Yale University President’s Public Service Fellow Agency Application
November 8, 2019

Agency Applicant/Organization: Creative Arts Workshop
Address: 80 Audubon Street, New Haven, CT 06510
Website: www.creativeartsworkshop.org
Public Service Fellow Supervisor: Robin Green, Gallery and Programs Manager
Phone: (203) 562-4927; Email: Gallery@creativeartsworkshop.org
Placement Dates: May 26, 2020-August 7, 2020; Start and end dates can shift; we are amenable to a 9-10 week duration
Proposed work schedule: M-F, 9-5 (w/ lunch and time to attend required Fellow engagements as needed)

Creative Arts Workshop’s Mission
Founded in 1961, Creative Arts Workshop (CAW) is a home for creativity and community in New Haven. It has been stimulating and sustaining the visual arts in the Audubon Arts District in downtown New Haven since 1972 when that planned mixed-use district was formed. Our mission as an educational and cultural resource center is to foster creativity through participation in, appreciation of, and leadership in the visual arts. We affirm our commitment to making programs available to a broad and diverse population with intention as outlined in our Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Statement.

Our Vision
At CAW we believe that creativity is a critical part of the human experience and that everyone is inherently creative. Our aim is to establish Creative Arts Workshop as a center for creativity through the visual arts that welcomes and supports that pursuit for all and to help New Haven region residents leverage that which is essential in all of us—creativity. And, in so doing, thrive.

Project Summary
In collaboration with neighbors, CAW seeks to activate Leeney Plaza (an attractive, highly accessible and programmatically grossly under-utilized public space in downtown New Haven) with programs and activities, installations and classes, and work to promote them to create a vital and vibrant destination, better social and cultural cohesion on the street, enhance this human-scale public space, and importantly live into the intended purpose of this planned, mixed-use street.

Project Background
Located in the Audubon Arts District, in heart of the this urban, planned, mixed use street—specifically designed for arts and culture, commerce and residential space—CAW has embarked on a multi-year effort to not only increase its own enrollment,
programs and exhibitions attendance and overall engagement with more of the city’s residents, but also to catalyze more activity and life on the street. increasing its presence in downtown New Haven as a destination. Our aims are to: increase the dynamism of the Audubon Arts District in service of downtown vitality, enable the District to live more fully into its brand promise as cornerstone of cultural life of downtown New Haven, and to literally extend CAW’s work beyond the four walls of its facility into the community, remaining linked through a visually permeable membrane.

To be successful, we must work in a coordinated and collaborative way with other organizations, including Neighborhood Music School, Arts Council of Greater New Haven, New Haven Ballet, Foundry Music and the Educational Center for the arts AND the commercial establishments on the block and nearby.

We have been working to activate CAW—inside and out—to draw new visitors to CAW and Audubon Street. Recent exhibitions and related press suggest we are onto something—and we can do more. By attracting new artists, new works, and themes of social justice, we have attracted upwards of 1000 people in the past two months who had never been to CAW before. This is good for us, to be sure, but also benefits local organizations AND nearby businesses.

**The Project**

Unlike its neighbors, because of its unique combination of studio, class, and exhibition space, CAW stands out as a catalyst to draw residents and visitors to this area of downtown, now dominated by visual and performing arts schools. Our street-facing two-story glass curtain wall invites visitors in to explore and engage in discourse about creativity and its connection to current social contexts.

Audubon Street, between Whitney Avenue and Orange Street has traffic calming elements—a widened sidewalk and curved narrow street to create a plaza directly opposite our façade—Robert Leeney Plaza. The plaza was an original architectural detail in the plan for the creation of the Audubon Art District as an “outdoor room” (August 1970 New Haven Redevelopment Agency Memo).

With both pedestrian and parking garage access, it is attractive, highly accessible and programmatically grossly under-utilized. It is well-maintained by Town Green as a public space. Activating this space with innovative, interesting, and regular programming is a wonderful opportunity to address downtown vitality by leveraging existing assets and partnerships.

Over the years this space has been used for an annual celebration, Arts on the Edge, a site for the Dragon dance for Lunarfest, a site for musical performances as part of
Make Music Day, among others. But regular programming has largely lapsed. Visible from both Whitney and Orange, it could, if well programmed, be a natural attractor for life on the block, and add to the diversity of the neighborhood and downtown.

Utilizing key placemaking strategies, we seek to activate Leeney Plaza with programs and activities, installations and classes, and promote them to create destination, and better social and cultural cohesion on the street.

Working with CAW Gallery and Programs Manager, the Executive Director, and a committee (in formation) to advise on this project, the Yale President’s Fellow will:

- research past uses and history of the space
- set a cohesive, sustainable framework for public programming at Leeney Plaza that lives into the spirit of the original intention of using the space as an “additional outdoor room” and is contextualized by:
  - CAW’s vision and exhibition/public program plans
  - Current civic plans to strengthen downtown and the innovation district (CAW sits within the WAGO area)
- collaborate with local arts and civic organizations to plan a maximized use of the space and its promotion
- develop and implement a kick-off program at Leeney Plaza
- plan a future schedule of programming, with partners to catalyze new activity and investments in the Audubon Arts District
- identify resources needed for future sustained success.

Key Fellow Skills:

- Strong research and communication skills (written and verbal)
- Ability to learn quickly both factual and political landscapes
- Inclination to take initiative
- Ability to stay to task, use complex problem solving skills
- Strong people skills - ability to work with multiple partners
- Exceptional time management skills
- Ability to track project details, summarize status of project internally, and externally
- Facility with MS Word, Excel and Google Suite

Yale and Creative Arts Workshop
CAW has benefited most recently in the last two years with awards of Tsai Center for Innovative Thinking Interns who have worked on research for shared services and helped develop a new program for professional development leveraging
creativity. We are enormously grateful for this partnership and the deep and varied skills Yale students have brought to CAW.

A few photographs of the location of activity that the Fellow would work to activate with our team: