

SEATTLE ARTS COMMISSION

Minutes

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, August 11th, 2020

Remote – Zoom Conference

Commissioners present: Priya Frank (Co-Chair), Quinton Morris (Co-Chair), Cassie Chinn, Sarah Wilke, Sheila Ghaibi, Chieko Phillips, Kayla DeMonte, Mikhael Mei Williams, Holly Jacobson, Tracy Rector, Yeggy Michael, Dawn Chirwa, Jescelle Major

Staff in attendance: Calandra Childers, Randy Engstrom, Allie Lee, Alex Rose, Kathy Hsieh, Erika Lindsay, Meghan Sebold (OED)

Guests: David Toledo, Takiyah Ward (Artist Talk)

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

Approval of Minutes:

Tracy moved to approve the commission minutes from July 2020. Mikhael seconded. Approved.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Congratulations to Priya and her new position at SAM as Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion!

Directors Report

- Staff and leadership are working in partnership with ARTS' Black Love Union (BLU) and responding to their demands. Leadership have regular meetings scheduled with BLU and will be looking at where resources are going globally.
 - Mayor's Arts Awards pivot is in the works.
- Seattle Together (interdepartmental group) has been doing work around fostering belonging
- Several community members, City staff, and FED members are convening every Monday to build governance structure for the Cultural Space Agency. Looking to legislate in September.
- Hope Corps (WPA-style program) is developing – this program will connect artists/creatives with urgent needs that have emerged in our community. Part of Inclusive Creative Economy work that involves the Arts Commission, Music Commission, and Film Task Force.
- Youth program / arts education pivot – will hire teaching artists to teach our most vulnerable students.
- ARTS has started strategy work groups including one that focuses on supporting the professional development of artists.
- City's current focus areas are community wealth building, climate justice and food sovereignty, digital equity and access, reimagined social safety net, city workforce, inclusive economic

recovery, and community health and public safety. Cabinet/staff teams are built around this work and work has started.

- City notified staff that we will be working remotely until January. However, this could go longer, and we need to prepare for the long term.

SAC Questions / Comments:

- Jescelle – Re: teaching artists serving vulnerable students - what about students with disabilities not getting the same care?
 - Randy - SPS has been a moving target and it's been hard to know where the need is greatest, but we can work with districts on where most the vulnerable are and needs are. Dealing with more modest resources. We can take back with Youth Arts Team with Ashraf/Alex.
 - Calandra - Part of Hope Corps work will be around art therapy, which could potentially support. Still awaiting funding and need more fleshing out but will incorporate youth needs.
- Cassie – Good to hear on BLU progress. Do you foresee near term budget implications that require further help from SAC, also in the coming year?
 - Randy - A lot of what the BLU letter calls for is investment strategy - transformation of resources will be a collaborative process with SAC. Will also need support from SAC on messaging to community on how we align our values with funding / community needs.
 - Cassie – What is the timeline?
 - Randy - There are internal ARTS strategy work groups scheduled through end of year.
 - Cassie – This could feed into SAC workplan too.
- Priya – Re: artist professional development – how will this continue to roll out and how is information continuing to be gathered around what the needs are?
 - Randy – Pre-Covid we were looking at efficiencies around mixers, Artist Up, and public art boot camp. Post-Covid, we are currently sharing latest information we are hearing around needs and discussing strategy in an internal strategy work group around this topic. May be able extend invites to SAC.
 - Calandra – There is a statewide survey around needs in response to Covid, which speaks to needs right now with reduced employment / unemployment. Need to dive into those results.
 - Chieko – Re: statewide data, missing was number of impacted arts administrators / cultural workers. How do we support workers who have been displaced from the field?
 - Calandra – Maybe we should have a joint presentation on statewide data?
 - Chieko - [Hello4Culture webinar](https://www.4culture.org/hello-4culture/): ARTS' Impact and Assessment Manager Mytoan Nguyen-Akbar will be presenting data results from the statewide cultural and creative recovery survey on **Friday, August 21 at noon**. Allie to send out link again to the group after meeting. (<https://www.4culture.org/hello-4culture/>)

Chairs Report

- Waiting for Mayor's Office response to the Mayor's Arts Awards pivot statement / letter.
- Budget letter incorporated SAC feedback and has been submitted to Council and Mayor.
- Mayor's Arts Award pivot subcommittee has been created. Vivian Phillips will be lead-producing a Black-led storytelling video series. Priya, Quinton, and Vivian will write a proposal, then submit to subcommittee for approval, then start video production. Will have a rough cut for subcommittee to provide feedback and approve.
 - Co-chairs proposed having two separate subcommittees; 1) Black-led storytelling video series subcommittee 2) BIPOC subcommittee with BLU members re: BLU letter demand
 - Will report back to SAC on progress

SAC Questions / Comments:

- Yeggy – Who will be coordinating the videos and who is on the video series committee?
 - Quinton and Priya will be representing SAC and we've invited community artists, cultural org partners, music commissioners, and members from the film task force.
- Cassie – What is the timeline for the video series?
 - Quinton - Goal is to have a vision and purpose in the next few meetings. We've asked the subcommittee some hard questions around who we are we serving / values for the Black arts community. Hopefully, we will have answers by the end of August. Planning to work on a proposal and have something back to SAC by October.

Arts Advocacy / Sector-Wide Visibility Discussion

- Holly and Calandra previously connected on where arts advocacy lives in our region and how SAC is working within that world. Initially the topic came up when All in WA fundraising started, convos focused on basic needs in the pacific area, and Holly noticed there was an evident absence of arts and culture at the table. Wanted to bring the topic to SAC and discuss what advocating for arts and culture in this moment of emergency should look like and what investing in our cultural community should look like as we face the losses we are experiencing. Holly expressed interest in advocacy work for SAC. Advocacy is especially important in this moment as we communicate with officials at State and Federal and make the case for arts and culture when there are so many needs.
 - In the past, SAC had a working group around advocacy and messaging.
- Holly – Getting tagged in funding opportunities, the topic keeps on coming up, and feels the need for a more coordinated effort. Arts gets more into programming side of things and nonprofits are doing similar work; how do we coordinate all these efforts and how can SAC be involved?
 - Calandra – where are other folks having this conversation around arts advocacy, is it working well in other spaces, and is there a role SAC can play?
- Sarah – Would like to flag that some of the spaces where there is advocacy are problematic because they are not fully representative of the sector – during early Covid response strategies/decisions mainly came from larger white-led orgs.

- Holly – Agrees and feels that SAC represents different subset of orgs that are more community based. With SAC’s focus and commitment to BIPOC communities, is there a way to unite all arts orgs, so it’s not just the larger resourced orgs being heard?
- Chieko – Please clarify if we are talking about the arts sector advocating for the arts sector, or the arts sector advocating for other social justice movements?
 - Holly – Yes to arts sector advocating for arts sector, but also feels that arts is a way to get to an equitable and just society - artists are first responders in that way, they can change perceptions, and come up with cross-sector solutions.
 - Chieko – Yes to supporting arts as change agent, but problem is that so many activities are not centralized – arts are in so many convos where social movements are happening, but it’d be hard to come up with a collective advocacy voice (through the commission). 4Culture has started an action team that is oriented towards looking at investment strategy not just for the benefit of the arts community, which is where we have historically lived. How do we advocate for our sector to be active citizens?
 - Holly – Clarification of topic: What is the role of SAC in this bigger question of what role can the arts play, especially when we talk about recovery, why we are relevant now, and why we need investment now?
- Randy - This is the fundamental question for the sector right now. There are two camps of cultural workers – folks who want to rebuild to where we were in January and folks who want to fundamentally reimagine the system. SAC and ARTS fall closer to the second camp.
 - ARTS could endorse cultural new deal, SAC could advise on cultural policy
 - Issue of who is represented and who is not is important – core to what ARTS and SAC have been talking about
- Calandra – Based on the depth of the need in response to crisis, all agencies including City need bigger investments and advocacy at larger scale, which we haven’t seen happen regionally in the last few years.
- Holly – Talks are not happening at community level; they are happening at the large institutional level - the old way. Interested in giving more voice to community and reimagine.
 - Quinton – Re: the old way - what would be ideally the new way to target our efforts?
 - Holly – It would be about having a conversation about unified messaging - a coordinated response about the role that art can play and building community work into recovery conversations. Would involve the creative economy discussion, making sure we are centering voices that have not been historically represented, and getting more resources into the arts.
 - Dawn – Acknowledges the approach and spirit of this arts advocacy ask, but struggling to understand what is the ask in this effort that is different from what we are doing or what has been done. Would be helpful to have more of a container around the specificity of the ask.
 - Holly – Lots of side conversation happening on funding and last-minute efforts to get arts included in recovery questions. But actually, arts folks are front leaders in community organizing efforts. We need a more unified messaging strategy around what role the arts are playing in recovery efforts. Feels like there isn’t a coordinated message outside of SAC.

- Quinton – There is an accountability component to also be addressed in this conversation around recovery.
 - Tracy (via chatbox): *I have been seeing people raise concerns around performative equity and antiracist efforts in addition to the accountability of institutions. I'm not sure if I have words for this but do recognize through my own work which is white led that if the work is not approached daily or even weekly the old ways emerge. How can we bat signal that it's time for a new paradigm and that artists especially BIPOC voices know that there is a unified voice for change. And yes, money too.*
 - Kathy (via chatbox): *And I will say more specifically, as BIPOC theatre artists/leaders, we're actually focusing on how to build what we want our future to be rather than focus on changing other arts & cultural organizations that aren't BIPOC-centered.*
 - Tracy – We are in an emotionally reactive time and there has been concerns raised from young people and artists on the performative efforts. How do we solidify a true commitment, which needs more practice on regular basis?
- Quinton suggests continuing this conversation at a next meeting by first focusing on transparency and accountability around recovery efforts, then working our way back to advocacy strategy.

Artist Talk – Takiyah Ward

Takiyah shared her artistic career trajectory, how she became involved in art activism, her experience working on the CHOP BLM street mural with Vivid Matter Collective, and the recent Waterfront project she was selected to lead. Highlights:

- Interested in applying arts to nontraditional canvases. Interested in art as an expression of what people are doing and how people see one another.
- Funds from the CHOP BLM mural prints are donated to community in need, and Vivid Matter Collective is continuing to raise awareness around the movement.
- Waterfront project – [Future Forward: Artist-In-Residency](#)
- Conversations that SAC had today are happening in community and nationally. Agrees community need to be involved in these conversations – arts advocacy should be collective effort.
- Follow Takiyah Ward & Vivid Matter Collective at:
 - IG @vividmattercollective / <https://vividmattercollective.wordpress.com/>
 - IG @tdubcustoms / <https://tdubcustoms.com/>