



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Economic Development Division

Urbana Arts & Culture Program Monthly Progress Report

2nd Tuesday of the Month– February 9, 2021

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Introduction

The following Urbana Arts & Culture Program Monthly Progress Report describes activities of the Arts & Culture Program for the Urbana Arts & Culture Commission. The report includes information regarding projects that are in progress, recent requests and recommendations from the public, staff activities, and upcoming events.

COVID-19 Crisis Impact

- **Suspension of Programs/Events:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program is continuing to suspend the majority of in-person events and programs in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Staff are following guidelines set forth in the Illinois Five-Phase Reopening Plan and consulting public health guidance. Some events are being held virtually and Urbana Arts and Culture staff are working to share relief program information, resources for local artists, and continue various initiatives.
- **Staffing Changes & Accommodations:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program staff continue to work from home with minor visits to the office as needed. The program welcomed a number of new Arts and Culture Interns this past January and each intern has had a variety of new special projects spanning arts marketing, events planning, and general operational support. The Office Support Specialist for Community Development (former Program Specialist for Arts and Culture and the Market) continues to assist with the Urbana Arts Grant program jury process.

Updates on Current Projects

- **Urbana Arts Grants:** The 2021 Urbana Arts Grant cycle received a total of 49 Urbana Arts Grant applications requesting over \$137,000 in grant funding. With up to \$90,000 in available funding, the Urbana Arts and Culture Program grant applications are under review by independent juries comprised of community members selected for their diverse expertise and experience in Urbana's local arts and culture. Notice will be given to all grantees the week of February 16th, 2021.

Grantees from the 2020 cycle continue to work with the Urbana Arts and Culture Coordinator to address planning issues arising from COVID-19.

- ***Art Inspired in Urbana Highlights:*** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program and The Urbana Free Library are collaborating to produce weekly highlights of local artists on social media. Each post includes a digital image of their artwork, a portrait, a comment from the artist, and weblinks to purchasing the artist's work. Posts appear Mondays on social media.
- ***Urbana Poet Laureate Ashanti Files:*** Urbana's Poet Laureate, Ashanti Files, began her one-year term on January 13th, 2020. The City invited the public to a virtual reception to celebrate Urbana Poet Laureate, Ashanti Files on January 21st, 2021 at 5pm, an event that featured brief remarks from Mayor Diane Wolfe Marlin, Arts and Culture Coordinator Rachel Storm, former Poet Laureate Will Reger, and inaugurated Poet Laureate, Ashanti Files. The virtual reception was well-attended and in addition to the general public, attendees included representatives from local poetry groups, educational programs, City staff, and Urbana Arts and Culture Commissioners.

Urbana's Poet Laureate has an already robust calendar of engagements developing. Key dates are listed below:

Feb 12th, 2021, 5pm-6:30pm Poet Laureate Listening Session

Mar. 2nd, 2021, 12pm-1pm Release of Black Herstory Slam

May 3rd, 2021, 12pm-1pm Dish It Up Lunch on Us Series Panelist

- ***Urbana Youth Poet Laureate Program:*** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program is still accepting applications from teen poets between the ages of 13 and 19 years old for its inaugural Youth Poet Laureate.

In an effort to outreach to local teens, the Urbana Arts and Culture Coordinator has visited Urbana High School classrooms and Art Club and University Laboratory High School classrooms and Arts Honor Society. Additionally, nominations are still be accepted directly from teachers, parents, friends, and mentors. For more information including eligibility and application guidelines, visit: www.urbanaininois.us/poet.

- ***Young Artist's Studio:*** In collaboration with The Urbana Free Library, the Urbana Arts and Culture Program continues to offer Young Artist's Studio workshops virtually using Zoom. Participants are asked to register on The Urbana Free Library's website to obtain the link and password. The upcoming workshop features artist and UAC intern, Natalie Wess presenting *Kids Create Chinese Paper Fans!* in honor of Chinese New Year on Sunday, February 21st. All upcoming Young Artist's Studio workshops will take place virtually until further notice.

- **The Great ARTdoors:** Works on display as part of The Great ARTdoors, a collaboration between the Spurlock Museum, the Urbana Park District, the Champaign Park District, the Urbana Arts and Culture Program, and 40 North Champaign County Arts Council have been de-installed. The committee will soon launch the second installment of The Great ARTdoors for installation throughout the summer and fall. The committee continues to seek partnerships to advance engagement with works once installed and encourage community participation in the #CUARTDoors campaign, inviting residents to share artworks in public spaces.
- **Art for Nourishment Program:** Urbana Arts and Culture Program is partnering with local food distribution programs to present Art for Nourishment, a program to share the creative work of local artists in the spirit of cultivating community and connection. A total of 300 local families will receive an art print. Art for Nourishment is organized by the Urbana Arts and Culture Program in collaboration with the following local mutual aid food distribution efforts: Bucket Brigade, Silver Hearts, and Tiger Market of Urbana School District #116.
- **Artist of the Corridor Exhibitions:** All exhibitions are temporarily suspended as a result of COVID-19 mitigations. The Urbana Arts and Culture Program staff are currently exploring alternative exhibition methods and venues to continue to offer exhibition opportunities.
- **Pandemics as a Portal to Change:** Urbana Arts and Culture Program is teaming up with Krannert Art Museum, Museum of the Grand Prairie, the Urbana Free Library, and the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center to present a new call for artworks from a wide array of artistic mediums (visual art, performance, experimental works) from adults and youth (middle school and up) that imagine what other worlds are possible beyond our current pandemic and social/environmental crises. The formal call for art will be released later this month.
- **Urbana Sculpture Project:** The City of Urbana Arts & Culture Program collaborates with Public Art League to select sculptures for placement in the City of Urbana. Urbana Arts and Culture Commissioners selected their favorites and staff continue to work with Public Art League to confirm sponsorship and placement. Peek Between the Trees, Races, and Ice Pops are soon due for removal. The Urbana Arts and Culture Coordinator recently met with representatives from Public Art League to begin planning for the changeover in sculptures on display.
- **Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program will be supporting the City of Urbana's comprehensive planning efforts by offering some coordinated programming that invites the community to share their visions for Urbana through arts practices, as well as specifically envision Urbana's local arts and cultural landscape 20 years from now. Potential engagement opportunities include arts-specific listening sessions and sponsored programs this spring.
- **COVID-19 Relief for Individual Artists & Arts and Cultural Organizations:** The City of Urbana Arts & Culture Coordinator has been in close communication with the local arts and culture community to promote various relief programs and upcoming grant deadlines. There is a comprehensive listing of individual artist grants nationwide on the Americans for the Arts website here. <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/disaster-preparedness/coronavirus-covid-19-resource-and-response-center> The Americans for the Arts Relief Guide is an excellent resource detailing COVID-19 resources here: shorturl.at/iwCDP.