

What would you do to create a public sculpture?

Let's look at how Marshall Fredericks created a public sculpture. Marshall Fredericks would get opportunities or "Calls for Public Art" sent to him by word-of-mouth, mail or phone. Because he was so well known in the public art world, and he was contacted for many public art opportunities. He also received many public art commissions from the architects with whom he worked. They would often hire him to do art that would be part of a building, alongside one or inside one.

Today the internet makes it easier to find "Calls for Public Art". The Americans for the Arts is one website to visit that has a listing of public art opportunities: <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/public-art-network/opportunities>

Marshall would read all the directions for a "Call for Public Art" commission and apply for it by making a proposal. You might have to explain what your public art is about. What media you will choose? Will you fabricate it or pay to have it fabricated and the cost for materials? How long will it take to fabricate? How will you secure it to the base or surface that it's placed? You need to research information to create a budget and timeline for making your art including sketch/site drawings of the proposal. There may be other documents you also need to submit like your resume, artist statement, images of your past artworks and more. Each "Call for Public Art" may be different and unique.

Applying for a public art commission means that you and other artists are applying for it and one of you will be selected. If you do receive the commission, then you already have a plan, which is your proposal. The commissioning party will draw up a contract for the proposal. It is suggested to have a lawyer review it before you sign it. Any changes should be negotiated before it's signed. When you sign it, this means you and the commissioning party agree to everything stated in it. Things that may be included are the budget, materials, timeline, payment, fabrication, transport, installation, insurance for installation, expectations for both the artist and commissioning party and more.

The next thing would be to set up a meeting with the commissioning party to discuss ideas and wishes for their public art. In some cases, you may have complete freedom with the design and sometimes not. Take notes and keep details from every meeting with your commissioning party.

Marshall worked with committees on some public art commissions, sometimes as long as 18 years before it was completed. For example, the *Cleveland War Memorial*. His original proposal to the committee was rejected and he had to change the design to please them. Keep in mind that he also is working on multiple commissions at the same time.

When designing, keep in mind the location where your art will be placed. Marshall would often do site drawings which not only had his proposed sculpture but the surroundings as well. You can view examples of sketch drawings or concept drawings at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/marshallfredericks/albums/72157630222494022/with/7414373176>

Marshall would then create small-scale "maquette" models to show the commissioning party a 3-D example. Some of them such as the *Cleveland War Memorial* and other commissions:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/marshallfredericks/albums/72157627016185577/with/5913358692>

Work closely with the commissioning party to develop your design. When they are satisfied with your design, then it is fabricated.

The site location for the public art may need preparation for the finished sculpture like a concrete surface or if it is a water fountain, plumbing and other site-preparation. Do you need to apply for special city or county permits? Do you need to complete paperwork for any contracting purposes?

Then you'll need to secure insurance to have it installed. Can you install it by yourself, or will you need contracted persons to help you install? Will you need a crane, or heavy equipment, or other machinery? How long will it take to install? After it's installed will there be any finishing touches on it. Will it need to be inspected for any issues?

Artists that work by commission will need to have their own liability insurance. Some insurance companies such as "Artists, Crafters and Tradesmen" (<https://www.actinsurance.com/artists-insurance>) provide insurance specifically for artists. There are other agencies as well.

Document your finished public artwork. Take plenty of photographs and video for your records. Share your accomplishment on your social media platforms. Marketing yourself can lead to more commissions in the future.

Reference

See how Marshall Fredericks developed the *Spirit of Detroit* by learning about "the Creative Process, Sculpting and Casting, Transporting the Art to Detroit, How it Arrives, Dedication", and more at: <https://omeka.svsu.edu/exhibits/show/the-spirit-of-detroit/transport-to-detroit>

See photographs and documents such as letters allowing Marshall to proceed with designing modern equipment for the interior of seven Great Ape Exhibit rooms, a list of laminated fiber glass equipment in the Great Ape Exhibit rooms and invoice for fabrication and installation of his equipment designs for seven Great Ape Exhibit rooms for the Holden Amphitheater and Great Ape Exhibit at the Detroit Zoo. Visit this link: <https://www.marshallfredericks.net/fredericks-primates.html> and other works at: <https://www.marshallfredericks.net/fredericks-modern.html>

For more virtual resources visit: Marshallfredericks.org