South Loop Sculpture Review Panelists

Since 1975 Ta-coumba Aiken has created over three hundred 2D & 3D public art works for urban, rural, corporate and non-for-profit communities giving them a visual voice. “I create my art to heal the hearts and souls of people and their communities by evoking a positive spirit” TTA

Recent projects include (2019), SMV Senior Housing projects, design & fabricating two metal enameled exterior murals, etched concrete walkways and etched glass windows, collaborating partner Seitu Jones work in progress. (2018), Capital Region Watershed District,“FLOW” 8’h by 16’w etched glass wall in new headquarters in Frogtown. In collaboration with Invision Glass Design & Yijia Li. (2018), Walker West Music Academy “Music Lives Here” creating a 74’w by 5’h metal enameled mural assisted by Yijia Li and LED lighting by Cunningham Group.

A Puerto Rican native of South Minneapolis, Candida Gonzalez studied Latin American Art and History at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA, and went on to get her M.Ed. at The University of Minnesota in 2003. She is passionate about education, community engagement through the arts and equitable arts access. In her 15 years of education work in Minneapolis, most recently as Arts Coordinator at Roosevelt High School, she worked on building art programs that focused on equitable arts opportunities, inclusivity of underserved populations, and deeper, culturally relevant arts experiences for youth and communities of color. Through her work she has also focused on providing opportunities and development for emerging artists of color. She approaches her work by centering at the intersection of art, activism, healing and personal/community empowerment. She is deeply invested in the concept of using art and community design as tools to wage love and healing. She recently left GoodSpace Murals, the public art business that she co-founded and ran for two years, leading the administrative visioning and development, project management and curriculum design. She is currently working as an independent art consultant developing community art projects with a social justice lens.

Patrick Martin currently serves on the Bloomington City Council representing District IV. A strong proponent of public art as a driver of both community conversation and economic development, he is excited to welcome a new focal piece to the growing South Loop neighborhood.

Ben Owen is the Director of Arts@MSP at Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport, a program of the Airport Foundation MSP. In this role he oversees all visual and performing arts activities at the airport. He has more than a decade of experience in public art management for statewide public art agencies in the United States. Most recently, he managed the Minnesota Percent for Art in Public Places program at the Minnesota State Arts Board, acquiring works of
art for communities throughout Minnesota using up to one percent of state-funded capital improvement projects.

Notable public art acquisitions that he has facilitated in Minnesota include the newly-developed Riverfront Plaza at the Mayo Civic Center in Rochester; the Bioscience and Health Careers Center at North Hennepin Community College in Brooklyn Park; the Wade Municipal Stadium in Duluth; and the Minnesota Veterans Home, Minneapolis.

In December of 2018, members of Americans for the Arts elected Ben to its Public Art Network Advisory Council. In this role, he will advise Americans for the Arts' staff on developing programs and services that will build a deeper connection to the field and the network membership.

Alejandra Pelinka is the City of Bloomington's first Director of Creative Placemaking. Alejandra facilitates the work of a Creative Placemaking Commission and works with the City’s nonprofit partner, Artistry, and a diverse group of stakeholders to implement and evaluate a Creative Placemaking Plan adopted by the City and Artistry in 2015. She helps the City identify the art, culture and design investments that will best support the evolution of a distinctive, walkable, urban neighborhood in Bloomington’s South Loop and build its regional brand. Alejandra also works to build community connectedness and engagement using a range of strategies. Previously, as Executive Director of Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association (NEMAA), she was responsible for general management of the organization and regionally acclaimed events, such as Art-A-Whirl®, the largest open studio tour in the country. She is passionate about working with artists and community building through the arts.

Erik Pearson was born and raised in Superior, Wisconsin, where he received a B.F.A. in Studio Art in 1993. He was awarded the first artist-in-residence at Lanesboro Arts in 2001 and has been a full time artist ever since. In 2005 he completed his first public mural project, and has created twenty public murals, and eight installations since then, working with city officials, community groups, and business owners in the process.

Erik is currently working out of his Saint Paul studio, Shipwrecked Studio, creating and exhibiting his paintings, murals, sculptures, installations, and music. In 2015, he was the first artist-in-residence for Made Here MN, an organization that gives opportunities for artists to create installations in empty storefronts in downtown Minneapolis. Erik spent several months building circus large sculptures for his installation, in a window in City Center, allowing the public to see his process. He was just commissioned a painting from the Duluth Sister Cities International to be delivered to Japan in 2017. Erik was also honored to receive a 2017 Knight Foundation award as part of the Knight Arts Challenge, and will be creating a large-scale way-finding mural in Saint Paul in 2018.

Erik Pearson’s works can be found in private collections nationally and internationally.
Tamsie Ringler’s artistic practice focuses on landscape sculpture and public art installations that engage environmental awareness. She studied at the University of Wisconsin and received her MFA from the University of Texas, Austin. She teaches sculpture and foundry at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities and serves on the board of directors of Franconia Sculpture Park where she leads the annual Community + Collaboration Hot Metal Pour. Recent exhibitions and public work include at Bascom Art Center, Highlands, North Carolina; Pedvale Open-Air Art Museum, Latvia; Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis where she conducted ‘River of Iron: Pouring the Mississippi’, an overnight iron pour in conjunction with Northern Spark, 2015. Ringler is a recipient of the 2017 McKnight Fellowship.