

Artists in Place: The Bunkhouse Project Pilot Program Summary and Evaluation



Artists in Place: The Bunkhouse Project was an artist-in-residence pilot program that took place from March 15, 2019 to April 30, 2020 in the historic Bunkhouse at the Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park and Zoo (SFFPZ).

Vision

The project grew out of the SFFPZ's desire to engage visitors at the SFFPZ with a wide variety of activities, including the arts, inspiring them to return often. During 2016 numerous arts organizations met with Manager Tim Sinclair-Smith to tour the facilities and contemplate the possibilities for art programming. These tours were facilitated by Community Development staff and resulted in a successful grant application to the Saskatchewan Arts Board's Artists in Communities program in May of 2017. Funding was secured to conduct a design charrette and facilitate three community engagement projects. The SFFPZ committed to renovating the Bunkhouse and providing cleaning services, pest control, general building maintenance, power, and heating for the

duration of the residency. A small amount of City funding for heritage conservation of the Bunkhouse had been saved over the years; this funding was instrumental in allowing the project to take place.

Design Charrettes

Crystal Bueckert led three design charrettes in May of 2018 (report attached). These sessions were attended by 45 people and contemplated how the Bunkhouse building at the SFFPZ could best be used as artist studio space. Participants suggested that the large main floor rooms should serve as small gallery and rehearsal spaces, and that the much loved wallpaper in the main floor front studio be kept intact.



Touring the Bunkhouse



Working on Designs in the Hall

Call for Artists

In the fall of 2018 a call for three artists (or artist groups) went out to the Saskatoon community with the following goals:

- to reimagine and redesign the Bunkhouse as an artist space that will serve as an artist laboratory and incubator
- to develop a pilot project for artist studios at the Bunkhouse
- to actively engage Aboriginal artists and community in the project
- to animate the Bunkhouse and Park at the Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park and Zoo through public art activities

In exchange for a year of free studio space artists were asked to: work an average of 14 hours per week in the studio; maintain a blog and post on social media about their work at the Bunkhouse; host an open house at the studio for the general public, provide one artist talk for the general public; and provide verbal and written feedback to City of Saskatoon staff upon completion of the partnership.

Artists in Residency

Due to the high quality of the applicants and the availability of space in the Bunkhouse, five artists were selected for the pilot residency program: visual artist and new Canadian

Muveddet Al-Katib; Métis Photographer and Filmmaker Marcel Petit, visual artist and filmmaker Wendy Sharpe (who applied for one space/project with Marcel), story-teller Danica Lorer, and musician and sound artist Lenore Maier.



Muveddet



Danica



Lenore



Marcel (photo by Wendy Sharpe)



Wendy (photo by Wendy Sharpe)

Community Engagement Projects



Funding through the Artists in Communities grant was available for three community engagement projects. Danica Lorer, Muveddet Al-Katib, and artist team Wendy Sharpe and Marcel Petit facilitated a variety of projects.

Danica held three storytelling workshops; two took place outside in the park across from the Bunkhouse building and one took place inside the Children's Zoo building. The workshop inside the Children's Zoo had good attendance and engagement while the workshops in the park were sparsely attended.

Wendy and Marcel held a stop film animation workshop in the parking lot outside the Bunkhouse; despite 5 people registering for this workshop no one attended. They carried on and the workshop was live streamed; some of their commentary that day was viewed online.

Muveddet worked with 146 participants in a variety of Saskatoon locations, including the Bunkhouse. Her project began with a series of “Sohbet” sessions where ideas and thoughts on art, integration into society, stories, and how to share with others were discussed. These sessions led into small art workshops where participants created 6” x 6” canvas paintings with symbols of their cultural values. Transportation to the Bunkhouse was not always feasible for participating organizations and towards the end of the project Muveddet traveled to the organizations directly.

Lenore was able to secure funding from the SFFPZ to program two “Goats and Shows” music performances on the Zoo grounds (near the goats). These stripped down music shows that feature Aurora Wolfe and Taylor Jade can be viewed on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=At8bqx6_PJM <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPfXhsThLI8>

Artist Talks

The artist talks were sparsely attended. Danica had 3 people attend her 7pm Tuesday, July 23 talk in the main hall at the SFFPZ. Wendy and Marcel held their talk in the main hall on Tuesday, August 27 at 2 pm for 10 people and also posted their talk on social media. Lenore and Muveddet held their talks on Saturday, February 1 in the event space at PAVED Arts for 15 people. This was the first time either Lenore or Muveddet had given an artist talk; the size of the audience made for a positive and friendly experience. All of the artist talks were promoted on the City's Bunkhouse Project website page and through PSA's.

Renovations

Management and staff at the SFFPZ led an impressive renovation of the Bunkhouse space. Rooms were cleared, walls were repainted, and floors were refinished. The beloved wallpaper in the main floor studio remained. The project did experience several delays, both in the approval and the renovation processes. Residencies were unable to start in January of 2019 and instead took place from March 15, 2019 to April 30, 2020. Running water was not able to be hooked up in the Bunkhouse during the residency. A sewer line was added in early November of 2019 allowing an opportunity for artists to clean paint brushes in the sink.



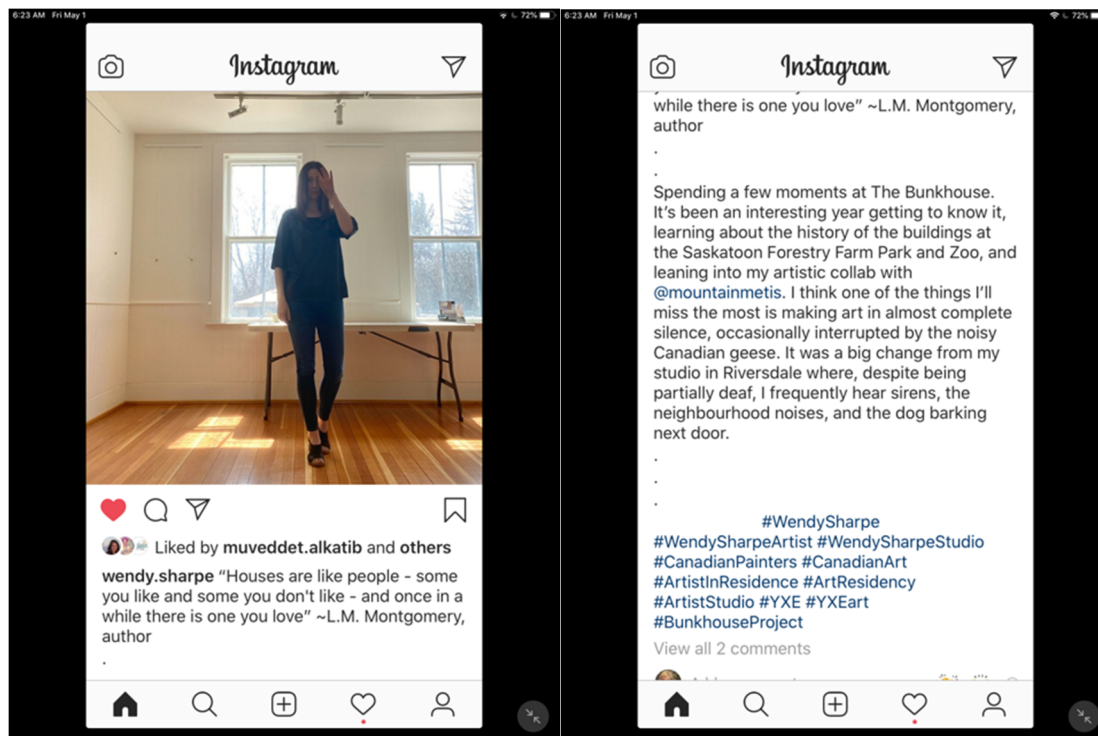
The building currently has private occupancy and needs some improvements to allow for public occupancy. Artists were able to invite guests into the Bunkhouse; the Bunkhouse doors were not able to be opened to the general public. This was not known until after the artists were selected. This also meant that it was not possible to host an open house at the studio.

Artist Feedback

The Bunkhouse has been an extremely valuable space for me as an artist. Without internet access and running water it began as a rustic retreat, not still or quiet, but vibrantly alive with sensory experiences. The room away from daily chores is vital to allowing space for new ideas to root and grow. It can be difficult to find suitable spaces for collaborations. As a literary artist I work alone most of the time, but over the past year some of my group work has flourished. The Bunkhouse is an amazing space for co-creating. My 3-person multi-disciplinary collective 'Howl' used the space for creation and rehearsal for our piece that was presented during Saskatoon's NatureCity Festival in May. In June my writing group used the space to have a workshop with local writer Brenda Baker facilitating. In late summer and early fall the Tonight It's Poetry slam team met to write and rehearse for the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word that was held in Guelph. Before heading to Guelph the team shared a meal in the space with the Indigenous Poets Society. Getting to know the other Bunkhouse artists has been an important exercise in multi-disciplinary connectivity.

I am grateful for the opportunity that the Bunkhouse has given me physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually in such a positive and incredibly beautiful space.

-Danica Lorier



Overall the artists responded positively to their residencies. Most commented on how being in an unconventional space that lacked amenities moved them to rethink their work and create differently. This was sometimes initially frustrating (the lack of running water, for example, meant that some planned activities - like painting and fibre work - could not take place). While the artists were aware that the Bunkhouse would only be available when the Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park and Zoo is open, the 4 pm closing time in the off season created more challenges for the artists with day jobs than was originally anticipated. The lack of Wi-Fi was sometimes stifling or expensive when on-line research was required.

Benefits for the Artists in Residence

The five artists selected for the Bunkhouse pilot project had not worked together previously and furthered their own practices through meeting each other and discussing their work. Being selected for the project and having studio space not only boosted the confidence of each artist but also allowed for a dedicated time and space to create work (something that the majority of the artists involved do not have access to). Being at the SFFPZ provided access to nature (animals and gardens) that inspired the work of the artists and allowed for meaningful contemplation. The artists were privileged to work in a civic facility that was supported by City staff in the areas of building maintenance, cleaning, and marketing and communications.

Recommendations

The Bunkhouse has the potential to be an active arts space at the SFFPZ that will encourage visits to the Park and, by proximity, the Zoo, as well as further the goals of the City of Saskatoon Culture Plan to animate civic spaces, support local artists, and grow the creative cultural economy. A good way to do this would be to:

- Continue the partnership between the SFFPZ and Community Development to program artist residencies at the Bunkhouse. This partnership requires a commitment to maintenance, pest control, power, and heating from the SFFPZ and coordination and management of residencies from Community Development staff.
- Offer studio spaces at the Bunkhouse to artists in exchange for a commitment from the artists to spend time creating in the space and posting on social media about their work. Studios could be offered on both a long term (one year) and short term (4 – 6 weeks) basis. Priority could be given to artists who will provide a reflection on their experience at the SFFPZ in their work.
- Upgrade the main areas of the building to public occupancy; this would allow for the possibility of pop-up gallery shows and sales that would drive visitors to the building (and possibly the Zoo). There may be opportunities to access new infrastructure funding from both the federal and provincial government for this purpose.
- Provide Wi-Fi at the Bunkhouse (Community Development could provide support for this).
- Continue to explore ways to extend the hours of access to the Bunkhouse (possibly through early Master Plan suggestions to move the perimeter fence at the SFFPZ so that the Bunkhouse falls outside it).



Report prepared by Kathy Allen, May 29, 2020.