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The Art on Campus Initiative: Promoting Artists and Educating the Viewer

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Introduction

The role of a university goes beyond providing an education for its students; it is also responsible for supporting and promoting the careers of its students, faculty and alumni. However, educating a population about art in their everyday life and promoting the works of artists can be challenging and difficult to achieve with academic institutions. The Art Department at Florida State University tries to accomplish this mission through their Art on Campus Initiative, which aims to promote the work of university students, faculty and alumni through exhibitions around the campus. The Art on Campus Initiative has not only taken a unique approach to displaying these works outside of the museum context but it also has developed the special opportunity to educate the Florida State University population about art and its social and cultural importance.

Materials and Methods

Since the start of this project there have been several steps taken in order to make Art on Campus more efficient and more effective:

- My first task was to update and redesign the Art on Campus website. I reorganized the layout to make it more user friendly and began frequently updating it to include current information about what works are exhibited and where they are located. This task also included adding up to date information about artists and their works as well as taking new, higher quality photos of the works. In addition, regular updates of the website, including its Featured Artists page, allows for the promotion of more artists but it also lets visitors see something new each time they come to our site.
- Creating materials for publishing is crucial for publicizing any program. I created several materials for publishing including posters and take away pamphlets that would be displayed at each of our exhibition. The posters will give visitors a synopsis of the Art on Campus Initiative and the pamphlets will allow viewers to take a piece of Art on Campus home with information on how they can learn more about the artists and their works.

One of the most important tasks for the Art on Campus Initiative was updating our catalogue system. Due to computer errors we had to start from scratch with our catalogue system. By keeping a record of the works in our collection not only did it allow us to better manage what works are displayed, but it also allowed to us better publicize works either online or through new exhibition opportunities.

Many of our works did not have labels describing their basic information. Our updated labels have a clean look with updated information, providing the viewers with necessary information about each work of art. We also added a new element to our labels: we included the website of the artist. This allows viewers to look at other works by the artist outside of the Art on Campus Initiative.

In our efforts to improve the Art on Campus Initiative we encountered a single, but important issue:
- The works displayed are generously on loan from artists and it is common for artists to need specific works back for upcoming shows. This means that we must constantly remove works and find replacement pieces for the space. A big challenge has been trying to balance the desires of those who want to show the art and what the artist is hoping to get out of loaning their work to the Art on Campus Initiative.

Future Projects

We have three very exciting projects for the Art on Campus Initiative that allow for greater interaction with viewers and allows us to better promote our artists:

- Currently we are working with the Office of National Fellows for a new exhibition space in the Honors, Scholars and Fellows House. This is will add one more location that the Florida State community can be exposed to art and see the works made by our talented students, faculty and alumni.
- We also plan on establishing a fund through individual donations that will go towards the purchase of student, alumni and faculty works for a permanent Art on Campus collection.
- The most innovative idea that has been developed is the creation of QR Codes, which will allow visitors to use their phone to connect to our site and learn more about the works of art around them. Though it is still in the developing phases, you can see an early prototype of the QR Code project below:

A Unique Opportunity

Art on Campus is unique because it is not confined by the limitations that go along with displaying works inside a museum or gallery. Instead, the Art on Campus Initiative is a moving body, present in several areas throughout the Florida State University campus. Works with the Art on Campus Initiative can be displayed at any location on campus, instead of a single facility. Not only does this better the aesthetic quality of the space the works are in, but it also has the unique opportunity to reach a wider audience. Instead of reaching the museum-centered audience, the works with the Art on Campus Initiative can reach the everyday individual, allowing people to unexpectedly stumble upon a work of art that captivates their attention.

Conclusion

The Art on Campus Initiative has made great strides the past eight months to better promote our student, faculty and alumni artists and educate the Florida State community about the important role art has in the world. These past few months have provided a solid foundation for an initiative that will soon be a driving force in art education and promotion at Florida State University.

artoncampus.cvatd.fsu.edu

From left to right: Lady or Tiger by Carrie Ann Baade; Lenda Green by Antonia Crook; Paper Ballerina by Jon Wildman; Birch Melt /NIE by Lilian Garcia-Roig