

Ekberg, Meri Rose

From: Jon Reske <jon.robinia@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 7, 2022 6:31 PM
To: Madison Arts Commission
Subject: Support for Jenie Gao for Agenda Item 65288

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear Madison Arts Commission:

I would like to submit my support for Jenie Gao to be awarded the Madison Metro Transit Public Art Project. Jenie has contributed significantly to Madison's public art scene AND the public discourse on all the values we hold dear as a city and as its collective populace not only through her works of art, but also through her elevated dialogue and educational programming. Her undeniable contributions on all of these fronts make her a clear-cut choice to receive this opportunity to further build upon all the values of equality, democracy and diversity so entrenched in all that she does and what we as a City should endeavor to promote.

Thank you,

--

Jon Reske

Founder, Co-owner

m: [REDACTED]

[Robinia Courtyard](#) (608) 478-0181

[Jardin at Robinia Courtyard](#) (608) 478-0101

[MadisonTap](#) (608) 478-0188

[Black Locust Cafe](#) (608) 478-0110

Ekberg, Meri Rose

From: Betty Harris Custer <bettyharriscuster@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 8, 2022 9:43 AM
To: Madison Arts Commission
Subject: Metro Bus Art

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All the presentations were exciting. But Jenie Gao's blew me away for the inclusiveness, thoughtfulness of the environment (emphasis on the trees and pedestrians), the materials, the seasons. This is art that will stand the test of time and put Madison in the top tier of public art. I hope she is selected.

Betty Harris Custer

Sent from my iPad

From: [Solveig Hanson](#)
To: [Madison Arts](#)
Subject: Madison Metro Public Art Comment
Date: Thursday, September 8, 2022 11:05:59 PM

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Dear members of the Madison Arts Council,
Thank you for making the Madison Metro Public Art proposal session public and accessible for remote viewing. I'm now living in Canada, but I've spent over half my life in Madison, starting with years 0-18, and most recently to earn a doctorate at UW-Madison. During my grad school time, I lived on the near East side and walked by the Metro building frequently; I was an avid bike commuter and occasional bus rider. I very much appreciated the reliability and respite granted by the bus system when I was too tired, or it was too cold, to bike.

I'm writing in support of Jenie Gao's proposed mural for its deep evocation of Madison as a place, for its focus on the present experiences of diverse Madisonians, for its capacity to build community, and for its striking visual effect. First, place. I miss Madison regularly, but when I saw the cicadas on Jenie's 'summer' panel, my eyes welled with tears. Wisconsin summer, for me, was equal parts buoyancy and annoyance, and the combination of prairie flowers and cicadas couldn't be more apt. Jenie's knowledge of Madison as a place is authentic, and it shows.

Second, I love that the mural lifts up present experiences of Madison bus riders, especially states of waiting and of solitude amongst community. Once again, the coexistence of comfort (of going home) with discomfort (of waiting, or waiting in the cold) is recognized; this mural sees the tensions of both living in Wisconsin and in the present socioeconomic context, and it lets the tension give it forward motion. As a white woman raised in Madison, I know that aversion to tension is part of the dominant culture, and I see that it both erodes relationships and hampers work towards equity. Turning towards tension is a habit that I see Madisonians trying to build — if by fits and starts — and I'd love to see a prominent mural that embodies that energy.

And the mural's production will engage and employ Madison youth, and it's beautiful!

Thank you for the opportunity to give public comment! Looking forward to strolling down a mural-enhanced East Wash when I return to town.

All the best —
Solveig

Solveig Hanson

solveig.hanson@gmail.com
she / her / hers

From: [nipinet.landsem](#)
To: [Madison Arts](#)
Subject: Metro Transit Mural
Date: Friday, September 16, 2022 7:01:39 PM

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Dear Madison Arts Commissioners,

I'm writing to express my full support for Jenie Gao's proposal for the Percent Arts Program's Metro Transit Mural project. My name is Nipinet Landsem. I'm a Madison resident of six years, a local business owner, and part of the Indigenous community of Madison. Jenie's proposal really, really resonated with me. I don't rely on public transportation in Madison currently, but I have in the past and in other cities, and the design just made me think about how much I enjoyed watching the city and the seasons pass from my seat on the bus when I rode it. It's relaxing and empowering and Jenie really captured that.

I don't think any of the other finalists measure up to Jenie in artistic design, ethical considerations, community involvement, or economic impact. Artistically, Vito's doesn't use the space well and relies on an app that will soon be out of date. Deborah's is busy and detailed with a subtle color palette that doesn't stand out much, which will be distracting to drivers. Actual Size Art's design relies on Where's Waldo-style chicken spotting, which is liable to cause an accident on an already dangerous street.

Ethically, I'm worried about all of the finalists except for Jenie. Deborah and Actual Size Art's designs rely on evoking and celebrating a racist, segregated history of transit. I think that whitewashing Madison's past does a disservice to its citizens, many of whom were and are personally harmed by said racism and all of whom should know better than to romanticize racism and erasure. As an Indigenous resident of Madison, I take offense to the idea that Madison's transportation history started in the 1880s, like Deborah's proposal implies. We were here and transporting each other across Madison's rivers, lakes, and land long before settlers ever stepped foot on Ho-Chunk territory. Additionally, Actual Size Art's design is a slap in the face to bus riders who are forced to wait at bus stops with no protection from the elements, as they use bus shelters to protect a vintage bus. Why protect a keepsake from a racist past but not the people who ride the buses today? Deborah, Vito, and Actual Size Art's designs all rely heavily on plastic for installation, and require the removal of fully grown trees that provide valuable shade and cooling to a section of East Washington that is mainly concrete. Jenie's does not.


In terms of community involvement, Jenie's design is best researched and gets to the heart of what people who ride the bus all have in common in a way that doesn't rely on surface level community portraits or the whitewashing of an imagined past. Vito's design doesn't seem to have had any community input at all. Jenie's has not only

involved the community through the planning process, but will throughout its execution as well, which I think is really important. Because Jenie's business and many of her community ties remain Madison-local, the money from this project will also stay in Madison's local economy if Jenie is selected, which can't be said for Deborah or Vito. It's also worth noting that Jenie is the only person of color in the finalists, and the only one who centered the BIPOC community of Madison in her proposal. This is an oversight on the part of the other finalists that only serves to further alienate an already marginalized group of people.

I urge you to choose Jenie Gao's proposal for the mural. Not only does she deserve it, given her history of community engagement and organization and her deep commitment to artistic ethics, but we, Madison as a community, deserve it too. I want to drive past that mural every day and I hope that you do too.

Thank you,

Nipinet
they/them/theirs
gjige.co

 Madison, WI 53703

From: [Hong, Francesca](#)
To: [Madison Arts](#)
Cc: [Rep.Hong](#)
Subject: Support for Jenie Gau Propos
Date: Monday, September 19, 2022 9:51:31 AM

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear Madison Arts Commissioners,

I'm writing to express my full support for Jenie Gao's proposal for the Percent Arts Program's Metro Transit Mural project. My name is Francesca Hong. I'm a Madison resident, a mom, community organizer, state representative, and part of the BIPOC small business community of Madison. Jenie's proposal really resonated with me. Critical members of my staff rely on public transportation in Madison currently. I rode the bus extensively growing up in Madison and watching the city as the seasons changed and communities evolved out the window was an important part of my upbringing. It's relaxing and empowering and Jenie really captured that.

I don't think any of the other finalists measure up to Jenie in artistic design, ethical considerations, community involvement, or economic impact. Artistically, Vito's doesn't use the space well and relies on an app that will soon be out of date. Deborah's is busy and detailed with a subtle color palette that doesn't stand out much, which will be distracting to drivers. Actual Size Art's design relies on Where's Waldo-style chicken spotting, which is liable to cause an accident on an already dangerous street.

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In terms of community involvement, Jenie's design is best researched and gets to the heart of what people who ride the bus all have in common in a way that doesn't rely on surface level community portraits or the whitewashing of an imagined past. Vito's design doesn't seem to have had any community input at all. Jenie's has not only involved the community through the planning process, but will throughout its execution as well, which I think is really important. Because Jenie's business and many of her community ties remain Madison-local, the money from this project will also stay in Madison's local economy if Jenie is selected, which can't be said for Deborah or Vito. It's also worth noting that Jenie is the only person of color in the finalists, and the only one who centered the BIPOC community of Madison in her proposal. This is an oversight on the part of the other finalists that only serves to further alienate an already marginalized group of people.

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Thank you for your consideration,

Francesca Hong

Francesca Hong
(She/Her/Hers)
76th Assembly District
608-266-5342
@staterephong

Ekberg, Meri Rose

From: Sharon Kilfoy <sharon@willyart.net>
Sent: Monday, September 19, 2022 5:08 PM
To: Madison Arts
Subject: Metro Campus Public Art Project

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear Commission Members,

I have hesitated to offer feedback on the metro campus public art project that is to be installed near my home. I feel compelled to do so, though, since I do not want to see this project become a mere popularity contest. I urge you to look at the track records of the finalists and not just the public support the artists are able to garner.

I have known and worked with Actual Size (Gail Simpson and Aristotle Georgiades) for years now. Gail has taught a service learning in art class at the UW for at least a decade in which UW students are placed with community groups to work on art projects. First through the Williamson St Art Center, and then through Dane Arts Mural Arts, I worked with her students for many years. DAMA continues to this day to work with Gail's students in community art settings and to give them real-life experiences with community mural making. I am aware of the curricula that Gail has developed that accompanies the on-the-job experience her students get. She provides them with a comprehensive view of the importance of community art and public art – and the difference between the two. I mention this because I do not know if Gail even brings this part of her practice up when applying for public art projects. To me, it is indicative of the deep, immersive quality of her commitment to art in general and public/community art in particular. If you are leaning toward choosing a local artist, having worked with both Actual Size and Jenie Gao, there is no comparison for me when it comes to quality of work, integrity of intent, and experience with process, materials and community.

I am not familiar with the out-of-town finalists, but both seem to offer something to the project. I am not experienced enough with their work to weigh in. I have shepherded artists – both national and international – through local projects and know the benefit that outside voices bring to the mix. Michael Owen – the Baltimore muralist of the LOVE mural on Willy St – just contacted me this afternoon about staying at my place while he touches up the LOVE mural this fall. He was originally suggested by Karin Wolf for the project – and ended up being a superb fit. So my final word of advice would be to ASK KARIN. Karin has been doing this work a long time – she has great instincts – and is more committed than anyone to seeing that good art fills Madison.

Thanks

Sharon Kilfoy

Director

Williamson St Art Center

1020 Williamson St

Madison, WI 53703

608-658-3736

www.willyart.net

Ekberg, Meri Rose

From: Jade Potter <jgpotter68@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 20, 2022 7:15 PM
To: Madison Arts
Subject: Madison Metro Mural

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Hello,

I am writing to voice my support for Jenie Gao's Metro Transit Mural Project proposal.

I have been a bus rider of Madison for close to 20 years, and Gao's proposal made me feel seen and heard. The care with which Gao has designed this project is both astonishing and heartwarming. The commitment and research that went into the design is evident through the proposal presentation. I found the quotes included that addressed both the beautiful aspects and the issues of Madison Metro to be extremely poignant. Gao's use of the available space is absolutely breathtaking, not to mention respectful. The way the mural combines both the natural elements of Wisconsin through the passage of time and images of riders is fantastic.

I also appreciate how Gao's piece reflects Madison's transport as a shared experience by making the mural itself a shared experience through involvement with the community, not only with Operation Fresh Start but also with a community paint day. This is a piece that the neighborhood can be proud of and proud to be involved in.

Gao's proposal is the most relevant, suitable, and appropriate of the submissions for the community and space. The other proposals seem to look at the bus as more of a historical concept while Gao pays homage to its contemporary relationship with the land and people. One proposal doesn't seem to have any relevance at all to public transportation, and though interesting, will not connect with the community as much as something that appreciates the ridership.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jade Potter

From: [Sara Meredith](#)
To: [Madison Arts](#)
Subject: Support of Jenie Gao's Metro Transit Mural Proposal
Date: Wednesday, September 28, 2022 8:42:12 AM

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Dear Madison Arts Commissioners,

I'm writing to express my full support for Jenie Gao's proposal for the Percent Arts Program's Metro Transit Mural project. My name is Sara Meredith. I'm a Madison resident of nearly 20 years, an artist and full time volunteer for Communication Madison, and part of the Northside community of Madison. Jenie's proposal really, really resonated with me. I don't rely on public transportation in Madison currently, and the design just made me think about how much I enjoyed watching the city and the seasons pass from my seat on the bus when I have ridden on it. It's relaxing and empowering and Jenie really captured that.

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The work that I do at Communication (arts and music non profit) is creating a safe space for everyone (artists in particular) to connect with community. We as an organization dream of the day that safe space is everywhere and not only cultivated in certain spaces. I believe Jenie's proposal is the start of creating this larger safe space. Valuing residents who use public transportation by representing them and engaging them in public art is a great step toward that end

I urge you to choose Jenie Gao's proposal for the mural. Not only does she deserve it, given her history of community engagement and organization and her deep commitment to artistic ethics, but we, Madison as a community, deserve it too. I want to drive past that mural every day and I hope that you do too.

Thank you,

Sara Meredith