PACE CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



Photo by Midori Hirose

Midori Hirose, *The Furin Project*

Overview

Over the course of more than a year, multimedia artist Midori Hirose engaged hundreds of southeast Portland community members in collaborative art-making experiences that explored the history of Japanese-American farming in the neighborhood. Working in an emergent process, Hirose collaborated with over a dozen local organizations and entities to help create connections in myriad ways- between old and young residents, past and present of the neighborhood, and the organic and artificial materials and modalities. The project created a platform for elders, students, farmers, and many more to engage with the legacies of Japanese-American internment and displacement in the local ecosystem and built environment, creating a kaleidoscope of healing, meaningful experiences, and lasting connections.

Selecting an Artist

The Culture Work team at the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) with a selection committee composed of members of the Orchards of 82nd Art Crew, ROSE CDC, and neighborhood partners selected Hirose through an open call to artists and creatives released in the spring of 2022. APANO asked for artists to enhance the connections between the history of farming in Southeast Portland and current geography of the Orchards of 82nd. The building is called

Spotlight by
Danya Sherman + Deidra Montgomery, Congruence Cultural Strategies

Mural Arts Institute Leaders and Advisors
Noni Clemens
Joseph Iacona
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Artist Assistants
Pablo Cazares
Chelsea Wilkinson

Address
Several locations throughout Southeast Portland

Dates
April 2022 - December 2023

Organizational Partners
Ikoi No Kai, Kirkland Union Manor, Portland Fruit Tree Project, Montavilla Farmer's Market, Ride Connection, Portland Community College, McDaniel's High School, the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Portland Cultural Lifeways

Documentary Video
https://bitly.cx/Wclmu

For More Information
https://www.midorihirose.info/furin-project

82 - the Orchards of 82nd Street - named for the legacy of fruit trees farmed by Japanese-Americans throughout the neighborhood before WWII and internment. When APANO moved into the building, it created a community art plan to identify priorities for future cultural organizing. Since then, APANO Cultural Work's department commissioned a community-engaged mural by the artists Lillyanne Pham and Paola De La Cruz (the first Catalyst project supported by the Mural Arts PACE initiative), hosted artists-in-residence, created three interior murals, and more. The call for the second Catalyst artist to collaborate with APANO on this topic over the course of a year (April 2022 - April 2023) was designed by Candace Kita, who was then the APANO Cultural Strategy Director, and Roshani Thakore, who was the Culture Work Manager at the time. Hirose was selected because of her interest in the topic and her experience as an interdisciplinary, collaborative, and community-engaged artist.



Hirose at one of the organizational partners' workshops, Ikoi No Kai, a Japanese elders' community lunch and music program

Making Art

Hirose began by doing research about the neighborhood - called the Jade District - learning about Japanese-American the descendants of these farmers still living in the area, and connecting with the existing trees. She built a relationship, and even went bowling with, two descendents of Japanese American farmers named Cheryl and Ken. Hirose later conducted in-depth video interviews with them.

Hirose made a connection to furin, which are a distinctive form of wind chimes that have been hung on trees and in homes in Japan for hundreds of years. Hirose decided to engage community members by offering free ceramic workshops to create and personalize their own furin. Hirose made connections with community organizations, and through evolutionary, relational work, these organizations collaboratively determined a way to engage with the topic and resources. Many wanted to host ceramics workshops as a way of

"We got involved because we were excited to help honor the history of our City, most of which used to be agricultural land and orchards."

"Furin Project" Organizational Partner

offering an art program to their residents, including the organizations Ikoi No Kai (Japanese American Elder Community Lunch Program), Kirkland Union Manor (a senior residence with over a 96% immigrant population), Montavilla Farmer's Market, McDaniel's High School, Portland Community College (PCC) and APANO. To address this indigenous connection, Hirose did a concurrent workshop with the Lifeways of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, working with pigment samples cultivated by Lifeway from the local area. These workshops made space for residents to engage peacefully and creatively with each other, creating connections over the shared experience of molding clay and neighborhood connection. Hirose would also give a talk at the workshop about the neighborhood's history and about furin.

Hirose and community members created 207 bells through 12 community workshops. They used two different kinds of clay to create each furin. Each person designed and personalized their own bell via a distinctive shape and underglaze colors. After they were formed, Hirose worked with and utilized the kilns at ceramics departments at PCC Rock Creek and Cascade Campuses.

Over the same period of time, Hirose also led several other collaborative, multimedia arts projects to further deepen engagement with this topic and with the furin objects. The PCC SE Campus (across the street from APANO) was originally farmland. It served as one of the central locations for hosting free workshops. She became a kind of resident artist at PCC and with other community-based organizations, where each organization or teacher could find

their own way to share learning about the topic and get involved with the community. These included:

- The Learning Garden, Community Based Learning Department, and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).
- GIS Story and sound map and community survey. In collaboration with the PCC Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Club, GIS professors, the Music and Sonic Arts, New Media Coding and Photography Department, an interactive story map and community survey sound was created. The GIS club had received a grant to investigate how GIS could integrate AI and machine learning. The result is a thorough website charting the history of the neighborhood, Hirose's "Furin Project", and an interactive sound map where community members can record sounds and take photos and then upload them to a specific place on the map. QR code
- Interactive furin sound installation. PCC professors collaborated with Hirose to photograph each bell, record sounds of each bells ringing, and then created an AI code to generate random sound and video imagery.
- Fruit tree installation. The Portland Fruit Tree Project attended a workshop at PCC, and gave participants planting materials. In conjunction, they spent days planting culturally relevant fruit trees (Yuzu and Persimmon) around the neighborhood for free for residents on their property. Interestingly, while some of Portland used to be farmland, one of the ways disinvestment manifests in the SE neighborhood is a lack of shade. What fruit trees used to be planted (apples and pears) are not climate resilient or culturally relevant.

Community members create furin bells at a workshop



Photo by Jordan Boyd

Furin bells are installed at the PCC Community Center

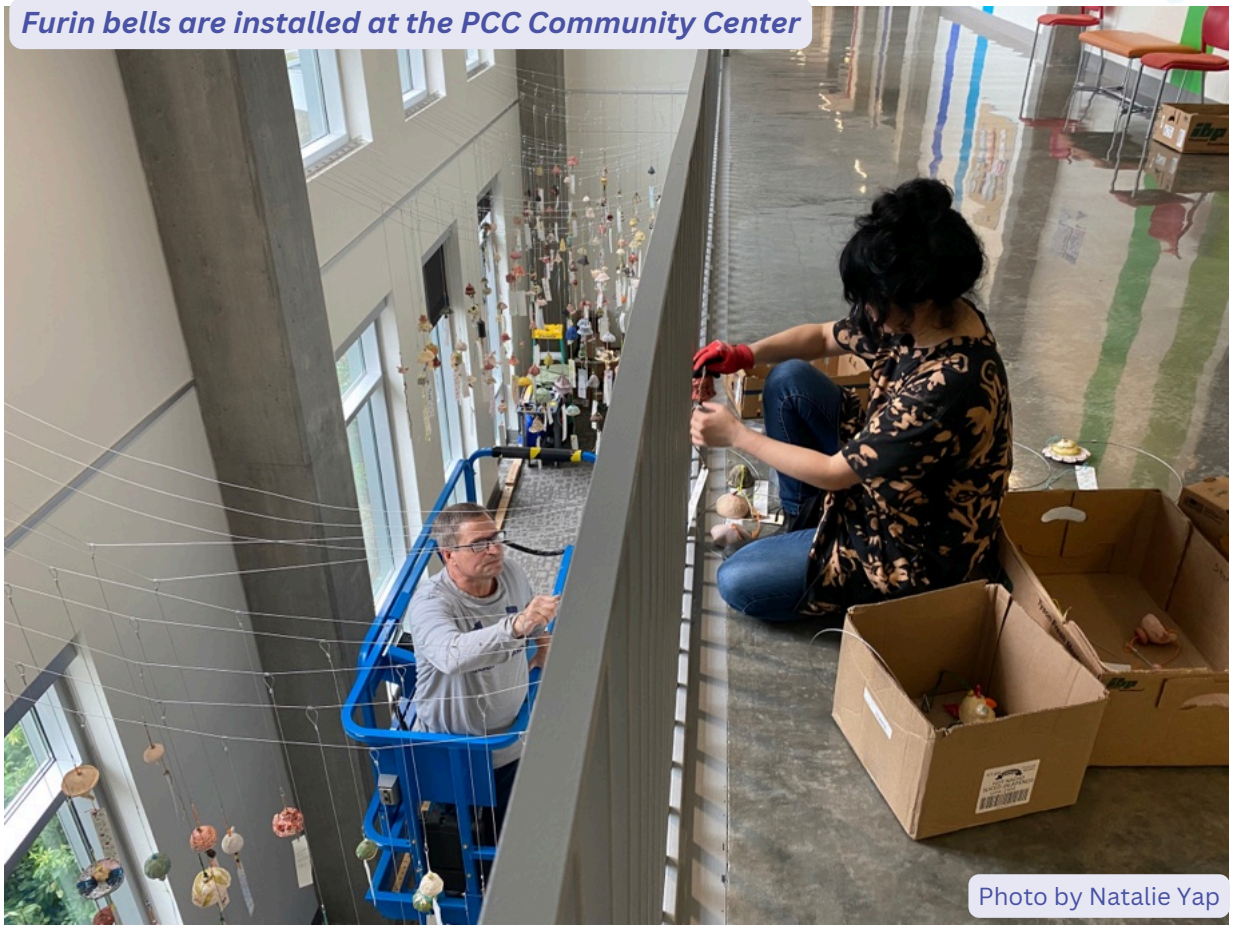


Photo by Natalie Yap

The clay bells were then installed in the PCC community center in a two-level space, creating a beautiful interactive and immersive experience. The bells were installed from April 10 - June 9 of 2023, and a symposium was held on May 4, 2023 for the project. The AI piece along with stills from the sound map were also installed in a gallery space at another PCC building. The symposium invited all organizations and participants to come together for an interactive walk through the learning garden, with a series of talks from partners at a Community Hall, and then to see the bells exhibition in two gallery spaces. The event culminated with a community dinner at APANO's O82 community space with local restaurants.

Engagement didn't end with the symposium. When the bells were de-installed, Hirose created gift bags for all workshop participants. Each bell was distributed to a community member who participated, rather than back to the original maker. This exchange added another community connection. There was also a QR code in the gift bag so that participants could take photos of themselves with their new bells and post it on the GIS story map. Hirose was invited to lead a furin workshop at the Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, the city's leading contemporary art museum and Hirose also spoke on a panel discussion with PCC GIS students.

Reflecting on the project's goals, impacts, and challenges

Hirose and the APANO team named that the three main goals of the second Catalyst project were to (1) Honor the history of Japanese American farming in the neighborhood, (2) increase belonging for a wide variety of neighborhood residents, and (3) increase community resilience through strengthening organizational connections. This project accomplished these goals and more through its unique interdisciplinary activities, at the center of which was Hirose, who was able to accomplish this constellation of work by virtue of her creative vision, warmth, and engaging style of community organizing. The project also helped move the needle on many of the broader intended impacts of the PACE catalyst projects (shown below), especially with regards to having art that reflected community cultural identities, strengthened potential cultural organizing, and supported capacity building for artists of color.

Note: The indications of impact were shared with PACE project staff and learning consultants. While longer-term impacts need to be tracked over time, many of the indications of impact relate directly to the goals PACE had set out for itself in terms of how it can impact change in people, place, and practice with the ultimate goal of creating more just and equitable cities through cultural and creative practice.

Overall PACE Goals

Change in People

1. Build collective power of BIPOC communities
2. Generate & equitably redistribute communally held resources

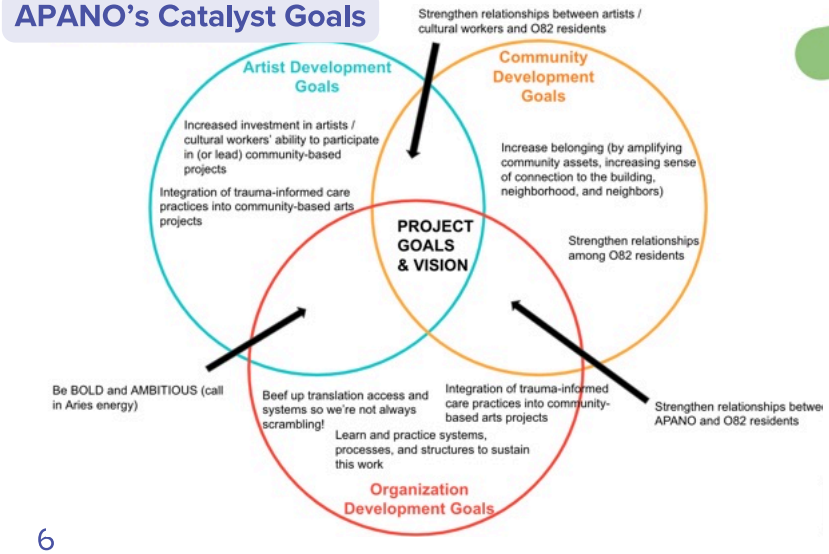
Change in Places

3. Reflect community cultural identities
4. Strengthen community-based cultural organizing

Change in Practice

5. Support and break down barriers for artists of color
6. Increase accountability of organizations to BIPOC residents

APANO's Catalyst Goals



PACE Reflection Agenda ©2024 Congruence Cultural Strategies..

“There were so many moments of connection - learning stories; making, assembling, receiving bells; student volunteers; and so much more.”

“Furin Project” Participant

Hirose was also confronted with several unexpected challenges. There was a lot of staff turnover at APANO throughout the course of the project. The entire Cultural Work department staff turned over throughout the year. As a result, Hirose needed to administer the project herself. The project also lasted for much longer than originally planned. In some ways, this is wonderful; however the question of whether enough of an artist stipend was given to support these extensive and unexpected aspects and timelines.



Four of the 207 unique handmade furin bells

Photos by Midori Hirose

Hirose leads PCC students in a furin bell-making workshop



Photo by Chelsea Wilkinson

About the Artist

Midori Hirose (born in Hood River, OR) is a Japanese American interdisciplinary artist based in Portland, OR. Hirose explores themes of memory, transformation, and connection using playful nuance to discover new modes of communication. In her work, community bonds, recognizing space as a necessary part of the generative process through collaborations, historical narrative, perception (physiological and psychological), and storytelling are interchangeable with physical objects and materials. Research, materials, and techniques become animate models of emergent taxonomy. Hirose calls her relationship to this history "material storytelling." She sees her sculptures as dimensional illustrations of these investigations. They are metaphors for the complexity of knowing.

Hirose's work has been shown nationally and internationally, including solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA, and Disjecta Contemporary Art Center (now called Oregon Contemporary) for the Portland Biennial. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at The Lumber Room in Portland, OR; East/West Project, Berlin, Germany; Newberg Gallery, Glasgow, Scotland; and Fylkingen, Stockholm, Sweden.
Hirose received an MFA from University of Washington, Seattle, and BFA from Pacific NW College of Art.

Midorihirose.info

About the Public Art and Civic Engagement (PACE) Capacity Building Initiative

The PACE Initiative aimed to develop sustainable infrastructure to support the growth of socially-engaged public art in communities around the United States through a cohort learning environment which included mentoring, shared learning experiences and resources, and funding for capacity and two Artist Catalyst Projects. After a competitive selection process, the three host institutions selected to participate in the cohort were the APANO Communities United Fund in Portland, Oregon; Louisville Visual Art in Kentucky; and the South Side Community Art Center in Chicago, Illinois. During the 30-month initiative, each organization worked with artists and community to create two works of public art in a civically engaged manner, including sending the artists for an immersion incubator program to Philadelphia. Additional goals of the PACE initiative were to strengthen a national network of socially engaged public art practitioners, and produce and disseminate research, case studies and useful advice to a national audience. The Mural Arts Institute hired Congruence Cultural Strategies to lead the research and evaluation work for the PACE Initiative.

About the Mural Arts Institute

The Mural Arts Institute (MAI) was established in 2017 as an initiative of Mural Arts Philadelphia, the nation's largest public art program dedicated to the belief that art ignites change. As part of Mural Arts Philadelphia, the Mural Arts Institute is dedicated to sharing knowledge, ideas, and experiences that have shaped our approach to community-centered artmaking. At its core, MAI seeks to build connections, sustain relationships, and share skills about the practices that have been instrumental in creating works of public art with Philadelphians. We work with artists, arts administrators, and community leaders across the world to align knowledge, amplify voices, empower change, and distribute resources that move us all toward a more inclusive and equitable future of socially engaged public art. www.muralarts.org/institute

About APANO

APANO's mission is to unite Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development, and cultural work. We envision a just world where Asians and Pacific Islanders and communities who share our aspirations and struggles have the power, resources, and voice to determine our own futures, and where we work in solidarity to drive political, social, economic, and cultural change. voices, influence popular narratives, and build power. https://apano.org