNER: THE SECURITY SERIES, Los Angeles CA  
2000 Mary Boone Gallery, PETER WEGNER: CLEAR BLUE SKY, New York NY  
1999 Griffin, PETER WEGNER: REMARKS ON COLOR, Los Angeles CA  
1998 Mary Boone Gallery, BLUES, New York NY  
1998 C/R/G, PETER WEGNER: REMARKS ON COLOR, New York NY

#### GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

2013 "Focus: Architecture," The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles CA  
2012 "Skyscraper: Art & Architecture Against Gravity," MCA, Chicago IL?  
2012 "Liminality, Luminosity & the Everyday," CUAM, Boulder CO?  
2011 "ParaDesign," SFMOMA, San Francisco CA?  
2010 "The More Things Change," SFMOMA, San Francisco CA  
2010 "When Wine Became Modern," SFMOMA, San Francisco CA  
2010 "archiTECHtonica," CUAM, Boulder CO?  
2008 "Cut: Revealing the Section," SFMOMA, San Francisco CA  
2008 "Machine for Living Color," The Museum of Modern Art, New York NY  
2006 "Selections from Permanent Collection," Yale University Art Gallery, CT?  
2005 "Extreme Abstraction," Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo NY  
2003 "Crosscurrents," Henry Art Gallery, Seattle WA (traveling)?  
2002 "Amerika-Europa Dialog," Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal DE?  
2001 "Objective Color," Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven CT?  
2000 "Of the Moment," SFMOMA, San Francisco CA

2000 "On Language," Sean Kelly Gallery, New York NY  
1998 "Four Decades," SFMOMA, San Francisco CA  
1998 "Then & Now/Now & Later," Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven CT

#### ARTIST'S PUBLICATIONS

2012 BUILDINGS MADE OF SKY  
2010 ON, OFF, VIA, VERSUS, BESIDE, BEYOND... & UP AGAINST: THE WALL  
2009 TERRA FIRMA INCOGNITA  
2007 P,E,T,E,R,W,E,G,N,E,R,  
2005 LEVER LABYRINTH  
2004 A,N,S,W,E,R,S,&Q,U,E,S,T,I,O,N,S,  
2002 THE OTHER TODAY  
2001 PETER WEGNER, 11" x 8 1/2" x 3/8"  
1998 THE BLUE BOOKS  
1998 REMARKS ON COLOR  
1997 AMERICAN TYPES

#### LECTURES (SELECTED)

2013 Stanford University, Palo Alto CA?  
2012 TEDxEast, New York NY  
2012 The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago IL  
2011 Stanford University, Palo Alto CA?  
2010 The Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix AZ?  
2010 The University of Colorado Art Museum, Boulder CO  
2007 The Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin NZ  
2005 The American Academy in Berlin, Berlin DE  
2004 The Bohlen Foundation, New York NY  
2002 Printed Matter, New York NY?  
2000 The Cooper Union, New York NY?  
1999 Art In General, New York NY

#### ARTICLES & REVIEWS (SELECTED)

2014 M. Mai, "Peter Wegner, Buildings Made of Sky," Suddeutsche Zeitung, DE  
2014 "Buildings Made of Sky: Peter Wegner Inverts Skyline," HuffPost UK  
2011 J. Finkel, "Peter Wegner/Stanford: The Art of Innovation," LA Times, May 2  
2008 A.H. Merjian, "Cut: Revealing the Section," ArtForum, April  
2008 C. Huong, "10 Questions for Peter Wegner," KQED Interview, May 30  
2005 K. Johnson, "Peter Wegner: 'Lever Labyrinth,'" NYT, September 2  
2005 S. Cross, "Peter Wegner at Lever House," The New Yorker, August 8-15  
2005 N. Chasin, "Reading Room," ArtReview, July  
2004 A.Scott, "Peter Wegner at Henry Urbach Architecture," The New Yorker  
2004 M. Nichols, "Peter Wegner at The Bohlen Foundation," Art in Am, Oct  
2004 C. Knight, "Mass, Volume and Air, by Wegner," LA Times, May 14  
2004 K. Levin, "Peter Wegner at The Bohlen Foundation," Village Voice, May 6  
2004 C. Lang Ho, "Color-Coded," The Architect's Newspaper, April 6  
2002 E. Meltzer, "Peter Wegner," Frieze, September

# Artist Statement

Although I create abstract art, I feel that it must deeply engage the values central to the commissioning entity. I have a responsibility to the people who will work in this building every day, and to all those elsewhere in the community who benefit from their dedication to the greater good of public safety. It's always a distinct pleasure – and a privilege – to create artwork that will live in the public space.

The work I've made most directly relevant to this RFQ came to me from close by. Stanford's GSB (Graduate School of Business) asked me to create permanent artworks for their new business school campus. They had in mind a history walk with engraved plaques of illustrious alumni. My intuition pointed me in the opposite direction: I proposed a series of monuments to the future. But what, exactly would that look like? My signature work for Stanford goes to the heart of this paradox. It's entitled "Monument to Change as it Changes."

Before I started thinking about the art, I thought a lot about GSB. I talked to the dean, the administrators, the professors, the students. I hung around campus, attending lectures and seminars. I looked at how GSB positioned itself within its competitive set. In short, I thought about them. (That's not to say I ignored artistic considerations, but as the artist, that part of the equation is always known to me.) So instead I focused on the people who would live and work in the immediate vicinity of my artwork. That's where I began; that remained the focus of my process; and inevitably, that's where I ended up.

To begin with, I imagine a given opportunity as a series of questions. By the time I've worked my way through the list, I'll have a few approaches in mind. Then it's a matter of figuring out the fit between my initial conception of the piece and what the conditions will allow. During this interval, my artistic inspiration functions as a kind of hypothesis tested by the site and programmatic concerns.

So my working method is dialogue. With the commissioning entity; with the site; with other professionals working on other parts of the project; with functional considerations; and finally, with my own desire to make work that, while institutional, is never less than personal.

As a result, my work fits naturally into a broad range of environments; it's how I understand the world. Of course, some approaches instinctively make more sense to me than others, but I find there's no one way my art has to look. Often color is the most immediate visual response, but sometimes it's architecture or language. My work adapts, translating easily from one medium, and one kind of space, to another.

And if it does so while eliciting interest and delight from passersby – if the folks who see it every day continue to take pleasure in it – then (and only then) do I feel I've done my job.

Peter Wegner