

Stadium Boulevard Art Selection Services:

Final Report to the City of Ann Arbor

The Ann Arbor Art Center would again like to thank the City of Ann Arbor for choosing us to develop and manage the selection process for artwork to be included in the Stadium Boulevard capital improvement project. It was a pleasure working with City staff and we are confident that together we have selected an outstanding artistic option for the community as well as developed a solid and repeatable process that can be used by the City for future capital improvement projects designated to include public art.

RECOMMENDATION: BRIAN BRUSH, 'LEAVEN'

As a result of our process and having considered all the feedback we received from the public, City of Ann Arbor staff, and our project advisory committee, the Ann Arbor Art Center recommends the installation of Brian Brush's artwork 'Leaven' on the two new retaining walls of Stadium Boulevard.

About Brian Brush

Brian Brush labels himself a "creative nomad," primarily splitting time between New York City, Montreal, and project sites around the world where he creates large-scale spatial and sculptural installations with a focus on the relationship between light, material, and cultural identity of place. He earned a degree in environmental design from Montana State University and later received master's degrees in both architecture and urban planning from Columbia University. Currently, Brian is growing his public art practice, BRUSH, and is pursuing a Ph.D. as a Fulbright Scholar through McGill University. Brian has twice been awarded the Public Art Network Year in Review Award by Americans for the Arts and his work has appeared in publications including *Metropolis Magazine*, *Interior Design* magazine, *The Architect's Newspaper*, *ArchDaily*, *Fast Company's Co.Design*, *Atlantic Cities*, and Phaidon Press's recent book, *Room: Inside Contemporary Interiors*. In September 2016, Brian presented his work in "Mediating the Identity of Place" as an invited speaker at the Media Architecture Summit in Toronto.

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About Leaven

Leaves and limestone retaining walls previously prominent at the installation site inspire Brian's proposed Ann Arbor installation, 'Leaven.' This artwork visually softens the hard boundary of the new concrete retaining walls with a vine-like relief sculpture of aluminum diamond-shaped 'leaves' that reflect diffused images of the ever-changing adjacent environment. Below are notable characteristics of the proposed artwork:

Material: Anodized aluminum is the installation's primary material. The anodization process prevents corrosion and screw anchors and spacers will be stainless steel. The aluminum's 3-millimeter thickness and the installation's spacers will limit pedestrians' ability to bend the art.

Reflection: The aluminum reflects softened and diffused light, rather than bright and sharp light. Cars travel parallel to this art, which limits direct reflection of headlights off of the installation.

Safety: Edges of the aluminum will be sanded and buffed and the installation doesn't extend beyond three inches from the walls' surfaces. Both characteristics reduce safety (snag) hazards.

Fee

The contract specified a maximum artist award of \$115,000 for artwork creation and installation. Based on early counsel from the advisory committee and in order to ensure that the project will not exceed the City's total budget (due to unforeseen necessary or required engineering changes, for instance), the Art Center built in a \$15,000 contingency. The total artist award, based on the original call for artists and throughout the selection process, was \$100,000. Providing there are no changes or additional monies required to complete the art installation – the project will be completed \$15,000 under budget.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT: CITY OF ANN ARBOR AND THE ANN ARBOR ART CENTER

The Art Center's contract with the City of Ann Arbor was to recommend art for a newly reconstructed Stadium Boulevard. Below are the deliverables detailed in the contract:

- Form a project advisory committee, include an art commission member
- Develop a call for proposals
- Solicit proposals
- Review proposals
- Conduct web-based polling of the public
- Host town hall meetings
- Do a final jury review
- Make a recommendation to the City

PROCESS

Context

This process for managing the selection of art was positioned from its inception to be different from other public art selection processes that preceded it, which saw various combinations and prioritizations of input, votes, and feedback in ultimately choosing art to install in Ann Arbor.

Our process related to Stadium Boulevard was the first major public art project since the Percent for Art program had been eliminated, which heralded a new method of approving and funding projects.

This project was also different from other standard selection processes because the timeline was six months. As we had learned in our research and interviews, typical selection processes of this scale and scope ideally would have been longer and had two phases: a call for qualifications and call for art proposals. Artists invited to submit proposals would only have been those who passed detailed vetting of a qualifications period. Given we did not have the time luxury of a two-phase process and with the advice of our advisory committee, we worked to effectively embed assessment of qualifications into our streamlined process.

Opening Interviews

Knowing the large scope and scale of work before us and its difference from previous public art projects, the Art Center interviewed and consulted a variety of people experienced in creating art or participating in public art processes in order to learn about the history of public art projects nationally and locally, artist needs and interests, public polling best practices, and community perceptions of art in public spaces. Those people included the following:

John Bracey, State of Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs
Allison Buck, formerly with the Arts Alliance (managing public art programs)
Kathy Gendron, local artist / muralist
John Kotarski, Public Art Commission

Advisory Committee

Per the Art Center's contract with the City and as part of standard practice across many of our projects at the Art Center, we thoughtfully formed an advisory committee that would offer counsel and guidance throughout our selection process.

Among other things, we hoped this committee would do the following:

- Assist in framing and editing the call for proposals
- Assist in developing and refining the artwork selection process overall
- Assist with community engagement and public relations strategies
- Serve as public ambassadors for the project
- Assist with artist outreach and recruitment
- Offer insights about art, artists, and the public throughout the process

We had seven committee meetings and were in frequent contact with individual committee member advisors throughout the six months. Meeting length averaged one hour and attendance was generally strong and consistent.

Members included the following:

Lisa Borgsdorf, University of Michigan (U-M) Museum of Art
Lori Brewer, Brewer's Towing
Allison Buck, Arts Alliance
Justin Herrick, Entrepreneur and Restaurateur
WAP John, Grafaktri, Inc
John Kotarski, City of Ann Arbor Public Art Commission
Lucie Nisson, Mosaic Artist and POP-X Founding Partner
Leslie Raymond, Ann Arbor Film Festival
Lori Roddy, Neutral Zone
Mike Savitski, Savitski Design
Mia Shin, Pioneer High School
Versell Smith, Corner Health Clinic
Mary Thiefels, Neutral Zone
MaryAnn Wilkinson, U-M Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning/U-M Museum of Art

Process of Elimination

As a result of our call for art (open July 1 to August 31, 2016), we received 57 proposals from around the country. Below is step-by-step process by which we eliminated proposals and made our ultimate recommendation, involving City staff, Art Center staff, the public, and our advisory committee along the way.

Internal Review: City and Art Center staff reviewed proposals to determine whether they met minimum submission requirements, i.e. submitting proper materials.
28 proposals eliminated from consideration

Public Panel Review: 10 community members performed detailed, in-depth reviews of proposals on their own; they then met to discuss proposals as a group and score proposals based on their merits

and strength in relation to submission criteria in the call for art. The goal was to end up with a short list of 3-5 proposals.

25 proposals eliminated from consideration

Staff Review of Panel Review Outcomes: Mike Nearing and Omari Rush discussed the remaining four proposals and decided that though one of them received a high score from the committee, there was not enough detail about installation engineering and specifications for us to feel comfortable having it be installed.

1 proposal eliminated from consideration (R. King)

Public Polling: The Art Center created and disseminated a video describing the remaining three proposals and used it to survey the public, getting their input about the those proposals. Prior to this phase of the process, each artist had provided responses to question, collected from the review panelists, about their proposed installations. Those responses were incorporated into the public pooling process materials.

1 proposal eliminated from consideration (L. Sauv /Synecdoche)

Artist Interviews: Mike Nearing and Omari Rush conducted phone interviews with the remaining two artists (each lasted at least an hour) to do a detailed assessment of engineering considerations, installation timeline, and artist temperament. As a result of the interviews, both proposals were remained characterized as feasible.

No proposal eliminated from consideration

Town Hall Meetings: The Art Center hosted two town hall meetings to get direct feedback from the community. These meetings began with a detailed presentation of each proposal followed by an open comment / Q&A session.

No proposal eliminated from consideration

Final Jury Review: Members of the project advisory committee convened to do a final jury review of the proposals. The meeting began with a detailed presentation of each proposal and a review of feedback/data received in each step of the process: opening solicitation, internal review, public panel review, public polling, artist interviews, and town hall meetings. The jury discussed and shared feedback about the remained two proposals and voted to make a final recommendation.

1 proposal eliminated from consideration (K. Larson)

Brian Brush recommended to the City of Ann Arbor by the Art Center as the artist to install artwork as part of the Stadium Boulevard reconstruction.

Technical Elements of the Process

In addition to selecting art, the Art Center also aimed to create a process that was replicable by others in the City of Ann Arbor aiming to administer a community-focused selection process. Notable elements include the following:

- a. We used CaF  to collect submissions to the call for art. This art opportunity advertisement and submission portal is widely used by artists throughout the US. The Art Center has an account and regularly posts calls for art for our juried exhibitions...often generating hundreds of submissions.
- b. After considering a variety of online polling platforms (guided in part by those initial interviews), the Art Center chose to use Google Forms to survey the public. This choice was

made given the security of the Google, the ability to embed pictures and video in the form, and given that the platform is user friendly (for the administrator and poll taker).

- c. In producing the brief video that introduced artists and their artwork to the broad public (which garnered 2,700 video views), it was important for the Art Center to keep it short (2 minutes), include closed captioning, and use high-resolution images from artists.
- d. We found the Ann Arbor District Library to be a great venue for hosting some public meetings that were part of this process. When we hosted meetings at the Art Center, the ability to project work (using a computer, laptop, screen, and dimmable room) were also important to review and assessment processes.
- e. Our Art Center marketing team created a centralized space for project information online by hosting a dedicated landing page on our website. We gave it a special and easy-to-remember URL (annarborartcenter.org/stadium-boulevard) and we conveniently posted links to the submission portal, project FAQ, images of artist work, and other information help to those interested in this project.

Hours

Our original projection of hours required to complete this project on behalf of the City of Ann Arbor included an estimated 350 hours. Actual hours invested to complete the contracted artist recommendation services totaled 396 hours, and that total does not include meeting time spent post initial recommendation, which has easily required an additional 15-20 hours of our time.

LESSONS LEARNED

Integral to developing and refining any process that paves the way for future work are the key lessons learned that ensure continuous improvement. The Art Center had many lessons learned that will be important for future public art projects contracted by the City and they include the following:

1. Taking additional time and effort to describe verbally and visually the installation site
2. Including A2 Open City Hall as a public input channel in the future
3. Clarifying the role of the public in the selection process
4. Clarifying the role and expectations of the Public Art Commission related to the selection process