

Faculty and Staff Diversity Mini-Grant Final Report

Project title *US IS THEM/ Here + Now*: Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts presents works from the Pizzuti Collection with newly curated work by African American artists.

Grant Recipients Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts

Date Project Started 1/1/2017

Amount of Money Funded by the Mini-Grant \$5,000

1. How was the grant used to address a diversity or inclusion related goal

U.S. museums have a history of operating as institutions that offer access and participation to mostly white artists and mostly male artists, attracting audiences from those same dominant cultures. Though this has changed some over the last decades, there is much work to be done if museums are to move toward an approach that is truly equitable. As a step in that direction, in 2017 UICA intentionally shifted to a tighter focus on artistic and audience equity with the presentation of *US IS THEM/ Here + Now*. We believe this shift will resonate through UICA's programming and audience growth in the years to come.

The Grand Rapids metro area, the primary audience for this project, has a population of just over 1 million, which has grown by 3.1% over the last three years. Employment has grown by 3.9% in 12 months. This growth is reflected in the area topping national lists for best housing market (*Forbes*), places to visit (*New York Times*), and places to raise a family (*Forbes*).

Some of Grand Rapids' population, however, has been left out of this post-recession boom. The overall poverty rate in the City of Grand Rapids is 26.8%, and nearly 45% of black residents live in poverty. The Grand Rapids Metro area, which is 8% black or African-American, is the U.S.'s 26th most-segregated metro area (out of 102). The city of Grand Rapids, which is 21% black or African-American, currently ranks 51 out of 52 as worst cities economically for blacks (*Forbes*). This exhibition and complementary programs sought to empower the region's African-American community through representation in a major contemporary art show, as well as provide equity in opportunity for artists.

2. Describe the audience that was impacted by the grant's implementation.

Provide quantitative data, if available.

Audience Demographic Survey Analysis and Notes

Responses collected 1/27/17 – 5/30/17 for *US IS THEM / Here + Now*.

Total responses: 1355

Deleted responses (Nonsense or blank): 15

Usable responses: 1341

Race or Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	UICA 2008	UICA 2017	Kent Co.	City of Grand Rapids
White not of Hispanic origin	74%	71%	75%	59%
Black or African American	4%	10.1%	11%	20.9%
Two or more races	7%	6.5%	3%	4.2%
Hispanic or Latino/a	6%	5.8%	10%	15.6%
Asian	4%	4.6%	3%	1.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	1.3%	1%	.7%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	n/a	<1%	<1%	n/a

Declined to answer - .03%

Age

Median: 30

Declined to answer: 37 people

Comparison of 2009 and 2017 Results

Age	UICA 2009*	UICA 2017
0-15	n/a	3%
16-21	31%	17%
22-35	33%	45%
36-55	28%	21%
56+	8%	14%

*The 0-15 group was not included in the 2009 survey.

Breakdown by Decade

Age	UICA 2017
0-17	5.7%
18-24	27.6%
25-34	29.5%
35-44	12.2%
45-54	9.7%
55-64	9.3%
65-74	5%
75 and over	1%

Gender

Female – 57%

Male – 38%

Non-Binary or Third Gender – 5%

First time at UICA?

Black or African American

Yes – 56%

No – 44%

White, not of Hispanic decent

Yes – 30%

No – 70%

Overall

Yes – 35%

No – 65%

Zip Codes

A large portion of UICA’s audience (47%) lives in the zip codes representing the cities of Grand Rapids and East Grand Rapids. An additional 18% of our visitors were from the rest of Kent County. 35% of our audience was from outside Kent County.

58% of UICA’s Black or African American visitors were from the City of Grand Rapids.

3. Grant recipients are required to provide a short narrative that details the specific efforts each of the collaborators made to the implementation of the grant.

Miranda Krajniak, UICA Executive Director – Ms. Krajniak had the overall responsibility for oversight and execution of these programs. These shows created opportunities for interaction among people from different identity groups, creating a welcoming cultural and learning environment that was inclusive of and sensitive to diverse populations, and strengthened and extended collaborations and partnerships with diverse communities. UICA's program of artist and audience equity utilized a combination of presenting artists of color, purposefully showing

established, emerging, and mid-career artists at the same time, along with a grassroots outreach program, and program-planning coordinated by a committee made up of people from the communities we wanted to reach.

Heather Duffy, former UICA Exhibitions Curator - The *US IS THEM/ Here + Now* exhibitions at UICA were organized and curated by Ms. Duffy. This included exhibition, guest curator, and individual artist selection, as well as organization and execution responsibilities for presentation, didactics, and adult program creation (panels and seminars).

Katherine Williams, UICA Community Programs Coordinator - Ms. Williams planned and implemented community events associated with the project, as well as the associated educational workshops, tours, and adult programs. Besides the exhibitions themselves and provided didactics, UICA programmed 11 events for *US IS THEM* and *Here + Now*, the educational program included student tours, art-making activities, artist talks, family days, and scholarly presentations. Six of these are documented on video and available on UICA's YouTube Channel. UICA hosted an 'Equity Drinks' event during the exhibitions, and Dr. David Pilgrim's talk was the post-conference event at the Partners for a Racism-Free Community FORUM conference.

Megan Bylsma, UICA Associate Director – UICA welcomed over 9,000 visitors during the *US IS THEM* and *Here + Now* exhibitions. Ms. Bylsma oversaw all operations during the exhibitions, including planning, finances, contracts, and guest services.

Steven Rainey, UICA Exhibitions Preparator – Mr. Rainey worked with the staff of the Pizzuti collection, the independent curators, and individual artists on all exhibition installation and de-installation, as well as creating the crates for Nakeya Brown's *More Than a Woman* traveling exhibition.

4. What is your overall assessment of the project's impact on the Ferris community? How did this impact compare to what you expected?

Diversity and inclusion efforts for cultural organizations typically employ one of two techniques: The first is an "If you build it, they will come" strategy, which relies on presenting culturally-relevant programming, art, and exhibitions that are representative of communities whom you'd like to attract. The second technique is advertising, marketing and public relations targeted to the communities whom the organization would like to attract. In most instances, when it comes to the arts, these strategies are used separately. Additionally, most often organizations utilize one or the other strategy in a vacuum, without prior or ongoing one-on-one interaction with members of those communities, and without involving those communities in the planning, programming, or promotion of the activities. The consequences of not involving, in a

meaningful way, community members from the cultures who are represented in artwork can be dire: in 2016 and 2017, we such methods exploded in community outrage and protest at the Whitney Museum, the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, and the Walker Art Center when works about people of color were created and presented by white artists and curators without context, an educational plan, or prior dialogue with the represented peoples.

For 2017, UICA resolved to use a new approach in an effort to improve both artist and audience equity in all of its programming. We began this process in 2016 with an initiative to increase the number of black or African American artists whose work would be featured in UICA exhibitions, and to increase the number of black or African American visitors to UICA. UICA assembled an Advisory Committee made up of African American community members who advised UICA staff on exhibition content and inclusion activities through the lens of building equity in our own institution, and extending that equity throughout the West Michigan community. The committee members provided guidance in the following areas: artist selection, exhibition design and user experience, outreach and communications, and the development of panel discussions, speaker events, and performances. The committee and its work was organized by Miranda Krajniak, Executive Director, and implemented by Heather Duffy, former Exhibitions Curator, and Katherine Williams, Community Programs Coordinator. Ms. Williams also planned and implemented community events associated with the exhibitions, as well as the associated educational workshops, tours, and adult programs.

The selection of exhibitions and artists was intentional and goal-oriented: Along with a 'blockbuster' show that featured many household-name artists of color, at the same time UICA would feature several exhibitions of emerging and mid-career black or African American artists. In this way, the work of the newer artists, shown at the same museum and at the same time as the established artists, would be afforded the same platform, context, and legitimacy.

In addition, UICA staff members met with leaders from neighborhood, educational, and business organizations in the region to discuss the upcoming exhibitions and invite involvement from their constituents. UICA staff members attended community events, and UICA participated in other organizations' events as often as possible. In short, UICA staff members worked on building strong one-on-one relationships with many black and African American residents and leaders over the course of a year, which translated into trust, and created a welcoming environment for visitors to UICA.

Our marketing plan, which relies heavily on in-kind media donations and building good word-of-mouth, was multi-channel (social media, print, billboards, and earned media) and presented the work simply, letting the imagery do all of the heavy lifting. Whenever possible, the artists themselves were featured for photos or interviews. An apt analogy for this work is that UICA staff relinquished both the 'stage' and the 'microphone' for our 2017 programming, focusing

instead on building relationships and creating a genuinely welcoming and engaging environment for cultural experiences. At the same time, UICA asked the artists, performers, scholars and leaders from the black and African American community what to present, how to present it, and whom to invite. These efforts were very successful, and are presented in the above results of a demographic survey conducted over the course of these exhibitions. In the first five months of 2017, UICA's audience racial demography was roughly equal to that of Kent County, and we more than doubled the African American audience from when it was last measured. In addition, 56% of the African American visitors in that period were visiting UICA for the first time, compared to 35% of visitors overall. The 10.1% of visitors who were African American was significantly larger than the national percentage of African American visitors to art museums (5.9%).

With this success, following as it did on a similar success emphasizing access and equity in the arts for people with disabilities in 2015, programming and operations at UICA over the next two years have been developed to direct UICA as an institute that operates with the lens of artistic and audience equity – in race, ethnicity, religion, physical ability, socioeconomic standing, and gender. One major lesson learned from implementation was that success was dependent upon a significant investment of staff time both in and out of UICA.

Present a final budget including all funds received and spent related to the project, with special focus on the funds received via the Diversity Mini-grant.

(Attached)

Primary Grant Recipient's Signature _____
Date Dec. 18, 2017