

Natalie Draper

From: Becky Boling <bbling@carleton.edu>
Sent: Thursday, September 16, 2021 4:40 PM
To: Natalie Draper
Subject: ACC and public art

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization.

The ACC should provide an avenue for groups like Say Their Names to create grassroots public art. Art is meant to be thought-provoking, to touch us in myriad ways. It's not merely or solely decorative. Even when it can be pleasing, it is not guaranteed to please everyone. Public art does not have the obligation of serving the purposes of local government or local business.

Their Say Their Names project is just the kind of temporary art installation the commission should be making space for and supporting. We should not close down a peaceful effort to include Northfield in the national conversation about race. Public art can be both a memorial and a call to activism.

I'm one of the 12 poets whose verses are on the staircase leading from the 4th street bridge to the promenade along the river. I had been included in public readings in Northfield at NAG and Content Bookstore. I'm published in This Was 2020 collected, edited, and published by Ramsey County Library. I've lived here since 1983. The ACC should be promoting public art, not reducing it to sloganism.

I'm disturbed by a statement that was expressed this past Monday at the ACC meeting that rejects art that is 'thought-provoking,' that sees no value in art that promotes discussion and that sees "public" art only in terms of presenting an attractive picture of Northfield to the outside. Arts and culture in Northfield can't be reduced to putting on a good face for tourism.

Please reconsider your decisions regarding Say Their Names and revise your definition of art and its purposes. We have a very lively artistic scene in Northfield, but the attitude expressed this past Monday runs counter to what many of my writer friends and I myself espouse as artists.

In the City's cultural plan, art connects us with others and with ideas. This leads to art that stirs us, that challenges us, that engages us in thought-provoking discussions. How can this be otherwise?

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