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2019

One VCU Art

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ONE VCU ART

TEAM MEMBERS

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Project Sponsor: Dominic Willsdon, Executive Director – Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA)

PROJECT ABSTRACT

The Association for Public Art notes that

Public art is not an art “form”. Its size can be huge or small. It can tower fifty feet high or call attention to the paving beneath your feet. Its shape can be abstract or realistic (or both), and it may be cast, carved, built, assembled, or painted. It can be site-specific or stand in contrast to its surroundings. What distinguishes public art is the unique association of how it is made, where it is, and what it means. Public art can express community values, enhance our environment, transform a landscape, heighten our awareness, or question our assumptions. Placed in public sites, this art is there for everyone, a form of collective community expression. Public art is a reflection of how we see the world – the artist’s response to our time and place combined with our own sense of who we are.”

Art and creativity are at the core of VCU’s identity and culture. ONE VCU Art envisions a vibrant and diverse public art landscape on the VCU campuses that equals VCU’s national reputation and enhances connections with our urban home of Richmond. VCU’s nationally ranked arts programs as well as its relationship with the city of Richmond allow for opportunity to revive efforts to enhance current and future public art on the two Richmond campuses. This is in conjunction with the goals and priorities set out by the VCU strategic plan, Quest 2025: Together We Transform.

The ONE VCU Art project team set out to survey the current landscape of public art on VCU’s Monroe Park and Medical College of Virginia (MCV) campuses with a goal to understand the history of public art on campus and to find innovative ways to increase access and visibility of public art. The team proposes a framework that could be adopted by VCU with a goal of developing inclusive, meaningful transdisciplinary collaborations that both inform and directly engage commissions of artwork. This VCU-distinctive process sets intentions that allow fluid, experimental work while honoring core VCU tenets: artists’ ties to VCU; substantive student engagement; cross-pollination with university initiatives; connection between Richmond campuses, and between VCU and our home city.

QUEST 2025: TOGETHER WE TRANSFORM

VCU adopted a new strategic plan in 2018 titled Quest 2025: Together We Transform, which is shaped by four key themes: Student success, National prominence, Collective urban and regional transformation, and Diversity driving excellence.

The Art on Campus proposal is supported by the following Quest 2025 themes:

Theme 2: National Prominence. Increase the university's recognition and investment in the creation and dissemination of research, scholarship and creative work, and national recognition of the same

VCU art programs consistently rank at the top nationally for private and public universities. Elevating the experience of faculty, staff, and visitors in VCU's physical space by increasing the prominence of dynamic public art will highlight the impact of art throughout VCU and the greater Richmond community. ONE VCU Art would increase investment in the creation and dissemination of creative work, and can help to elevate VCU and Richmond in the national art scene.

Theme 3: Collective Urban and Regional Transformation. Elevate VCU's contributions to the region's economic and cultural vitality and advance efforts to enhance the integration of the arts into community development and to expand arts funding

ONE VCU Art would directly serve to integrate the arts into the campus community in a way that is inclusive of all faculty, staff, patients and visitors. VCU is the only urban state university in Virginia, has art programs that rank in the upper echelon nationally, and has a vision of inclusive admission and education. VCU is a major force in driving the creative energy found in Richmond, and the launch of the ONE VCU Master Plan provides an additional opportunity to elevate the campus and Richmond experience through public art.

The city is host to a thriving arts scene, of which VCU plays a significant role. In the past decade, more than 100 murals have been painted around town through the Richmond Mural Project and RVA Street Art Festival, including on our campuses. The City's Arts District stretches down Broad Street between the two campuses, and the First Fridays Art Walk in the district features 38 galleries and locations that display artwork, often created by VCU faculty, students, or alumni. The City has also recently adopted its very first public art master plan, which notes that "VCU...has contributed greatly to Richmond's development as a creative city" and "Continually, VCU supports innovative endeavors on and off campus".

The vision of this proposal is to help VCU realize campuses that utilize art to enhance the campus aesthetic, express a creative spirit, create the foundation for a dialogue about art and creativity; inspire and enrich the lives of all those who populate and visit them, and integrate with City art initiatives. Doing so will highlight a nationally prominent strength of VCU and will contribute to the region's cultural vitality.

PROJECT GOALS

1. Explore existing public art works on the VCU Richmond campuses
2. Understand the history and previous efforts at VCU to develop public art including potential resources and barriers that will impact current efforts
3. Understand models of successful public arts programs at other universities
4. Generate a feasible proposal that enables a steady increase in public art accessible to VCU community members, campus visitors and Richmonders

PROJECT STRATEGIES

The team worked to identify existing art on both VCU campuses as well as individuals who have knowledge of previous efforts and initiatives to locate art on campus. Individuals with expertise in this subject matter were identified on both campuses and the team performed focused interviews regarding the history and current state of public art at VCU. The team learned of past efforts to increase public art at VCU and sought to understand how future efforts can build on and grow from the past. In order to "move the needle" on the discussion around public art, the team needed to understand previous successes and roadblocks. This process led to reframing the goal of a deliverable into proposing a mechanism to make future public art a reality on the VCU campuses.

ACTION STEPS

- Met with key stakeholders
 - Dominic Willsdon, Director of the Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA)
 - Shawn Brixey, former Dean of the School of the Arts
 - Philip Muzi Branch, Director of Cultural Programs
 - Mary Cox, University Architect
 - Stephanie Smith, Chief Curator, ICA
 - Yuki Hibben, Interim Head and Curator of Books and Art, Special Collections and Archives, VCU Libraries
- Began a catalog of current public art
 - Built a prototype interactive map of existing public art which allows geotagging
- Identified existing art programs on campus
 - Arts in Medicine Program
 - Anderson Gallery Holdings
 - Art on Campus policy and Committee
- Researched public art programs at other university campuses
- Created a proposal for “ONE VCU Art”

OUTCOMES

<i>Goal 1: Explore existing public art works on the VCU campuses and public art initiatives in the City of Richmond</i>

There is not a current catalog of public art across the VCU campuses, and very little publicly available information regarding existing art. The team’s initial focused interviews and survey of physical space revealed the following:

MCV Campus. There is currently no existing public art external to the buildings of the MCV Campus. There is art readily visible in public areas of clinical and administrative buildings composed of pieces that have been donated to the University.

Monroe Park Campus. There are public art pieces both outdoors and indoors on the Monroe Park Campus; however, there is very little information available regarding these pieces, their history or origins. The works located outdoors are often small and do not occupy prominent or visible locations. It appears that much of the public art on the Monroe Park campus was installed in a burst of interest in the late 2000's following an initial donation of public art by alumni of the Richmond Professional Institute, one of the forebears of VCU.

The Anderson Gallery Collection. The Anderson Gallery closed its doors in 2015 and its entire holdings were moved to the James Branch Cabell Library. The collection is available for study and research but it is a closed collection, and will not be expanded.

James Branch Cabell Library. There is artwork displayed within the Cabell library that is sourced from the Special Collection and Archives and the Anderson Gallery collection.

The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) at VCU. The ICA opened in 2018 on the southwestern corner of the intersection of Broad and Belvidere streets, in a prominent and unique building designed by Steven Holl Architects. The ICA is a non-collecting institution but plays a prominent role in elevating the visibility of the arts at VCU. Since opening the ICA has displayed artwork external to (but mounted on) the building.

The City of Richmond is host to a thriving arts scene, of which VCU plays a significant role. In the past decade more than 100 murals have been painted around town through the Richmond Mural Project and RVA Street Art Festival, including on VCU's campuses. The City's Arts District stretches down Broad Street between the two campuses, and the First Fridays Art Walk in the

district features 38 galleries and locations that display artwork, often created by VCU faculty, students or alumni. The City has also recently adopted its very first public art master plan.

Goal 2: Understand the history and previous efforts at VCU to develop public art including potential resources and barriers that will impact current efforts

Through strategic interviews, the team learned of a rich history and passion for public art at VCU. The VCU Health System collection and interiors displays on the MCV Campus are managed by the Arts in Healthcare Program, led by the Director of Cultural Programs who is responsible for cataloging donated works. The Arts in Healthcare Program was founded in 1986 by the Dean of the School of the Arts and has been a sustainable program since that time. The director works with faculty and staff to choose art appropriate for each public or clinical space as needed. This is an ongoing sustainable effort.

On the Monroe Park Campus, a focused effort to install public art on campus arose in the mid-2000s when a group of RPI alumni approached VCU with a proposal to donate a sculpture to be displayed outdoors. This donation spurred VCU to create an official policy and committee to review artwork to be placed on campus. Following the initial donation, there was a small burst of activity in the late 2000s whereby several more works of art were placed outdoors on campus. However, since that initial burst there has been no sustained effort to place exterior public art on campus.

To the team's knowledge there have been no coordinated efforts between the campuses to install public art, and no funding has arisen to initiate further projects. However, there have been a few individual efforts to locate public art in new buildings on both campuses, particularly in public interior spaces.

There is an existing Art on Campus policy, which provides a framework for the selection, acquisition, installation, management, and educational promotion of public artwork and commemorative elements at VCU. Along with the policy is a committee composed of:

- Chief of Staff, Office of the President
- Vice President for External Relations (Chair)
- Vice President for Advancement
- Dean of the School of the Arts
- Senior Associate Dean of the School of the Arts
- Associate Vice President for Facilities Management
- University Architect

The committee serves an important function in the selection, review and placement of artwork on campus. This is critical to the success of any public art effort on the Richmond campuses; however their mandate does not include "priming the pump" by creating and funding the commissions and proposals for review.

Finally, the ONE VCU Master Plan is a coordinated effort across the Richmond campuses, and integrated with the City of Richmond. While generating public art is not a specific mandate for the plan, the ONE VCU Art proposal supports with three of the six guiding principles:

- Program synergies, which seeks to advance a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration and discovery
- Placemaking, with a goal of celebrating and enhancing VCU's unique urban setting and rich history
- Unifying the Campus, which aims to strengthen the heart of each campus and the collective VCU identity through strategies that connect the campuses to each other and to the city of Richmond

Reassured by the initial research that there is a history of passion and vision around public art at VCU, and strong existing resources ready to partner with public art efforts, the team sought to propose a framework that would move efforts forward. The team envisions two campuses tied together by public art that is dynamic, interactive and a vital part of VCU's identity.

<i>Goal 3: Understand models of universities with successful public arts programs</i>

With a concept in mind to increase public art on VCU's campuses, the team researched other university public art programs to determine best practices. Results of a study in 2009 at the University of Minnesota indicated a wide range of definitions of what constituted public art, which in part, explained the large variance in numbers of items classified as public art (Grenier, 2009). Grenier (2009) went on to say that there are three major implications of public art on university campuses.

"First, public art programs that are considered as part of its institutional master plan intensely infuse public art on campus as part of the university life. Secondly, public art programming that is part of their institutional master plan operate as a strategic initiative that provided a democratic shield for university administrators and decision makers. Thirdly, public art on campus programs that reported being part of an institutional master plan promoted the continuous alignment of aims, goals, and objectives through the processes of strategic planning and program evaluation."

The Art on Campus team researched other institutions that had a focus on public art and found that each university defined public art differently. They also varied in focus and/or purpose. Each institution had a different unit on or off campus that would oversee the selection of art to be placed in suitable locations throughout the campus. Colorado State University, Carnegie Mellon University, and Brown University each have a Committee on Public Art that works in cooperation with their Campus Planning Committee and a University Curator. The Campus Planning Committee identifies appropriate works of art and suggests locations. The Committee on Public Art recommends the commissioning of works of art. Committee membership includes faculty, local industry and members of the community. Students may be invited to act as advisors.

Carnegie Mellon believes "public art enhances the quality of life for all people and should be part of the daily life of the students, faculty, and staff" at the institution. Public art is described at Carnegie Mellon as permanent or long-term art in public spaces on campus. The Public Art Committee at Carnegie Mellon believes that acquired public art should expand the educational mission of the university and the College of Fine Arts. The committee reviews specific proposals for public art and makes recommendations to the president for approval or rejection. The committee was also established to clarify the need for public art on campus and target specific locations both indoor and outdoor. The selection process addresses: artistic quality, appropriateness, site context, public sensibility, durability, maintainability, safety, and cost.

Goal 4: Generate a feasible proposal that enables a steady increase in public art accessible to VCU community members, campus visitors and Richmonders

The team's research efforts identified key VCU strengths, core concepts that are important to a VCU-specific process, and one major area needed to "move the needle" towards growth of public art at VCU: a mechanism to generate new commissions of artwork. Core concepts identified include:

Outdoors as "public". Outdoor artwork is the most accessible to the community as it does not limit the audience to those who enter into a particular building or office. There are exceptions to this, such as the entry lobby of a building that welcomes a large contingency of the community or can be readily seen from the sidewalk. The MCV campus has sustainable "inside" art programs in health system buildings, however, the opportunity common to both campuses is outdoor space.

Additionally, outdoor spaces are more accessible to the residents of Richmond, visitors and patients. Outdoor spaces and sightlines connect with and invite in the city.

Temporary, rotating installations. Temporary for art can mean two hours or two years. The perceived advantages to this approach include installations that can evolve with the campus; the process can intentionally generate new transdisciplinary collaborations and intersect with new university wide or citywide events, initiatives, and concerns. A pragmatic advantage is that non-permanent outdoor artwork removes some of the cost of displaying artwork, such as long-term maintenance and storage costs when the piece is not on display.

Artists with connection to VCU. VCU connections may include alumni/faculty/staff/students, artists from our home city of Richmond, and visiting faculty. These connections to VCU support the National Prominence theme of Quest 2025 that seeks to increase the university's recognition in the creation and dissemination of research, scholarship and creative work.

Transdisciplinary work. Themes for the commissioning of artwork will focus on VCU's transdisciplinary approach, will ensure that the selected artwork has wide impact, and will encourage organic collaborations that connect VCU's diverse units, campuses, and communities.

Student involvement. There will be opportunities for student involvement at all levels of the process, ranging from internships to research to academic use of the public art.

<i>Reframing the proposal: How can efforts around public art on VCU's campuses be revitalized?</i>
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The project team's research identified an area to focus on in order to make the vision a reality: the commissioning or "front end" process. The "back end" of the process, the review and approval of the location of art on campus, already exists in the form of the Art on Campus committee. This presented an opportunity. Time and project ownership for generating themes, identifying artists, and commissioning proposals were frequently cited as critical resources for any public art process, and there would need to be an individual to perform this function.

At the heart of the ONE VCU Art proposal is a "Curator of Campus Art" (see appendix). With the transdisciplinary nature of the proposal, this position should not be located within any single school or college, but could be housed in the libraries system, an affiliated unit such as the Institute for Contemporary Arts, or other area that naturally links schools and campuses.

The Curator is responsible for conducting the commissioning process with the core principles guidelines. It would be the initial responsibility of the Curator to form a small team to assist with the selection of a theme for the rotating art as well as the duration for which the art will be displayed. Highlighting VCU's transdisciplinary approach to initiatives, the team members would be composed of student representatives, and a representative from each of the Monroe Park and MCV campuses, selected from applications and nominations from the university and health system, with no preference given to any particular school or unit. This core group then works to create broader connections with other stakeholders including students and Richmond city communities to identify that cycle's theme and encourage artist applications. Student involvement could include interns working with specific artists, students working on identifying potential themes and collaborators, registering and installing work.

The Curator of Campus Art, along with the team, will present the artwork proposals to the existing Art on Campus committee to receive approval of its appropriateness and physical placement on campus.

The Curator of Campus Art will be responsible for creating a digital record of the artwork that is placed on campus, both through the ONE VCU Art initiative and artwork already existing on

campus that has not yet been accessioned. This database will make the artwork accessible to a wider audience than those who visit campus, and also serves as an educational tool.

Additionally, the Curator of Campus Art will be responsible for developing *Guidelines for Artists*, guided by the concepts of public art being accessible, inclusive, and connective of the campuses to each other and to their home city of Richmond.

FUNDING, RESOURCES, AND SUSTAINABILITY

ONE VCU Art will make use of many existing VCU resources including the existing Art on Campus Committee. The only fixed cost will be funding for the Curator of Campus Art position. The vision is for a full time permanent position, which could be housed in the libraries system, an affiliated unit such as the Institute for Contemporary Arts, or other area that naturally crosses schools and campuses. There are existing potential staff and faculty models for this position. The project team advocates for a full-time position, as time and process ownership are the major gains of creating the Curator position. For fastest implementation, testing sustainability, and balancing the full-time proposal against funding constraints, a non-permanent sabbatical position could be utilized to encourage established curators to take on initial cycles of installations.

Core curatorial committee positions could be funded via service time for faculty or staff appointed to the committee for the length of the cycle, for example one three-year term, similar to coverage for other important University committees. Enabling real time for the committee's campus representatives is crucial for connecting the Curator and artists to the VCU community and collaborators.

Artist's time and effort could be funded through visiting scholar positions, grants and development. Individual commissions are likely to vary widely in price, based on artists (ex: recent alum who may accept a small honorarium) and artworks (ex: large, intricate, difficult to install light display with high costs). To establish a dedicated funding stream to support the Art on Campus initiative, the Curator of Campus Art will work with staff from Development and Alumni Relations to solicit funds, with an eye towards expanding the program. The commissioning, installation and upkeep of the installations may be funded through a variety of sources including University funds, public grants, and private contributions in the form of cash gifts, endowments, bequests, and direct gifts of art from individuals, corporations, and foundations. A development plan for the ONE VCU Art program will blend these sources of funds for the purpose of leveraging maximum external funding and matching contributions for the program. Funding streams may vary with the proposed length of installation, and the particular theme. Prospective sources for gifts and grants shall be cleared for solicitation and closely coordinated through Development and Alumni Relations.

In addition to funding, sustainable implementation will need to take into account legal aspects of temporary art installations, and whether there are still other key resources integral to long term success of the proposed process. For example, a registrar may be a necessary partner to do the cataloguing, mapping, and historical record of installations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The project team recommends that VCU adopt the ONE VCU Art proposal. With the addition of a Curator of Campus Art, the support of the existing Art on Campus committee and the Office of Development and Alumni Relations, this project could roll out on a small scale or on a global, VCU-wide scale. As this initiative matures, the team recommends building a publicly accessible map of public art across both campuses that will allow access to individuals across the globe, thus increasing the national prominence and visibility of VCU.

FINAL PITCH

Art has an important role to play in society as one of the last frontiers of free expression. Artists, rather than politicians or corporations, are leading some of the key conversations about the state of our world.

Art can inspire us, make us think, show us new perspectives, spark a dialogue, move us, and transport us from our daily mindset. Public art reclaims public spaces as places for people to gather, share, and commune with one another, bridging cultural and socio-economic differences. Public art promotes engagement, wellness, and reflection.

ONE VCU Art will transform our campus and the city by providing a framework for the University to increase the number and visibility of public art works.

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APPENDIX. JOB DESCRIPTION FOR CURATOR OF CAMPUS ART

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) seeks a creative, collaborative, dynamic and audience-minded Curator of Campus Art, who will thrive in a transdisciplinary higher-education environment. The Curator of Campus Art will work with a small transdisciplinary team from both the academic and health sciences campuses to envision a curatorial program that seeks to highlight the public arts on VCU's campuses, to highlight the creative culture at VCU, and to elevate the arts in the curriculum and the city of Richmond.

The Curator will primarily be tasked with organizing non-collection displays of accessible and highly visible outdoor public art focused on themes articulated by the transdisciplinary team. There may also be opportunities to organize collection-based exhibitions in select locations on campus. The Curator will also conduct original research on the collections, ensure that all permanent artwork on campus is properly catalogued, develop relationships with donors and collectors, and seek to expand the scope of the Art on Campus program as time progresses. The Curator will also work to foster faculty and student use of the collection and non-collection displays in curricula, extracurricular research, publishing, and inventive interpretive techniques.

Key Job responsibilities

60% – Exhibitions

- Provide curatorial leadership and work collaboratively with the transdisciplinary team to develop broad themes with which to solicit artwork to be placed in prominent, accessible and visible locations on campus.
- Work with the existing Art on Campus committee to review and receive approval of artwork to be placed on campus.
- Develop a curatorial budget and multi-year exhibition schedule.
- Collaborate with Development and Alumni Relations to secure foundation, corporate, and private funding for ambitious exhibitions.

20% – Collection stewardship

- Conduct original research and produce scholarship related to VCU's collections and related exhibitions.
- Encourage and facilitate the use of VCU's resources and collaborative programming with VCU's faculty and students, as well as community partners. Assist faculty, students, scholars, docents, and members of the community in research of VCU's collections and exhibitions.

20% – Outreach and education

- Collaborate with VCU staff in the creation and management of interpretive strategies, publicity materials, and public programs for a variety of audiences.
- Maintain active relationships with artists, community members, lenders, donors, and professional colleagues.
- Represent VCU at regional arts initiatives and events.
- Lecture on and lead tours of VCU's exhibitions and collections.



The Team


 Jeff Eastman University Planner Facilities Management	 India Sisler, M.D. Associate Professor Pediatric Hematology/Oncology
 Soundarya Gowda, Ph.D. Associate Professor, Neurology School of Medicine	 Claudia Testa, M.D., Ph.D. Professor, Neurology School of Medicine
 Elaine Reeder, Ph.D. Instructional Design Team Lead ALT LabOnline@VCU	 Matt Wallin Professor Department of Communication Arts

Team Sponsor: **Dominic Willsdon**, Director ICA



Why?

Art has the ability to transcend time,
culture, race, age...



"...advance efforts to enhance the integration of the arts into community development and to expand arts funding..."

VCU Quest 2025
Theme III: Collective Urban and Regional Transformation

ONE VCU Master Plan



Student Success



Program Synergies



Mobility and Safety



Patient Experience



Placemaking



Unify the campus



ONE VCU Master Plan



Art at VCU

Number one public art school in the country, number two overall

VCU Vision Statement

VCU will be a premier, **urban** public research university

RVA + VCU = A Great Place for Public Art

Thriving Arts Scene

Over 100 murals through the Richmond Mural Project and RVA Street Art Festival

Galleries

38 art galleries/locations in the Arts District participate in First Fridays art walk

Master Plan

Richmond Public Arts Commission recently adopted a Public Art Master Plan



What is Public Art?

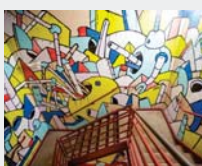
What can Public Art accomplish?

Project Strategy Research

Research Public Art at VCU



Research Public Art at VCU



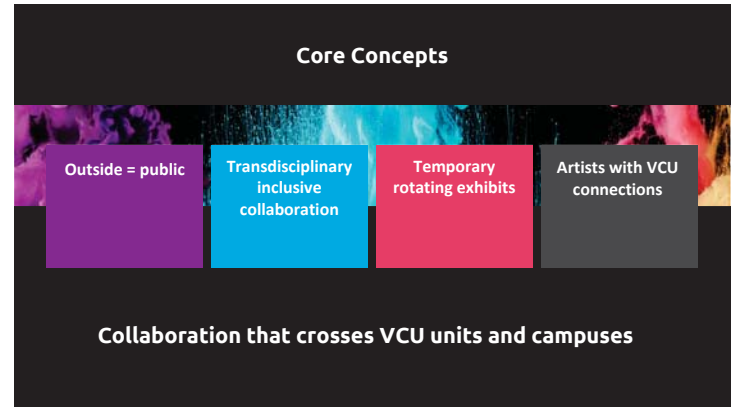
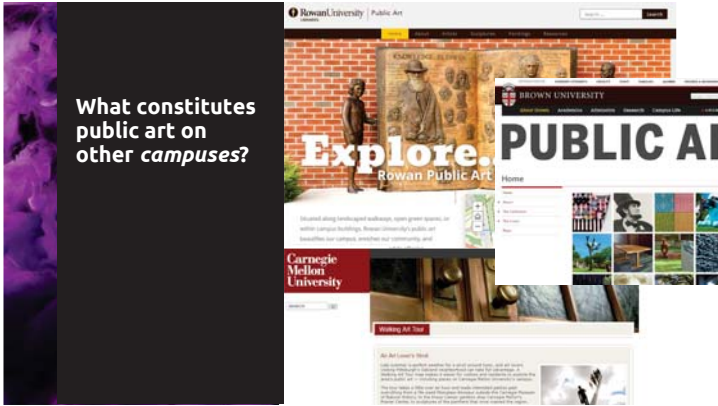
Research Public Art at VCU



Further Investigation

VCU has "Art on Campus" policy and committee

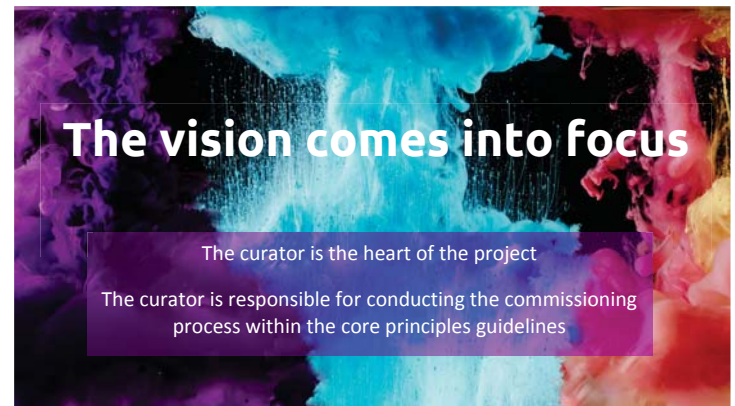
- Chief of Staff, Office of the President
- Vice President for External Relations (Chair)
- Vice President for Advancement
- Dean of the School of the Arts
- Senior Associate Dean of the School of the Arts
- Associate Vice President for Facilities Management
- University Architect



Reframing the Proposal: Project Strategy

- How can we revitalize efforts around public art on our campuses?
- Where can we contribute to *Make it Real*: A way to commission art?
- Who does that?

A curator!



**Make the
vision a reality**



The Project Takes Shape



Curator team:
Appointed
representative from
each VCU campus



Existing committee
approves and finalizes
the public art plans
and installations

One VCU Art

01 | dynamic rotating temporary public art installations

02 | at the heart is a VCU public art curator

03 | meaningful transdisciplinary collaboration

04 | fluid, experimental work while honoring core VCU tenets



Make it Real

A curator for public art is at the heart of the proposal

Home alternatives

- Libraries
- Institute for Contemporary Art

Type of position

- Appointment alternatives: faculty or staff
- Plan B: Rotating, sabbatical type position; part time position

Implementation Challenges



Funding



Legal
Requirements



Registrar



Unknowns

VCU Art on campus 2050



Special Thanks

- Mary Cox
- Shawn Brixey
- Dominic Willsdon
- Sam Messner
- Muzi Branch
- Yuki Hibben
- GEHLI staff and leadership
- Patients, families, friends and colleagues

and Our GEHLI cohort

Credits

Slide 4: image by Pixabay

Slide 9: ONE VCU Master Plan image

Slide 10: ONE VCU Master Plan

Slide 12: ONE VCU Master Plan

Slide 29: by VCU ICA

Slide 38: Bear: Argent Studio, Bird: CandianArt.ca, Slow Lens: Vincent Leroy, Projections: Karen Birdsong, Shelter:

Sojhi Timoh, Jeff Koons: Puppy.

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