



City of San Leandro

Meeting Date: May 18, 2020

Staff Report

File Number: 20-094

Agenda Section: ACTION ITEMS

Agenda Number: 10.A.

TO: City Council

FROM: Jeff Kay
City Manager

BY: Jeff Kay
City Manager

FINANCE REVIEW: Liz Warmerdam
Interim Finance Director

TITLE: City Council Discussion of Mildred Howard's Proposed Design for the Work of Art to be Installed Along the Front Façade of the San Leandro Main Library

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Consistent with the City Council's direction at its July 15, 2019 meeting, staff brings forward for the City Council's consideration, based on the City of San Leandro Arts Commission's recommendation, the draft design of a sculpture to be installed along the front façade of the San Leandro Main Library.

BACKGROUND

At the July 15, 2019 regular City Council meeting, the Council approved a \$135,000 contract with award-winning Bay Area artist Mildred Howard for the design, fabrication, and installation of a bronze sculpture to be installed at the San Leandro Main Library. Ms. Howard spent the subsequent months formulating design concepts.

As part of her development of the proposed sculpture, Ms. Howard worked collaboratively with a committee of the City of San Leandro Arts Commission consisting of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission. She also received input from the City's Library Director as part of the process. The proposed sculpture would be cast in bronze from a local foundry in the East Bay and would be approximately 12-15 feet in height and mounted on the front façade of the Main Library, below the exterior clock on the lower portion of the building, adjacent to the main entryway. As part of the project, Ms. Howard also secured an agreement from Quincy Troupe, nationally-acclaimed author, poet and professor, to develop a related poem that would be installed along the façade of the retaining wall located immediately in front of the Main Library building, adjacent to the Library's front lawn area. It is envisioned that the poem would provide additional context for the proposed sculpture. A visual rendering of Ms. Howard's proposal is attached as an exhibit to this staff report.

Consistent with the City Council's prior direction, the proposed design was presented to the City of San Leandro Arts Commission at its February 19, 2020 meeting. That meeting was publicly noticed and took place in City Hall's Sister Cities gallery; it was attended by members of the public. Following a presentation by Ms. Howard, and comments from the public, the Arts Commission unanimously recommended that the proposal be presented to the City Council with a recommendation for approval.

If authorized by the City Council, the artist would move forward with development of construction documents for the proposed sculpture, in conjunction with a structural engineer who has already been retained for the project. In advance of bringing forward the proposed design to the City Council for its review, staff from the City's Engineering and Public Works departments were also consulted to confirm that the proposed design would be viable from an engineering, building code and maintenance perspective.

About Mildred Howard, the artist

Mildred Howard is a local Bay Area artist who grew up in Berkeley. She has a strong track record of developing significant works of art in prominent locations across the country. Known for her sculptural installations and mixed-media assemblage work, Howard received her MFA from John F. Kennedy University in Orinda, CA. In 2015 she received the Lee Krasner Award, in recognition of a lifetime of artistic achievement. She has also been the recipient of the Nancy Graves Grant for Visual Artists (2017), the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award (2004/05), a fellowship from the California Arts Council (2003), the Adeline Kent Award from San Francisco Art Institute (1991), and, most recently, the Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts and the Douglas G. MacAgy Distinguished Achievement Award from the San Francisco Art Institute.

Large-scale installations she designed have been mounted at Creative Time in New York, InSITE in San Diego, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and the New Museum in New York. Public commissions and installations were also executed for the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, the City of Oakland, and for the San Francisco Arts Commission and San Francisco International Airport. Mildred Howard's works are represented in the collections of SFMOMA, the de Young Museum, the Berkeley Art Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, the Museum of Glass and Contemporary Art, Tacoma, the Oakland Museum, and the San Jose Museum of Art. The Anglim Gilbert Gallery in San Francisco has also shown Ms. Howard's work since 1990.

About Quincy Troupe, the poet.

Quincy Troupe is the author of 20 books, including 10 volumes of poetry and three children's books. His awards include the Paterson Award for Sustained Literary Achievement, the Milt Kessler Poetry Award, three American Book Awards, the 2014 Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Award, a 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award from Furious Flower, and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History Award, January 25, 2018, in Detroit, Michigan. His writings have been translated into over 30 languages.

He is co-author with Miles Davis of *Miles: the Autobiography*, and author of *Miles and Me*, a chronicle of his friendship with Miles Davis, re-issued by Seven Stories Press (Fall 2018) and scheduled for release in 2020 as a major motion picture for which Mr. Troupe wrote the screenplay. Also forthcoming from Seven Stories Press are *Duende: Poems from 1966 Until Now* (Fall 2020) and a memoir, *The Accordion Years*, in 2021. Mr. Troupe was also a contributor

to the *Pursuit of Happyness*, which became a major motion picture. Quincy Troupe is Professor Emeritus from the University of California, San Diego. He edits *Black Renaissance Noire* a literary and culture journal published by the Institute of African American Affairs at New York University.

Summary

The Arts Commission recommends that the City Council approve the proposed sculpture design as developed by artist Mildred Howard, and authorize the Arts Commission and City staff to work with her to execute the fabrication and installation of the sculpture and related poem at the San Leandro Main Library.

Fiscal Impacts

Sufficient funding for this project was appropriated in the FY 2017-18 and 2018-19 Arts Commission budgets and encumbered with the existing contract that was authorized by the City Council at its July 15, 2019 meeting. No additional appropriations are requested.

Budget Authority

Funds for the project are appropriated and encumbered in the current Fiscal Year 2019-20 budget, account 010-14-010-8516.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Attachment(s) to Related Legislative File

- Proposed design simulation

PREPARED BY: Eric Engelbart, Deputy City Manager, City Manager's Office

Proposed Work of Art
San Leandro Public Library
Mildred Howard

Arts Commission Meeting
February 19, 2020

Artist Statement:

While we are often taught that asking a question indicates ignorance, intelligence is in fact driven by curiosity. Like many young people, I was curious about the world around me as a child but was often afraid to ask questions. The local library was the one place where I felt free to bring all of my inquiries about the complex world around me. Education is not just about going to school and getting a degree; it's about finding a safe environment where one can investigate, explore, and learn at one's own pace. A library provides that space.

The bronze sculpture I've designed for the San Leandro library continues my ongoing series of works that transform punctuation — an intangible and sometimes invisible aspect of language — into solid sculptural forms. Cast in bronze at 12-15 ft tall and mounted on the face of the building below the exterior clock on the lower portion of the building, the question mark thus assumes a paradoxical dimensionality and permanence. It serves as a beacon to the intellectually curious of all ages, inviting them to fearlessly investigate every mystery they have ever wondered about — from the profound to the quotidian, from the past to the future. The question mark suggests openness and potential, the promise of limitless opportunities to change the narrative of that which is expected to that which is possible.

“The paradox of education is precisely this - that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.” – James Baldwin



It is recommended that the signage be moved to above the archway or to another location.



Curiosity, 2020
Bronze with Steel
reinforcement



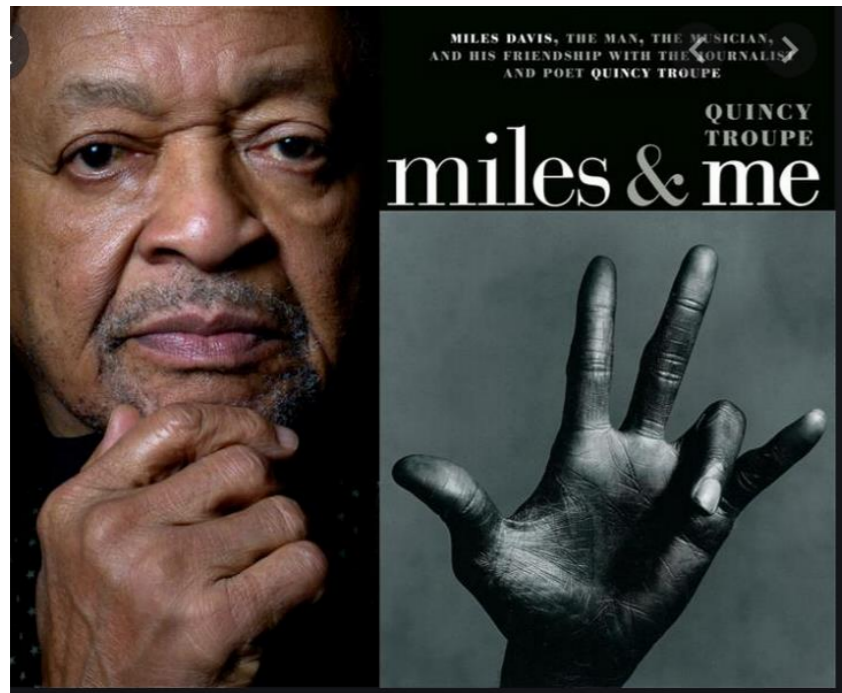
Free	Exploration	Old	Curiosity
	Wonder	New	Public



Poetry along the retaining wall can be a lead in to the library and sculpture
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Poetry is also a backdrop to the activities held on the lawn



About the Poet:

Quincy Troupe is the author of 20 books, including 10 volumes of poetry and three children's books. His awards include the Paterson Award for Sustained Literary Achievement, the Milt Kessler Poetry Award, three American Book Awards, the 2014 Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Award, a 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award from Furious Flower, and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History Award, January 25, 2018, in Detroit, Michigan. His writings have been translated into over 30 languages.

Troupe's latest books of poems are *Seduction* and a book length poem, *Ghost Voices*, published by Tri-Quarterly Northwestern University Press in 2018. He is co-author with Miles Davis of *Miles: the Autobiography*, and author of *miles and me*, a chronicle of his friendship with Miles Davis, re-issued by Seven Stories Press (Fall 2018) and scheduled for release in 2020 as a major motion picture for which Mr. Troupe wrote the screenplay. Also forthcoming from Seven Stories Press are *Duende: Poems from 1966 Until Now* (Fall 2020) and a memoir, *The Accordion Years*, in 2021.

Quincy Troupe is Professor Emeritus from the University of California, San Diego. He edits *Black Renaissance Noire* a literary and culture journal published by the Institute of African American Affairs at New York University. He lives in Harlem (New York) with his wife, Margaret Porter Troupe.