

Richmond Arts & Culture Commission
PART III: NPA GRANT PRESENTATIONS
Special Meeting Minutes
450 Civic Center Plaza
Finance Department Conference Room
Richmond

Thursday, October 11, 2018

In attendance: Jenny Balisle, Melissa Kirk, Silvia Ledezma, Nava Mizrahi, Steven Robinson, Ben Steinberg, Antonio Tamayo, and Florene Wiley

Absent: Rosalie Fay Barnes

Staff: Michele Seville, Arts & Culture Manager

Guests: Daud Abdullah, Antu Antinao, Vreni Michelini Castillo, Marilyn Doss, Amanda Elliott, Hayley Ferreira, Taro Harttori, Andrea Hendricksen, Jessica Jordao, Alfonso Leon, Mickie Marlin, LauRiece Mills, Meryl Pierce, Anna Scaiano, and Rue Harrison Whittaker

I. Welcome/Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Balisle called the special meeting to order at 6:38 P.M.

II. Approve Agenda

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

III. Neighborhood Public Art Mini-Grant Overview

Michelle Seville welcomed all the presenters and 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: Antu Antinao – *Son Jarocho for Richmond*

Antu Antinao presented the *Son Jarocho for Richmond*, traditional Veracruz, Mexico music for singing and dancing, bringing the community together for fandangos. He described the music as multi-interracial that had been performed for centuries telling stories of resistance through music, dancing, and poetry.

Mr. Antinao and Francisco performed some Jarocho music for the RACC, after which Mr. Antinao described the project as a series of five workshops at four different locations in the City, potentially at the Library, High School, community centers, and cultural centers. At the end of the workshops, all the participants would be invited to participate in a larger, more traditional fandango where the entire community would be invited to a larger location that would be the impetus for more fandangos in the future. He explained that the fandangos promoted community relations, cultural understandings, and encouraged community building.

In response to questions, Mr. Antinao explained that the performances that had been envisioned would be brought to over 100 people; he would be working with other collaborators such as the Ryse Youth Center; referred to the potential venues where the workshops, two hours each, could be held, and clarified the proposed budget.

V. Presentation: Andrea Hendricksen – *Indigo Animal*

Andrea Hendricksen, artist and teaching artist; Jessica Jordao, artist sculpture of animals endangered in the Amazon; Rue Harrison Whittaker, author and illustrator of the book Indigo Animal in which the character had been introduced; presented *Indigo Animal*, a story that embodied positive values. The project would create a large seated sculpture of the title character 7 feet tall. It would be fabricated in John Toki's studio and Mr. Toki had donated studio space and equipment to allow the build. They proposed the sculpture be placed in a public space, potentially at the Library. Preliminary planning would start in January with an installation in August at a community reception. The community, children and adults, would be involved in the construction and throughout the process that would include reading circles at Richmond Library and art workshops.

In response to questions, Ms. Hendricksen explained that K-8 would be the target audience to become familiar with the character through various workshops, the High School would be involved in the mosaic aspect of the proposal, and there would be lesson plans. Details of the budget were provided and while some costs would be donated, supplies would be needed for the art workshops over the proposed six-month period.

For the next presentation, Ms. Seville advised that Commissioners Tamayo and Wiley would remain but could not vote or ask questions given a potential conflict of interest.

VI. Presentation: Amanda Elliott – *Art Through Transition*

Amanda Elliott, Executive Director for Richmond Main Street, presented *Art Through Transition*, a revitalization program that celebrated the diversity of the community, much of it through art in a variety of forms.

Ms. Elliott explained that previous art projects had been developed through the Ryse Youth Center, among other groups, to draw people into Downtown Richmond. The BART retail space or Richmond Business Hub space would allow an opportunity to feature local artists in a variety of mediums, and include panel discussions that would explore community development and art social justice. Given that the Downtown was in transition there was a desire to find ways to keep the culture of Richmond highlighted and visible, and the artists who were part of the community to communicate about what that meant to them through the panel discussions and hands-on activities with youth, and with some art to be commissioned specifically for the Downtown in some of the identified spaces.

In response to comments as to the expected positive outcomes, Ms. Elliott explained there had been lots of discussion as to how the City had been transitioning with anxiety and controversy about gentrification and how people felt about the changes. The project would offer an opportunity to explore that situation, particularly how it would affect youth and bring people into the conversation. There would be an open call for artists and potential locations of the panel discussions would depend on the response.

The next presentation was taken out of agenda order.

VII. Presentation: Taro Hattori – *Rolling Counterpoint*

Taro Hattori presented *Rolling Counterpoint*, which he reported had previously been provided at three different locations funded by other organizations. He had already built the teahouse on a trailer. As a first generation immigrant, a student of psychology, an interior designer, a musician, and a new resident of Richmond, he proposed a conversation-based project initiated with the questions of WHAT DIVIDES US and WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BELONG. Participants would respond to those questions in a creative way using the porous walls of the traditional Japanese teahouse to represent the many facets of conversation. Everything would be recorded and videotaped to come up with a list of questions for the community to consider in the future. Each neighborhood would have different topics depending on the neighborhood visited, such as the issue of social and political exclusion in American communities, mental health, homelessness, gentrification and racism, with a focus on communication between youth in the Iron Triangle area, and connect the youth with those who used Richmond/San Francisco Ferry Services because this latest development would influence the mobility of people and cultures in the City. Conversations would be developed through an event in the Iron Triangle to find youth who would work with him, and there would then be events in the City and at the Ferry Terminal. The goal was to help youth and families in the Iron Triangle to participate in the process and community with other residents; and encourage a flow of people through three different points, the Iron triangle, the Civic Center, and the Ferry Terminal to create activities around the Terminal.

In response to questions, Mr. Hattori clarified the budget and noted that the Richmond Art Center was interested in participating, and if not getting the full funding he could simply eliminate one of the venues. He had already worked with the Richmond Art Center to get access to the Civic Center space inside the parking space but had not directly approached the City; had approached a park in the Iron Triangle but had yet received a reply; and had been talking with Boardmembers of East Bay Transit and BART to access the ferry system through them. He was collecting data with the conversations which would be exhibited online in a website of previous versions. He expected between 50 and 100 participants overall.

VIII. Presentation: Hayley Ferreira – *Growth is Beautiful*

Hayley Ferreira, Bay Area Muralist, presented *Growth is Beautiful*. Having been approached by the owner of Williams Natural Foods, the first and only food store of its kind in Richmond, she was to paint a large scale mural of fruits and vegetables on the wall of the building to bring awareness of the need to be healthy, and to engage the community in the process. The owners of Williams Natural Foods would distribute a newsletter to hundreds of residents to promote the project and invite anyone interested to help, children and adults. An area along the bottom of the mural would be available for anyone to paint anything they wanted. The owner of Williams had offered to have snacks and refreshments for people passing by who wanted to help paint, and get people involved including those coming to the store. She hoped the mural would deter graffiti.

In response to questions, Ms. Ferreira suggested the project would affect all residents of Richmond and others given the location along San Pablo Avenue; as to whether the cars parked in the lot would block the mural she stated the mural could be raised on the 30 foot wide by 15 foot high wall; she was open to collaboration but the main idea was color, fruits and vegetables; she sought the highest budget amount available given the size of the mural; the owner would be willing to help out with some cost of materials; and donations would be sought from paint stores and the like so the budget could change.

IX. Presentation: Vreni Michelini Castillo – *Color Theory Reflections*

Vreni Michelini Castillo, an educator and artist, presented *Color Theory Reflections*, a collaborative book to be published in November that would have 13 different authors talking about their experience as women of color in the arts and what that meant in terms of identity and the intersectionalities of how identities affected the experience in the labor force of artists. She identified a list of collaborators from different parts of the Bay Area, quotes that had come from the book, and reported that the funds were available to publish, although funds would be needed to pay artists for readings and performances.

Women artists would be asked what it meant to live in the Bay Area given the shifts due to gentrification, the need for economic equity for women artists, and the history of labor for Black women through the decades. Free workshops would also be offered to the community with a focus on youth artists and art administrators. Ms. Michelini Castillo proposed an event at the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts at the Richmond Art Center, stated she worked for both, and explained that in order to have art and culture there had to be sustainable labor practices, and to do that they had to have conversations, share skills, and find creative ways to solve problems. Part of the work was thinking about the next generation. There was a desire to encourage younger folks to have the ideas to be able to articulate what they needed, find resources for their projects, and advocate for themselves and their community. The project would encompass a lot of issues in a very creative way.

In response to questions as to how the project would be advertised, Ms. Michelini Castillo expected to go out to meet different people, through email, through a radio show she had access to, and through conversations. She expected to have three artist events at the Performing Arts, Richmond Art center, and the NIAD Center for Art & Disabilities. Each event would be different and cater to the different parts of the community. She responded to the budget including the cost for food that would be served as an important way to bring people together and support local businesses, and the proposal was intended to address places where they were interacting with community and outward, and while the people performing and greeting might be a limited list, those attending would come from all parts of the Richmond community and others from the Bay Area.

X. Presentation: Anna Scaiano – *Bridging the Gap*

Anna Scaiano, Meryl Pierce, Marilyn Doss, Daud Abdullah, Mickey Marlin, students Martin and Johnny and their families, representing Verde Elementary School and Head Start, noted that Verde was the only school in North Richmond and was underserved and challenged. Verde used to be the lowest performing school in the district consistently serving students with the highest need, and despite that Verde was thriving and with trauma informed practices academics and social and emotional learning was being provided to the students. The aging campus was in need of beautification and the project would teach all students and families from Head Start to middle grades how to make mosaics and install them on the bridge over the creek to the school; teach students the history of North Richmond and to be proud of their community; upper grade students would help design a mural on the side of the administration building supporting the history of North Richmond; and a block party at the end of the year would celebrate the completion of the mural and mosaics and invite all North Richmond families. To prepare for that, a clean-up day would be hosted to clean up Wildcat Creek in front of the school and clean up the block leading to the school.

Strengthening and connecting the neighborhood would provide a better chance for the children and there were numerous community partners involved to make that happen. Community input would be pursued to “own” the project and the North Richmond network would be used to design the mural.

Martin, a fifth grader, stated he wanted the art for his school.

It was noted that a previous mural funded by the RACC continued the beautification of North Richmond block-by-block and taught students about the strength and resiliency of their community and brought art into their lives.

In response to questions as to the community partners, the RACC recommended that the long list be included in the proposal and that there be some sort of signage near the mosaic or the mural to identify the class year the mural had been completed. As to whether other funds were possible for the project, it was noted that the community partners would be asked for donations given that the requested budget would not fund the entire project that had been proposed; school enrollment was reported to be 330 students with another 80 in the Head Start program, all of whom would be involved.

XI. Presentation: Alfonso Leon – *One Richmond: Unifying Community Mural*

Alfonso Leon presented *One Richmond: Unifying Community Mural*, stated he painted a number of murals including the Rancho Market Mural through the RACC in the past. The project was intended to tell the story of a unified Richmond through art, bringing community members to participate in a healing transformative project, and to learn and use newly developed art skills. The project would be video documented to gather information on participants’ opinions and progress of the mural through a survey. The mural would be visible in the surrounding community including Richmond High School students and faculty. Students at Richmond High would get volunteer credits toward graduation for participating in the mural, which had already been confirmed by the Principal. Between students and staff 1,500 people would be impacted annually and for years to come; art workshops would be held at Richmond High; people would be given tools to express themselves and various art practices and techniques would be taught; community engagement workshops would also be held collaboratively; the art would be a healing tool building self-esteem, resilience, and confidence to art and learn how to design logo and characters, and learn the history of graffiti and the hip hop culture. There would be an unveiling party at Richmond High School.

In response to questions, Mr. Leon stated he had settled on Richmond High School because of its accessibility to the community, he had no luck with other areas of the community, had spoken to the Principal who was excited, the space would be the old art building where classes used to be held, and the mural would be on the outside of the building facing 23rd Avenue.

With respect to Richmond High School, RACC members agreed that beautification was sorely needed and art was lacking. The art workshops were proposed to last two hours, with the first half the technical art and community engagement and the second half the general public, students, and faculty would be the working group; a four-month project from December to the end of March, all at Saturday school.

XII. Presentation: LauRiece Mills – *Richmond Emerging Choreographers Festival*

LauRiece Mills, an educator and dancer, shared her proposal for *Richmond Emerging Choreographers Festival*. Her project proposed a dance festival for the community to allow an opportunity for people to get up and move together transcending race and language barriers. To do that, she sought young dance artists and emerging choreographers from Richmond through dance technical workshops and professional development, providing young artists ages 13 to 20 with scholarship opportunities, and working opportunities throughout the event with professional choreographers, providing a platform for performing arts organizations in Richmond and dance artists from Richmond through a showcase. There would be workshops in the morning, professional development in the afternoon, and a showcase in the evening, a one-day event that could eventually expand. The process would start in February with planning and the actual event was hoped to be through Bay Area Dance Week between April 26 and May 5. She described the elements of the budget, identified the need for supplies, the need for a venue, and the scholarships, along with student stipends to pay for the student interns, workshops, and panel instructors. The event would be memorialized on film. She hoped to have 50 participants in the morning workshops, wanted three high school interns, three to six organizations for five to 10 choreographer showcases, 150 attendees at the showcase and three scholarships (two at \$500 and one at \$1,000). She expressed her hope to have contributions from local companies to expand that number.

In response to comments, Ms. Mills identified her festival management experience, and clarified that the dance artists had not been identified and part of the festival would be to identify who those people were and to bring them together during February and March with outreach and advertisement through Bay Area Dance Week. As to community partners there was only one at this point. Participants would have a selection of different options after which the particulars of the workshops and professional development would be identified.

XIII. Commissioners Turn in Score Sheets

Commissioners turned in their score sheets.

XIV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:29 P.M. to the next meeting on October 25, 2018.