

Anton Art Center
IDEA Council Public Art Project
May 2022

Background

In partnership with our recently established IDEA Council (Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity and Access), we undertook a series of Community Conversations, hosted on a bi-monthly basis and focused on various topics related to underrepresentation in the arts and at the Anton Art Center with a primary purpose of uncovering BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) experiences with the Anton and broader arts community. The first conversation introduced a statement of acknowledgement and support of the BIPOC community which was approved by the Anton's Board of Trustees. Subsequent conversations touched on the importance of arts access in education and how art can help us have difficult conversations. These conversations are providing important opportunities for Anton staff and board members to hear from community members and gather information related to how the organization has missed the mark when it comes to inclusion, access and equity.

Additionally, these conversations helped provide context and content for a large mural that is being created by Detroit-based award-winning poet and musician Jessica care Moore and graphic artist and Macomb County native Jay Dickerson. Stemming from commentary that BIPOC community members are not represented in local public art, we are working to change that narrative. We are starting with this art project which will be installed on the exterior of a modern addition to the historic Anton Art Center building in downtown Mount Clemens (a former Carnegie Library). This mural is intended to create discussion in the community about underrepresentation in the arts, and champion the contributions of Black artists.

Artists Jessica care Moore and Jay Dickerson have worked together to synthesize experiences and information from these Community Conversations to create a monumental public art piece to be permanently displayed on the exterior of the Anton Art Center building beginning in 2022. We are in the process of vetting mural artists to translate Jay and Jessica's piece to an appropriate mural size of 18' x 24' (486 square feet).

Purpose & Goals of the Project

- Engage our community in discussion around their lived experiences when it comes to art in Mount Clemens and Macomb County, and the Anton Art Center, and to allow us to learn from our community in order to better meet their needs
- Improve representation of Black people in both public artwork content and as public artists in Mount Clemens and Macomb County

Talking Points

- The Anton Art Center's mission is to enrich and inspire people of all ages through the arts. Our goals are to present a wide array of programming to appeal to diverse audiences, provide support for the arts and become a focal point for arts programming, and work towards inclusion, diversity, equity and access in all we do.
- Commissioning and presenting this artwork helps us to meet our mission and goals, as well as helps us work toward our vision of building an open community around creative expression.
- The 2020 Census indicates that Macomb County has a 12.6% Black population (increase of 4% over 2010 Census), and the City of Mount Clemens has a population that is 27.8% Black (increase of 3.1% over 2010 Census). Increasing diversity of residents and visitors to Mount Clemens and Macomb County requires that attention be paid to representing these diverse communities and ensuring opportunities to participate with the Anton Art Center.
- Historically, non-white audiences have had lesser representation at the Anton Art Center and in the arts more broadly. By creating an opportunity for this new public artwork and sharing our platform for the arts in Mount Clemens and Macomb County, we can help to build a new vision for the arts that is inclusive and representative of all those who are part of our community.