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Item No. 3

**Halifax Regional Council
March 2, 2010**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Austin French, Acting Director of Community Development

DATE: February 1, 2010

SUBJECT: Emerging Artist Studios Pilot Project

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

The Emerging Artist Studios Project was a pilot program developed by HRM Cultural Affairs in partnership with the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) and the Halifax Port Authority (HPA). The program provided local emerging artists with short-term studio space to develop their skills and grow their professional practice.

BACKGROUND

A recent survey of HRM's arts and cultural community found that location, cost and availability are the most important factors in choosing spaces, while affordability was the biggest hurdle¹. This struggle is pronounced on Peninsular Halifax where the majority of the surveyed artists live, work, create and present, and where space costs are the highest. The inability to access space has been cited as a common reason for artists moving away.

HRM Cultural Affairs recognized that under-utilized spaces, in transition or standing vacant, represent an opportunity to provide artists with short-term studios. The HPA was approached as a significant landholder with properties in transition and an established artistic community.

The pilot project targeted "emerging artists," recent graduates from NSCAD, as key players in the future creative and economic growth of our city. When transitioning from graduate to professional, emerging artists often have to balance school debt with the costs of establishing a practice. Financial incentives or support from other regions may entice them to move away, even if they wish to remain. By providing studio spaces, HRM can retain and develop local artists, while recognizing their contribution to our creative economy. HRM's *Economic Development Strategy, 2005* recognizes that HRM is in competition to attract and retain emerging artists. The Strategy cites the creation of "places of opportunity" as key to the retention of creative talents.

HRM's *Cultural Plan, 2006* also recognizes the importance of creative spaces to the growth of emerging artists and the strength of our cultural sector, as follows:

GOAL # 16: ARTS DEVELOPMENT

To enable professional and emerging artists in all media to successfully live, exhibit and perform in HRM;

► Policy 4.7

HRM will work with partners to help emerging artists incubate and develop their artistic and creative talent;

► Actions

Explore partnership opportunities for working with Nova Scotia College of Art & Design and other design institutions.

This pilot project involved a collaboration of the following:

- HPA to provide the studio space to HRM, at a reduced cost;
- NSCAD to select and mentor artists, provide oversight, insure conditions of use were met, and prepare site inspection reports. These services were provided in-kind by NSCAD staff and faculty; and
- HRM (Cultural Affairs) to cover operating costs, and liaise with HPA, NSCAD, and artists.

¹ *Cultural Spaces and Places Survey*, Community Development, Halifax Regional Council, October 20, 2009.

The objectives of this program were to:

in the short term:

- ▶ Provide artists with studio space for creating and producing artworks, at no cost, to a maximum of six months; and
- ▶ Provide artists with an opportunity to research, experiment, develop and produce a body of work and enhance their professional art practice.

in the long term:

- ▶ Retain HRM's young professionals and creative talent within Halifax Regional Municipality;
- ▶ Create new and unique cultural spaces and hubs of creativity that can foster innovation and vibrancy within HRM;
- ▶ Help better position HRM as a creative city on a provincial, national and international level; and
- ▶ Create a lively, supportive and dynamic cultural and economic environment.

DISCUSSION

"The most crucial time in an artist's career is its beginning- when issues of time, space and money can rule out integrity long before a promising artist can realize their potential."

Aaron MacLean, SeaPort Studios Emerging Artist, 2009.

Access to studio space is crucial to professional practice but can be beyond the financial means of an emerging artist. Providing studio space is an innovative way for HRM to foster these artists and develop their connection to the city. The presence of artists also creates vibrancy and represents an excellent alternative use of vacant commercial space.

The 3 artists enjoyed the studios from July 1, 2009 to December 31, 2009. The artists were established in two 500 sq. ft. studios on the ground floor of the Immigration Annex on Marginal Road of the Halifax SeaPort. This building was an ideal location as there are already a number of established studios and NSCAD's Port Campus is across the street. One studio was shared by two textile artists and the other studio was occupied by a visual artist. Please refer to Attachment A for pictures and descriptions of the studio work.

Reflections

The artists' reflections illustrate how beneficial this program was as they transition to professional practice (Attachment A). Access to the studios enabled all of the artists to prepare and exhibit their work in major shows, to critical acclaim. Their successes clearly met the short term project goals to provide space for creation of a body of work and entrance into the professional arts world.

"It was the perfect situation for translating an art education into the reality of making a career in art."

Arianne Pollet-Brannen, SeaPort Studios Emerging Artist, 2009

The artists' reflections also demonstrate gains toward the long term goals:

- ▶ retain creative talent
"...motivates to create more ambitious amounts of work in Halifax itself, as opposed to "running away" to a larger setting."
Akshay Tyagi, SeaPort Studios Emerging Artist, 2009
- ▶ create unique spaces & hubs of creativity
"...consistent motivation with wonderful environment and fellow artists in the annex..."
Akshay Tyagi, SeaPort Studios Emerging Artist, 2009
- ▶ position HRM as a creative city
"Given our city's student population, working out the kink between education and application (working world) would likely boost productivity in a big way... SeaPort residency... unquestionably a step in the right direction for Halifax..."
Aaron MacLean, SeaPort Studios Emerging Artist, 2009
- ▶ lively cultural and economic development
"...success by emerging artists is perhaps the most fundamental in stimulating sustainable growth in creative sectors..."
Aaron MacLean, SeaPort Studios Emerging Artist, 2009.

Future Development

The pilot project's significant impact on the artists' professional development and its importance to HRM's support of the creative sector warrant its continuance. Upon review of this pilot and with the insight of the resident artists, an ongoing studio residency program will be established with the following changes:

1. Formalize the program with an annual budget allocation of \$20,000;
2. Maximize the budget by running the program in HRM facilities such as Bloomfield Centre, Khyber Building, and other cost effective locations;
3. Increase the number of studios available to support more emerging artists;
4. Celebrate the program by having the artists host public outreach during and after the program through events such as workshops, open studio days, exhibitions, etc; and
5. Explore partnerships with landlords and institutions with vacant spaces as an opportunity to revitalize these spaces and breath life into their communities.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications with this report.

Operating cost center C770 would be the funding source for the ongoing studio project, pending annual budget approval.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN


This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Emerging Artists' Reflections on Studio Experience

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by : Leticia Smillie, HRM Cultural Planner, 490-4083

Report Approved by: 
Andrew Whittemore, Manager of Community Relations and Cultural Affairs, 490-1585

Attachment A



REFLECTIONS

SeaPort Emerging Artist Studios

Artist's Reflections on Studio Experience & Impact on Professional Practice

November, 2009

HRM Community Development

REFLECTIONS

SeaPort Emerging Artist Studios

Artist's Reflections on Studio Experience & Impact on Professional Practice

This reflection will be used to gauge the success of this pilot project in improving the professional practice of emerging artists through access to the SeaPort Studios. HRM will be sharing this document with Regional Council and other agencies. Please indicate below that you consent to this sharing.

ARTIST INFORMATION

Name: Akshay Tyagi

Studio #: 147

Date of Residency: July 2009-Dec 2009

Media: Textiles/Fashion



Consent to Sharing: Yes

ACTIVITY REPORT

As part of this residency, my aim was to create new bodies of work to further my practice post-graduation. I was selected to be in a local fashion competition, Off The Cuff, at the beginning of this studio residency and utilized the studio for the purposes required for completion of the weekly competition works. I had mainly wanted the studio for the purposes of creating my new body of work - a full collection of 16 outfits for a collaborative work with Camerata Xara, a vocal performance group. The show, THAW, was inaugurated on October 24, 2009 and was a roaring success. The space allowed me to continue my art practice even when I was moving to a new home early September. The studio has also been great with its extended term as the 6 month time frame allows for definite growth and stability that is required of any major projects. I thoroughly enjoyed the sharing of the space with fellow artist Arianne Pollet-Brannen. I was fortunate to have a close friend develop in this time and to have another down the hall, Aaron MacLean. I am always happy to share the experience and the great boon that this venture has been and am excited for the next selection of Alumni to cherish this wonderful collaboration with HRM/HPA/NSCAD.

IMPACT ON PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Please describe how having access to the SeaPort Studios impacted:

-  Space to produce larger bodies of work -
-  Consistent motivation with wonderful environment and fellow artists in the annex.

- ✚ Short term - to continue with practice at home level; Long term - to utilize space for a professional environment for career -
- ✚ Increased interest by fellow emerging artists towards this venture.

Do you think that this program should be continued? Please explain your answer.

YES. This program has proved to be successful with the lack of stress surrounding a space and an environment that nurtures growth like this upon graduation. I had the luxury of this studio space within the 2 year period since graduating, and it is a rarity in this city. This venture validates one's practice and motivates to create more ambitious amounts of work in Halifax itself, as opposed to "running away" to a larger setting.

Please provide any recommendations/suggestions you may have for improvement of the program.

The eventual 6 month term is a great time frame - but an ideal 1 year program really helps with the immediate nurture of artists' growth in Halifax.

EXAMPLES OF ARTWORK

Please attach digital images of your artwork and Studio workstation (Please note that HRM may reproduce these images to promote the program or share with other stakeholders).

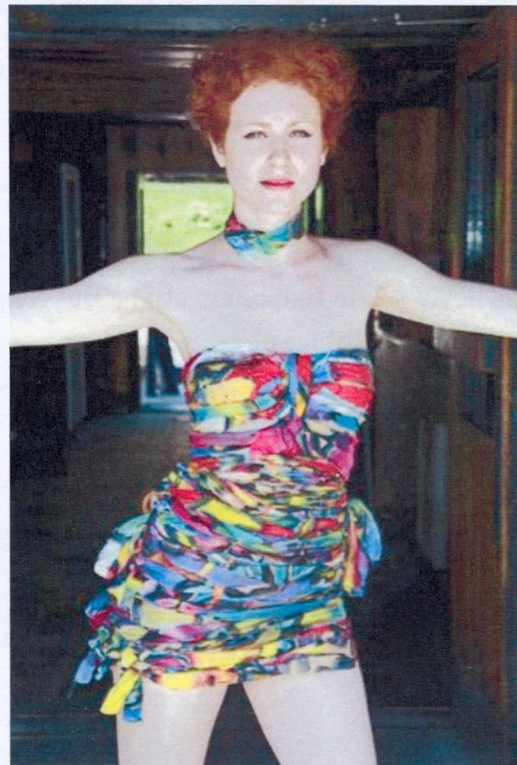




Photo 1: Off The Cuff Fashion Competition Finale - SEPTEMBER 2009

Photo by Shaun Simpson

Photo 2: Off The Cuff Fashion Competition Week 2 - JULY 2009

Photo by Shaun Simpson

Photo 3: THAW - Solo Exhibition at The Bus Stop Theatre - OCTOBER 2009

Photo by Shaun Simpson

REFLECTIONS

SeaPort Emerging Artist Studios

Artist's Reflections on Studio Experience & Impact on Professional Practice

This reflection will be used to gauge the success of this pilot project in improving the professional practice of emerging artists through access to the SeaPort Studios. HRM will be sharing this document with Regional Council and other agencies. Please indicate below that you consent to this sharing.

ARTIST INFORMATION

Name: *Arianne Pollet-Brannen*

Studio #: *147*

Date of Residency: *July - November 2009*

Media:

Consent to Sharing: *November, 2009*

HRM Community Development

ACTIVITY REPORT

Please provide a short description of the projects you undertook and highlight your successes while occupying the SeaPort Studios

IMPACT ON PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Please describe how having access to the SeaPort Studios impacted:

- ☒ Your art form;
- ☒ Your art practice;
- ☒ Your short- and long-term career goals; and
- ☒ The community.

Do you think that this program should be continued? Please explain your answer.

Please provide any recommendations/suggestions you may have for improvement of the program.

EXAMPLES OF ARTWORK

ACTIVITY REPORT

GROUP SHOWS

High Fibre Café - Sept. 26-Oct. 23 2009

The Moorings Gallery – Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia

Footwear utilizing wooden shoes for an exhibition that explored the relationship between fibre, textiles, clothing and fashion, and featured the work of a number of Maritime artists.

The Edible Show - Oct. 12-25 2009

Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Sweet Little Dress, a dress constructed of fruit leather and confectionary, for a two-week food themed art exhibition supporting food accessibility and creativity in Atlantic Canada.

NOCTURNE ART FESTIVAL – 17 OCTOBER 2009

Genuine Leather

Installation imitating the standard window display of a fashionable clothing store. Six live models, wearing outfits made from deconstructed/reconstructed leather shoes, performed spontaneous acts on a two-hour rotating basis.

The subject of the body is of great interest to the artist and the exploration of human anatomy has led to the discourse of the 'fashioned' body. In this context, shoes have been the framework for ongoing exploration. Used and discarded shoes are taken apart, maintaining the integrity of the various sections and are then reconfigured into clothing. The results of this investigation provided 'fashion' for artful window-shopping.

Bajin

Bajin transported us to the dark side of Victorian Halifax as 'Mary Howard', aka Janice Jackson, asked Nocturne visitors to witness her unsettling life.

Singer/Actress Jackson, draped in an otherworldly costume by Arianne Pollet-Brannen, chanted, howled, cried, screamed, and sang texts written by Barbara Louder (inspired by Judith Fingard's book *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax*, 1989). 'Mary Howard', in Pollet-Brannen's head-to-toe costume created a metamorphic ambiance of swirling luminosity and deep shadow.

VONDA DE VILLE IN TEMPORAL FOLLIES (AN ELECTROPERA) – 2-7 FEBRUARY 2010 (IN PROCESS)

Currently the studio is a planning and production area for costume and prop design for an opera, written by musician, composer and sound designer Lukas Pearce, directed by Marty Burt and performed by soprano Janice Jackson. The opera is to be staged in February 2010 at the Bus Stop Theatre in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

PUBLICITY

Nocturne's Building Inspection, The Coast, October 15, 2009

Nocturne expands, Metro News, October 16, 2009

An economic night light, Chronicle Herald, October 20, 2009

2nd Nocturne art showcase a hit, Metro News, October 21, 2009

Nocturne art at night attracts thousands, unews.ca, October 20, 2009

Web page in Alumni Gallery, NSCAD University website,
<http://nscad.ca/en/home/alumnifriends/gallerypages/ariannepolletbrannen.aspx>

IMPACT ON PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

IMPACT ON ART FORM

The use of this studio space has allowed me to practice a method of art making that is continually in evolution. Having a large physical space is critical for allowing a constant overview of processes that have been used in the past. At the same time ample space is available for new processes and procedures. The luxury of space keeps my oeuvre coherent and prevents it from becoming stale. The historic display of my work convinces me that I am a consistent artist who has a clear understanding of how I want to fashion my artwork.

IMPACT ON ART PRACTICE

The use of this studio has not only been a privilege but it has also portrayed me as a competent developing artist to fellow artists/collaborators. For meetings, I have been able to invite people to my studio and show my work in a professional manner. Visitors immediately have an idea of the depth and the extent of my work. This is an ideal way to discuss projects. The proximity to the NSCAD University Port Campus is also a tremendous connection. There are many art makers in the immediate area so if you choose you can be exposed to a critical professional audience which I believe is ideal for artists at all levels of their careers.

IMPACT ON SHORT- AND LONG-TERM CAREER GOALS

My short-term career goals are very specific. A collaborative project with local artists will come to fruition in February. I will make costumes and props for the opera, *Electropera*. As well, the three occupants of the Seaport studios, Aaron MacLean, Akshay Tyagi and myself are considering the possibility of a collaborative project after the program is over.

Long-term career goals now involve finding a permanent studio space so that I can fully develop as a professional artist. An artist needing a studio is no different than a dentist needing a dentist's office.

I intend to continue exhibiting my work in various showcase situations. In addition I would like to promote my artworks to a larger audience. My connection with Belgium, the country where I was born and grew up, will at some point be a starting point to seek exhibitions outside Canada.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

My job as an artist is to define issues that are potentially subversive. The visual art training that I received during my undergraduate degree has empowered me to aestheticize and comment on such issues.

My artwork is perhaps most recognizable as the deconstructed/reconstructed shoe 'wear'. This work is created with the use of discarded material. A part of my art making is in a sense, recycling. Other aspects of my work see the re-use of different kinds of rejected and/or trashed elements. I like the idea of generating a sustainable form of art making by incorporating material that is otherwise destined for the dumpster.

Fashion and drama are blended in my public displays. Sexuality and vulnerability of the fashion model are therefore naturally occurring elements in this scenario. Male models are used alongside female ones in garments that draw power and strength from within the wearer. My role in this undertaking is to showcase a form of anti-fashion in response to the terror of the existing garment industry.

THIS PROGRAM SHOULD BE CONTINUED because it is the best possible step between art school and the reality of earning a living. When you have a defined workspace, the making of art is elevated for yourself and everyone you come in contact with. Access to this studio has made me become more efficient as an art worker. Having this space was like a continuation of art school without the pressure of tuition but with the option of creating my own critical peer group. It was the perfect situation for translating an art education into the reality of making a career in art.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE PROGRAM.

The size and location of the space are perfect. Perhaps what would make this undertaking unrivaled would be the inclusion of a residency program for artists from away. Perhaps the smaller studio could be used for a guest resident and the larger one could be shared by two local, newly graduated artists, as it was this time around.

The introduction of the option to have an exhibition at the end of the program seems a good idea in this type of program.

As well, visits by foundation students from NSCAD University, since they are just across the street, would be helpful for the artist as well as the students. It would give them an immediate view of the studio practice of an (emerging) artist.







Reflections on the Seawall Residency Pilot Program,

The most crucial time in an artist's career is its beginning—when issues of time, space and money can rule out integrity long before a promising artist can realize their potential. It has been my understanding that success by emerging artists is perhaps the most fundamental in stimulating sustainable growth in the creative sectors as younger generations of might-be artists are all-too familiar with the constant affirmations of art stars but have few models to outline the possibility of their having any such success.

For me, the Seawall Project enabled a full-time studio practice that led to a successful solo exhibition at Galerie Sans Nom (Moncton, NB) in October 2009 and Eyelevel Gallery (Halifax, NS) in January 2010. This same solo show will open at Struts Gallery (Sackville, NB) in April and the Confederation Centre Art Gallery (Charlottetown, PEI) in September 2010. The work was also included in a group show at Studio 21 (Halifax, NS) in December 2009. The Seawall residency was a perfect fit for me but I do have several recommendations for its development:

1. The laissez-faire structure of the residency was one of its strong points. Most artists need time and space to experiment while making work and pressure to do so is often counteractive. In this regard it is great that there is no mandatory exhibition or open studio, however it might be beneficial to encourage the possibility of a show and provide a potential venue for one in the future—if the artists are wanting of exposure. Perhaps the option of a small show at the Khyber ICA, City Hall or Anna Leonowens would be a nice incentive for potential future applicants.
2. A small annual presentation about the residency to fourth-year studio classes at NSCAD would encourage enrollment and probably give sight to studio practice after university. (Promotion through NSCAD's Advancement Office will help too)
3. Residency artists are given a temporary NSCAD I.D. That way, multimedia artists among others, might have access to resources that are difficult to acquire early on and can check out the AGNS free of cost.

The bridge from academia into the working-world is obviously a difficult one to cross. Given our city's student population, working out this kink between education and application would likely boost productivity in a big way. Opportunities like the Seawall Residency are imperative in sustaining art-making within the city and are unquestionably a step in the right direction for Halifax—a city with a huge number of artists that exports an unfortunate number of them.

I thank HRM and NSCAD University for allowing me the opportunity to be a part of the pilot program and I sincerely hope that the program continues. If there is anything I can do in this regard please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours,

Aaron Weldon MacLean

For immediate release

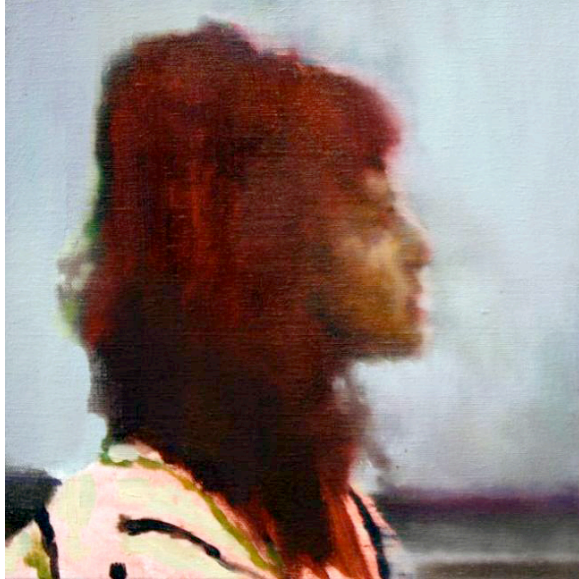
AARON WELDON MACLEAN Nature of Descriptions

January 15 – January 30, 2010

Opening reception: Thursday, January 14, 7 PM

Eyelevel Gallery, 2063 Gottingen St., Halifax, NS

Media Inquiries: contact Nadine LaRoche, nlaroche@gmail.com.



Aaron Weldon MacLean's exhibition *Nature of Descriptions* will open Thursday, January 14, 2010, at Eyelevel Gallery.

This exhibition seems at once happily accidental and thoughtfully contrived. In the gallery, vibrant paintings and the smell of fresh paint offset the nostalgia of yesterday's images and 8mm film—a body of work that began with a photograph depicting a family-planning class at Tantallon Junior High School sometime in the early 1990s.

The photo—from the archives of the artist's late father—depicts nearly two-dozen teenage students, a teacher, a baby

and a mother. MacLean restaged the image, prolonging an instant to describe a class in its entirety. The performance took place in the original school and classroom and, from this reenactment, MacLean developed paintings, sculpture and a silent film laced with the awkward humour of its subject matter. The film's cast includes Halifax performance artist Veronique MacKenzie, dancer Sara Harrigan (Mocean Dance) and artist Suzanne Caines, among others.

"It was important that my characters be strong, recognizable cultural figures who deal with concepts similar to my own," says MacLean.

While his film hovers between theatre and documentary, his disparate means of applying paint confidently implies photography or collage.

"I find that while film and photography naturally involve specificity or exactitude, paint is better at generalizations," he says. "My attempt is to communicate both simultaneously in either medium."

MacLean has shown both nationally and internationally in solo exhibitions at Galerie Sans Nom, Moncton (2009), the Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax (2009), the Casa de la Cultura, Remedios, Cuba (2005), and in group shows at Studio 21, Halifax (2009, 2010), Dale Smith Gallery, Ottawa (2009), Eyelevel Gallery, Halifax (2009), the Anna Leonowens Gallery (2008), the Yukon Arts Centre, Whitehorse, (2007) and SUGS X gallery, Chicago (2007).

Aaron MacLean has studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and NSCAD University (BFA '09), an education during which he received 15 scholarships and awards, and has apprenticed with internationally renowned Halifax-based artist Marilyn McAvoy. In 2007, he was chosen to represent Nova Scotia at the National Artist Program, a residency and exhibition in the Yukon and, in the same year, completed a commissioned project in San José, Costa Rica.

Nature of Descriptions comes on the heels of MacLean's return from Paris, having been chosen as one of two Canadians to participate in an initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in France to expose young, French-speaking artists to the art scene in Paris. The work for this exhibition was completed while in residency at the Seawall Project, an inaugural initiative by NSCAD University and the Halifax Regional Municipality granting young artists space to work near some of Canada's most renowned, including the late Gerald Ferguson. MacLean lives and works in Halifax.

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