Art in State Buildings - Essex, Vermont

MENTAL HEALTH
RECOVERY RESIDENCE

Proposal - Michael Cerulli Billingsley
OBJECTIVES:

1. To work comfortably and closely with the building team (architects, designers, staff, community)… to choose and create visual art which enhances the lives of all the public engaged with the residence.

2. To coordinate with suggested room themes and color schemes while providing visual images that can resonate with viewers. And to give stable reference points in the landscape and terrain… enhancing a sense of grounded safety.

3. To enhance indoor and outdoor spaces with art created to entertain the eye and relax the mind.

4. To ensure that the presented art is resistant to vandalism, is securely attached to support walls, and is color stable in natural light and sufficiently maintenance-free to last for decades.
THE ARTIST

Michael Cerulli Billingsley

- Fine Arts Undergraduate Degree - University of Delaware
- TV Production Postgraduate Study - University of Delaware
- Clinical Psychology Graduate Degree - Goddard College
- Media Production Postgraduate Study - Dartmouth, SUNY Fredonia
- CME Counseling Studies - Brattleboro Retreat

Born in Canada and raised in central Vermont, Billingsley has been an exhibiting artist since his teen years. In addition to art and media production, he has done public teaching and arts management for the Vermont Arts Council’s Artist in Schools/Artist in Residence programs and in Vermont colleges and universities, as well as directed several non-profit arts organizations in Vermont and Massachusetts. He is a citizen of Canada and the United States, and has exhibited and taught in both countries. He now resides in Plainfield VT.
COLLABORATIVE HISTORY (EXAMPLES)

- Montessori School of Cambridge - with teachers and parents help designed child sleep cubbies for diverse children’s napping arrangements.
- Goddard College - with the faculty designed a new school model for collaborative cross-disciplinary learning, and successfully landed a major 2-year federal grant to implement it.
- Image Co-op Inc. (Montpelier) - over 20 years partnered with Community College of Vermont and other grantors to redesign its gallery and teaching spaces; worked directly with local schoolteachers; and put together a teaching team for college credit media courses and workshops for adults & teenagers.
- Vermont State Hospital (Waterbury) - designed a resident photo & poetry program with Elaine Segal and coordinated a partnership of the Arts Council, the hospital and the Polaroid Foundation to offer poetry and photographic self-discovery for residents.
- The Art Bank, Inc. (Shelburne MA) - a two-gallery/multiple classroom and performance space. Worked with Line Architects, Cambridge to design a new elevator tower next to the building, formed a disabled citizens’ committee to advise the work, and ultimately funded a Universal Accessibility consultant to help enhance the art learning experience for all students.
- Amherst Community Media (MA) - designed additional ADA workspaces in a 6000 sq. ft. rented building, and worked with Douglas Architects, Northampton to build the improvements. Acted as Clerk of the Works for the multi-room project and coordinated with users, the Board and the community to fine-tune the design.
PROPOSAL FOR ART PLACEMENTS

• Install 10 to 12 large photographic images, to scale with the chosen wall and the design proportions of each room, wherever the team sees a benefit. Sizes can vary up to 6’ x 9.5’.
• Mount each image with tamper-proof attachments, acrylic shield and aluminum backing to provide a stable presentation.
• Choose images from exterior landscapes of New England, Ireland and Canada or make new (see examples). Solicit ideas on the range of possibilities, including known places.
• Determine if stained glass is called for and if so, partner with artist Fred Varney for that (see examples of his work).
• Address the visual distraction of the metal gymnasium shed with various possible surface treatments (multiple choices illustrated).
EXAMPLE INTERIOR
ART VISUALIZATIONS

• We are uncertain about the exact size and proportions of display-ready wall areas, the preferred lighting, and proximity to any installed joinery (ie. closets, shelving). Many placement decisions may have to wait until the various public rooms are closer to final build.
• The proposed hanging security will require firm attachments to hidden joists, so careful pre-planning will be advantageous.
• Whatever the chosen images (and their dominant colors and complexity) the printing process allows proportional custom sizing to fit the available wall surface.
• Each piece of interior hung art may require additional dedicated lighting to make it fully visible to viewers.
• The range of photographic subject material is potentially quite broad, and open for discussion.

Sample print - “Grass meditation, Glenstal - Ireland” (Living Room)
MORE VISUALIZATIONS

Sample print - "Fishing House - Cong, Ireland" (Multipurpose Room)

Sample print - "Winter Beaver Pond - Putney" (Multipurpose Room)
SAMPLE PORTFOLIO

Not necessarily images for use in the Residence, but examples of possibilities...

Sample print - “Winter Beaver Pond, Putney VT”

Each one of these pictures was assembled digitally from multiple high-resolution individual photographs, combined together from 3 to 8 color-matched and retouched source images.
Sample print - “Connecticut River, Westminster VT”

Sample print - “Upper Meadow, Starksboro VT”
Although these look similar to single-frame photographic images, each one is actually assembled from 3 high-resolution photos.
Sample print - “Woodard Farm, Waterbury Center”

Sample print - “Lower Village by the Brook, Putney VT”
Sample print - "Townshend Reservoir, Townshend VT"
Some of my work (possibly applicable in a specific location within the Residence) explores the vertical dimension, and hence can create floor to ceiling images.

Certain subjects lend themselves to this dimension.

Sample print - “Grass Meditation, Glenstal Abbey, County Limerick, Ireland”

Sample print - “Forward Apse, Great ‘Dun’ Cathedral, Galway, Ireland”
END OF PORTFOLIO SAMPLES
POSSIBLE STAINED GLASS WINDOW PLACEMENT

• The architect has depicted a potential stained glass window placement between the central corridor and the multi-use room. It is unclear if this must be produced as is (a choice made early on?); if it is a “suggestion” for a window to be made; or if it is arbitrary and instead could be a wall for hung art.

• If stained glass is called for I propose to partner with Calais VT artist Fred Varney. He can and has produced symmetrical circular works for round frames. He also has made landscape scenes of great beauty within circular, rectangular and square frames. These options remain to be explored.

• What follows are several examples of his stained glass art.
Fred Varney, Stained Glass
Fred Varney, Stained Glass
THE GYMNASIUM SHED

On the site, and almost immediately adjacent to the Residence, is the former recreation shed used by the Woodside Juvenile Detention Center.

Because it is so close and relatively tall, it fills the view from vantage points looking in its direction… from the multipurpose room, from the dining room and from several of the resident’s rooms.

It is the virtual “elephant” in the room, filling a visitor’s vision. I wish to tackle it.
This shows the angle of view that is filled by the gym building, as seen from the windows facing in its direction.
One approach is to either hang photographic panels, or (less costly) to use billboard techniques to cover all or part of the wall with a landscape. An image (of trees, for instance) like the one shown, can be made continuous.
A second option - which can make the building almost disappear, is to use a photographic image (on adhered flexible vinyl) of the trees behind the building... as if seen through it.

These are the trees behind the building. The height of the image on the building can easily be varied.
A third option... which is intentionally more tromp l’oeil... is to mix the same photographic image (again on adhered flexible vinyl) with a spray-painted or photographed “ground,” and a painted “sky.”

The painted “sky” would (better than this mockup depicts) be a gradient of soft cool greys... as shown below.

The expense of this solution, certainly more costly, may not be so great as to prevent its realization.
Thank you for your attention. Questions?

Any questions which come up after the conclusion of the live presentation, are welcome at michaelbix@gmail.com