

Artist Selection Memo to File

Date: January 30, 2024

From: **Artist Selection Panel - Voting:** Ja'nell N. Ajani - Curator and Scholar; Nate Cormier - Landscape Architect, Managing Studio Director, RIOS; Asha Iman Veal - Associate Curator, Museum of Contemporary Photography Chicago; Rakhee Jain - Artist, recent AIPP commission; Meaghan Perry - Objects and Variable Media Conservator, Momentum Art Conservation; **Non-voting:** Mari Boren, AIA, LEED-AP (BD+C), PMP - Project Manager, COA Capital Delivery Services; Akeshia Johnson Smothers - MSW Social Services Agreements Administration Manager, COA Public Health; Aaron Taylor - Designer, McKinney York Architects; Taylor Davis - AIPP Panel Liaison

Copy: **Art in Public Places Panel:** Panel Chair Stephanie Lemmo, Vice Chair J Muzacz, Arts Commission Liaison Monica Maldonado, and Panel Members, Stephanie Lemmo, Lisa Woods, Kristi-Anne Shaer, Taylor Davis, and Sarah Carr.

Subject: **Family Violence Shelter & Protection Center AIPP Project**

Background: AIPP panel approved a Request for Qualifications for Family Violence Shelter & Protection Center public art opportunity on September 11, 2023. The RFQ was approved by Arts Commission on September 18, 2023. Notice of the public art opportunity was posted through usual methods as well as through Social Media channels, EDD newsletter and through PublicArtist.org. The opportunity opened on November 6, 2023, with a submission deadline of December 19, 2023. 15 artists applied, and 5 were eligible for review by the selection panel. The project budget is \$70,000.

The Jury was supported by staff Meghan Wells - Cultural Arts Division Manager; Lindsay Hutchens - AIPP Coordinator; and Ryan Runcie - AIPP Coordinator.

1. Recommended Artist: Felipe Gomez

"I am quite enthusiastic with the high-caliber of work and therapeutic design goals of artist Felipe Gomez, and look forward to seeing what this artist will materialize as the public art project for this specific environment and community." - Asha Iman Veal

"Great balance of inspired figurative capability and rich textures and phenomena that invite further experience of the work." - Nate Cormier

2. Recommended Alternate: Sharon Keshishian

"Sharon Keshishian is a wonderful artist who a long history of producing work around the city. For purposes of this project and the specification noted in the RFQ, the sole piece that stands from her submission is the work "Esperanza"." - Ja'nell N. Ajani

"Extensive experience with permanent outdoor commissions. Thoughtful response about intentionality of creating work that will be climbed on by children (ATX sculpture). Colorful, whimsical design, lots of negative space that allows interplay of light, airy feel, which speaks to some of the principles of trauma-informed design." - Meaghan Perry

CALL TO ARTISTS

Family Violence Shelter & Protection Center: Exterior Installation -
Public Art Opportunity

City of Austin (Texas): Art in Public Places (AIPP)

Deadline for Submissions – 5:00 PM CST: December 19, 2023

Submit all information via PublicArtist.org

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

The City of Austin Art in Public Places program (AIPP) seeks to commission a professional visual artist or artist-led team, to design and fabricate an exterior installation as a place for reflection, peace and restoration integrated within the secured lawn area of the site.

BACKGROUND

The site of the Shelter & Center is a former Super 8 Motel located in central Austin. Renovations consist of repairs and retrofits addressing various existing building and site deficiencies as well as enhancements of spaces that facilitate the conversion of the hotel-to-shelter for women and children experiencing family violence.

According to statistics provided by the SAFE Alliance, there were 2,105 confirmed cases of child abuse in Travis County in 2015-2016. While these statistics are not current as of 2023, statistics available from other resources such as National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) stating that on average nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States, indicating that the cycle of violence continues to be an urgent issue.

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

The goal of the City of Austin Family Violence Shelter and Protection Center project is to integrate the visions of the key project stakeholders into a functional and well-designed facility that meets the urgent need to provide additional shelter for women and children experiencing family violence in Central Texas. The design for the building will integrate principles of Trauma-informed Design to foster healing and improve the overall well-being of the individuals being served.

One or more Austin-based artists will have the opportunity to create an artwork installation situated within the exterior lawn area inside the secure perimeter of the site. The ultimate artwork experience could be a graceful statement that informs or reflects the landscape as an intentionally designed calming space. Aesthetic elements should contribute to feelings of emotional safety, hope and

comfort. Functional elements may include a walkable and ADA compliant pathway, spaces to sit and to lie down, with access to shade and open sky. The final installation must be accessible and inviting to diverse users presenting multiple perspectives with unobstructed views of nature, varied lighting (natural and artificial), visual simplicity, safety, security and privacy.

APPROXIMATE BUDGET: \$70,000

The total budget allocated for this opportunity is **approximately \$70,000**. This amount is inclusive of all artists' design fees, engineering, permitting, machining and fabrication, transportation, installation, travel, shipping expenses, insurance, and other artwork project-related costs.

ELIGIBILITY

The City of Austin AIPP program strives to commission a broad range of artworks which contribute to the current dialogue in the field of visual art by broadly awarding commissions among local, state and national artists. AIPP defines artist as an individual recognized by critics and peers as a professional practitioner of serious intent and substantial ability in the visual, performing, or literary art.

Austin-area artists and makers skilled in creating sculptural work encouraged to apply. Experience creating 3-dimensional permanent artwork in materials suitable for exterior environments is a requirement. Only one commission will be awarded for this opportunity.

This opportunity is limited to Austin-based visual artists who reside in the seven counties bounding the Austin metro area (Travis, Hays, Williamson, Bastrop, Caldwell, Burnet, and Blanco counties) and who are at least 18 years of age.

Applicants not meeting these eligibility requirements will be withdrawn from consideration.

INELIGIBILITY

Design professionals, including architects who do not have a consistent visual art practice are ineligible to apply as team leads, but may be a part of an artist-led team.

Artists who have more than three permanent artworks represented in the City of Austin's Art in Public Places public art collection; artists who currently are under contract with the City of Austin for a permanent Art in Public Places project; and artists who have completed an AIPP project within the past year are ineligible to apply. Artists living outside of the Austin-area as defined above are ineligible for this opportunity.

City of Austin full-time employees, architects, designers or contractors employed by the project's consulting firm are ineligible.

SELECTION PROCESS

A five-member selection panel comprised of visual arts professionals and community representatives will review all eligible submissions. Three artist(s) or artist-led teams may be shortlisted, invited to interview and submit a proposal for a fee of \$500. The selection panel reserves the right to recommend one or more artists and one or more alternate artists at the time of the initial review.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

1. Credentials: CV/Resume (limit 2 pages)
2. Short responses to the following questions (100-300 words per question):
 - a. Describe your artistic practice and what would make you a good candidate for this opportunity.
 - b. What specific interest do you have in creating artwork that contributes to Trauma-Informed Design?
 - c. Describe how engaging communities informed concepts/outcomes of your past artworks or installations.
3. Ten images of previous work (only one image per page).
 - a. Label each image with the following information: title, date of completion, location, materials, art budget.
 - b. For team application, please indicate the lead artist for each project; or provide an annotated image list.
 - c. IMAGES OF INCOMPLETE PROJECTS, PRELIMINARY SKETCHES, or PROPOSAL IDEAS FOR THIS PROJECT WILL NOT BE REVIEWED
4. Three Professional references: (names, phone numbers and email addresses)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The panel will evaluate applications based on the following criteria:

- Technical quality and aesthetic appeal of past work
- Dedicated and consistent artistic practice
- Authenticity, creativity and innovation of work as presented
- Communication of ideas and intentions
- Experience with public art projects of a similar size and scope

TIMELINE (subject to change)

Virtual Information Meeting

November 15, 2023; 6:00pm

Submission deadline

December 19, 2023

Submit all information via PublicArtist.org

Deadline to submit qualifications is 5:00 PM: December 19, 2023

Submissions received after the deadline will be considered unresponsive and will not be reviewed.

Questions regarding this solicitation must be directed in writing to:
Art in Public Places Coordinator – Lindsay Hutchens,
lindsay.hutchens@austintexas.gov

Image List for Felipe Gomez

Afro futurism, 2022

Stain on layered birch

4 ft x 3 ft

Austin, Austin, Texas

Budget: \$6,000



Gomez_Felipe_01.JPG

?In continuation of the divine series, I wanted to express the opposite of the feminine—the male divine. A piece that represents my Colombian roots, and the afro-influence on my culture.

An Afro-Indigenous being in touch with nature, surroundings, emotions, forms of commutation and one who is a guiding beacon for a moral way to treat themselves, and others. This piece is honoring the afro-influence on the people of Colombia.

Champeta is a musical genre and dance that originated in the Caribbean coast of Colombia in the 1980's. Based on Chalupa and Afro-Cuban percussive music—it began as a dance movement within the afro-Colombian people. Champeta culture became better-known in Colombia due to the development of a set of complex dances set to the rhythms of salsa and jíbaro and later reggae and came to be after people found the music of Afro-beat pioneers.

Like Yin and Yang, we need both parts of ourselves to better understand the world around us. The male and the female. I'll always be an advocate for self-work, healthy and constructive communication, and grounded reactions to adversity. That's what this piece means to me.

Divine Edification, 2017

Stain on layered birch

6 ft x 3.5 ft

Austin, Austin, Texas

Budget: \$6,000



Gomez_Felipe_02.JPG

She is finally cut and out of my head! This piece is a continuation of my series honoring the divine feminine. As I have said before, the world would be a dark and bleak place with out the love, the magic and nurturing values that women bring to this world. Beyond this though, my intention with this current stage of my art—is to remind people that beauty does not only lie on the outside. To remember that we are magical beings, that there is immense beauty within all of us. If you just take a second to think about your souls ability to grow, change, and adapt—a sigh of relief and gratitude might come over you. There is **always** something beautiful about each and every human being, and I hope to shine a light on this thought—even if only for a fraction of a second. For people to treat **themselves** and **others** with love. The root solving answer for existential dread—love. As Erich Fromm said, "The mature response to the problem of existence is love." ??If you look closely, this piece

is anatomically correct in regards to muscle groups and tendons around the body.

Divine Feminine, 2022

Stain on layered birch
8 ft x 9 ft
Austin, Austin, Texas
Budget: \$20,000



Divine Feminine, Stain on layered birch, 8ft by 9ft, \$15000

Gomez_Felipe_03.JPG

This piece is a continuation of my recent works on the female divine. I feel that many people have something to say on this subject, or even on the female body. Personally, I wanted to continue my personal dialogue with the subject and my own thoughts on the impact that females (or female energy) can have on our society.

There's a lot of turpitude and darkness in the world, and to me—the answer starts, and ends with love.

I began this series to honor the grace that female energy carries, and aids in the design/creation of a *good human being*. In the past, I have spoken on the nourishing values women bring to the world, and how without, we would be lost. I love, appreciate and respect this so much, that I truly believe that if we as a community, as a society place this familial love upon our youth—we will aid in the creation of good human beings.

As with everything though, powerful and respectful masculine energy is also a big part of the equation—however, this series is focused on honoring female energy. As developed humans, we carry and embody both. As men, we can be aware of this, be *developed*, be in touch with all aspects and emotion of daily life, and aid in the creation of space for the betterment of society. One step and day at a time.

The model is a dear friend of mine @seedofthestar. A human that I believe embodies all of the qualities of growth, and the continuation to work on ourselves that *is* being a developed human. A person that not only aids her community, but nurtures health, body, mind and love.

Fortlandia at The Austin Wild Flower Center, 2022

Layered Birch, Wood Stain, Varnish. Frame Galvanized sheet metal Frame Wood glue Frame Deck Screws Frame Deck Screws 2in Frame Wood Planks 6in x 8ft x 1in Plank 100 Frame Plywood 3/4in x 4ft x 8ft sheet Blasters Barrels Barrel Blasters Galvanized steel netting 27in x 8ft Blasters Rebar Rebar #3 .375in x 4ft Blasters 1in square tube 24ft Blasters 3/4 nuts, bolts, washers Cladding Exterior boards
Dimensions Vary
Austin Wildflower Center, Austin, TX
Budget: \$30,000



Mars Base, 2022, Lady Bird Johnson wildflower center, permanent public art install, \$30,000

Gomez_Felipe_04.mp4

A narrative of the design concept

"Mars Base" is an artful and playful interpretation of what a shuttle and working quarters would look like when humans leave earth to stay on another planet. It is comprised of a shuttle and three geometric domes, all primarily made of reclaimed and native woods. Each structure will be both (1) connected through shafts that will allow children to crawl easily from one to another, and (2) have a 36 in wide ADA compliant door opening allowing many ways to enter and exit.

The primary structure will get its support from beams that are 2 in wide by 3 in deep. These beams will be constructed by bolting and gluing two 1 in by 3 in wood planks together. This construction is necessary to create the unique shapes of each structure. Additionally, buttresses will be reinforced with steel brackets when necessary to ensure any unintended climbing of the structure can support the weight.

Next, the cladding will be made from reclaimed pallet wood, which is in general made of pine that is 3.5 In wide x 1 in deep. These will be placed on the beams using deck screws and each cladding plank will be spaced 1 inch between. This is except for the transition at 31 inches up from ground level, when the structure changes from 90 degrees to the ground, to 120 degrees from ground level. At that point the cladding will shift to being a 1 in by 1 in "stripe" of reclaimed pallet wood with the same between board spacing of 1 in before resuming the same 3 ½ in wide previous pattern.

All cladding will be sanded to a 120-grit sandpaper level. The outside facing surface will be treated with hemp oil, providing a natural appearance to the wood that should age quickly to match the natural color tone of the surrounding environment.

Then, the inside of each structure will contain educationally focused artwork and/or pictures. This will be done with a bend towards textures allowing the children another level of sensory experience in addition to giving ones who "see with their hands" a highlighted adventure geared specifically for them.

For the three pods, we are partnering with three separate local artists who will utilize zero VOC and Milk Paints to create an artistic interpretation of the purpose of each structure: (1) science lab, (2) navigation, (3) food production. As for the shuttle, each interior panel will have historically significant pictures showing important events in the history of human flight. This will provide an educational timeline of human flight which can be utilized by educators for their elementary, middle and high school students.

Lastly, within a given pod or shuttle, there will be interpretive renditions of the tool necessary for each activity that is associated with a given structure. These will be created in the form of toys and made from the same reclaimed materials and native woods that the rest of the structure is made from.

Evaluated as a whole, this provides a compact complex of beautifully finished wood-based structures, that perfectly complements the environment, while still instantaneously evoking images and memories of space travel and space exploration.

Introduction:

Space travel has long caught the imagination of children, artists, and scientists alike. However, between the SpaceX Starship launching later this year, a return of humans to the moon, and constant talk of a human base on Mars; rocket ships, moon bases and space explorers will soon reenter the public imagination in ways not experienced since the 1960s. It is easy to imagine how this common experience will translate to imaginative play around space shuttles, rocket ships, and human bases on far away planets.

In that light, we propose the construction of an artful and playful interpretation of a "Mars Base." This will be comprised of 3 "pods" and a "shuttle" that are right sized for children. Their construction will be made primarily of reclaimed and native woods that are allowed to remain in their natural wood color state. The exterior wood cladding will be spaced just enough so that light and air easily flows through the structure. This will allow it to blend into the landscape in a complementary and attractive way, while still being instantly recognizable as a shuttle and pods. Next, anyone who has seen children play with a fort after it is built knows where the magic really happens: the imaginative play on the inside. To match this; the inside of the shuttle and each pod will be painted on the inside edges of the cladding with artwork that represents the

purpose each plays at the base, as well as toys and tools made from the same reclaimed and native woods

What this creates is a structure that from the outside, due to the wood tones and cladding spacing will blend effortlessly into the environment, while still clearly being a "Mars Base" due to the shapes. Then, from the inside children will enter the world of imagination, becoming space explorers through playing with toys and imagining their role due to the artwork. As a package, this will make "Mars Base" one of the go-to and most memorable forts displayed.

Story

A space explorer on Mars returns from a hike to explore a nearby canyon. They had collected a very unusual set of rocks and are excited to bring them back and test them in the science lab. Although the large rolling red hills obstruct the long-range view, the explorer trusts their equipment to show them the way home. Despite the heavy suit, hiking on Mars is easy due to the much lower gravity, allowing for giant leaps that can make walking feel more like flying. As the explorer crests the last hill, the "Mars Base" comes into view. The shuttle that brought them to Mars still sits next to three geometric pods that make up their new home and workshops. The structures all look vaguely similar. This is because they are all repurposed from the ship that brought them there. In the months since they landed the red sand has blasted the outside clean, so now both the hills, sand, and structures blend sharing the same hues of red. The explorer enters through a port on the shuttle and removes their suit. It feels cramped compared to the vastness and big sky just outside the door. But at least in here the explorer is safe from danger. They then climb through a shaft connecting the shuttle to the pods. After putting the rocks into the tester for evaluation, they continue through another shaft to the living quarters where activities are logged for the day. Where they write back to family on earth and prepare equipment for the next day's adventure.

Gabriella Zepeda-All projects, 2023

Multimedia

Dimensions Vary

Budget: \$5,000,000



Gomez_Felipe_05.JPG

Paradise, March 2023, Ibiza, Mirror, foam.

Paradise Records, Stage Designer, Fabrication, creative producer. Miami



Gomez_Felipe_06.JPG

Paradise, March 2023, Ibiza, Mirror, foam and synthetic floral

Paradise Records, Stage Designer, Fabrication, creative producer. Designed and fabricated all art pieces, disco balls, etc. Miami



Gomez_Felipe_07.JPG

Gucci Art Basel, Dec 2021, Miami, Carpet, MDF, composite aluminum, Integrated LED's. 89k Budget

Gucci. Scenic fabricator. Designed and fabricated all scenic objects, LED's, carpet, etc. Art Basel Miami



Gomez_Felipe_08.JPG

Seismic music festival, Nov 2022, Austin, Tx, Wood, Aluminum, and LEDS

Production Designer, Scenic. Creative producer.

Design and installation of 7 lounge spaces

Fabrication of props

LED Installation

Lighting Design & Programming

Design, Fabrication & Installation



Gomez_Felipe_09.JPG

Rockstar energy art basel, 2022, Miami, Steel and LEDS

Installation, Integrated light project

LED Installation

Lighting Design & Programming

Design, Fabrication & Installation

Here today gone tomorrow, 2022

My personal piece was: Stain on layered birch, and mirror

4 ft x 8 ft

Austin, Austin, Texas

Budget: \$12,000



Gomez_Felipe_10.MOV

Traces of impermanence, 2023, Mirror, 1500 integrated sound reactive and wifi connected LEDS, stain on layered baltic birch

I was one of 40 artists that had a large scale piece in this very big interactive art installation for the east side studio tour "HERE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW" is an artist-run collaborative visual journey that speculates the cycle of beauty, destruction, and rebirth. This interactive art exhibit features 35+ creative visionaries of diverse disciplines.

The project consists of eight (8) various size rooms that are divided into two (2) separate units of the duplex with exterior facade and yard. Each room will be curated and transformed by different creative groups and individual artists. Selected artists will given no creative limitations and are encouraged to use a variety of mediums to create an immersive art space. Whether they paint, build, construct, destruct or all of the above is up to them. There will be event programming throughout the duration of the project

The entire duplex will be demolished at the end of 2022 with plans of a new housing project which will include a public mural, sculptural installation and one unit dedicated to affordable housing for the Blackland neighborhood.

The project is designed to celebrate creative freedom of Austin artists while raising awareness of the Blackland organization and neighborhood.

Felipe Gomez Artist CV

Contact Info

936-827-1815
Felipegomezart@gmail.com
www.felipegomezart.com
IG: @Felipegomezart

(Full CV on website. Cut to add team mate & keep at 2 pages)

Education

2017 Texas State University, Bachelors of Science in Digital Media Innovation, San Marcos, TX
2014 Austin Community College, Associates Degree in Environmental Science, Austin, TX

Public Art Projects

2022

Austin Wildflower Center, Fortlandia, Permanent exhibit.(People's choice award) Austin, TX
Raaisin in the Sun, Community Stage. Austin, TX
META/Facebook, AR FaceFilter
Here Today Gone Tomorrow, Austin, TX

2021

Unknown art-box drop, 25 artists, Austin, TX

2020

City of San Marcos, TX Allen Bridge Mural. Anti-littering theme mural. Two 115 ft wide walls
ATX Mural Project, Black soul mural. Acrylic and oil paint, Austin, TX

Exhibitions

2023

Art Prize—International Art Festival, Michigan.
Of Color Gallery "New Direction"
Bolm Arts Solo show "*Staying Alive*"

Publications

2022 Canvas Rebel Arts Magazine, May 2022
2022 Almost Real Things Magazine LIVE May 2022
2021 Almost Real Things Magazine, LIVE Nov 2021
2021 Art Island Art into Content, March 2021
2021 VoyageDallas, Inspiring Stories Series, February 2021

Community Affiliations

2021 OfColor Austin
2021 Mas Cultura Austin
2021 Founder member of Unknown Collective
2020 Polis Creative
2020 Austin Arts Collective
2020 WhenWhatWhere Austin
2019 Meow Wolf
2019 Big Medium

2018 Founding member of Future TBD Art Collective

Gabriella Zepeda

Large scale installation artist and scenic fabricator CV

Contact Info

469-693-1664

gab.9kproductions@gmail.com

Education

2015 The Art Institute of Dallas, Bachelor of Arts with focus on sculpture

Experiential Activations

2023

Rufus del sol, Design lead, creative producer. Miami

Don Julio, Creative producer, design lead. Art Basel Miami

Paradise Records, Stage Designer, Fabrication, creative producer. Miami

Hocus pocus, Art installation, Lead designer, creative producer. Miami

Frosty's Lead Designer, creative producer NYC

J.P. Morgan summit, scenic lead, fabrication. Miami

Pink Wonderland, Lead designer, creative producer. NYC/Chicago

Kazbah, Lead decor, fabrication, build crew. LA, Miami

2022

Cardi B, Prop fabrication. Art Basel Miami

Rufus del sol, Design lead, creative producer. Miami

Mayan warrior, Lead designer, creative producer. Austin

Kazbah, Lead decor, fabrication, build crew. LA, Miami

Seismic dance event, Production Designer, Scenic. Creative producer, LED

Lighting Design & Programming Design, Fabrication & Installation. Austin

Liquid death, Lead designer, fabrication, creative producer. LA

Rockstar energy, Installation, Integrated light project LED Lighting Design & Programming,

Design, Fabrication & Installation. Miami

2021

Gucci. Scenic fabricator. Art Basel Miami

Prada, Fabrication, scenic lead. Art Basel, Miami

NFL Super Bowl , Mural

Seismic dance event, Production Designer, Scenic. Creative producer, LED

Desert hearts festival, Vendor coordinator, art department, build crew LA

Sorry papi, Lead design, Fabrication, installation. Texas tour

Felipe Gomez

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References

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Statement from Felipe Gomez

Short Answer Question 1

Idk about this one lol

Ever since I embarked on my artistic journey with wood as my medium, I've heard that my art has a profound well-being energy emanating from my creations. Recently, a San Antonio hospital approached me to submit a proposal for a healing center designed for individuals facing terminal illnesses. This request deeply resonated with me, as it reinforced the innate therapeutic nature of art, which I've always felt but now had the opportunity to channel purposefully. Recognizing the impactful role art plays in mental health, I'm enthusiastic about delving into the principles of trauma-informed design.

This potential project signifies a turning point in my career, emphasizing a commitment to creating with healing at the forefront of my mind. I am particularly intrigued by the prospect of crafting a piece that prioritizes safety, trust, and empowerment, aligning with the principles of trauma-informed design. Art, as a form of non-verbal communication, offers individuals the freedom to engage at their own pace and on their terms. By incorporating calming aesthetics, thoughtful spatial arrangements, and sensory considerations into my artistic practice, I aspire to contribute to spaces that provide support and consideration for those who may have experienced trauma.

Statement from Felipe Gomez

Short Answer Question 2

My artistic practice defies a singular description, evolving with each exploration of different mediums and concepts. The heart of my creative process lies in the meditative experience of art—a source of personal well-being. It's a dynamic journey, shaped by cultural narratives, personal growth, and the threads that bind us to our community. I see myself as a conduit for ideas, inspired by the vibrant tapestry of the community around me.

In collaboration with Gabriella, our commitment extends beyond skills and experience; it's deeply rooted in a shared vision for societal development and growth. What sets us apart is our unwavering dedication to crafting a sculpture that emanates love and healing. We're not just artists; we're listeners, engaging with patients, community members, and thorough research to birth a beautiful piece inspired by genuine conversations and the essence of human connection. This project isn't just about creating art; it's about contributing to a space of compassion and resilience.

Statement from Felipe Gomez

Short Answer Question 3

In the realm of creating expansive public artworks, my strategy revolves around deep community engagement. I prioritize gathering input, insights, and perspectives directly from those who will engage with my art. The integration of community voices and experiences serves as a wellspring for my own learning and growth. For this particular piece, community engagement isn't merely important; it's indispensable. Actively conversing with people who have experienced trauma, delving into their stories, and using their input to shape an environment of safety and comfort is my primary goal. Specifically, engaging with women and children affected by family violence in Central Texas is pivotal to conceptualizing my design. In essence, my art is a reflection of its environment, molded by current events and the vibrant people surrounding me. Heightened awareness and sensitivity to my surroundings form the bedrock of my creative process.

Take, for instance, my permanent installation at The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, where I grappled with the challenge of crafting a vibrant play space for children. The key question was: How could I captivate the young mind through art? This pondering led to insightful conversations with the children themselves. The outcome was a concept centered around storytelling through panels, complemented by additional elements playing with light and shadow. This interactive addition not only engages young minds but transforms the installation dynamically throughout the day. The dialogues with the children were pivotal, shaping the very core of my design.

Image List for Sharon Keshishian

ACL Music Fest Guitar, 2007

Aluminum, Neon, Turbo Bulbs, "Eyecatcher" architectural sequins, electrical components, transformers

Dimensions Vary

Austin , TX

Budget: \$50,000



Keshishian_Sharon_01.JPG

Who doesn't like a 16' tall guitar covered with red reflective eye-catchers?! This went on to become one of ACL's landmarks and an embodiment of Austin's festival scene. I love seeing all the photos taken with it year after year!

ATX Sculpture - Whole Foods, 2017

Aluminum, Paint, Concrete

Dimensions Vary

5th & Lamar, Austin, Texas

Budget: \$95,000



Keshishian_Sharon_02.JPG

This interactive sculpture created for Whole Foods Market was intended to be a landmark for the city of Austin and not specifically to promote the Whole Foods brand. Our team had to put effort into making this piece structurally sound, because people were encouraged to climb on this sign to take photos. One of the biggest potential problems was that the individual slats might start to fan if there was any discrepancy in placement, so we had to be exacting and basically assemble the slats like a giant jigsaw puzzle. This sculpture quickly became a new landmark for the city of Austin. In fact, only two days after installation, Yelp was already recommending it as a "place to see" when you visit Austin!

Deer in Vines, 2020

Steel, Aluminum, & Stained Glass

Dimensions Vary

The Shops at Arbor Walk, Austin, TEXAS

Budget: \$15,000



Keshishian_Sharon_03.JPG

Commissioned by Washington Prime Group, we designed, fabricated, and installed a graceful Corten-steel deer jeweled with stained-glass flowers to be displayed at The Arbor Walk permanently.

Domain Flamingos, 2018

Aluminum, steel, paint, silver leaf

Dimensions Vary

The Domain - 11410 Century Oaks Terrace, Austin, TEXAS

Budget: \$50,000



Keshishian_Sharon_04.JPG

Esperanza, 2022

Expanded Polystyrene Foam, Hardcoat, Faux Patina Paint, Concrete

Dimensions Vary

Austin , TX

Budget: \$25,000



Keshishian_Sharon_05.JPG

Esperanza translates to "hope" in Spanish, and we think this ethereal sculpture of a woman releasing a bird truly inspires uplifting and hopeful feelings. The process to create this sculpture was fascinating. We started by taking a 3D scan of a model wearing a flowing gown, and then used that rendering to create the basis for our sculpture. We routed some parts, but most of this sculpture was hand carved to precisely hone the details and capture the windblown movement in a stationary piece. Our friends at Blue Genie handled the hard coat, and then we went through the arduous painting process to capture the perfect weathered patina.

Jackalope, 2017

Rusted Corten Steel, Polished Steel

Dimensions Vary

Austin , TX

Budget: \$35,000



Keshishian_Sharon_06.JPG

In Spring of 2018, our team embarked on a magical journey that turned out to be one of our favorite projects yet! Standing at an impressive 18 feet tall, this larger-than-life steel jackalope (named Jacky Lo) made his home in front of Red Velvet Events, catching the attention of all passersby.

Rufus the Sleeping Chicken, 2021

Aluminum, Matthews Paint, PVC

Dimensions Vary

Austin, Texas

Budget: \$22,000



Keshishian_Sharon_07.JPG

The only thing better than napping under a tree is napping under a tree with a friendly butterfly to keep you company! A surprising amount of energy actually went into creating such a laid back guy. We fabricated his internal structure out of aluminum panels assembled into a "waffle" for strength, then covered him in individual aluminum feathers that were sprayed red and then hand painted to add dimension. His PVC legs were also hand painted to get that perfect color and texture. To complete the sculpture, we added some adorably ruffled head feathers, some sleepily closed eyelids, and finished by giving him a sweet butterfly buddy. Rufus the Sleeping Chicken looks so relaxed, we wish we could just chill in the shade all day with him!

Seven Sisters Ranch Cave, 2023

Neon glass, paint, aluminum, transformers, LEDs, Programmable LED Controllers

Dimensions Vary

Private Residence, Boerne, TX

Budget: \$215,000



Keshishian_Sharon_08.JPG

The owner of the Seven Sisters Ranch out in Boerne decided to build the ultimate entertaining "man-cave" complete with underground guest rooms, kitchen, wine cellar, gym, and a multitude of artistic features. To truly wow the viewer upon entrance to the caves, Sharon and the Ion Art team were commissioned to design a fantastical neon mural across the entry chamber. Inspired by the tale of the Seven Sisters constellation, and the history of the surrounding area, a stunning art experience was created. Wall mounted neon sculptures of desert flora and fauna are interspersed amongst the neon accented murals of mountains and mesas. Above this landscape are neon accented petroglyphs and cave paintings, along with the famous Seven Sisters who have been transformed from stars into the personification of the constellation, depicted as artistic female forms dancing in the sky above the desert landscape. The neon characters are also backlit with LEDs that can be set to change colors using a programmable control system. A surreal neon moon hangs in the center tying together both sides of the chamber.

Tracking the End of The Rainbow, 2020

Steel, Aluminum, & Stained Glass

14 ft x 7 ft x 3 ft

Corner of 8th Street & Colorado Street, Austin, TEXAS

Budget: \$80,000



Keshishian_Sharon_09.JPG

Researching the rich and varied history of Austin and using the Our Austin Story resource, led us to an equestrian cowboy sculpture for this public art piece. There are many aspects of Austin culture that led us down this trail.

For one, the Chisholm trail came through Austin and cowboys drove cattle across the Colorado River at a point that most likely would become Longhorn Dam. After the Civil War, these cattle drives from Texas to the railhead in Abilene, Kansas, helped build the legend of the Texas cattle industry as well as adding to the economy and culture of Austin. Thinking about this iconic imagery led to further thoughts of the origin of the cowboy.

We found cowboys play a key part in many cultures. The North American cowboy's roots originated in Spain and came to the United States via Mexico. Cowboys are found in South America and in Hawaii, and they all trace their roots to the Spanish va-quero. We envisioned a brightly painted surreal cowboy and his horse on the trail of a missing cow and her calf that are represented by their footprints.

Windmill Sculpture, 2022

Aluminum, Steel, Glass, Matthews Paint

Dimensions Vary

Austin , TX

Budget: \$40,000



Keshishian_Sharon_10.JPG

Paying homage to some iconic native Texas flowers and the Tonkawa Tribe that originally inhabited what is now Georgetown, we designed and built this lovely stained-glass windmill for MAA Windmill Hill. If you look closely, you can pick out Bluebonnet, Indian Paintbrush, Indian Blanket, Purple Coneflower, Black Footed Daisy, and the Tonkawa Tribe Seal Bird on the top of the Teepee.



SHARON KESHISHIAN

FOUNDER | PRESIDENT | ART DIRECTOR

NOTABLE COMMISSIONED WORKS

2022 "Esperanza" Exterior Sculpture: Commissioned by Washington Prime, Austin, TX

2021 "Light Pole Musicians" & "Rufus the Sleeping Chicken" Exterior Sculptures: Commissioned by Washington Prime, Austin, TX

2020 "Deer in the Vines" Exterior Sculpture: Commissioned by Washington Prime, Austin, TX

2017 "ATX" Exterior Sculpture: Commissioned by Whole Foods, Austin, TX

2017 "Jackalope" Exterior Sculpture: Commissioned by Red Velvet Events, Austin, TX

2014 "Playboy Marfa" Neon Roadside Sculpture: Commissioned by Playboy in Collaboration with Richard Phillips - Relocated to Dallas Contemporary Museum

2007 "ACL Music Fest" Neon Guitar Sculpture: Commissioned for ACL Music Festival, Austin, TX

PUBLIC ART

2020 "Tracking the End of the Rainbow" Public Sculpture: Art in Public Places, Austin, TX

2019 "Neon Bench" Interior Sculpture: The People's Gallery at Austin City Hall, Austin, TX

2014 "Cash Cow" Exterior Sculpture: Donation for the Longhorn Stampede Fundraiser, Austin, TX

2011 "Discow" Public Sculpture: Donation for the Cow Parade Fundraiser, Austin, TX

2009 "Cosmospheres" Interactive Neon Sculpture: Installed on City Hall for Austin First Night, Austin, TX

EXHIBITIONS

2022 & 2023 Ion Art's Surreal Garden at the Zilker Botanical Garden, Austin, TX

2020 She Bends: Women In Neon - Loveland Museum, Loveland, CO

2018 & 2019 Ion Art's Surreal Sea, Austin, TX

2017 First Annual Surreal Event: Ion Art's Surreal Jungle hosted at Ion Art, Austin, TX

2017 Group Show: West Austin Studio Tour, Austin, TX

2015 Group Show: POP Austin International Show, Austin, TX

2010 & 2011 Group Show: Austin Details Gallery, Austin, TX

1988-89 Group Show: Laguna Gloria, Austin, TX

CONTACT

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **HUB Certified**- Texas Statewide Historically Underutilized Business
- **Founder & President** of Ion Art: Austin's premier design + build company
- **Neon glass artist** with 40+ years of neon bending experience
- **Founder:** Surreal neon event, Austin's first interactive neon art show
- **Only female neon bender** in Austin for 40 years
- **Featured** in Tribeza, Austin Women Magazine, Almost Real Things, Austin Monthly
- **Featured** on the cover of The Austin Chronicle April of 2022
- **Featured** in video interviews for Tastemade, Natiivo, KVUE, KEYE, etc

Sharon Keshishian

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Statement from Sharon Keshishian

Short Answer Question 1

I have been utilizing many aspects of Trauma-Informed Design for a long time without being aware of the specific principles. My biggest goal in my art has always been to bring joy and an impression of beauty to whoever is viewing the piece. I want my art to feel accessible to everyone, no matter their level of art knowledge. I'm very inspired by elements found in nature, and gravitate towards a vibrant and healthy color palette. While I fully support the creation of art that is thought-provoking and provides social or political commentary, that type of art has not usually been my own personal focus. I am passionate about art that promotes positivity and happiness. If my work is something that can distract the viewer from their emotional burden and let them escape into a moment of whimsy and fun, I consider it successful. My art tends to appeal to all walks of life, but I find it is especially appealing to children due to its vibrant and playful nature. Whenever possible I like to add visual elements that allow for light to pass through, or to utilize light to illuminate and reflect off of different surfaces to bring a feeling of brightness and openness to the viewer.

Statement from Sharon Keshishian

Short Answer Question 2

My artistic practice is greatly influenced by my own life experience and my personal and professional passions. I am the only female neon bender in Austin, and as a woman working in a heavily male dominated industry, and a mother of 2 daughters, it has always been a priority to encourage the empowerment of women in every aspect of the artistic process. As both an artist and a business owner, I make it a priority to employ women in every level of my company, frequently in roles that tend to be heavily male dominated, such as project management, fabrication, and welding. While my art may not directly be considered a form of social commentary, it is still unabashedly my own, and it reflects the confidence for my craft and dedication to my personal style. I have earned this confidence from years of pushing forward into an art scene that has frequently told me that I was not enough simply because I was female, and because I was happy to make art that was fun, funky, and simple in its inspiration (if not simple in the execution which can occasionally veer into a maximalist style). Over the years I have experimented with many different mediums, and have a firm grasp for working in metal, glass, ceramic, and neon, and incorporating various lighting techniques and movement through kinetic and motorized components. I believe that all of these facets of my artistic practice lend themselves especially well to this specific opportunity.

Statement from Sharon Keshishian

Short Answer Question 3

In April my company completed the second year of our annual neon art experience, The Surreal Garden, at the Zilker Botanical Garden. It was an opportunity to engage with the Austin community and also gave us knowledge for working with the city to provide a unique art experience in a natural park setting. When we were in the planning phase for the AIPP installation Tracking the End of the Rainbow, I enjoyed discussing the project with the art class at the Headwaters School. We talked about public art, the cowboy and Austin's cultural history with the goal of creating footprints or a cattle brand that could be incorporated into the installation. We created a dialogue with the students and they helped inform general concepts instead of a specific design contribution. The ATX sculpture is another good example of creating art that serves and engages the community. While working with Whole Foods to plan the sculpture, there was a focus on making sure the structure would allow people to freely interact with the art. There was also the goal of providing Austin with a fun and funky art piece that serves as a visual representation of the city for locals and tourists alike. I've sat on various artists' panels and given talks to different communities, and while I'm generally there to provide insight as an art professional, I frequently come away from these events with inspiration of my own for future art projects. I love creating art that is inspired by the history and mood of a location, and the more I learn about the specific place and hear from the community about its needs, the more I can strive to make a piece that ultimately enhances the space and serves the people that use it the most.