

T E D C L A U S E N

ARCHES OF HONOR: CREATING A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

A Proposal for a new public art installation for Ringer
Park in the heart of the Allston-Brighton Community.
Submitted by Ted Clausen

THE GOAL

The goal of this art installation is to “get at the emotional experience of our four honorees’ commitment to the Allston-Brighton Community and to create a conversation which will inspire visitors to think and talk about their own commitment to their community”.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

I am proposing to create two new artistic forms for the park. One, a woven stainless steel or silicon bronze archway at the Gordon Street entrance, dedicated primarily to Sgt. Stanley Ringer, with descriptions and quotes from and about his life permanently engraved into the steel. The second, an outdoor ‘Honoring Room’, made of woven arches of stainless steel or silicon bronze, dedicated primarily to our other three honorees, with compelling descriptions and quotes from and about their lives permanently engraved into the woven steel pieces. I am proposing to site the outdoor ‘Honoring Room’ either between the basketball courts and the ball field or on the top of the ridge overlooking the lower park, in front of the new addition to West End House.

SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE FORMS

1. Forms: stainless steel or silicon bronze professionally designed and engineered to withstand weather, wind and possible human interaction. For either the stainless steel or silicone bronze option no-ongoing maintenance is required. If graffiti happens to occur, it can be easily removed as a result of the anti-graffiti coating which will be applied during fabrication.
2. Letterforms- permanently sandblasted into the metal
3. Paint: Permanent Lithochrome, intended for outdoor severe weather conditions, anti- graffiti coating. I am currently suggesting the following colors: marine blue for Sgt Ringer because of his association with the Marines, perhaps red for Dawn as it is a color shared by the 4 national flags of each the countries of her own ancestry, and perhaps green for the deep Irish roots of Brian Honan. Fortunately, Mr Margolin is yet with us, so he can help us out here.
4. Foundations: engineered and designed to follow current code for depth, type of concrete and amount and type of reinforcing rebar. Both foundation’s surface will be at grade and each foundation will be round to echo the round shape of the entrance arch and the suggestion of a round shape offered by the shapes that make up the ‘Honoring Room’.
5. The bollards at the Gordon Street entrance will be removed and replaced by the arched form, which structurally will serve the same purpose as the bollards.

Below I reprint my presentation to the committee. In the Addendum section at the end of this proposal I have added clarifying descriptions to the section on 'Youth Artists' and to the section which describes the possible options for siting the outdoor 'Honoring Room' and for possible seating. These added sections are noted as Addendum I and Addendum 2.

PRESENTATION

I would like to divide my presentation into three parts: in the first part I would like to take you on a tour of what I hope will happen to you when you visit the park after this work is installed. Then I want to step back a bit and tell you about the process I used to come up with the idea, and finally I want to tell you some specifics about the design.

Creating this proposal for you has been a wonderful opportunity to find out more about your community and particularly about these four individuals: Sgt. Stanley Ringer, William Margolin, Brian Honan, and Dawnn Jaffier. I want to create a work for you which says loud and clear: these people mattered then, and they matter now to us now, their example can be an inspiration for each of us.

THE TOUR

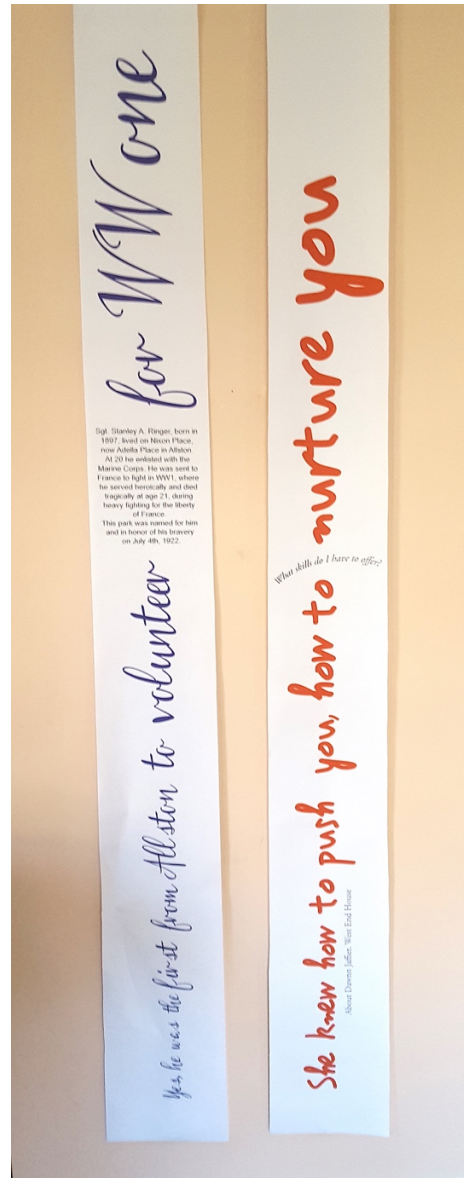
As I walk toward the park on Gordon Street I see something slightly round and shiny from a block or two away - it's an entrance, a definite way to say the park starts here. It's an arch, an entrance arch.



Image of draft model arch in place at Gordon Street entrance

As I get closer I realize that this arch is made of four interwoven steel arches, and as I get closer still I see that there is text engraved on each of the pieces, and I start to read a few of the words there, engraved in dark marine blue:

"Yes, he was the first volunteer from Allston for World War I."
About Sgt. Stanley Ringer 1899-1918, 4 Nixon/Adella Place



Draft full-scale text on paper

And then I read another quote in blue:

"Some men are brave in the heat of battle, fewer are brave when they make a sober decision to sacrifice themselves."

From the citation of The Croix de Guerre French medal awarded to Ringer's Regiment

And in the middle of the arch I see and read a short paragraph:

Sgt. Stanley A. Ringer, born in 1897, lived on Nixon Place in Allston. At 20 he enlisted with the Marine Corps and was sent to France during World War I. He served heroically and died tragically at age 21 fighting for the liberty of France. This park was named for him on July 4th, 1922.

So far all the words are about this man named Ringer, who gave his life for a cause greater than himself, and then I come across a quote in a bright warm red, about someone named Dawnn:

"She told me to always be myself. She built my confidence."

A former student speaking of Dawnn Jaffier, West End House

And then there is a quote in Kelly Green:

"He always told the truth...always told you what was on his mind."

About Brian Honan, Gordon Street

And then one in a light sandy brown color:

*"He knew you. He knew your name;
he knew what would be good for you before you did."*

About William Margolin, West End House

Some of the arches have a mirror polish, and I see myself as I read the stories about these people. I read a few more quotes in blue about Sgt. Ringer:

"Just think of it, he was only 21 when he died, fighting in France for their liberty, so far from home. I wonder what compelled him?"

About Sgt. Stanley Ringer, 1899-1918, 4 Nixon place

So what's going on here? I see from the addresses that these quotes are about people from this neighborhood who worked here, who made a difference here, and that this arch is here to honor them. Perhaps I go straight ahead into the park toward the tennis and basketball courts, or perhaps I take the path to the top of the hill. In one of those locations, not both, is another form, different from the arch, but similar - shining steel arches that are woven together to create an outdoor room.



Map image showing entrance arch site (1) , and two possible sites for the 'Honoring Room' (2)



Image of draft model of 'Honoring Room' placed between the basketball courts and the ballfield



Image of draft model of 'Honoring Room' in place on the top of the hill

It invites me in from any side, and as I approach I see that there are words here too, on the outside faces of the arches. I'm not sure where to start, but I start with the words closest.

I read two quotes in red:

"She did more in her short life than most of us will ever do in our longer ones."

About Dawnn Jaffier, West End House

"She was an example of who you wanted to grow up to be."

About Dawnn Jaffier, West End House

And then I notice in the midst of these quotes there are sets of smaller words, not in a handwriting typeface like the others but in a more familiar one, in gray, and very quietly woven in and around the larger texts.

Am I as committed as she was?

Will people say that about me?

These are not about any of these people. They are questions for me.

At the bottom of this arch of steel I read a description:

Dawnn Jaffier was born in 1988 and raised in Brighton. She began attending the West End House at 10. Her leadership, drive, and determination to help others was critical at West End House and in the larger community, and continued throughout her short life until her untimely death in 2014.

I turn to another arch and find more quotes in color, more questions in gray, and a description of another person:

In green I read:

"He could be passionate without getting personal, he could get things done, you only had to ask once."
Stephen Murphy, City Councilor Honan's friend

"He always wanted to know what you thought"
A friend describing Brian Honan

And then there is another question for me:

What skills do I have that I could share?

And in the middle of this arch, I read the following:

Boston City Councilor Brian Honan was born in 1963 in Allston, and was raised on Gordon Street, next to Ringer Park. He worked tirelessly for his community in many roles: as Director of Parks, as a teacher, as a District Attorney, with West End House, and as a three-time elected member of the Boston City Council.

I walk inside this outdoor shining room, I look up, and see words soar above me. I look up and read more quotes in 4 different colors, and now it's clear, each color signifies a different person, each of them is from this neighborhood and is being honored here. Impressive stories are being told about them. And the questions that are next to these stories are related to the stories but about my own life.

In brown I read:

"To see that the students come back to West End House years later and say thank you, is all the reward I was ever looking for,"
William Margolin, West End House

"When you were talking to him you were always the most important person in the room."

And then in gray another question for me:

How could I get my kids involved?

Because each piece of steel reflects the light in different ways I feel surrounded by light and by something that reaches up and toward, I've actually never been in a room like this... I read a few more quotes:

In brown I read:

"He never did anything halfway - he jumped in full force."
About William Margolin

And then I read:

William Margolin was born in Dorchester in 1945. He attended Boston Latin, learning Russian, using this skill to serve as a translator for the US Army. Later, he dedicated the rest of his life to serving the needs of all ages of children at West End House and the greater Allston-Brighton Community.

"He looked for and found the humanity in everyone."
About Brian Honan

And then I see a smaller question for me:

Who do I know who could get involved with me?

I sit for a while under the shining steel, read a few more quotes, think about the questions, and just let the light play above and around me. I've slowed down, and I am thinking.

MY PROCESS

Now that you have had a tour of what these installations might feel like, before I offer you more technical information, I want to tell you a bit about the process I used to come up with this experience. I never start my projects by making a model or a drawing, or by looking at landscape plans. I start my work by asking two fundamental questions:

1. What are the stories that need to be told and shared here?
2. How can I involve the local community in gathering those stories, making the community a vital part of the art making process?

So, let's answer the first question: What are the stories that need to be told here?

The stories here are of 4 remarkable people. As I learned more about them I realized that even though they had very different backgrounds and were from different eras, they all had one thing in common: what weaves their lives together is a commitment to something larger than themselves – the stories here are the stories of how they lived out that commitment - what they did, what choices they made, and how those choices affected the people in this community. More specifically I think the stories that need to be told are the stories about our honorees that might inspire me and each one of us to be more like them, told by people who knew them.

When I was researching this project and found quotes about our honorees like the following:

He always wanted to know what you thought.

I hope I can be as honest as she was.

He taught every kid how to play chess; that's how he got to know them.

something very specific happened inside me, and my guess is that it probably happens to you. I found myself asking myself questions like the following:

Could I make a difference the way they did?

Am I as committed as she was?

Will people say that about me?

And when I thought about these questions, I said to myself, 'Those are good questions for me to be asking myself.' Then I thought, 'Wait- what if I take those questions that we ask ourselves and make them a direct and integral part of the work?' I suddenly realized that there was another level of story that I wanted to include in the work- not only quotes about the honorees, but also the questions that we ask ourselves that those quotes inspire. I'll call them 'reflecting questions'. And lastly, I realized that our moving quotes from and about are honorees needed to be placed in a context, which is why I have included short biographical entries about each of our honorees in the work

On our tour of the possible sites, committee members posed two questions. One asked: 'How do you create a work that inspires the visitor, the neighborhood?' and another committee member asked: "How do you get at the emotive experience of their joined and collective commitment so that the message inspires others?"

I think using both honoree quotes and reflecting questions gets at the heart of the answers to these two important questions.

So now I have the answer to my first question- what are the stories that need to be told - and the answer is in three parts: the honoree quotes, the reflective questions we ask ourselves, and the short biographies.

The second question was: how can the community be involved in the actual creation of this work?

We are very fortunate in having West End House at our doorstep. I am proposing to work in conjunction with WEH and a group of your own local high school students - I call them 'youth artists' - using a curriculum I have developed over the last 17 years and used in many projects that brings youth and community together to gather possible texts for the work. I have spoken with Nadine Martinez, director of Visual and Performing Arts at WEH, and should I receive this commission, she and I have established a provisional format for working with students for a semester to teach them two basic sets of skills: text gathering skills and basic graphic design skills. They will learn how to research, develop interview questions, interview, and gather, edit and propose texts before you for the work. The youth artists will fan out into the local community and interview neighbors, family, business owners, public safety officers, and local residents, who knew or have heard of our honorees. They will ask them to tell them what they know about our honorees, and how they might have made a difference in their lives. Secondly, they will also learn basic graphic design skills, and they will be part of the actual design process for designing of where and how the text is integrated into the work. For more information about the 'Youth Artist' aspect of the project please refer to Addendum I below.

So now I have the answers to my two big questions: I have my stories, and I have a way to involve the local community in gathering the stories and creating the work.

Next I thought about what I wanted these stories to look like. What form do they take? First, I listened to your words, what you told us about what you wanted. One Committee member said: 'We would like the work to reactivate the park, to give it a sense of energy.' And another said: 'This work is a celebration, not a cemetery- celebrating what they did, who they were, what they stood for and believed in.'

When I thought about these comments, and how the honoree quotes affected me, I realized that I wanted to create something that did three things:

I wanted it **to hold and surrounded you** as you were being told these stories- much as you are held and surrounded by an important story a friend is telling you.

I wanted it to **suggest inspiration and have a sense of uplift, of rising,**
and I wanted to create a conversation between you and our four honorees, and about you and your role in your community.

I wanted to create a work that made you feel a bit excited and intrigued as you walk through the park. I also wanted visitors to be engaged with the work no matter when they came to the park, night or day, snow or rain. I wanted to make a work that would mean that anytime you walked through the park you would be in a conversation with these four remarkable people and with yourself. This is what I mean when I talk about creating a community conversation.

DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

That gives you a partial sense of the background process that led to the tour we have just taken. So now let's talk about some specifics about the aspects of the project:

THE FORMS

They are made of stainless steel, permanently etched with quotes that cannot be damaged. They are constructed in such a way so that they will withstand any possible climbing on or hanging from them. They will be covered with an anti-graffiti coating ensuring any marks can be easily removed.

You will notice that the forms taper: they get slightly thinner as they move up. This is to underscore the sense of lightness, flight and inspiration. Also, notice that the size of the letters changes too- they get larger as you go up- making for a more dynamic upward reaching line of words.

Reading these honoree quotes and reflecting questions will be its own unique experience. This is not reading as usual. I want to slow you down, to change time a bit for you, to take you, however momentarily, out of your regular walking reading world, and offer you a new experience. I want it to be fun- I want children to walk the words with their fingers. So, yes, you will need to turn your head to the side, and you read what is over your head. That is part of the plan.

I invite each of you to come up close to each model, bring it right up to your face and look inside, and you will see what an engaging experience it can be to be inside these shapes.

I think the reflective nature of the steel responds to a number of comments told to us by the committee members, but stainless steel is not our only possible material solution. If we wanted to create a work that blends in a bit more with the natural surroundings we could use a material equally strong and permanent known as silicone bronze. I am happy to work with the community on this choice.



silicon bronze
medium



silicon bronze
rust

THE TEXT

Let's talk for a few moments about the text. Honoree quotes will be the larger of our three types of text. They will be in typefaces that I have specially designed to replicate our honorees handwriting or the handwriting of the period. And because I wanted to add some lightness and a touch of fun, I have decided to use color to designate each of our honorees. The reasons for the specific colors I am currently proposing are explained in more detail in my written documentation (See Addendum #3 below). The reflecting questions and brief biographies will be in a smaller, more standard typeface. All the texts will be large enough to be able to read very comfortably no matter where they are located on the steel pieces. Please note: The sample sheets I have shown in my presentation are full scale renditions of possible drafts. They are not the final texts. Final texts will come directly from your community via your Youth Artists at West End House who will make their proposals to you. I am proposing about 35-40 total quotes - certainly more than any one person will typically read on one visit. I do that on purpose. I want people to feel that there is always more, and that they can come back, and when they do they will see something different and read something different. You will create a new story with each visit.

I am proposing two possible sites for the outdoor room - one in the circle between the basketball courts and the ball field and one on the hill overlooking the lower part of the park. They each have their positives. Both of these spaces will encourage gatherings: of friends, after a game, for classes, award ceremonies, meetings and special events.

For more information about the possible siting of the works and possible seating please see Addendum #2 below.

Finally, I want to be very clear about what I am doing here - I am not creating something for you just to look at and walk by - I am creating a layered and multi-level experience - your eyes will look and be intrigued, your body will move through, into, around and out of the forms, you will read quotes and texts that alternately inform and inspire you, that make you smile, make you feel and think, and you will ask important questions of yourself. You will be in a conversation with our honorees and with yourself and your community. You will not be able to walk through this park without being in a conversation with these inspiring people and without asking yourself what your own contribution might be.

I will finish with a brief statement about why I think text in public art can be powerful.

WHY WORDS WORK

Text integrated into form can be a powerful component of public art.

Words take you there; they take you on a journey

Real voices, of real people, bring the experience to life. You are on a journey with the words.

You can identify.

You read the words of a real person you can identify with.

You participate.

You read and think about what you have read. The words keep you interacting with the work, keep you invested in the experience.

Words offer complexity and diversity.

They allow for the inclusion of many roles, persons, attitudes, experiences, and places.

Words involve you on many levels.

They educate, they remind, they inspire, they generate curiosity, they make you smile. Powerful texts help you feel AND think. And they spark conversation between you and fellow visitors and community members.

Each visit brings a new experience.

You may reinterpret a quote you read on an earlier visit, or you may relate the words to another text or to the sculptural form in a new way.

Thank you for asking me to make this proposal and for allowing me to be part of the journey you are making.

ADDENDUM I: The 'Youth Artists' Program

The value of the Youth Artists Program

I believe that the 'Youth Artist' program adds in significant and primary ways to this project. There are a number of reasons why I make this a component of each public art project I create.

1. Youth artists learn specific life skills that will serve them well in their ongoing lives. They will learn how to research, develop interview questions, interview, gather, edit and propose texts for the work. Students will learn how to comfortably interact with a broad selection of members of their community. They will learn the basics of graphic design practice and they will use them to work on the creation of the artwork. (See below)
2. Youth Artists engage the community by creating a wider circle of actual participants: with the Youth Artists and participating community members there are more voices having actual input into the artistic process and outcome. We gain a greater sense of the community and its values and use that knowledge to inform the texts used and the design of the text.

3. By having the youth artists interview a broad spectrum of community members a deeper sense of investment by the community at large occurs in the project. Neighbors talk to neighbors, family members talk to family members, it becomes 'something we are all doing together' rather than thinking of this art project as the contribution of an artist or a group of artists.
4. It offers all participants (interviewers and interviewees) the opportunity to personally share with each other some critical stories from their own lives around the topics of community engagement. A conversation is started - in this case a conversation about valued members of a community and it then expands to how each of us might be able to serve our community.
5. I have found over the years that when students ask others, particularly adults, thoughtful and sincere questions, the adults have a way of responding that is fresh and compelling. To be asked an important and compelling question by a younger person is a powerful and vital door to important truths. This approach takes advantage of this special energy, and provides the students with a sense of pride and confidence that they can go out into their community and be an active agent, and provides the community with a sense that the younger generation is actually taking part in building something important in the community.

What the students will learn and how they will learn it.

The students will learn 2 basic skills: 1) how to research, formulate interview questions, interview, gather, edit and propose texts for possible inclusion in the final work, and 2) basic graphic design skills which they will use to help design the final work.

First, they will learn how to research individuals, our honorees, by looking through the historical record and finding and gathering possible quotes from those sources. They will learn how to develop open ended and thought provoking questions about our honorees. They will work with each other to develop basic interviewing techniques: how to listen carefully, how to formulate a follow up question, how to be patient with silence, and how to share their own experience as part of the interviewing process. They will learn how to gather the texts into coherent and sensible groupings. They will learn how to edit the texts so that they remain powerful and speak with the voice of a real person. They will learn how to rank and discuss the attributes of various texts and they will formulate their own system for ranking which quotes they feel will add to the project. And they will learn how to present their findings in an open community forum that they will organize, run and complete.

They will learn basic graphic design skills. I am a professionally trained lettering artist, typeface designer and graphic designer. I use these skills in each of my public art projects: from the careful choice of typefaces to be used to actually designing new, project specific fonts. Youth Artists will learn about the history of western letterforms and the emotional impact that various forms of lettering contain. Right from the start of class they will experiment with designing texts in a number of different ways related to the forms of our project and develop skills to determine which layouts might be the most successful. Youth Artists will also learn to evaluate their own progress and will share in group evaluations of our joint progress. We will learn how to express thoughtful and helpful comments and critiques, and learn how to grow from them.

ADDENDUM 2: The Siting of the 'Honoring Room' & Seating

I am proposing to site this structure either in the existing circle between the basketball courts and the ball field or on the top of the ridge overlooking the park, in relation to the new, to-be-built addition. There are positive reasons for each location and differences in the actual construction at each location, and these are discussed below.

For the circular site between the courts and field, you will see the structure ahead of you soon after entering the park, there will be a direct visual connection between the arch entrance and the Honoring Room. Notice that in this location the room has a round foundation to underscore the basic inclusive shape, and in the center it has flooring of a permanent soft rubber-like playground surface, allowing visitors to sit very comfortably in the center and experience the words and the movement of light. If we place the honoring room on the top of the hill, it will act as a beacon for those coming from the Allston entrance, and it will be placed so that it takes advantage of this part of the hill being a destination- a place to walk to. If we site it here, I am suggesting natural turf ground cover, perhaps thickly planted, to fit in with the natural surrounding area and to invite comfortable sitting.

SEATING

I would like to work with the committee and the local security team to see how we might best offer seating without also offering opportunities for unwanted behavior. There are a number of possible and pleasing solutions for this issue and there are funds available in the budget for seating. Possibilities include seating for individuals placed close together that would facilitate conversation, but not suggest a place to stay overnight. There are additional possible solutions I would be happy to discuss with the committee and the local public safety community.

617-974-4566
tedclausen@aol.com

tedclausensculpture.com
46 Cogswell Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02140

T E D C L A U S E N

DRAFT BUDGET : Ringer Park Public Art Project, submitted by Ted Clausen 4-15-2017

2 Steel outdoor structures: fabrication/installation, Includes crane (all completed by the same firm)	147,600.00
Engineering drawings for above	4800.00
Masking for etching	1650.00
Etching	7425.00
Added paint color	1500.00
Anti- graffiti coating	900.00
Transport	1100.00
Foundation Includes excavation, rebar, concrete, and finishing to code	18,400.00
Artist fees Includes one semester working with Youth Artists, all design, and fabrication/installation, supervision	51,000.00
Insurance	2500.00
Contingency (15% of subs/ GC fees)	13,125.00
Total	\$250,000.00