



FY20 ANNUAL REPORT

BU ARTS INITIATIVE

Boston University

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AUGUST 2020

YEAR IN REVIEW

This year was certainly a year to remember for the BU Arts Initiative. Fall 2019 saw new and expanded programming including the second annual **BU Global Music Festival**, which drew 1,000 individual attendees, doubling the previous year's attendance. New to the festival this year was our partnership with the Boston Public Schools (BPS) Visual and Performing Arts Department, providing a full professional development credit in world music for BPS music teachers, designed and executed by BU Music Education Faculty Tawnya Smith (BU Arts Council) and Ruth Debrot. BU student attendance at the festival nearly doubled over the first year with 245 student attendees. While the growth in those numbers is respectable, we plan to increase outreach to students for future festivals, particularly through faculty and relevant courses. The BU Global Music Festival also served as the client for the HUB Cross College Challenge Course - Cross Cultural Exploration of Music. The students in the course worked as staff volunteers for the festival and worked in teams to explore advancing marketing, funding, community connections, and student engagement. This year's festival was named in the top ten world/global music festival awards by Transglobal World Music Chart. It was the only US based festival recognized on that list. In June, we were notified that the National Endowment for the Arts has awarded the next festival (2021) a \$15,000 Art Works Grant. Additional external support of \$7,552 was awarded to us this year through a Massachusetts Cultural Council Gaming Mitigation grant, a fund that "aims to mitigate a direct threat to the sustainability of non-profit and municipal performing arts centers in Massachusetts by providing capital to preserve their ability to compete in a new, unbalanced marketplace."

On August 15, 2019, Francisco Alarcon began a semester-long residency in **Computational Art**, funded and designed in collaboration with the Rafik B. Hariri Institute for Computing and Computational Science & Engineering, BU Spark!, and Innovate@BU, with strategy support from the School of Visual Arts, College of Fine Arts. Thirty-five artists from around the world applied for this residency. Alarcon was selected by a committee with representatives from BU Arts Initiative, Hariri Institute, Spark!, and the School of Visual Arts. This is the first full semester residency we sponsored at BU, and was intended to highlight and build connections around technology and art.



The residency featured workshops, pop-up installations in three Charles River Campus locations (George Sherman Union, Spark! suite, and the Rajen Kilachand Center for Integrated Life Sciences and Engineering) receptions, formal and informal faculty meetings, student design work with the student group BUILDS (Boston University Information Lab and Design Space), and creative work production, particularly in the Engineering Product Innovation Center (EPIC). The residency ended on December 15th. In total, more than 270 people connected with Alarcon through events and meetings, with more than half of those being BU Students. Overall, we consider the residency a success, but through surveys and post residency discussions with key stakeholders, we have a list of areas and strategies for improvement for future semester long residencies, including grounding the residency in a course taught or co-taught by the artist in residence.

For two weeks in October, we collaborated with BU Art Galleries and the Department of History of Art & Architecture (HAA) in the College of Arts and Sciences to exhibit **Domenic Esposito's FDA Spoon** in the green space immediately adjacent to the George Sherman Union plaza. *FDA Spoon* (one of four spoons) was originally created in 2019 by Esposito as a protest, intended to bring awareness to the opioid epidemic and spur accountability among doctors and pharmaceutical companies who manufacture and prescribe the drug. Greg Williams (BU Arts Council) who teaches contemporary art in HAA brought the project to the BU Arts Initiative through the Public Art Committee of the BU Arts Council. The public exhibit was supplemented by programming

with Domenic, including receptions, two panel discussions, and three class visits (social work, school of visual arts, and HAA) which engaged more than 100 people.

With new energy and programming in public art (*FDA Spoon* and Alarcon pop-ups), the Public Art Committee of the BU Arts Council requested that we create a new web page for BU public arts. In the Fall we hired Kimber Chewning, a graduate student in HAA to research and photograph BU's public art for a new **Public Art at BU web page** which was launched in February 2020.



Also in October, we sponsored our first artist residency conceived, designed for, and implemented with the BU School of Public Health to draw attention to the ways in which the arts can support and enhance public health initiatives. In concert with the School of Public Health Dean's Symposium **400 Years of Inequality: Breaking the Cycle of Systematic Racism**, and working with Jennifer Beard (BU Arts Council) and the staff of the Activist Lab, we hosted activist and theatre artist **Rhodesa Jones** for four days. For more than 50 years, Jones has been working with incarcerated women and women with HIV training them to tell their stories through performance. Rhodesa's residency included a faculty/staff forum, a student workshop, a class visit, a performance, and closing comments at the Dean's symposium. In all, more than 400 people at or connected to the School of Public Health were engaged during this residency. "To be honest, I have often thought of public health as a desert where the arts and humanities had no place or, to be more generous, just didn't get enough attention as critical tools. During her week in residence at SPH, Rhodesa Jones facilitated emotionally intimate and evocative workshops and performances that opened new ways to talk about the trauma of structural racism and inequity and stories of resistance and resilience. These are topics we often talk about, but the Arts Initiative and Rhodesa helped us to think, feel, and create in utterly new ways." *Jennifer Beard - Clinical Associate Professor, Global Health, School of Public Health.*

Spring of 2020 was a bit different. We had planned to produce or co-produce six different programs, five of which were cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19. Coupled with our successful programming in the fall, we were on track to see some of our highest attendance numbers ever this year. The three largest programs of the spring were a week-long residency, co-produced with



the School of Theatre, College of Fine Arts, with theatre artist and military veteran **Stephan Wolfert**. Programming would have included performances (at Boston Playwrights' Theatre and WBUR City Space) of his original piece called *Cry Havoc* - a solo performance weaving Shakespeare's words on war and military with his own personal experience. Also throughout the week Stephan would have conducted workshops with students and local veterans, and class visits -

including one scheduled in the School of Public Health. We hope to be able to do this residency in the future, but at this moment in time, we have no dates. We had also planned an event with BU Initiative on Cities at WBUR City Space on April 16th called [From Arts to Placemaking: What Burning Man Can Teach Us About Great Cities](#). Other projects we were to produce or co-produce in the Spring that were cancelled or postpone were the Arts and Ideas lecture with Teju Cole, a Boston based panel discussion [Women Driving Arts Innovation in Boston](#) with MET Arts Administration and Innovate@BU, and a faculty luncheon, *Seeding the Muse*, designed to broaden faculty awareness of the programs and resources of our office.



We did hold one program in February in collaboration with the Boston public art organization Now + There, which featured artist Justin Favela. Favela had an installation at the Prudential Center called *iProvecho!*. The program was a live podcast recording of [Latinos Who Lunch](#) hosted by Favela, and held at the new event space in the Howard Thurman Center for Common Ground. The cancellation of events, including one grant funded event, resulted in a loss of \$8,661 that was paid in deposits for planned events, however a savings of nearly \$37,000 of funds not spent.

While our planned Spring programming was not able to be shifted to a virtual platform, we were able to present four [virtual programs](#) (this page also includes other BU, arts based, virtual programs). In early April, we partnered with BU Hillel and the JustBU Collective student organization to hold a virtual art contest; 49 students from ten schools and colleges submitted work, and more than \$700 in prize money was awarded to five winning artists. [Global Music Today](#) featuring two BU musicology faculty and the Artistic Director of the World Music Institute (NYC) was live on April 27th; 79 people registered and 45 attended, eight of which were BU students. A virtual study break was created with four different creative projects that could be done at home. Each video went live at noon from May 1 to May 4. In total, those videos had 12 views. [Arts, Mental Health, and Social Distancing](#) featured a BU School of Public Health faculty member as well as arts and mental health experts from Harvard

**GREG HOFMANN (CAS'22) PERFORMS
AT A FIRST FRIDAY EVENT**



University and Drexel University. The program was live on May 13th; 360 people registered, 180 attended, 21 of which were BU Students. Attendees represented 11 different countries, and 46 different colleges and universities from 16 states, and two Canadian provinces, as well as Berlin and Cairo.

This year also saw growth in leadership and programming from our **Student Advisory Council**, with the expansion of our student art exhibition opportunities and a new series of monthly First Friday events held in the office suite.

With the help of the Student Advisory Council Gallery Committee, we added two additional calls for student artwork to exhibit on campus. Preexisting calls included the annual Silber Way Exhibition, and our Student Council curated office gallery, which exhibits two to three shows per semester. This year, we were asked to curate student art for the newly relocated Office of Undergraduate and Graduate Affairs, and plan to cycle exhibitions once or twice a year. Additionally, we added a specific opportunity for graphic designers or digital artists to exhibit work in our large office windows, overlooking the GSU stairwell.

An exciting development for the Special Events Committee of the Student Advisory Council was the addition of our First Friday events. The first Friday of every month we hosted a student-planned and student-centric event in our office. These events had an arts activity, snack food, and live music from a student musician. A total of 250 students attended five First Friday events and two end-of-semester Study Breaks planned by this committee.

This year, a total of 84 students attended five Arts Insiders events, which are free, off campus, unique arts programs hosted by an upper class student council member and designed to help students make social connections and experience unique arts opportunities in the Boston area. Of attendees, 30% were international students and 29% were first year students, our two target populations for this program.

EVENTS & PARTICIPATION

The Numbers:

48 events with
22 unique schools,
departments, or programs
\$213k total spent



Attendees:

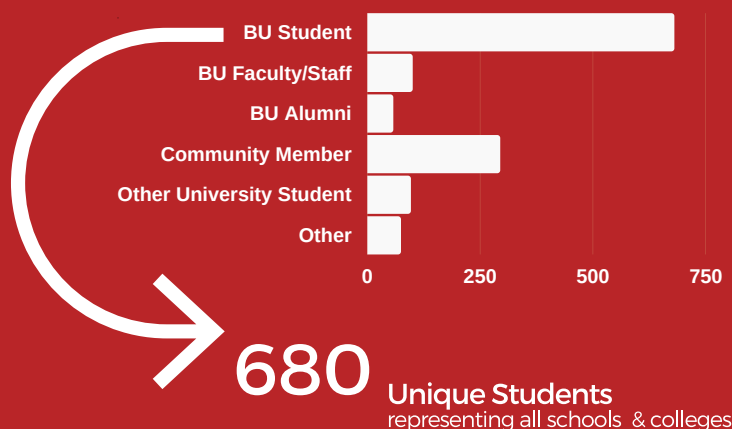


3,790
Total attendees

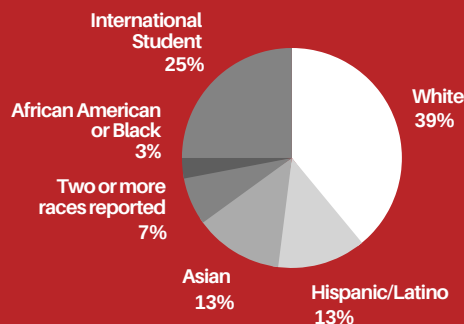
1,790
Student attendees

Data: *collected from 47% of total attendees

Attendee affiliation



Student demographics



*Total events include grant funded programs. Co-sponsored events occurred with Hariri Institute for Computational Science and Engineering, Spark!, Innovate@BU, The Activist Lab at the School of Public Health, CAS History Department, History of Art and Architecture, College of Fine Arts, Dean of Students Office, Musicology & Ethnomusicology, BU Global Programs, CAS American and New England Studies, BU Global House, CAS World Languages and Literature, and the Wellbeing Project. See pages 7-8 for program grantees. Data for unique student count, affiliations, and demographics were based on the 47% of attendees we were able to track. Demographics were collected by asking attendees to self-identify and through Institutional Research data. Numbers do not include BSO and Museum attendees.

OTHER PROGRAMS

MARKETING & PROMOTION

We continue to market and promote any arts program produced by a BU office through our website, social media, and our weekly email. The weekly email list was purged of inactive emails down to just over 8,300 emails. The purge, as well as an updated look to the email resulted in an increase to our open rate that this Spring averaged just over 30%. Through social media, we also promote non-BU arts programming that offers a specific discount to BU students. Our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts continue to grow in followers and Facebook and Twitter in particular result in registrations and engagement with our events. This year, we produced our fourth [Arts Integration video](#) featuring faculty in Sargent College who integrate arts into their course work. Finally, initial conversations were had with Senior Vice President of External Affairs, Steve Burgay, his staff, and Dean Harvey Young (College of Fine Arts) to explore the possibility of visually branding the area west of the BU Bridge as BU's "arts district". With most arts focused spaces, excluding Tsai Performance Center, west of the bridge, there is an opportunity to draw more attention to our academic arts and programming units. Because of COVID-19, the continuation of this conversation has been postponed.

ARTS GRANTS

This year a total of \$37,211 in grants was distributed in the following ways:

Interdisciplinary Arts Programming Grants: \$16,175.00 - Eleven grants to students & faculty in History of Arts & Architecture, World Languages & Literature (3), Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies (2), Neuroscience, School of Theatre Movement, College of General Studies Humanities, and CAS English.

Three Spring 2020 grants were cancelled, of those two returned the funds to us for a total of \$2,500. All three are being rescheduled for FY21.



Arts Integration Grants: \$3,127.00 - Eight grants to faculty in School of Visual Arts Art Education, CAS English, CAS Writing, College of General Studies Rhetoric, World Languages & Literature, and Mass Communication, Advertising and Public Relations.

Three Spring 2020 grants were cancelled and two are being rescheduled for FY21.

Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) Arts Research Awards: \$10,400.00 - Three grants (one of which we split funding 50%) to students in Sociology, Art History, and Linguistics.

Graduate Arts Research Grants: \$7,385.00 - Four grants to students in History of Art & Architecture, Scene Design, Lighting Design, and Anthropology.

RA Programming Grant: \$123 - In recent years, we have offered small programming grants to support creative activities spearheaded by Resident Assistants.

MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP & BSO PARTICIPATION

Due to the closures of Boston area museums & the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO), this attendance data reflects from 7 to 9 months of visits. One notable increase was ICA attendance, which saw a total increase of 5% over the full FY19, despite the March closing.

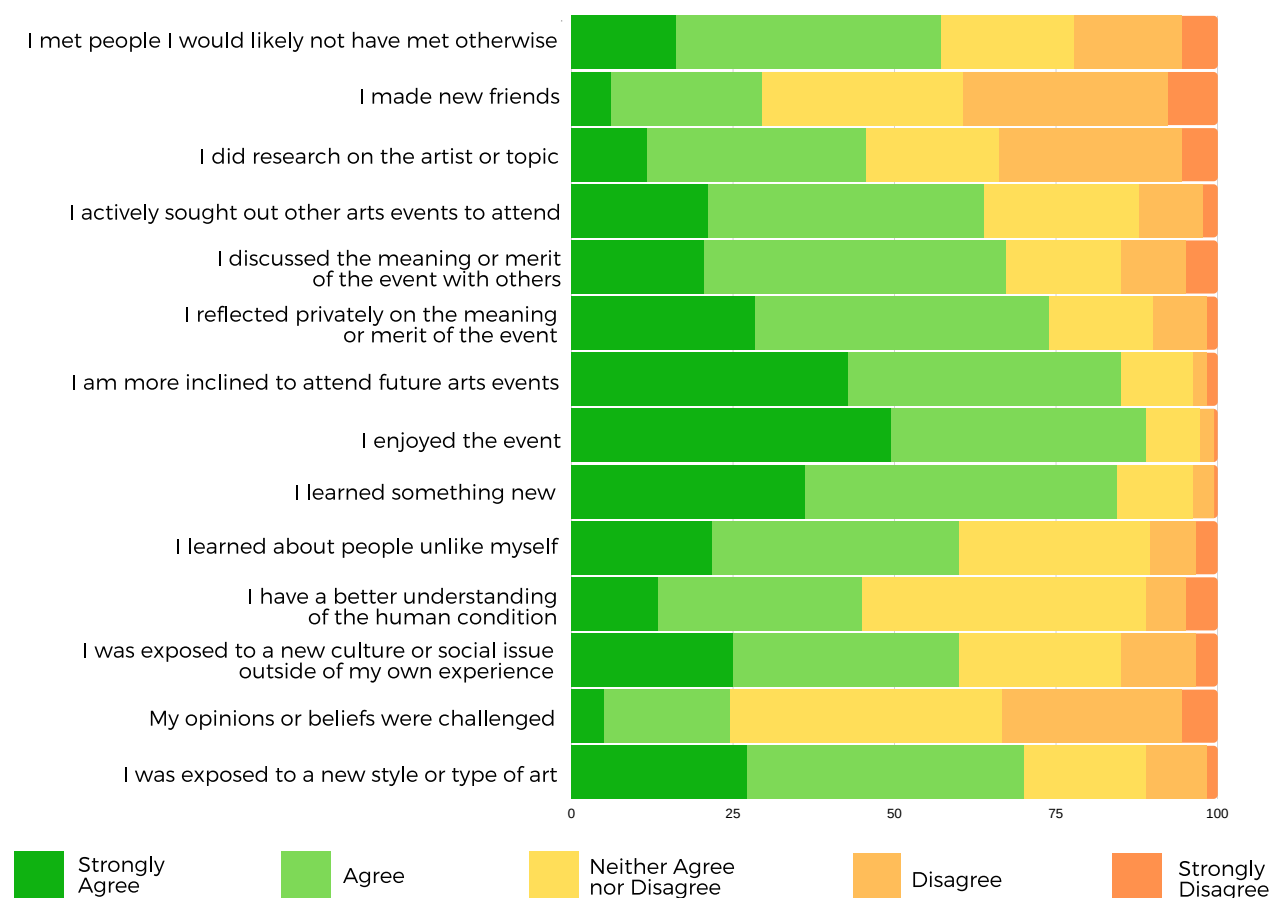
Museum/BSO	FY18 Total Participation	FY19 Total Participation	FY20 Total Participation	% Change from FY19	Date Range
Isabella Stewart Gardner	5,624	6,919	3,084	(55%)	Sept - March
Museum of Fine Arts	17,500	20,715	13,332	(36%)	July – March
Institute of Contemporary Art	2,079	4,338	4,556	5%	July - March
Harvard Art Museum	1,221	1,417	1,214	(14%)	July - March
Boston Symphony Orchestra	2,142	2,849	2,477	(13%)	Sept – March
TOTAL	28,566	36,238	24,663	(32%)	

ASSESSMENT

PROGRAM & LEARNING OUTCOMES

Our end of year student art survey received 337 responses, our highest response rate yet. 53% of respondents attended one or more arts events at BU this year. Of the respondents who did not attend any arts events, we continue to see the top two barriers to participation being “I didn’t know about the events,” and “I don’t have time.” Of those who attended any arts event, 55% attended something at least once a month, which remains similar to past years data. The BU Arts Initiative weekly email continues to be the top way students found out about arts events, with word of mouth and BU Today in second and third places respectively.

Our learning outcomes assessment tool is designed to measure three areas of intrinsic value in arts engagement; social/communal bonds, health/happiness, and cognitive/empathetic growth. We received largely positive responses to our learning outcomes, which remain consistent from past years.



CHALLENGES/FUTURE



We have a number of plans in the works to address challenges and improve systems and practices, as well as expanding successful initiatives. They are:

- Grow faculty outreach and connections, particularly on med campus and in hard sciences, through strategic outreach and information sharing - which will in turn expand our outreach to students for academically based programming
- Expand opportunities for temporary public art installations and programs related to them, particularly of art that addresses social issues
- Develop a detailed model, funding, and resource list (including studio space) for expanded artist residencies, particularly semester long residencies
- Continue to explore and advance antiracist practices and programming, including amplifying Black, Indigenous, and People of Color artist voices
- Continue to explore relevant topics and partners for virtual programming
- Launch the approved HUB cocurricular *The Individual, Community, and the Arts*

MEET THE TEAM

THE BU ARTS INITIATIVE STAFF



**TY
FURMAN**
Managing
Director



**SARAH
COLLINS**
Assistant
Director



**DOROTHY
HIBBARD**
Administrative
Coordinator



**CAMERON
LANE**
Graduate
Assistant

FY20 Student Workers: Montiah Norton (CAS '21) & Lauren Henning (COM '22)

Photo Credits:

Global Music Festival (Front Page, Pg. 2) - Dave Green Photography
Rhodessa Jones (Pg. 4) - Kelly Davidson Photography
Martha Graham Dance Company (Pg. 8) - Sahana Sreepakash (ENG'22)
Public Art - Explosion (Pg. 11) - Kimber Chewning