Commission an Original Art Work for $100, Recess Can Make It Happen

by Hrag Vartanian on May 30, 2012

It's the dream of any art lover to commission an original work by a talented artist and now Soho-based nonprofit Recess offers you the chance to realize that dream.

The organization has launched a new initiative, called Commission, which connects emerging collectors to Recess artists through the commissioning of small individualized art works.

*How does it work?* Collectors can buy a “commission envelope” for $100 and then they randomly select an artist bio to determine who they will commission to create an original 5”×7” artwork. It's a wonderful idea that makes connections between artists and patrons of all kinds.

The new project launches at Thursday’s Recess benefit at the Tribeca Grand Hotel, a limited number of benefit tickets are still available.

If you are feeling a little more ambitious in your desire to own original art, then consider bidding on their silent auction that is currently posted on Paddle8, it includes works by Terence Koh, AL Steiner, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Clifford Owens, Michael Smith and many others ... but hurry as bidding ends at noon today. Hyperallergic is the sole media sponsor of the 2012 Recess benefit.

To help understand the importance of Recess, we reached out to those artists who have worked with the organization to help explain what makes the nonprofit special.

We asked them “*How has working with Recess influenced your practice?*” and “*How is Recess different for other nonprofit project spaces you have worked with?*”
Here are their answers:

**Juanli Carrión**

“Working with Recess has enriched my artistic practice by learning more about my own process and how to make it visible to the public.”

“For me, what makes Recess different from other nonprofits is the fact that one of their main goals is to show the artistic process to the public, something that can be a challenge in a world where only the final product normally shown.”

—Juanli Carrión, was born in Yecla, Spain and lives and works in Brooklyn. Recent works include “Building the Neverending Ruin of the World” presented in collaboration with NY’s Abrons Art Center and Spain’s ARTIUM Museum.

**Kara Hearn**

“The experience of having the entire process of making the work (in my case a collaborative video) on display and open to public interaction was so scary, unpredictable, and terribly satisfying that it has become an integral part of my practice. I am interested in how drama is produced in daily life, so the idea of making the studio into a stage and the creative process into a performance meshes perfectly with the work that I do.”

“Because I was going to the space almost daily to work I had a lot of time to interact with Allison and Maia. They were completely engaged with the process beginning to end, but even better, they met the inevitable anxieties and challenges (and triumphs) of doing a large-scale project with a level of support and unwavering tranquility that I hadn’t experienced before. It made it a really pleasant place to work from.”

—Kara Hearn is a Brooklyn-based artist. Her most recent work includes “Unnamed Broadway Musical: The Musical” with the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts.
Dan Herschlein

"While at Recess you can work late into the night or early morning if you like, and you tend to experience a really varied crew of visitors, most of which have no idea what is going on. And experiencing this, those walk-ins at 3AM while you’re eating your deli dinner and trying to put the last dumb shelf on the wall, has taught me quite a bit about the audience that I really respond to. Sometimes it’s best to let your dinner get cold while you’re off doing something else."

—Dan Herschlein is a Brooklyn-based artist. His recent work "Me and Everyone That is With Me" was produced in collaboration with the Whitney Museum and the Regent Family Residence.

Corin Hewitt

"Recess provided me with the opportunity to work collaboratively for the first and only time so far in my practice. I also feel real gratitude for being part of such a great organization and to continue to contribute in a variety of ways."

"In many ways, but primarily Recess’ small scale allows a directness and feeling of supportive partnership in the making of work while working with them."

—Corin Hewitt lives and works in Brooklyn and is represented by Laurel Gitlen Gallery. Corin is assistant professor of Sculpture and Extended Media at Virginia Commonwealth University and he has had solo shows at the Seattle Art Museum, the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center and the Whitney Museum.
Bethany Ides

“Recess has encouraged me to craft more paragraphs alongside & in accordance with everything else.”

“Its air extends past its walls.”

—Bethany Ides is a Brooklyn-based artist. Her performance-based works have been presented at the Brooklyn Museum and PS122 in New York. Bethany teaches modern and contemporary art theory and history at the School of Visual Arts.

Anders Johnson

“Recess provided a doorway into a artist community that seemed hard to find, one that truly focuses on the artist and their work. Recess has always been extremely supportive of my endeavors, wherever they go.”

“Recess's priorities and goals are uncorrupted. There doesn't seem to be a bigger influence that works the strings in a direction hidden to the public. The operation is small and visible, it works. Recess is an important organization because its goals of providing a space to work, show, and interact is just that. A rarity these days.”

—Anders Johnson received his MFA from RISD. He was the recent artist in resident of the Wassiac Project in Wassaic, NY, and he lives and works in Pine Plains, NY.
Christine Sun Kim

“It has put my practice in state of flux, making it much more interdisciplinary.”

“If Recess were a person, she’d be every artist's bestie! They offer so much flexibility and freedom in conceptualizing and creating work; they operate on a non-traditional format that focus on artists’ needs rather than institutionalizing them.”

—Christine Sun Kim, lives and works in NYC. Her work has been featured internationally. In 2010, she participated in the Youth Insights Artist Residency at the Whitney Museum.

Sophy Naess

“My experience at Recess fortified my confidence in the powers of skill sharing and putting heads together.”

“As in the fable of Stone Soup: Once the artist has the pot on the stove, the most savory ingredients unexpectedly find their way into the broth to make something more wholesome than anyone imagined.”

—Sophy Naess is a painter and sculptor living and working in New York. Sophy teaches at the Brooklyn Museum, the Bruce High Quality Foundation University (NYC) and the Valand School of Fine Art (Göteborg).
galería perdida

“Recess is admirable for the risks they take by the autonomy they give to their artists. This smartly presents the challenges of defying expectations; committing you to seeing the fruits that bear out of this wonderful little tree.”

—galería perdida is a curatorial collective based in New York.

Kenya (Robinson)

“Working with RECESS has reinforced the importance of process in my practice. Whenever I am fortunate enough to work with them, I am inspired to ask questions of ‘why’ and ‘how’ instead of focusing so intently on the end product of ‘what.’ This allows enough space to be surprised by both the destination and the journey.”

“The dialogue continues to feel rich. I don’t feel like my work with RECESS is ever an isolated occasion. It's an ongoing conversation that leads back and forth and around again to clarity and challenging ideas.”

—Kenya (Robinson) is a community-taught artist from Gainesville, Florida. She is a past resident of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s Workspace Program. Her performances have been featured at The Kitchen, Rush Arts Gallery and MoMa PS1.
Legacy Russell

“Recess has been a great influence to my practice in that it provides a space in New York City where ‘process’ is consistently valued as much as ‘product.’ This is most needed, and most essential.”

“It’s a place for artists, by artists, and incredibly in tune with the needs of the creative individual. It also has a commitment to the growth of the artist first and foremost, which has meant that Recess has given back to artists without gouging artist earnings, providing an economic model that nods towards the support of creative sustainability and the mobility of the working artist in a city that often fails to provide creative individuals with the appropriate structures to allow them to rise up, unfettered by debt and demands that benefit the growth of the institution over that of the individual/the greater public.”

—Legacy Russell is a writer, artist, curator and creative producer based in New York. She has worked with the Bruce High Quality Foundation, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Legacy is the co-founder of ContactProject.net and a founding member of the curatorial production team, Limited Time Only. Legacy is the art editor of BOMB Magazine’s BOMBlog.

Carmelle Safdie

“I have not had my own Recess space grant but two of my colleagues, Sophy Naess and Christine Sun Kim—with whom I collaborate often, have and I have worked with both of them in the SOHO space. The location and visibility of the Recess space has been essential in realizing these public projects.”

“Recess is special because it feels like an open, artist run space but has the organization and professional qualities of an established institution.”

—Carmelle Safdie lives and works in Queens, NY. She has been presented in venues internationally including the Queens Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Gideon Fink Shapiro

“Recess has made me question the distinction between back-stage process and front-stage exhibition and publication.”

“Younger, fresher, more open, better organized!”

—Gideon Fink Shapiro writes about architecture, art and landscapes. Gideon is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design.

Laura Vitale

“Although I haven’t done my residency yet (it starts in July), I’ve been in communication with Recess for over a year. The opportunity to check in with them while my ideas and experiences percolate has been great. It’s been like orienting toward an exciting point on the horizon, but I can also shift where the position of the horizon is. I like how Recess prefers an elegant quality of concept over glamor or trend. It’s a helpful barometer.”

“I think Recess is special because of how committed they are to the project of protecting spontaneity in artists’ practices. They aren’t afraid to take risks, but they also are just really smart about contemporary art, and generous with their discipline. They completely protect their artists from the sweat it must take to run their operation. On a practical level, they help artist’s practices make progress because they give the time and space to make it happen. I think Recess’s strength is in the simplicity of its mission.”

—Laura Vitale creates sound-based works. She has made commissioned sound installations for WNYC, been a Van Lier Fellow at Harvestorks Digital Media Arts Center and received a New York State Council on the Arts Individual Artist Grant.
Jeff Williams

“The openness of Recess, letting the public in on how a project develops, was very influential on my practice. Since my Session I have tried to keep the process accessible with each project.”

“Recess is very different than other non-profit spaces I have worked with. Recess is more about the artist than the outcome and as a result, great things happen.”

— Jeff Williams is an assistant professor of Sculpture at The University of Texas at Austin. He has exhibited in venues internationally, including at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, Project Row Houses in Houston, Texas and LAXART in Los Angeles.

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