



Cultural Arts Programs

Cultural Arts & Marketing Division

PUBLIC ART ADVISORY COMMITTEE AGENDA ITEM IV.

Item: SFMOMA- 2012 SECA Art Award Recipient Z. Abdalian Proposal for City Hall Plaza
Submitted by: Kristen Zaremba, Senior Public Art Project Manager
Committee Date: April 8, 2013

SUMMARY

Staff requests that the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) review and give direction on the proposal by Oakland artist and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) 2012 SECA (Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art) Award recipient Zarouhie Abdalian, for a temporary sound project, to be placed on City-owned and private buildings located in the City Hall Plaza and downtown Oakland, from September 14th through November 17th, 2013.

BACKGROUND

SFMOMA will be closing for two years beginning in June 2013 for expansion. During this time, they are embarking on a series of off-site projects and collaborations, including the first iteration of their 2012 SECA Award recipients' exhibition to off-site locations.

Public Art and museum staff met in the fall of 2012 to explore the feasibility of Oakland artist Zarouhie Abdalian's proposal for a sound-based project consisting of 12" diameter brass bells set with timers to ring at specified times, and located on rooftops and balconies in downtown Oakland and the City Hall plaza, for the exhibition period of September 14th – November 17th, 2013.

Public Art staff facilitated site visits with the chief city building facilities engineer to select three locations on city property with electrical access and the artist's preferred sound projection qualities, including the 250 and 150 building balconies and rooftops. Building management and Public Art staff feels confident that each of the selected locations will work for this project, and encourage SFMOMA to consider extending the installation beyond the proposed two month period.

The PAAC is required to review and approve all public art projects to be placed on city property. Staff requests that the PAAC review and give direction on this proposal.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no direct financial impact associated with this design review and approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) review and approve the proposal by Oakland artist and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) 2012 SECA (Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art) Award recipient Zarouhie Abdalian, for a temporary sound project, to be placed on City-owned and private buildings located in the City Hall Plaza and downtown Oakland, from September 14th through November 17th, 2013.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen Zaremba, Senior Public Art Project Manager

SFMOMA COMMISSION PROPOSAL – ZAROUHIE ABDALIAN TEMPORARY PUBLIC SOUND
INSTALLATION IN DOWNTOWN OAKLAND

2012 SECA Art Award: Zarouhie Abdalian, Josh Faught, Jonn Herschend, David Wilson

September 14 – November 17, 2013 [tentative dates]

Various offsite locations in the Bay Area

Organized by Jenny Gheith and Tanya Zimbardo

SFMOMA press release bio – Zarouhie Abdalian:

Zarouhie Abdalian works with the specifics of a site to create subtle interventions into everyday perception. Often bordering on the edge of invisibility, her minimal installations alter understanding through small shifts in sight or sound. Through her research into the history and physical features of a location, she focuses on simple adjustments such as measuring the sonic vibrations of bass shakers in the walls of an exhibition space with a plumb bob, making a window flutter with mylar, or illuminating an abandoned building with lights set on timers. Her refined modifications transform a viewer's physical or emotional resonance of space. Abdalian explains, "A successful work might act a bit like a speed bump: It may not change your path, but it registers, and for a moment, you move differently."

The Oakland-based artist (born 1982, New Orleans, Louisiana) earned her BA at Tulane University in 2003 and her MFA from California College of the Arts in 2010. Abdalian's work has been included in numerous national and international exhibitions including the *9th Shanghai Biennial* (2012), the *3rd Moscow International Biennale for Young Art* (2012); and the *12th Istanbul Biennial* (2011).

<http://zarouhie.com/>

Zarouhie Abdalian short concept:

Bells regulate the activities of social spaces; indeed, the extent of their reverberation often corresponds with the scope of the authority they signal. Announcing passing hours, shift changes, festivals, calls to service, and emergencies, they reveal a powerful mechanism by which the listener is situated (or *interpellated*) in social and material space. Within the site of the city, a listener's experience is modulated by the cumulative resonance of these chimes and by the action of the various occlusions that structure urban space. For this project, I propose a network of bells for downtown Oakland. I will position five identical cast brass ship's bells, equidistantly radiating from a center point in Frank Ogawa Plaza. At pre-designated times, all bells will be actuated by controlled mallets and will ring for a period of minutes. During this daily event, each bell will play a different but strictly coordinated series of accelerandos and ritardandos. Roughly two spaces are articulated by these sounds: one extends inwardly to the center, the other outwardly from each bell. Perceived from outside the circle of bells, each bell's ring is more individuated than the others; within the center, one hears a dense, pulsating, and clamorous chord. The action of this work is diffuse and inclusive of various publics. As in other installations, I address the dynamics between spectators and a site, and, in reconfiguring the space in which they are situated, I propose novel dynamics among those publics addressed.

Locations discussed with the City of Oakland:

250 Frank Ogawa Plaza: Dalzell Building

Outdoor city worker lunch room

150 Frank Ogawa Plaza: Wilson Building

Outdoor city worker lunch room

Schedule:

February 1, 2013: 1st site visit with artist and City of Oakland Cultural Managers

February 2013: Artist research with programmer and bell experts

March 5, 2013: 2nd site visit with building managers and to test 12” cast brass ship bell

Mid-March 2013: SFMOMA to contact privately-owned building options

SFMOMA installation team to test support structure design options

March 25, 2013: Deadline for PAAC presentation materials

April 8, 2013: PAAC presentation

2012 SECA Art Award exhibition dates: September 14 – November 17, 2013