

# The Westport Library...

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## Westport Library Announces Plans for Artwork and Installations Ahead of Transformation Project Construction in September

Westport, CT – With construction beginning on the Westport Library’s [Transformation Project](#) in mid-September, the Library announced a comprehensive plan for the numerous installations and unique artwork in the Library collection during the nearly two-year renovation project.

“As excited as we are for the innovative plans for the future of the Library, we are equally cognizant of the importance of honoring our past,” said **Westport Library Executive Director Bill Harmer**. “Our team of designated experts has been working tirelessly with staff and volunteers to catalogue, package and store these art works so that they are well protected during construction.”

One of the first phases of the Transformation plan was the removal and storage of the more than 150 works of art that have been on display throughout the library’s public spaces, reading and program rooms and staff offices. Earlier this summer, these artworks were reappraised, cleaned, photographed, and packed and then transported by art handlers to a professional fine art storage location.

To ensure the proper protection of the artwork and to manage costs, true community collaboration was required. Volunteers from the Westport Arts Advisory Committee, the Westport Public Art Collection Committee, the Westport Artists Collective and interns from Staples High School and Norwalk High School worked together under the leadership of consultant Kathleen Motes Bennewitz, who also serves as the art curator for the town of Westport.

“All the volunteers were trained and worked in teams, as packing artworks requires special care,” said **Bennewitz**. “The large scale and highly valuable works required the expertise of the professional art handlers to pack.”

One of the most significant collections that was moved is the 90 piece “Black & White Collection” comprised of drawings, illustrations and fine art prints by Westport artists that adorned the walls of the McManus Room on the Library’s Riverwalk. The marble bust of Library founding patron Morris Jesup formerly located in the Great Hall was moved in late May and is currently on loan and display at Westport Town Hall. The 1935 W.P.A. mural “Pageant of

Juvenile Literature” by Westport artist Robert Lambdin currently hanging in the Great Hall will be taken down in 2018 when work begins on the Main Level.

Another significant piece to be moved is the “River of Names” donor wall on the Riverwalk Level outside the McManus Room. In 1997–98 the Westport Library commissioned the creation of a tile wall acknowledging donors to the capital campaign. Tiles that form the donor wall include the names and messages of past library donors and depict pictorial scenes from more than 350 years of Westport’s history. The plan for the new Library presented logistical challenges with keeping “River of Names” in its current location, so the installation will be carefully and professionally removed this September and stored until its disposition may be determined.

“Our family grew up enjoying our corner “Arts” tile and the rest of the art in the Library,” recalled **Nancy Diamond, tile donor and co-chair of the Westport Arts Advisory Committee**. “It’s gratifying to see the Library continue to be so thoughtful with respect to all of its collection as the Transformation Project begins.”

“We are very excited about the bold new vision for the Westport Library,” said **Dr. Richard Epstein, co-chair of the Westport Arts Advisory Committee**. “As we watch it come to life, we have been so pleased to see the Library take such care with the artwork and installations in its collection.”

Construction is scheduled to begin on the \$19.5 million renovation project in September and will last for approximately 18-21 months. The work will be done in phases to keep the Library open and accessible to the community. By staging the construction, the Library will avoid the expenditure of millions of dollars in non-recoverable expense for renting and moving to /from temporary space.

“Westport is and always has been a vibrant community full of creativity and artistic expression,” said **Westport Library Board of Trustees President Joe Pucci**. “To honor that spirit, the Library has a proud history of showcasing extraordinary art and installations and this will remain a priority when the new building is complete.”

Phase I (first 8 months) of construction will focus on preparing the Riverwalk Level for its ultimate use as the permanent home of the adult book collection and a quiet reading/study space, while also creating a newly designed entrance, which will capitalize on the Library’s beautiful, central location in the heart of the downtown area. During this phase, the Riverwalk Level will be closed to patrons, while the Main and Upper Levels will remain open, except for very limited periods.

Celebrate the official kick-off of the Transformation Project by joining us at the Groundbreaking Ceremony at the Library on September 14 at 6 p.m. For more on the specific elements of the Transformation Project, visit [wltransformationproject.org](http://wltransformationproject.org).

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