

Art Installation Report

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ENVS 471 Spring Quarter 2018

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Executive Summary

The mission of this project is to provoke and improve sustainability movements on Western Washington University's campus that are currently unseen. Throughout history and culture, art has been present as part of the human experience. Visual communication has the power to transcend language barriers, creating a visual language we all have the opportunity to understand. In this way, art can be a powerful tool in promoting change.

Art has been used in a variety of ways across other campuses in the country to draw attention to sustainability movements. From art galleries showcasing student work under the title "Future Perfect: Picturing the Apothocene" in Albany New York to rusted car parts and junk drug from a river in Athens Georgia and displayed in a "Home for Discarded Objects" art installation to a mobile trailer at Cascadia College that serves to educate students through a variety of continually changing exhibits within the trailer itself, art has been used to educate and promote behavior change.

Western Washington University has the opportunity to do something similar, utilizing the arts to both visualize and promote sustainability on campus. Moving forward, the most successful project would be interactive, attention grabbing, and be reusable year after year. Considering this, the proposal put forward, is to build a mural installation that creates a tunnel around the fountain in red square. The tunnel will be built of nine-foot tall by five-foot wide plywood panels, meaning that the artwork will not be visible unless inside the tunnel. This helps to create an air of mystery, drawing people to the piece, and also helps to maintain their attention while experiencing it. On the outside, a few large questions could be painted relating to the theme of the artwork and getting viewers thinking before entering the piece. The tall walls block out scenery from the outside, while the circle of the tunnel around the fountain, channels viewers in a circle for the entirety of the piece. The panels could be secured in a variety of ways including L-beam supports, triangular supports on the exterior, or beams running across the top and bases at intervals to support the structure. The tunnel would be open to the sky and lit by natural light during the day. In the evening there is the potential for Edison lights to be strung above and around the tunnel if it is desired that the piece be continually visible and accessible throughout the night. Night lighting would also deter any vandals during the duration of the piece's installation. The plywood panels will be easy to take down and store when not in use. Their diversity in arrangement will also make it easy to add more panels during future years of the mural's exhibition, and to paint over old panels to keep the story of Western's sustainability relevant.

The success of the project will be measured in feedback from students, faculty, staff, and all who experience the art. Success can also be measured through the publicity the piece generates, as one of the goals of the project is to make sustainability on campus more visible both to communities both on and off campus. Funding can be sources from a variety of campus resources, but primarily, the Sustainable Action Fund.

Introduction

Western Washington University was one of the first schools in the nation to host a program specifically focused on environmental studies through the founding, in 1969, of “Huxley College of the Environment.” However, the university as a whole has continued to push past accomplishments in the field of sustainability as if they should be celebrated in the present, while a continued sustainable focus has taken the back burner. The value of sustainable action on college campuses cannot be understated. It is a place and time to teach the young people of the planet how to care for the earth through our day to day actions. It also helps us to understand the impact of larger institutions on the environment and how our participation plays into it. There is a continual need to make sustainability movements on campus more visible and in doing so, simultaneously motivate the campus community to improve their sustainability efforts.

By studying the behavior of students on campus and analyzing current conversations about sustainability between the institution and its students we will be able to create a project that not only educates, but also facilitates behavior change. The goal of our project is to create an art installation that reaches the widest campus audience possible, thus facilitating change in a variety of campus communities. The artwork should be accessible, meaning that the language or images used can be understood and influential to a wide range of students, not just those focused on environmental studies. The work should be relevant, meaning it illustrates our current environmental situation and the school’s current modes of promoting sustainability and sustainability education. In helping the work to maintain relevance should it be used over multiple years, a space of the mural should be left blank and painted added each year to help tell the continual story of Western’s sustainability. During the preliminary years, the blank space should propose the question “What’s next?” Provoking thought and concern for the future by students, staff, and everyone who experiences the artwork.

In the long run, this project will not only affect the experience of current students, but also the experience of future students, and the image Western presents to communities both internal and external to the University.



Inspiration was drawn, not only from other campuses, but from successful community mural projects across the country, such as the Great Wall of Los Angeles, pictured above. The wall stretches half a mile down the Tujunga Flood Control Channel of the San Fernando Valley. It tells the history of the ethnic peoples of California, and much like the proposal for Western, panels and pieces are continually added over the years as life continues and new history is created.



Methodology

In designing an interactive mural, the hope is to not only illustrate Western's current sustainability on campus but emphasize the need for more sustainable action. In order for the university to become more sustainable it will require a "all hands in" approach, meaning that students, faculty, and staff are all stakeholders in the project, because each role of the campus community is required for real change to happen. The behavior of the entire campus community needs to be addressed.

Research shows that when individuals sign a petition or pledge, they are more likely to follow through with a behavior change. For this reason, the mural installation will contain a section at the end for viewers to sign their name and pledge a change in action on their part, be it working towards zero waste, conserving energy in their home, reducing their carbon footprint, or a variety of other missions that could be presented through the artwork. In figuring out the specific content of the mural, a variety of approaches could aid in focusing the design. A preliminary step could involve a survey sent out to the campus community simply asking what visuals they would be inspired by from a project like this. A further question could ask what sustainability actions on campus they are already aware of. The answers to this second question would help illustrate which sustainability movements are already visible on campus and aware of by the community, thus illuminating which should be focused on further.

Outcomes/Results

Based on our work from this project, we learned many things. One thing we learned is some best behavior change strategies. One great behavior change strategy is through individuals actually physically whitening down a goal of their own. Because of this we have decided to implement an area of the tunnel for people to leave comments and or goals on and sign their name.

As a team we have come up with some major goals of ours for the installation. These goals were to have something that teaches sustainability and or makes the sustainability/unsustainability at Western clear and is able to be used year after year. So, because of that our team was thinking of a collapsible tunnel that has messages of Western's sustainability in and outside of it.

With this project we learned many things for us personally. One thing we learned is that it is very valuable to talk to a variety of people who are experienced in doing similar projects because they give great advice. Another thing is that it is helpful to involve the public in the design process in order to get better results. We also learned that you should think about the people who are going to be seeing this project. Making sure the content will be attractive and engaging to people while at the same time have people walking away from it with the message you were trying to portray.

Recommendations

We recommend to build an interactive mural tunnel in red square. The main structure will be made of plywood. The interior and exterior will be a mural composed of paint, eco-friendly products, and recycled and reused materials.

We will allow for about six months to construct and build the entire structure. The plywood will cost about \$1000, paints about \$2000, building materials about \$1200, installation costs will be about \$300, the artist/artists will be paid about \$5000, and insurance will be about \$500. One way to get this money could be through a SAF grant another could be a Creative Development grant. We would first need to apply for this grant in order to get it.

The artists of the tunnel could be art and environmental students at Western. We could make this an internship for these students as an incentive to do the art. We will hire a resident artist to lead the group of Western students in creating the mural.

The mural tunnel will have the ability to deconstruct and reconstruct and store when it is not in use. This ability will be valuable to our stakeholders who will remain on Western's campus for many years to come and they will have the option of pulling it out annually. There is a storage building on Western's campus in the basements of buildings where the mural could be kept when it is not in use. Contact Francis Halle, space administration, for more information. It is recommended that this mural tunnel be taken out during spring quarter when there will be nice weather and more people outside. We plan for fall quarter to be the time when there is a call to student's interest, to work with a resident artist, and to source materials. In winter quarter there will be time for each student to paint a panel. Then spring quarter will be the quarter when the installation is demonstrated. We also want to make sure this mural has the ability to adapt and change over the years as knowledge on sustainability will likely change over the years.

The exterior of the mural will have intriguing questions on it that will attract students, staff, faculty, and community members to walk inside of the tunnel. The interior of the tunnel will be the mural painted by the group of students and the resident artist. There will also be areas of blank spaces for years to come. This is how the tunnel will be interactive.

Included here are a few illustrations to help the reader visualize the proposed installation.



Monitoring and Evaluation

To assess whether this project's activities are on track, we have created a timeline with clear goals. Fall quarter is when the interests of students are gathered and they work with a resident artist to source material. Winter quarter is when each student will create their panel. And spring quarter will be when the mural is to be demonstrated.

To assess whether this project is educative, efficient, has an impact, is relevant, and is sustainable, we will read the comments left by students, staff, faculty, and community members. This can be counted up as well as the signatures. The sheer level of attendees to the art installation will also give us an idea of how successful this project has been.

Conclusion

This report includes a detailed plan for our art installation project. Our overall goal is to increase the awareness of the sustainability or lack thereof on Western's campus. And in the end, we hope students, staff, faculty members, and community members who experience our mural, walk away with more knowledge on sustainability than they had prior to experiencing our mural. We have also included in this report how we arrived at some of our ideas and what happened as a result of those ideas. There is also an overview of what we plan to do, how, how much it will cost, and how we are keeping the considerations of our stakeholders in mind.

Imagination is important! The actual images included in the mural have yet to be determined and their design is the next stage to this project. Included here are a few examples of murals from around the world to help provoke thought and demonstrate the emotional power of art.

