

SEATTLE ARTS COMMISSION

Minutes

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, May 11th, 2021

Remote – Zoom Conference

Commissioners present: Quinton Morris (Co-Chair), Sarah Wilke (Co-Chair), Cassie Chinn, Chieko Phillips, Kayla DeMonte, Holly Jacobson, Yeggy Michael, James Miles, Racquel West, Mikhael Mei Williams, Steve Galatro, Vivian Hua, Rick Araluce, Vanessa Villalobos, Dawn Chirwa, Ebony Arunga

Staff in attendance: Calandra Childers, Allie Lee, Kathy Hsieh, Ashraf Hasham, Erika Lindsay, Alex Rose, Diana Falchuk, Mytoan Nguyen-Akbar, Amy Nguyen, Dominique Stephens (MO)

Guests: Sadiqua Iman, Maria Kolby Wolfe, Reese Tanimura (SMC)

Call to Order, Introduction, Land Acknowledgement (4:05)

Approval of Minutes:

James moved to approve the commission minutes from April 2021. Rick seconded. Approved.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Arts Community Presentation

Presentation: Sadiqua Iman, Artistic Director of Earth Pearl Collective

Sadiqua Iman builds bridges across many different artistic and institutional disparities. She uses dance, theatre, and poetry to deconstruct complex issues and boil them down to the bare bones of healing as a community in order to move forward as a nation. Sadiqua is the Artistic Director of Earth Pearl Collective, a non-profit organization of queer black womyn dedicated to healing their communities through creative collaborations. Sadiqua is most well known for her work as Namii, a gender-queer burlesque performer and drag king that weaves politics, sexual liberation, and comedy together to seduce audiences to constantly evolve.

- <https://www.earthpearlcollective.com/>
- sadiqua.iman@gmail.com
- Sadiqua talked about her extensive work with the [James Washington Cultural Center](#) and [Niles Edge](#)
- Commissioners are invited to join Nile Edge's "No Healing, No Peace" silent protest for healing on Juneteenth (Saturday, June 19) at 10am at MLK Memorial Park. There will be live music and artists and folks are encouraged to enjoy some mindful walking!

WA Women's Foundation

Presentation: Maria Kolby Wolfe, President and CEO of Washington Women's Foundation

Maria introduced her personal and professional connection with arts in the Seattle area, her experience being a Black woman working in arts administration and fundraising, being a leader, experiencing power imbalances, and how donor-centrism perpetuates inequities in non-profits. Maria wants to change inequitable practices in funding through trust-based and participation-based giving and wants to better center voices of communities we are accountable to.

- <https://wawomensfdn.org/>
 - maria@wawomensfdn.org
 - "The future of philanthropy requires more humility and more solidarity. Funders are ultimately responsible to the communities our democracy is failing." Pia Infante, Whitman Institute
- SAC Questions/Comments:
 - Does WWF work with other arts organizations in the city that haven't received funding or support from government?
 - There is space at WWF to fund advocacy work and activate members.
 - What will the community outreach process look like?
 - Working on that this summer but will be carefully looking at the application process to make it less burdensome on community. Aware of how applications cut out orgs who don't have professional backgrounds; thinking about asking orgs to just send their websites and WWF can do the research. Want to reduce the grant process so it doesn't take long from application to funding.
 - SAC would like to invite WWF back to a future meeting with key women doing the work. Would like to have to face time with WWF folks mentioned.

ARTS 2021 Workplan

Briefing: Calandra Childers and ARTS Program Managers

The goal is to connect ARTS Program Managers with SAC members for a high level of what ARTS is working on and a space for dialogue. Two key questions for SAC to think about:

- How does this work relate to the conversations you are having with community members?
 - What are the advocacy needs we can focus on for Recovery?
- SAC Responses:
 - Hearing from performing artists starting to get gigs that at times artists are expected to donate their time for events or only get freebies. How do we change the standard of this so people don't ask artists to do that anymore?
 - Black artists are also Black businesses. (re: people wanting to support Black businesses)
 - Kathy – involved in building toolkit for paying artists and developing standards for pay equity and what that means especially for BIPOC artists. Invites folks to get involved – please reach out to Kathy Hsieh.

- Hearing concern around displacement around light rail expansion – seeing in the ARTS work plan “supporting BIPOC community led partners” might help address that. Also concerned about recovery (im)balance between downtown/Seattle center area and fringe areas. How can the ARTS office be an advocate within the City regarding this system issue.
- Hearing from community around access to space, where communities are being represented, and the granting process orgs need to go through during challenging times. Would be nice if ARTS office could revisit engagement / outreach practices to make sure communities not funded (not networked into) can get funded. It is challenging for orgs to even apply for things due to capacity shortage; during recovery programming is not at top of tier for orgs because they are trying to survive (many are cutting important programs).
 - o Calandra – we can talk about how to expand this in the CIC space.
- It’s already mid-May so we need to build a ramp up to 2022. How can SAC and ARTS partner on workplan sooner, rather than in May?
- Re: celebrating ARTS 50th anniversary – feels self-congratulatory when community is struggling. How can we frame the anniversary of 50th but also have humility and service to community. If not, we shouldn’t have an anniversary. Is celebrating what we are really doing here?
 - o Erika – we need to uplift artist orgs if we want to go another 50 years. Let’s figure out who are the people we haven’t heard from and the stories we haven’t told. It will be important what we highlight. Let’s tell the broader story of, “this is why we need to have the arts, and this why we need to fund orgs, so we can have a robust community.”
 - o Kathy – our office was created during a recession and has showed how arts is even more important in these trying times. Let’s tie in our story of how we began; how the arts kept our spirits lifted and how it will help with recovery and beyond through its role in civic engagement.
- Re: internal goals - how do we make sure skills of people are evolving, especially in terms of leadership, issues of inequities in orgs, and leadership gaps? What types of trainings need to happen in a safe way?
- Re: external goals - “shift opportunities to be relief-responsive to Covid-related sector under- and unemployment.” Resonated the most. This ties back to the need for training - tech support, skill development, and fighting displacement of people out of field.
- Arts advocacy is not just about politics, it’s about perception (beyond Mayoral Forum) – glad that artists pay scale is being worked on (re: Kathy) so everyone knows what that means - understanding that arts is valuable and that it has a role. What is the semiotic role with ARTS office in that?
 - o Calandra – this is the partnership piece; work that the ARTS office cannot do as government, but SAC can, and SAC can feed that into the larger community.

Chairs Report

Briefing: Quinton Morris, Sarah Wilke

- Budget Priorities Letter
 - o Appreciation for feedback and edits on the budget priorities letter.
 - o Co-Chairs will be meeting with the Mayor at the end of May, where we will hear the Mayor’s response to the budget priorities letter.

- Also connecting with Councilmembers Herbold, Morales, and Mosqueda.
- Request to SAC – encourages attending the next Council Finance and Housing Committee meeting to ask for support and reiterate importance of arts and culture. Quinton will make a video to ask for community to support our recommendations to the Mayor and come out to the Council meeting for public comment. Meeting information, links, and talking points to come in follow up email.
 - Alex will invite the Music Commission and Film Task Force and let them know about this action.
 - Community is also encouraged to comment on the ARTS blog where the letter is posted.
 - Would like to keep messaging positive and constructive.
 - Elected officials are dealing with many issues across the city, so we need to engage this advocacy as education. They may not have depth of knowledge of the arts sector as we do, so sharing personal experiences will help them understand.
- Mayoral engagements – collaborating with Town Hall, NASH, and Arts Fund to host on back end; coordinating a survey for 15 candidates to fill out this summer (James Miles is leading the survey draft); planning to have a forum for top candidates later in fall; will bring survey content back to full commission before it gets finalized.

Directors Report

Briefing: Calandra Childers

- Director search advisory group had its first meeting and talked about process. Co-Chairs will talk to Mayor about timeline.
- We want to get meetings set up with Councilmembers and SAC based on districts and connection points. We will check in with you to see if you have capacity to meet this summer. There will be talking points, and Calandra will join. We want to advocate now for next year's second half of federal funding.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30pm.