

SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK ARCHIVE PROJECT

Socrates Sculpture Park seeks a thought partner in realizing its first institutional archive. This request for proposals lays out the full scope of what the archive seeks to accomplish. The expectation for this position is for an initial assessment to inform and contextualize what will be a larger proposal to fulfill the goals enumerated in this request. The primary deliverable for this work is the inventory, which is foundational to the success of this project. The ideal candidate will help inform the timelines for other critical deliverables, assist in establishing a quote for the full scope of work, and offer recommendations for a collections management system.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Socrates Sculpture Park is requesting proposals from experienced archiving consultants for the Park's first institutional archive. The archive will broaden the narrative of Socrates in the context of its mission, preserve the organization's history and focus on artists who have been left out of the historical canon of large scale public art; because they were people of color (BIPOC), women, freely expressing their sexual and gender identity, or all of those intersections.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Founded In 1986 by visionary sculptor Mark di Suvero, Socrates Sculpture Park is a community engaged New York City waterfront park dedicated to supporting artists in the production and presentation of public art.

In its 35 year history, Socrates has been foundational in fostering and launching the careers of over 1,000 emerging and mid-career large scale public art sculptors. In addition, the Park has pioneered environmentalism from its genesis as a land reclamation artist led project, on its five waterfront acres in Long Island City. Socrates has fabricated and exhibited sculptures by renowned artists and introduced groundbreaking work by numerous women and artists of color such as Agnes Denes, Alison Saar, Bob Haozous, Chakaia Booker, Emilio Cruz, Jeffrey Gibson, Michael Richards, Sanford Biggers, Ursula von Rydingsvard and Xaviera Simmons. The Park is a cultural anchor in Queens, NY, the most ethnically diverse county in America, and a pioneer for community led use of cultural space for public engagement.

Socrates is initiating an archive project to tell its institutional story and preserve its history. The organization will lay the groundwork for a living archive to tell the story of its artists served, projects produced and Socrates' overall impact on the field of modern sculpture, particularly in the context of inclusion and promoting diverse artists.

We are in a critical time in American history, where norms regarding inclusion, diversity, representation and access to the arts, are being upended. With the establishment of an institutional archive, Socrates is in a unique position to play a pivotal role in changing the cultural narrative around who creates large scale public sculpture, by promoting and reintroducing the work of women and BIPOC artists who have historically been excluded from the artistic canon.

Throughout Socrates' history, 32% of public art sculptures were created by women, 20% were BIPOC. From 2015-2020, 49% of public art sculptures were created by women, 45% BIPOC. In our 2020 exhibition season 'Monuments Now', 50% of the public art sculptures were created by women, 79% BIPOC. The institution strives to gain more data from the archive regarding our artists who have identified their sexual and gender identities.

The importance of an institutional archive lies in the ephemeral nature of the artwork created here. The large scale sculptures exhibited at Socrates mark the first time commissioning public art for a majority of our artists. Socrates does not have the space to house a permanent collection, at the end of each season, many of the sculptures are dismantled and destroyed. The institution continues to work at traveling artworks to other institutions and exhibition spaces to increase the audience for these sculptures. Without an archive, images and records of these works will no longer exist in the world, or be available to add to the stories, scholarship and legacy of so many visionary artists.

OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE

Socrates seeks to create longevity and access to the sculptors and artists who have fabricated and exhibited their work at the Park.

The living archive should accomplish the following:

- Create access to historical data and offer a robust cohesive narrative about the organization's history as an internationally recognized onsite fabricator and presenter of large scale public art
- Focus on the contributions of BIPOC artists, women, and artists who have freely expressed their gender and sexual identity, to the artistic canon of large scale public sculpture
- Build a foundation for future documentation and highlight the Park's impact on its local, national and international communities
- Create an artist life cycle linking artists who have returned to exhibit their work at Socrates to previous work they created at the Park (examples Jeffrey Gibson, Maren Hassinger)
- Implement archival best practices specifically around dealing with slides, digital assets, video and artist ephemera in a searchable cloud based database
- Create useful tags, robust finding aids and a style guide
- Build a community knowledge base for public programs and engagement
- Emphasize Socrates' environmental work with land reclamation, and suggest a platform for committed and meaningful land acknowledgement
- Provide for strategic use of the archive for future institutional initiatives across multiple platforms, including scholarly research

SCOPE OF SERVICES

- Create an inventory and catalog of assets
- Create a finding aid
- Assist in creating a budget for the costs associated with archival personnel, maintenance, technology and storage in the context of the ambitions set out in the request for proposals
- Suggest organization, record groupings, structure and record retention in support of a searchable cloud-based database, accessible for public and scholarly use
- Assess database options and recommend digital asset management tools
- Recommend best archival practices for current and future assets to include standards of care, maintenance and storage of scannings, digital images, slides, film and video footage, publications and draft drawings as well as for future digitization of books, records and non-digitized items

ASSISTANCE AS THOUGHT PARTNER IN

- Creating a roadmap for determining what should be collected in the future
- Recommending future stewardship of the archives, including current and archival staff requirements
- Activating the archive space, identifying audience usage and best relational experience of our artwork
- Suggesting ways that the institution can better collaborate with department directors, as well as with artists and community stakeholders to create a cohesive institutional vision for the archive

DELIVERABLES

- Inventory of archive assets
- Archive assessment report for Socrates Sculpture Park to include the items detailed in the scope of services with emphasis on findings, record grouping structure, recommendations and estimated budget including personnel, storage and technology costs

CORE QUALIFICATIONS

- Experience developing a living archive that evolves from a static historical reference tool
- Preferred candidate must be familiar with the non-profit art sector specifically in engaging with a smaller institution, Socrates' annual operating budget is 1.7 million
- Be able to speak to the issues of inclusion and correcting lack of representation in archives and artistic spaces
- Ability to synthesize information from institutional staff, artists and stakeholders into functional data
- Ability to identify best practices and industry standards for archiving, technology and storage

FEE

The Archive consultant will be paid \$20,000 for their services: half upon signing the contract, the remainder upon completion of deliverables. This is an independent contractor position and is not eligible for employee benefits.

TIMELINE

The proposed timeline for this project: May 2022 and ending December 2022

TO APPLY

Send a proposal with "Archive Consultant" in the subject line to jobs@socratessculpturepark.org including the following attached as a single PDF:

- Cover letter expressing interest and qualifications
- Resume
- Examples of previous archival work
- Names and contact for three references

Socrates Sculpture Park is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law. The Park is committed to building a culturally diverse community and strongly encourages applications from candidates from underrepresented communities.