

Rhode Island College Public Art

Selection panel Meeting

Thursday, August 2, 2007

400 Roberts Hall

Providence, RI

Re: Public Art for the New Residence Hall

Present: J Hogue (artist representative), Steve Hughes (architect representative), President John Nazarian (agency representative), Carolyn Peck (artist representative), Gary Penfield (Vice President of Student Affairs for RIC, not a panel member), Cristina DiChiera (Director, Individual Arts and Public Art Programs for RISCA, not a panel member).

The total budget for public art could be anywhere from \$70,000 - \$75,000. The total project budget is \$89,699. If we set the public art amount at \$75,000 and save \$5000 for conservation that will leave a bit under \$10,000 for administration. If we distribute the call according to LEED principles of a 500 mile radius, that will cut down on travel expenses for bringing artists to Rhode Island for the selection of finalists. There was some discussion of not wanting to exclude artists from the West Coast, but general agreement that it is preferable to stay local, especially in consideration of the building's LEED certification.

Describe the project: There is big demand for housing on the RIC campus. RIC has a policy of guaranteed housing for new students if they get their request in on time. The requests were more than they could accommodate. Rents have shot up in Rhode Island making off campus housing too expensive for many. More upper classmen were requesting on campus housing and the school was forced to use a lottery system for the 2-4 year students. The student body was very vocal about the issue. Vacant buildings on east campus could not be renovated for housing due to budget constraints. The new building will provide 367 beds – increasing the college’s capacity from 800 to 1200 residents on campus. Sweet hall has 210 beds. The project was funded through a bond and the school will pay the debt service through housing fees. Students will pay about \$4000 a year to live there (about \$330 per month) and each room includes kitchenette, microwave, fridge, etc. Some are private rooms and some are shared. The administration believes that the new residence hall will help with recruitment and retention.

Existing art on campus: murals in Roberts Hall by Hollister. Artist Angelo Rosatti created the RI College logo from an element in this mural. A couple of pieces by students are in the student union. A welded piece started by an artist is in an exterior site and the Rec Center has an aluminum piece.

For the new residence hall, recycled and natural materials were used

throughout and storm drainage under the parking lot has a run-off filtration system. The building will have good air quality, with recycled air systems, etc. Bedding is all low VOC. Trees were maintained as close as 50 feet up to the building to keep it green. There is no solar power, but the building is energy efficient. The architects hope that the new residence hall will be Rhode Island's first LEED certified building.

Potential sites:

The large courtyard in the front of the residence hall could be a great site for artwork. Sidewalks in the courtyard will be lit by decorative fixtures. In order to get access to adjacent buildings there are walkways that lead students from building to building. The courtyard will be grass with a sprinkler system. There will be permanent benches in the center of the courtyard. The main entrance to the residence hall is in the very front center of the building. Students will only come in that center front entrance – the maintenance crew and staff will use other entrances. The offices of residential housing will also be in the new residence hall, but their offices will only be accessed from a separate north facing entrance. Students congregate in the courtyard at the center of campus and will likely congregate in the front yard of the residence hall. Inside the front entrance there will be a reception desk and on the first floor there will be a lounge area, recreation rooms, etc. All walls are concrete block and the ceilings are only 8 ft high. There is not a lot of open space for

artwork inside the building because it was designed to create as much living space as possible. There is chain link fence all around the back of the building as well as a terraced retaining wall that rises to 12 ft to keep kids out of the woods behind the building.

There were plans for stained accents in the concrete floors, but the budget would not allow and it is too late to add this as a potential public art site. The stairs were going to have glass block, but that budget also had to be cut back and the glass was replaced with a wire mesh partition that is open to let light through. It is a more utilitarian approach and still serves the original purpose. Some sort of artwork that hangs from the ceiling could be installed in this area of the stairs.

If the artwork was illuminated, it could be viewed from outside. Each floor is color coded – orange, purple, green – with each color represented on the back wall of the stairwell landing of each floor and then in the colors of the furniture in the rooms, etc.

There is a new parking lot in front of the student center with a walking path that goes across campus. Students have created a path across the street from the residence hall to the volleyball courts and they tend to create improvised paths all over campus. Students climb things and tagging and vandalism are a problem. The new residence hall is at the edge of the campus and not as protected from potential trespassing and vandalism. The security station is across the street, but the campus has had graffiti at the main entrance to campus, which is highly visible. On Mt. Pleasant Ave there is a rock ledge that

students tag every year. Any public art needs to be robust and vandal resistant. It would also be ideal if artwork could serve as a deterrent for vandalism and improvised paths, and bring attention and greater appreciation of the art and amenities on campus. On campus there are two big clocks including one that chimes, sculptures and historical elements. These deserve greater recognition and improved presentation.

Themes/goals:

Beautify, provide direction, improve landscape. There is a tree walk on campus with unusual and valuable trees. It has identification plaques and an accompanying information pamphlet. Public art could refer to the history of the campus and bring attention to historic elements. (RIC recently received a grant from RICH to restore the wrought iron gate on the opposite end of campus.) Public art should create a safe and inviting atmosphere for the students. RIC is primarily a commuter school of 9000 students including graduate students and part timers. With the addition of the residence hall there will now be capacity for 1200 residents on campus. The residence hall will provide more of a sense of community. Public art could provide focal points and lead students to places where they need and want to be. Artwork should reflect the kinetic energy and movement of the campus - things are never stagnant in a residence hall. But moving parts on the artwork itself might present problems. The

language of the RFQ should be about home and community. Any artwork indoors could not make noise or be kinetic (except like a free hanging piece such as a Calder), and it must not be flammable. Exterior environmental art would be ideal. An exterior water feature could tie into the existing irrigation system, but could also be complicated and maintenance could be a real problem. An outdoor video installation that makes reference to water could be a good way to recognize the underground filtration system. The RFQ should include a description of the underground collection and drainage. The artwork should be site specific and should respond to the landscape or refer directly to the purposes and goals we have outlined. Interior artwork should be welcoming.

Notes submitted by Cristina DiChiera