June 12, 2020

Re: Update on the selection process and conceptual proposals of 6 Urban Interventions for Code:ART

BACKGROUND: The City of Palo Alto Public Art Program launched its first new media event, Code:ART in 2017. The three-evening festival which temporarily reframed downtown Palo Alto as a laboratory for interactive urban interventions and creative placemaking engaging commuters, residents, students and visitors in dialogue to re-imagine underutilized spaces attracted over 10,000 visitors from the Bay Area and beyond. Based on the feedback collected during the successful 3-day 2017 event, the Public Art Program staff proposed to launch the second festival to take place in the fall when the days are shorter to feature more light-based artworks and offer more opportunities for artist collaboration and prototyping.

DISCUSSION:

Vision: Code:ART2 will again temporarily reframe the City as a laboratory for urban interventions and creative placemaking while engaging commuters, residents, students and visitors in dialogue to shape the future of the downtown corridor. During the months leading up to the festival the Public Art Program will host a virtual prototyping Artist Collaboration Workshop to introduce selected artist teams to each other and tap into Silicon Valley’s spirit of design and critique and help artist and makers inform their design development for Urban Interventions. The three-evening event will feature installations of the Anchor Artwork and six Urban Interventions in the downtown corridor to reimagine downtown spaces such as alleys, parking lots and blank walls, while exploring potential new and innovative uses for the sites. Public tours will be led twice daily across all intervention sites. In addition, a number of free public events with presentations, VR demonstrations and exhibits, and panel discussions about the role of arts and technology in creative placemaking and the future of cities will take place across various locations in downtown Palo Alto during that time.

Artist Selection Process:
Public Art Program staff released a call for artists, tinkerers, designers, inventors and technologists to submit proposals for Urban Interventions and Prototypes in December 2019. They may be immersive experiences with augmented and virtual reality, game-based installations, projections and holograms, or physical installations. The Urban Interventions will tap into innovative technologies, activate public
spaces downtown (i.e. storefronts, alleys, parking lots, and blank walls) in new and creative ways, and encourage community engagement. Over 30 teams from the US and across the world submitted their conceptual proposals in response. A selection panel comprised of Ian Klaus (Public Art Commissioner), Darren Numoto (Director Information Technology, City of Palo Alto), Matthew Passmore (MoreLab, interdisciplinary art and design studio), Chris Treggiari (Artist), and Charlie Weidanz – CEO, Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce, and Elise DeMarzo reviewed the conceptual proposals to shortlist 6 finalists and 3 alternates. The panelists applied the following selection criteria:

- Quality and strength of proposed Urban Intervention;
- Dynamic shared experience (or the ability of Urban Interventions to draw the public and encourages dynamic interactivity, engagement and participation);
- Potential to activate the site using technology; and
- Strong nighttime presence.

The full list of selected teams, proposal conceptual descriptions and renderings can be viewed in Attachment A. Each selected team was awarded a $6,000 commission to refine their initial conceptual proposals and realize projects. All Urban Intervention teams entered into professional services contracts with the City and have been working closely with the Public Art Program staff to realize their new media interactive Urban Interventions.

**COVID-19 Impact:**

In light of the spread of COVID-19, a novel respiratory virus, Californian are under the directives of the State Public Health Officer to shelter in place and observe social distancing protocols. In order to help slow the spread of the virus, there are currently restrictions in place on music and arts festivals. While these restrictions may be eased over time, the Public Art Program staff is considering pushing the initial dates for Code:ART2 from October 1, 2, and 3, 2020 to October 2021. Faced with the new reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, all artist teams are also refining their initial concepts to accommodate social distancing requirements.
**Description:** This interactive lightweight sound sculpture will be suspended from tension cords between magnolia trees on King Plaza. A geodesic pretzel-like mobile with extended limbs, the installation will be assembled from interconnected lightweight HDPE irrigation tube segments. *Hydrala* will deploy four channels of audio with transducers embedded in the mobile. Volume levels will be heard within a radius 10 feet from the mobile but mostly inaudible from 20 feet and beyond. The sound will be variable depending on the number of people and their movement around the mobile. When no one is present, the mobile will have a "sleep mode" consisting of a soothing sound that invites people to come and interact with it.

Examples of similar installations: [https://vimeo.com/216083659](https://vimeo.com/216083659)

**Art Experience:** Day and night
Description: CODED ARCHITECTURE 3.0 is an immersive intervention re-imagining the Bells Books /MAC's Smoke Shop alleyway. This installation seeks to create a connection between art, technology and society. The interactive mural printed on paper or vinyl and adhered to the walls (and potentially spilling onto the ground), with different combinations of black and white (based on the binary code) encodes a message in the architecture. The public will decipher an encoded message about climate change by using a binary-alphabet postcard. A new part of the message / short sentence will be added daily in order to decipher the entire message. LED lighting will activate the alleyway after dark.

Art Experience: Day and Night.

Learn more about the artist: https://amormunoz.net/
Urban Intervention

**Description:** The installation will be an interactive wall clad in technologically driven facades that users can manipulate: one side the input, the other the output. On the input side, participants will have a wall of buttons to try to influence and control the display on the output side. On the output side, participants can both provide feedback on successful input attempts as well as see the display/art change in real time.

This is a conceptual rendering. The final installation will be refined for increased social distancing.
Description: Cosmic Cannon is an interactive multimedia light installation designed to have visitors engage with each other in a shared experience through play. Spectators are invited to interact with the pyramid-shaped intervention through touch and immerse the senses with audiovisual stimulation. There will be four oversized tactile LED switches surrounding the four sides of the pyramid. Each button is associated with one musical embellishment that the user can switch on and off, enabling people to create music together. As the installation produces music, an associated visualization will accompany the sounds through an ILDA laser suspended from a metal frame that illuminates the pyramid, and layers of LEDs that create an audiovisual show produced by the audience.

Art Experience: 5-10 pm
Description: The Color Currents intervention is a dynamic interactive digital mural that may be back projected on a screen, or the mapped surface of the tunnel. Color Currents uses projected light to provide the mural’s content while making use of a camera and computer-vision AI algorithms to incorporate viewers' bodily motions into the mural. AI technology will allow for collaborative interactivity for 5-10 people at the same time with real-time engagement and participation in the content of the mural. The mural incorporates the processed in real time “flows” of the participants and passers-by. The directions of motion are tied to particular colors.

Color Currents Video: https://youtu.be/wLqLZWE2gn4

Art Experience: 5-10 pm
Description: This Urban Intervention will include a dynamic interactive large-scale projection, a Virtual Reality experience, as well as a sculptural installation. The projection will feature a video of a surreal cityscape that slowly floods and grows over with tree-like crystals. While the scene is larger-than-life, it stems from a hand-built sculpture placed inside an enclosed set, with a 360-degree camera recording the crystal growth through time-lapse photography. Viewers can engage with a tablet, enabled with a custom-designed app that allows them to pan, zoom, and control what is projected on the wall.

Art Experience: 5 – 10 pm

About the Artist: [https://www.lizhickok.com/](https://www.lizhickok.com/)

Video examples of similar dynamic projections: [https://www.lizhickok.com/ground-waters-crystal-worlds-1](https://www.lizhickok.com/ground-waters-crystal-worlds-1)