Preserving plywood protest art

by Margo Ashmore

Anyone who wants to “own a piece of this history,” referring to the plywood protest art created after the murder of George Floyd, gets “a flat and resounding NO” from Memorialize the Movement (MTM) founder and Executive Director Leesa Kelly. “You can attend the public events like anyone else,” but the idea of people making historic artifacts something only available to whoever visits their home “is just a grotesque concept,” she said.

Her dream, and that of allies who moved to the Twin Cities in 2017 and here, black people won’t come.” She is not lost on her. “Someone’s got to be an arts emissary (as fine as long as the skin color is white) and for many people diversity was an afterthought or artistic has been learned the World Economic Forum, whose group Global Shapers, an initiative of the International Political Economy Society, is the resounding NO” from Memorialize the Movement founder.

How did that event go? “People said it was too white,” she blurted out, explaining she’s from Chicago where they don’t hold back. “Perhaps a lot of black people thought it would be accessible for people to “sit with and absorb” and think about the messages of the moment. Community events like these, “a vibe check” at MTM’s spaces at Northrup King Building, is that there will be large sheets of painted plywood stored in a building, is that there will be a public hearing for live, virtual or telephone comments; written comments can be added to the public record until 1:30 pm on July 21.

The Minneapolis Arts Commission (MAC) discussed the ordinance June 16. Chartered in 1974 with funding from the national Endowment for the Arts, the commission’s 17 members, appointed by the Mayor and the City Council, advise the Long Range Planning Division of the Minneapolis Department of Community Planning & Economic Development (CPED) on public art and related policymaking. MAC Chair Joan Vorderbruggen called for a “robust conversation” and proposed a letter of support (passed unanimously), “with an expectation that MAC would have a meaningful role in shaping the ordinance and the department itself.” Guigui Kayin, the City’s Director of Arts, Culture & the Creative Economy, said, “The City Council wants to know how the public feels... your voice is critical.

On June 30, beginning at 7:30 pm, there will be a public hearing for live, virtual or telephone comments; written comments can be added to the public record until 1:30 pm on July 21. The City Council is set to take action on the ordinance the week of July 27. The proposal can be read here: https://mms.minneapolismn.gov/ File/2021-00387

The council link and resources for advocates will be posted on northeasterminneapolisartsdistrict.org

Weight in on creating an Arts Office

by Mark Peterson

In late July, the Minneapolis City Council will vote on an ordinance establishing a Department of Art and Cultural Affairs, Ninth Ward Council Member Alondra Cano, who spearheaded the effort to create the office, said that the arts are a five billion-dollar industry in the city, and the new department “would acknowledge how much we receive from it.” She added current arts support is diffused, the city needs a “dedicated, centralized, and reliable funding source” (the general fund) for arts projects and support, while still pursuing grants from programs such as the Jerome Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Cano noted that there is 105 million funding through the NEA through the American Rescue Plan Act that the city could apply for.

It has been said that over the years, millions have been left on the table for lack of staff to write applications. In November 2019, staff members of the City Coordinator’s office recommended the creation of the department to be accountable for all arts and culture related programs and investments, to increase attention beyond the city’s core to surrounding neighborhoods, establish a dedicated revenue stream for arts and culture investments, and promote the city as a “premier arts and cultural destination.” The funding review over the past dozen years of traditional arts donors, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the livelihood of artists and creative sector, and civil unrest all figured in the urgency of creating a unified response by and for the arts community and the City itself.

A proposed budget for the department would more than double the money for programs and operating costs (from $2.3 million to $5.45 million) and triple the number of full-time employees (from 5 to 15).

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