Site/See Exhibition Series
at Waterfront Park

Olalekan Jeyifous
2020
Task Force Members

- Susie Cohen, Arts Commission
- Allison Nance, Arts Commission
- Jack Browand, Project Stakeholder, City of Alexandria (Park Planning)
- Claire Mouledoux, Community Stakeholder (Visit Alexandria)
- Clint Mansell, Community Stakeholder (Principle Gallery)

Diane Ruggiero, Meridith McKinley, Aliza Schiff
Project Goals

- Amplify Alexandria’s reputation as an of-the-moment arts destination on the water with a new work of art that captures the public’s imagination and is unlike anything else that can be experienced in the region.
- Highlight Waterfront Park as a new civic space that gives prominence to the location where the mercantile city meets the river.
- Bring a new work of art to Alexandria that is informed by the context of the site.
- Foster engagement and interaction with a contemporary work of art on Alexandria’s historic waterfront.
- Attract visitors to experience a dramatic, visually compelling and unique work of art.
- Encourage repeat visits with work that has a presence during the day and the evening.
Artist Selection Process

- Task Force selected SOFTlab as 2019 artist.
- Task Force reconvened in February 26, 2019 and selected Lek Jeyifous as 2020 artist and Mark Reigelman as 2021 artist, both from original invitational call, after interviewing both artists.
- Selection of both artists was approved by the Commission for the Arts.
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<th>Task</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<td>Task Force reviews and recommends Project Plan</td>
<td>Nov 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commission approves Project Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff drafts Request for Qualifications (RFQ)</td>
<td>Dec 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff, consultants, Task Force members recommend artists</td>
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<td>Final List submitted to Task Force for review</td>
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<td>Staff issues RFQ.</td>
<td>January 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artists submit materials.</td>
<td>February 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materials organized and sent to Task Force for review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task Force meets and recommends Lek Jeyifous for 2020 and Mark Reigelman for 2021, after interviewing both artists.</td>
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<td>Artist contract</td>
<td>April 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist conducts site visit, begins to develop Concept Proposal</td>
<td>May 2019</td>
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<td>Technical Review of Concept Proposal</td>
<td>Sept 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist presents Concept Proposal to Task Force. Task Force recommends approval to Commission.</td>
<td>October 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff presents Concept Proposal to Waterfront Commission, Parks Commission, staff of Office of Historic Alexandria and other relevant City departments and community organizations.</td>
<td>October 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commission for the Arts approves concept.</td>
<td>November 2019</td>
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<td>Artist develops final design documents and submits for approval.</td>
<td>Nov/Dec 2019</td>
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<td>Artist fabricates and installs work.</td>
<td>March 2020</td>
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Lek’s Site Visit
May 22 & 23, 2019

- Public Reception at Blackwall Hitch – Presentation by Lek and phone polling activities.
- Meetings with OHA staff, VisitAlexandria staff, City staff.
- Walking tour of Waterfront Park and Old Town, including TFAC, museums.
- Driving tour of Alexandria, including Masonic Temple, neighborhoods.
- Time at the site.
Concept Proposal
My proposal considers the rich and complicated industrial and merchant history of this port city as inextricably tied to its involvement in the domestic slave trade and as home to one of the largest slave markets in the country. These two facets exist as interwoven threads in the fabric of this city and its evolution from a village of farms and plantations to a prosperous port of entry and major center for shipping and manufacturing, on to the residential community that it is now. One cannot commemorate Alexandria’s historical achievements: its symbols of wealth, and commerce, without acknowledging how the participation in the domestic slave trade and the labor of its subsequently freed black communities, contributed to the economic prosperity of the city.

Apropos of current conversations around re-imagining the confederate monument and in acknowledging these interconnected narratives, my approach is to distill the symbols of the city’s merchant and manufacturing history: its factories, tobacco warehouses, breweries, and nearby railways, to simple icons and illustrations that can be combined with other symbols and icons that reflect the city’s involvement in the slave trade, the quest for freedom and the freed black communities. The highlighting of combined narratives occurs in both the ground plane design at the site which visually references “Freedom Quilts” as well as in a set of four sculptural seating platforms that adorn the landscape and feature ornate metal profiles of stoic figures facing the water.
GROUND DESIGN: CARTESIAN TAPESTRIES

In referencing the “Freedom Quilts” in the ground plane design I am not invoking them in terms of the contested hypothesis that the coded block patterns were used to impart secret information about the Underground Railroad but their role in the tradition of craft, artistic interpretation, and folklore; aspects that are important to creative storytelling and the oral tradition. I’m additionally fascinated with how these quilts visually present as abstracted cartographic images that, when combined with other relevant symbols or iconography, can act as a key legend, identifying important references to the industrial and merchant history of this city in dialogue with its incontrovertible past as home to a major slave market and a substantial free black community.

The result is to create not only an informative but a colorful, rich and vivid surface pattern from which the sculptural profiles arise from and work in concert with as engaging and interactive seating elements that subtly reflect the city’s connected histories.
FIRST PROFILE

WATER-JET CUT ALUMINUM or STEEL (POWDER-COATED FINISH)
SECOND PROFILE

WATER-JET CUT ALUMINUM or STEEL [POWDER-COATED FINISH]
SCULPTURE DESIGN: DIMENSIONS AND MATERIALS

BENCH BASE [9'x9']
WATER-JET CUT ALUMINUM or STEEL [POWDER-COATED FINISH]
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The End