

INSIDE LOOK:

AUSTIN AIPP PROJECT
GREEN WATER TREATMENT
PLANT REDEVELOPMENT

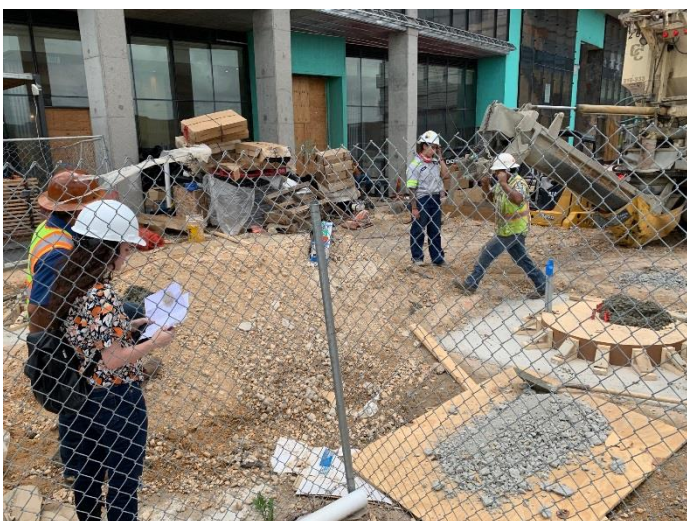
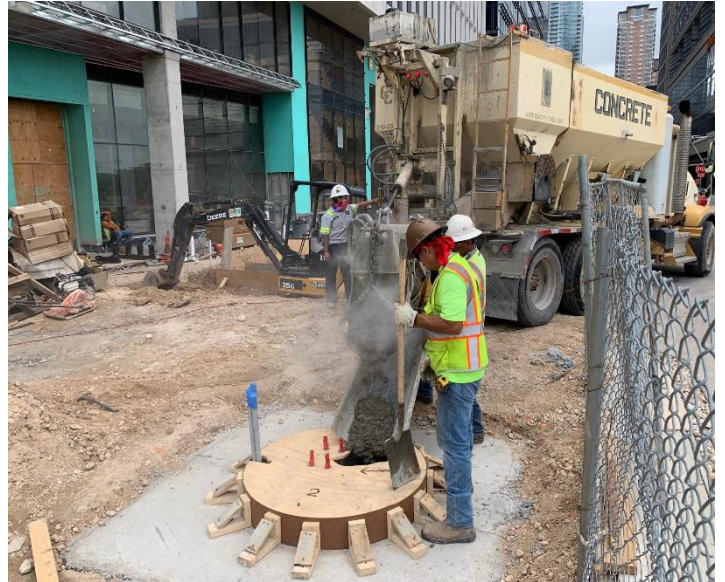


PUBLIC ART DUO
LaunchPAD

NAPA | BY CHRISTINE ANGELONE

I was afforded the immense privilege of being selected in 2017 to serve as the **LaunchPad** artist on New American Public Art's (NAPA) work *Kempelen's Owls*. I had previously completed two small City of Austin Art in Public Places commissions with my partner, and the opportunity to be part of a large project with multiple stakeholders seemed beneficial to me as a practicing artist with my own aspirations to work on larger commissions in the future.

As I reflect on my 2+ years as a LaunchPAD artist in conjunction with this project, I see both my tasks and the process as a whole as a huge feat. After the final design was accepted by the City of Austin, I was sent out to get a 3D scan of a Great Texas Horned Owl that would be used as a model for the finished sculptures. NAPA snail-mailed me an iPad and a 3D scanner attachment. After about 20 trial runs on random objects in my apartment, I was given the go-ahead by NAPA to start talks with Dr. Pamela Owens at The University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Owens is the Associate Director of the Texas Memorial Museum, which happened to have in their possession a taxidermy Texas Great Horned Owl, lovingly nicknamed "The Watcher". It is illegal to have a Texas Great Horned Owl in a private collection, and they are very rare. The specimen that Dr. Owens perched in her office was immortalized in all his glory sometime in the 1930s. There isn't much known about him, mainly that the team got very lucky in tracking him down. He has now been immortalized a second time, but this time in 10 feet of stacked solid surface and stainless steel. "The Watcher" will continue to live up to his nickname as he, and his female companion, keep a close eye on those walking through the 2nd Street District. The scanning task was a great opportunity to learn new programs and skills.



During sculpture fabrication, NAPA discovered that a key element of their design might not be feasible. After a few weeks of mockups and troubleshooting, it was decided they would in fact have reconsider the design. But the artist's adapted in such a way that the sculptures remain interactive. The design change was approved by the City of Austin and presented to the stakeholders involved. I was able to represent the artists at the meeting while they were back at their studios and that helped me understand the importance of face-to-face relationships.

The foundation pour started with building a circular form, taking care that the electrical openings and anchors were correctly placed before the concrete was poured. The artists were unable to be onsite for the foundation pour, so making sure things were properly in place and wouldn't have to be ripped up after the concrete set was not very kind on the nerves. I was able to oversee this process and capture key images for the artists to serve in their approvals.

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After aiding the coordination of the delivery, the owls arrived on-site the day they were scheduled to start installation. Shipped on an 18-wheeler on pallets and in large crates, they made a cross-country trek to Austin. The crates containing the owls and mechanical bases had to be disassembled on-site, then moved into location very carefully using a telescopic crane, as we could not have heavy machinery on the pavers that surround the sculpture's foundations.

Kempelen's Owls by most measures can easily be considered a masterpiece, and it was privilege to witness the development of the piece so intimately. Key lessons that I can take away from my **LaunchPad** experience:

Anything is possible if you are committed to actualizing your vision. These owls were incredibly ambitious and morphed and evolved into something truly spectacular.

The use of solid-surface as an outdoor material was eye-opening when thinking about future projects. 20-year outdoor sculptures are limited in the choice of durable materials, so watching NAPA use the material in a truly innovative way was rewarding.

Don't be afraid of kinetic movement in an outdoor installation, however it is not for the faint of heart. Upwards of 600 individual pieces made up each mechanical base. Careful engineering and fabrication must be in place to ensure the success of the project.

I learned through observation how important it is to listen to all of the stakeholders who are involved on the project, and that transparent and consistent communication is crucial for a successful project. *Kempelen's Owls* were installed on public property being developed by a private owner, meaning the number of stakeholders involved were many. I also learned that there are few things more important than trees! Tree placement, moving trees, tree canopies, tree maintenance, sight-lines.

Open-sourcing. Here's the deal, it would be an incredible feat to replicate these sculptures, as they took the artists almost 3 years! They had access to world class machinery, software, and had experts at their disposal. In addition, NAPA is composed of engineers and architects who are trained in problem solving, building, and more problem solving. But if you should find yourself needing to reference aspects of the project, see how something was designed, what material was used, grab some code, you're in luck! All of the work that went into *Kempelen's Owls* is all at your disposal through CreativeCommons.

Through **LaunchPad**, I learned crucial project management lessons in regards to a large-scale art installation including material selection, time management, scheduling, budgets, and coordinating with stakeholders and subcontractors. With all public art, each project is not the artist's vision completely, but a collaboration between teams that goes through many phases and renditions. It is imperative to be open-minded and not married to any one concept or detail, because public art isn't about the artist, it is about the community in which the art is being created for.

