

Richmond Arts & Culture Commission
PART II: NPA GRANT PRESENTATIONS

Special Meeting Minutes
450 Civic Center Plaza
Richmond
Richmond Conference Room

Thursday, October 4, 2018

In attendance: Jenny Balisle, Rosalie Fay Barnes, Melissa Kirk, Silvia Ledezma, Nava Mizrahi, Ben Steinberg, Antonio Tamayo, and Florene Wiley

Absent: Steven Robinson

Staff: Michele Seville, Arts & Culture Manager
Katy Curl, Director, Library & Cultural Services

Guests: Christy Chan, Rebeca Garcia-Gonzalez, Cordell Hindler, Ross Holzman, Dr. Shantina Jackson, Barbara Jordan, Aiya Jordan-Kawasaki, Rob Lipton, Tania Pulido, Rachel Schaffran, Rasheed Shabazz, Amy Spencer, and Miriam Wong

I. Welcome/Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Balisle called the special meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

II. Approve Agenda

Motion by Commissioner Mizrahi, second by Commissioner Ledezma, and carried unanimously to approve the agenda, as submitted.

III. Neighborhood Public Art Mini-Grant Overview

Michelle Seville described the format for the presentations, reported there would be a 10-minute presentation and a 5-minute Q&A for each presenter, and outlined the scoring process.

Chair Balisle opened the presentations at this time.

IV. Presentation: Aiya Jordan-Kawasaki/Barbara Jordan – *Old & New Neighbors Loving Richmond*

Barbara Jordan presented *Old & New Neighbors Loving Richmond* and described the impetus for the project explaining that she was a writer who loved to interview people and her daughter was an artist.

Ms. Jordan explained that she and her daughter both lived in the Pullman neighborhood and wanted to do a project together in their neighborhood. She described the project site as the intersection of the Richmond Greenway and 33rd Street near Ohio Avenue where there was an entrance to the walking and bike trail and an overpass spanning the BART tracks leading to DeJean Middle School and Nichol Park. Explaining that a young boy, Xavier McClanahan, had been killed in the area, and there was a sign in the park memorializing Richmond community activist Lillie Mae Jones, considered a champion of the Richmond Greenway, she and her daughter proposed to create some light and happy paintwork with a multi-colored theme mural on the other side of the stairs to memorialize some of the neighborhood people and their loved ones, but not in a sad way. Given the trail and a great place for biking, she also proposed to install a bike pump and would work with the neighborhood on the design of the mural. She had already presented her idea to the Pullman Neighborhood Council.

Aiya Jordan-Kawasaki described and presented graphics to show the light happy art that had been proposed for the overpass and stated that near the bottom of the staircase that was more susceptible to graffiti, tiles could be used instead of paint to make it easier to clean. She proposed to work with different students at the middle school or the high school and see what art programs might want to be involved. Using 3 to 8 inch tiles, feature tiles would be created to memorialize Lillie Mae, Xavier, the factory works, or the Pullman cars, and include any others who might also want to be memorialized on the tiles.

In response to questions, Ms. Jordan clarified the \$7,789 budget; the extent of the mural and the area where the tiles had been proposed; verified that the mosaic would be under the bridge as well; stated the bridge was heavily used because it accessed BART and there was a park on the other side; and children used the bridge to get to school. If full funding was not available, there would be other methods to secure funding such as fundraising.

V. Presentation: Rebeca Garcia-Gonzalez – *Pullman Corridor Mural*

Rebeca Garcia-Gonzalez, a mural artist, proposed a *Pullman Corridor Mural* project, and proposed a mural at the intersection of Carlson and Ohio Avenues. The project would be a collaboration with Groundwork Richmond, which would donate the time of a coordinator for the mural project. The mural would go on the fence that bordered Corky Boozé's lot, was aware the fence belonged to the City of Richmond and would have to get permission for its use, and Mr. Boozé had already given his verbal blessing to the project and she was aware that a written blessing would be required. She noted that the project was close to the previously presented project. The project would be placed at the fence, which was not 8 feet tall, and a frame would have to be built to hold the proposed panels, encompassing 160 square feet of mural.

Ms. Garcia-Gonzalez reported that the mural would be the first of other art pieces proposed for the park. Community input with respect to the mural's content would be actively sought among the neighbors and the image of a train could have a unifying effect for the Pullman neighborhood's past. She described how the mural would be promoted, would work with Girls, Inc., post flyers at the corridor and near the park, and would use social media to identify the dates when painting would occur. She described her process for creating murals in coordination with students and others, including the Neighborhood Council, and emphasized that the area involved was highly visible and heavily traveled.

In response to questions, Ms. Garcia-Gonzalez clarified her role in the process, and identified her budget at \$6,700 with help from Groundwork Richmond, and because she would be donating a number of hours to ensure the completion of the project. If written permission was ultimately not available from Mr. Boozé, there were other areas in the park that could be used for the mural.

VI. Presentation: Ross Holzman – *Mandala Peace Project*

Ross Holzman advised that he had been awarded two grants by the RACC in 2016 and 2018 for murals that he identified. He proposed a *Mandala Peace Project*, and explained that a mandala was a sacred, spiritual symbol used in Hinduism, Buddhism and many other cultures around the world. It started with a circle and had a center that radiated outward using a geometric form, an inspiring way to activate people in a creative process that repeated ideas and patterns seen in nature. The mural was proposed to use both paint and mosaic to create something beautiful and meaningful in the community and could be a gathering point for people to harness some of the spirit of the community. The mosaic would be created on fiberglass mesh which would later be installed on the mural creating a multi-dimensional piece. He sought a 20x20 or 20x30 foot prominent wall for the mural and explained how it would be developed and installed.

In response to questions, Mr. Holzman described his desire to work with Richmond youth, had partnered with Girls Inc. in the past and DeJean Middle School, had a lead at the High School, had communicated with RYSE and the Boys and Girls Club, and would continue with those contacts. He planned the project to be completed before the end of the school year.

The next presentation was taken out of agenda order.

VII. Presentation: Tania Pulido – *Richmond Purple Tree Collard*

Tania Pulido reported that she had dedicated the past 10 years in Richmond to social justice for food justice and environmental justice, and wanted to weave her passions into the project known as *Richmond Purple Tree Collard*. A gardener, she stated her strength was in diversity and the rich shared cultures, and to know what to do now and in the future was to know your roots, which was how she had

come up with a concept of “follow the plant, follow the story,” about forced migration and displacement, and bringing seeds where people were forced to go. Her proposal focused on the purple tree collard, which was Richmond’s official plant given its anecdotal history of being brought from Africa to the south to Richmond, producing the concept of “follow the plant, follow the story” and hitting on different themes of gentrification, environmental racism, social justice, cultural resistance, and diversity throughout the story circles about the history of Richmond. Each circle would end with a community dinner called Breaking Bread, Breaking Barriers. A purple tree collard book would come out of the process and tell the story of migration, food justice, social justice, and unity, with an art exhibition and a book release of a children’s book about Richmond’s history, and to celebrate diversity.

In response to comments, Ms. Pulido stated that a booklet would be published initially and a larger printing could be a second phase; the book would be one in a series; she had spoken with photographers and artists to help tell the story; could produce a bibliography to document the process; as a community organizer it was her job to get people involved; outreach would be critical; and there would be 25 to 30 people per circle with co-facilitators. She had already started recruitment of those in support of the project.

VIII. Presentation: Rob Lipton – *Richmond Literary Art Center*

Rob Lipton, one of the City of Richmond’s three poet laureates, expressed a desire to develop a *Richmond Literary Art Center* for Richmond and the general surrounding community. He described his background and explained that he had commitments for a space at no cost at Bridge Art Space and at Kaleidoscope in the past. He described his mission to develop a sustainable Richmond Literary Art Center drawing on resources and becoming a place that was known throughout the East Bay and the Bay Area generally. The main elements of the center, all free to the public, would include monthly readings, two feature poets and an open reading, with quarterly discussions, monthly writing workshops, and youth workshops. He had requested the mini grant for funds for the future readers to provide the seed to develop an infrastructure. The funding would be for future readers, producing books, producing material for students, and some rent to Bridge, Kaleidoscope, or other location. He would write other grants and do more outreach to fund his proposal.

In response to comments, Mr. Lipton explained that he could incorporate poetry into the name of the Center, the proposal could be opened to all the writing arts, and the work would reach the underserved by working in the schools.

IX. Presentation: Dr. Shantina Jackson – *Cops and Kids Unity Mural*

Dr. Shantina Jackson, the Mentoring Coordinator at Richmond Police Activities League (PAL), explained that she was not a professional artist but worked with

non-profits to get artistic projects off the ground. The *Cops and Kids Unity Mural* was intended to improve relations between police and kids given the recent influx in violence between youth, particularly young Black youth and police. She presented a brief video to offer a sense of the national conference around how youth and police needed to have more humane relations, and advised that Richmond PAL's mission was to provide safe, nurturing environments for recreational, educational, cultural, and social activities while building positive relations between youth and police. The project would take ten middle and high school youth and five police officers to design and erect a mural on the exterior elevation of Richmond PAL Youth Center on Macdonald Avenue along the 23rd Street Corridor. Through mural workshops, a final mural design would be developed collaboratively between the police and youth around themes of anti-violence, community safety, youth development, and positive youth and police relations and increase the public's knowledge of PAL's crime prevention, anti-bullying and youth development activities, with a focus on school resource officers, local artists, and boys and girls ages 7 to 17, youth that had already been identified as at risk. A mural prep day had already occurred, the wall had already been painted, and recruiting young people for the art club would start next month, leading up to the paint day in June, to be unveiled in July.

In response to questions, Dr. Jackson clarified the proposed budget; the lead artists expected to be involved; the number of youth expected to participate with a main group of 10 and with scores more involved in the painting; and the contributions from other sources and those others who would likely be involved.

X. Presentation: Christy Chan – *Inside Out*

Christy Chan, a video and installation artist, presented *Inside Out*, taking verbal statements from residents of Richmond and projecting them large scale at night on the side of the Richmond Civic Center. She advised that the statements from Richmond residents would be collected in a workshop asking residents what they wanted to say to the world, to the neighborhood, to the government. She explained that projecting people's phrases on a wall was essentially an artistic and political statement recognizing that even the word 'wall' was being used as a tool to divide and as a weapon. It would also be a statement from Richmond city government that it offered its citizens a voice. She would facilitate workshops where the statements would be discussed to elicit intimate, personal, and honest phrases. Once collected, the phrases would be designed to be projection ready in Helvetica style. Another activity could allow one special evening to be live, where people could send text or email phrases that would be instantly broadcast. While the technical logistics would have to be worked out, there were a number of flat walls with no windows facing Macdonald Avenue that would be suitable.

In response to questions, Ms. Chan verified that 1,500 to 5,000 people would be impacted by the project because that was the expected foot traffic along the street. The statements would be played on a loop and she expected 15 or so

phrases to be played towards the end of August with projections nightly for two weeks to offer enough time to be noticed and discussed. She had no other location in mind and suggested one key wall at the Civic Center would be preferable.

XI. Presentation: Rachel Schaffran – *Artist Residency Program*

Amy Spencer, Exhibitions Director, Richmond Art Center (RAC); Miriam Wong, Executive Director, The Latina Center; and Rachel Schaffran, Director of the Art in the Community Program at RAC, presented an idea for a community *Artist Residency Program* through the RAC in partnership with The Latina Center. Working with 25 school and community sites in Richmond and San Pablo (elementary, middle, and high school sites), city and community centers, housing affiliated community spaces and non-profits, the program represented the bulk of the work of the RAC centered on the local community, to be more reflective in the exhibition programs and in classes. While no artist had yet been named, an artist whose work and process centered on community relationships would be sought through a pilot program for a three-month residency that would involve in-depth work with about 15 adults at The Latina Center with a video artist, installation artist, sculpture artist, and printmaker; someone who knew and cared about working with the community.

Miriam Wong, The Latina Center, explained that the proposal for an artist residency would be a great opportunity for and help the community being served by The Latina Center and through art help those trying to find a better life.

Amy Spencer, RAC, summed up some of the goals and benefits of the program that was intended to benefit the entire community starting with The Latina Center and the women and families who would tell their stories through art in a more inclusive space through art and studio programs.

Directors supported the idea from the RAC that would allow it to be more connected to the community; clarified the budget had identified matching funds; and verified that the class work would be done at The Latina Center but the exhibition to celebrate the work would be at the RAC.

XII. Presentation: Rasheed Shabazz – *Richmond Muslims/Peace & Purpose*

Rasheed Shabazz, a creative cultural communicator through photography and storytelling presented the *Richmond Muslims/Peace & Purpose*, explained that the word Muslim meant peace, and noted that Malcolm X had come to Richmond to speak in 1963 after he had not been allowed to speak at UC Berkeley at that time. The purpose of the project was to use photography and performance art to capture the experience of Richmond Muslims to foster intergenerational understanding, combat media stereotypes, promote diversity in media and enhance local history through photography where 45 different participants would

be photographed. Using interviews, ten in-depth oral history interviews would be conducted to identify life stories. A poster series would be developed with four to six different posters of people who were the subjects or participants of the project, and flyers would promote the event and highlight the images from the actual event. There would be two events; a Black History month panel storytelling activity and a stage performance based on excerpts from the oral histories. He proposed to create a retractable banner that could be used for displays. Social media would be used to share the photography as a way to counter negative images, and traditional media such as print, TV, and online would enhance people's understanding of the project.

In response to questions, Mr. Shabazz clarified the budget and expressed a willingness to rent equipment if it made sense rather than purchase equipment to reduce the budget; spoke to the outreach; and as to next steps stated that after the preparation of the oral histories outreach would be by word of mouth, and getting people to come to the events would be through traditional media and marketing.

Chair Balisle thanked all the applicants.

XIII. Commissioners Turn in Score Sheets

Commissioners turned in their score sheets.

XIV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 P.M. to the next meeting