



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Public Art Commission



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| Write legislation/ordinance number here. | Meeting Date: 2/24/2022 |
| Applicant/Petitioner | Artist Selection Panel, Hillside Court <i>playground+</i> project |
| Project Description | <p>The Public Art Commission is commissioning a permanent public art installation at the Hillside Court Community playground currently under construction. The playground is the heart of the Hillside Court Apartments and serves as a central community gathering spot for the neighborhood.</p> <p>The vision for this project is a functional work of art that provides a unique character to the playground experience while also meeting community-identified infrastructure needs.</p> <p>Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the playground with a distinctive aesthetic experience • Highlight the importance of the site as a community facility • Meet at least one functional infrastructure need that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socializing zones with easy child monitoring • Shade structure with easy child monitoring • Seating/benches with easy child monitoring • Enrichment opportunities using sensory play <p>Proposals that combine more than one functional need will receive priority consideration.</p> <p>Fifteen artists from around the Richmond area responded to the RFQ. Three artists were invited to submit a full proposal and the Artist Selection Panel made its final selection: Nastassja Swift.</p> |
| Project Location | |
| 1500 Harwood St. Richmond VA | |
| Hillside Court Apartments | |
| Council District(s): <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> City-Wide | |
| (Recommending body) Recommendation | Approval, with Conditions |
| Staff Contact | Susan Glasser, Secretary, Public Art Commission, 804.644.7319, susan.glasser@rva.gov |

| | |
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| Conditions for Approval | <p>The artist shall be responsible for meeting all the terms of the City contract as well as making alterations to the final design based on requests from the Artist Selection Panel, including but not limited to:</p> <p>Modify design to comply with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission’s <i>Public Playground Safety Handbook</i></p> <p>Work with the architecture firm HKS, Inc. to determine optimal placement of structures</p> <p>Have design inspected by a certified structural engineer prior to construction</p> |
|-------------------------|---|

RATIONAL FOR PLACING ON RRHA PROPERTY

Councilwoman Ellen Robertson approached the PAC to ask if the PAC could add a piece of public art to the Hillside Court playground revitalization project being developed by RRHA. The City Attorney’s Office and the Secretary of the PAC met with the Department of Budget & Strategic Planning to determine if the PAC could use a portion of its budget to fund a non-CIP project. DBSP confirmed that \$306,396 of the PAC’s FY22 budget is “due to the inclusion of a fund balance amount for Percent for the Arts. Several years ago, City Council added funding to Percent for the Arts and the funding was not appropriated; this caused the funding to move to a fund balance account for Percent for the Arts. In an attempt to clean up our CAFR, DBSP moved the funding from the fund balance and into the project for this year.” It was determined that a portion of these funds could be used for this project.

ARTIST’S QUALIFICATIONS

Nastassja Swift is a multi-disciplinary artist holding a BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University. Nastassja was recently invited to Penland School of Craft’s Winter Residency as a Distinguished Fellow. She was the 2021 Summer Artist in Residence with SPACES in Cleveland, where her community parade and exhibition received support from the Ohio Arts Council. In 2019, her short film, and collaborative performance, “Remembering Her Homecoming,” premiered at the Afrikana Independent Film Festival, and screened at the Virginia Film Festival in Charlottesville. She is the recipient of a 2021 Dr. Doris Derby Award, the Art Matters 2021 Fellowship Award, the Black Box Press Foundation 2021 Art as Activism Grant, and the 2020 Virginia Commission of the Arts Fellowship. Her work has been acquired for the Grace Linton Battle Memorial Fund for the Arts Collection, as well as Quirk Hotel in Charlottesville. Nastassja has been included in the Berlin publication *SomeMagazine*, *RVA Magazine*, *RHome Magazine* and the *Stranger*, a Seattle publication. She has participated in several national and international residencies and exhibitions, including her solo exhibit in Doha, Qatar in 2016, Virginia MoCA, The Urban Institute of Contemporary Art in Michigan, and fellowships at the Vermont Studio Center and MASS MoCA.

Nastassja Swift works and lives in Virginia.

CORRELATION TO PUBLIC ART MASTER PLAN

The PA Master Plan states: p. 55: Distribute Public Art Equitably

. . . To engender interest and enthusiasm about public art in the city, the program must be active in neighborhoods outside of the downtown core to engage more citizens. Smaller-scale projects created by artists that interact with neighborhood residents can contribute to the texture and identity of an area and help provide a sense of community by adding landmarks, touchstones, and a unique character.

Priority Sites & Projects (pp. 83-89)

- SITES THAT ADDRESS AREAS OF THE CITY NEEDING ATTENTION: . . . Strategic decision-making about where public art is best sited on the south side will be crucial.
- PUBLIC HOUSING SITES
- YOUTH-FOCUSED SITES

CORRELATION TO RICHMOND 300 MASTER PLAN

Goal 4: Urban Design (p. 99)

Public art is critical to showcase a place's uniqueness, culture, and history. . . . Future public art projects and improved streetscapes in all parts of the city set the tone for high-quality development and create pride for residents as they look forward to the future prosperity of their neighborhood and their personal household.

Objective 4.2 (p. 102)

Integrate public art into the built environment to acknowledge Richmond's unique history and neighborhood identity, and engage the creative community, focusing public art efforts in areas that do not have public art today.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nastassja Swift's Proposal

HILLSIDE COURT PLAYGROUND + PUBLIC ART PROJECT

DESIGN CONCEPT

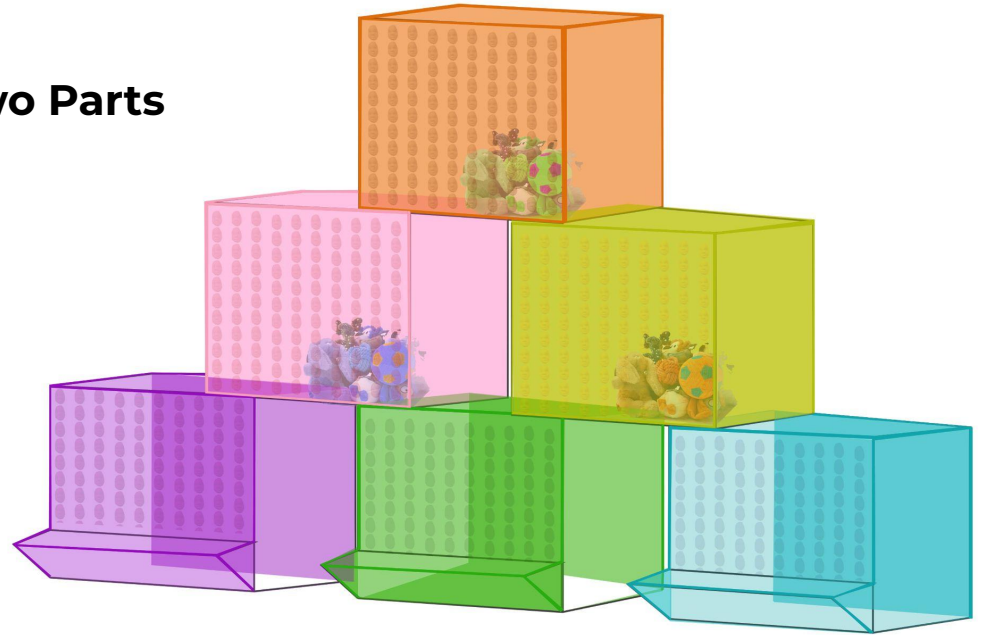
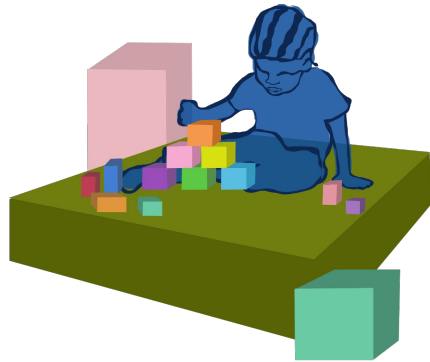
NASTASSJA
SWIFT

February
2022

Presented to
Richmond Public Art
Commission

The presentation contains images and text to communicate the artist's concepts. It is to be used solely for discussion purposes and may not be used for any public promotion, discussion, or advertisement without written consent of the artist. Development of concept and artist ideas will proceed only after contractual agreement between organization and artist. All ideas within this document, in consideration of this project are solely the intellectual property of Nastassja Swift and will not transfer to organization in any way until contractually agreed upon by artist. Any breach of this understanding is punishable by law.

Design Concept : Two Parts



Life-size Silhouette Figure

- A fabricated outline or silhouette of Shamar Hill Jr. playing with building blocks
- Appearing to build a mock-up of the larger sculpture
- His hair is important - braids, twists; Black hair repeats itself within my work
- The idea that his passing, as painful as that is, has brought beauty to the space for other kids to enjoy
- The larger sculpture is equally something he's given to the space
- Shamar becomes a part of the space, and his presence follows the subtle references of pyramids and ancestral relationships

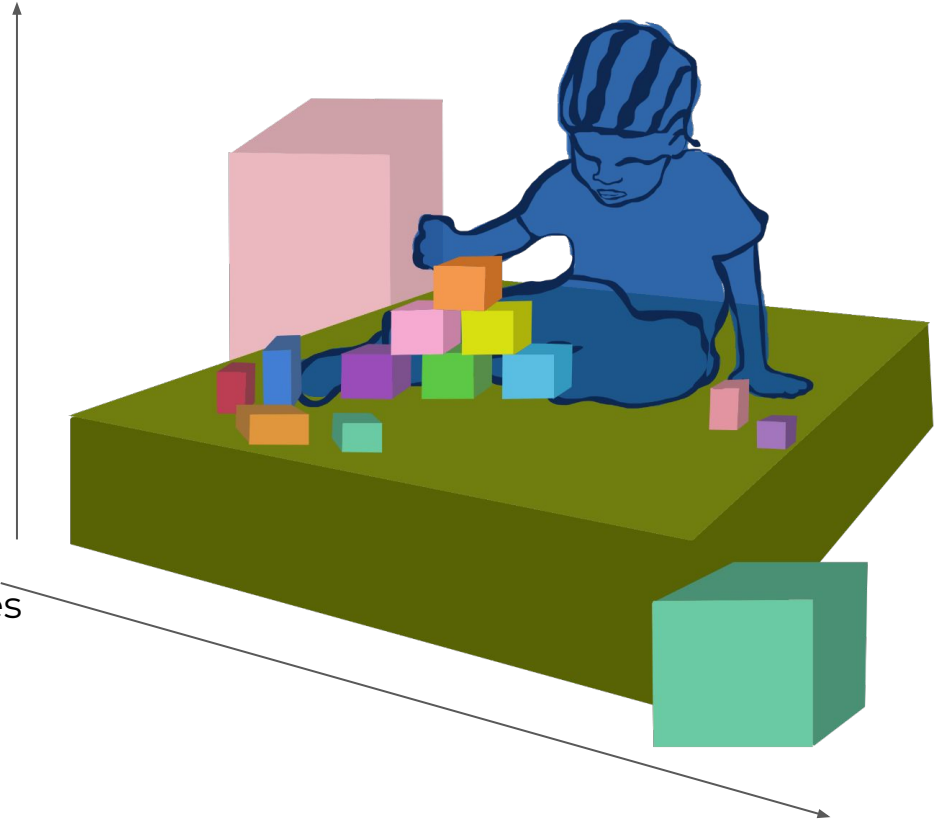
Building Blocks Installation

- Larger-than-life size building blocks that stack upward into the shape of a pyramid
- Historical context of pyramids and ancestry and spiritual attainment is subtly referenced, while the main focus is on the act of *play*
- Imagination, home, building, and agency are additional themes surrounding the use of blocks as the visual narrative
- The top two rows of blocks are filled with wool fabricated objects collaborated on by neighborhood residents and artist. The sculpture then begins to speak to toy chests, shrines, and portals through the gesture of holding these items. *The specificity of these objects are mentioned in the community engagement response*
- The pyramid becomes activated by the use of the kids interacting with it in many ways: hideout space, seating, shade etc

Part One

From the base of olive green block
to the top of Shamar's head = 36 inches

From the end of pink block to the end
of green block = approx 40 inches



Double Layer figure Idea

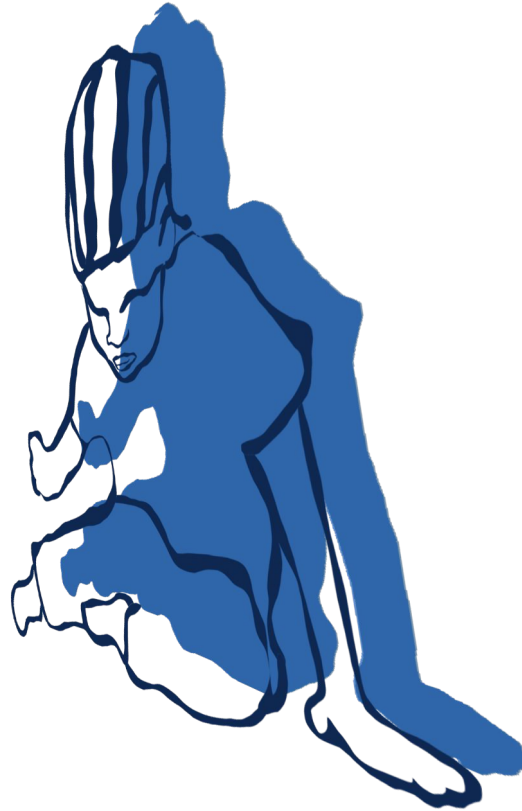
Front Layer:

Powder coated paint on
aluminum for outline

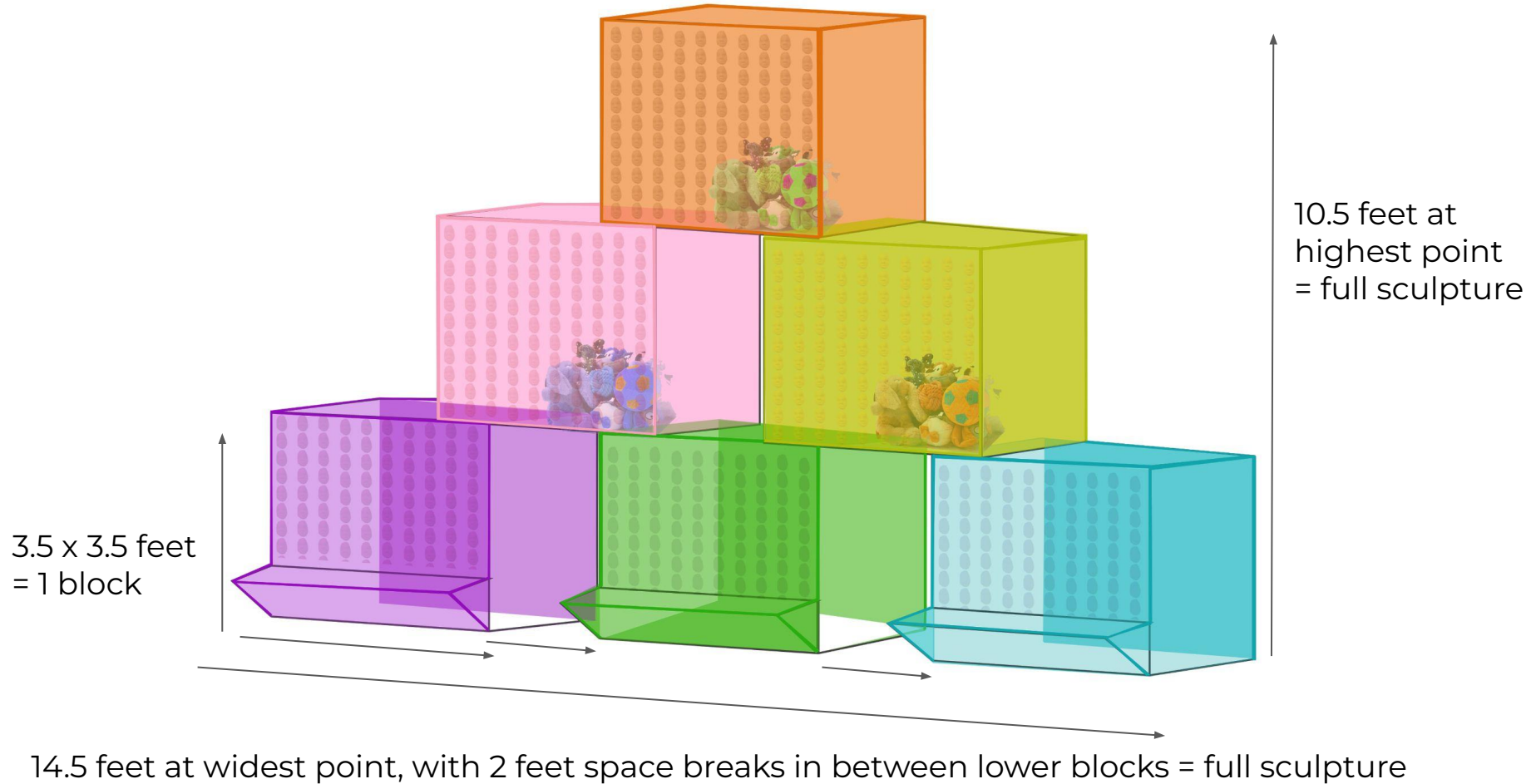
Second/Back Layer:

Cut out acrylic sheet for
transparency or
wood or aluminum as more
affordable backup options.

The image of the figure changes
depending on where viewer is
standing.



Part Two



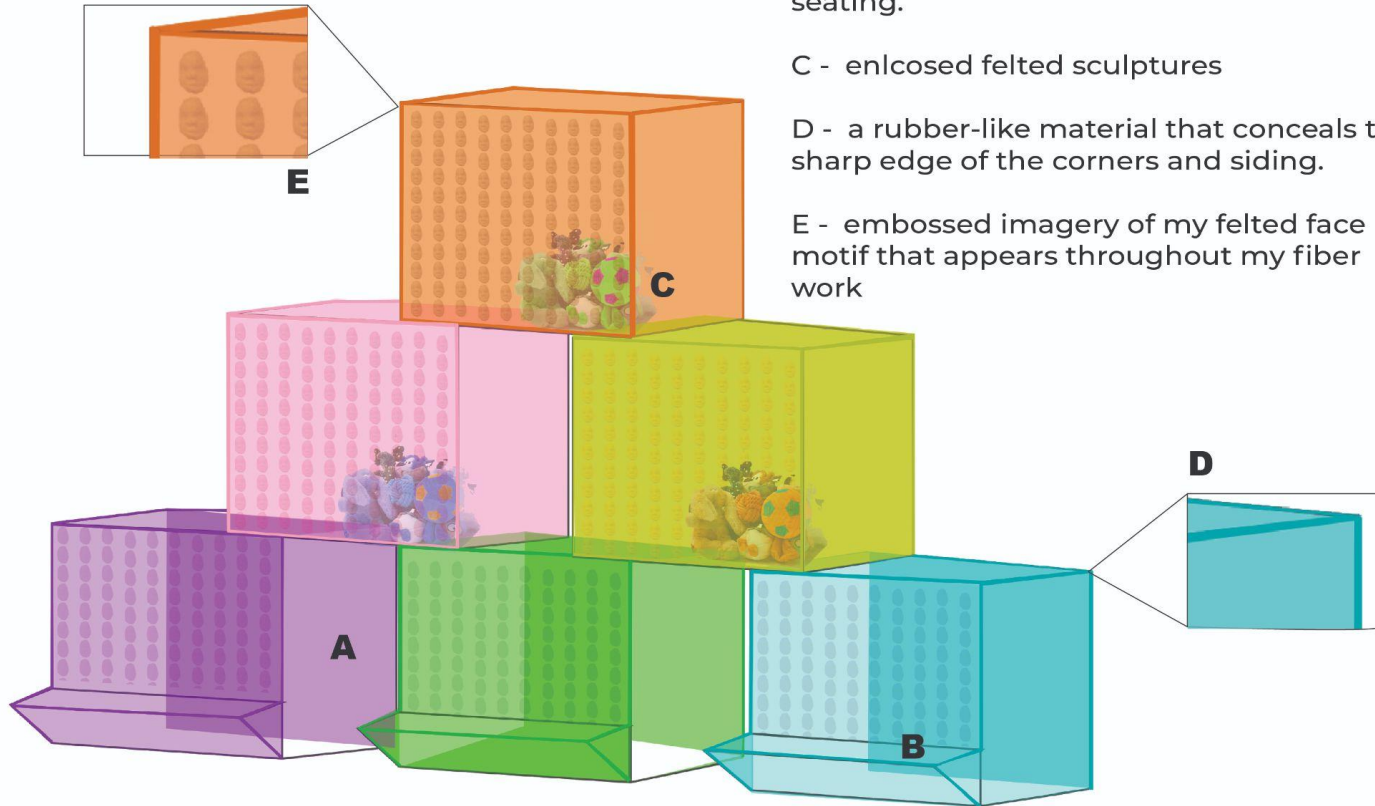
A - lower blocks are open on the inner panels to allow children to enter a part of the sculpture, while still being seen.

B - benches angle out of the blocks for seating.

C - enclosed felted sculptures

D - a rubber-like material that conceals the sharp edge of the corners and siding.

E - embossed imagery of my felted face motif that appears throughout my fiber work

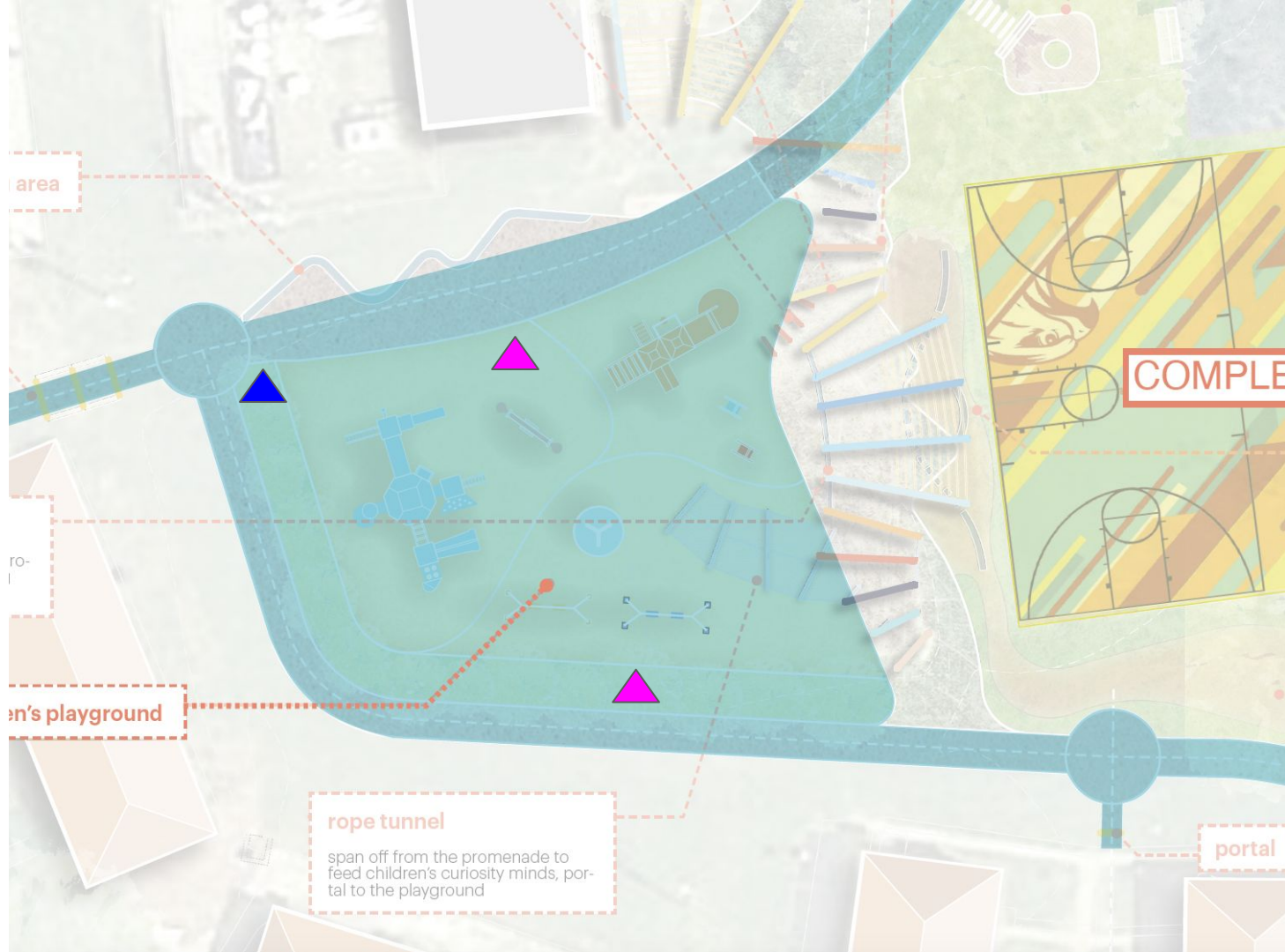


Materials

- Aluminum frame to create the structure of the large blocks
- Industrial acrylic sheeting for panels to allow for color transparency
- Wool roving for felted objects enclosed in sculpture
- Acrylic on aluminum to fabricate the silhouette of Shamar
- If a silhouette and outline layer to give the sculpture some dimension is fabricated, both painted aluminum and industrial acrylic sheeting will be used.
- The budget will determine how simple or complex this part of the installation can be
- Painted and Sealed Wood to build the solid blocks that Shamar is playing with and sitting on/around.

▲ Figure Sculpture
near an entrance
to the park

▲ Blocks Installation
in either location
along the outside
of the playground
(grass area)



rope tunnel
span off from the promenade to
feed children's curiosity minds,
portal to the playground

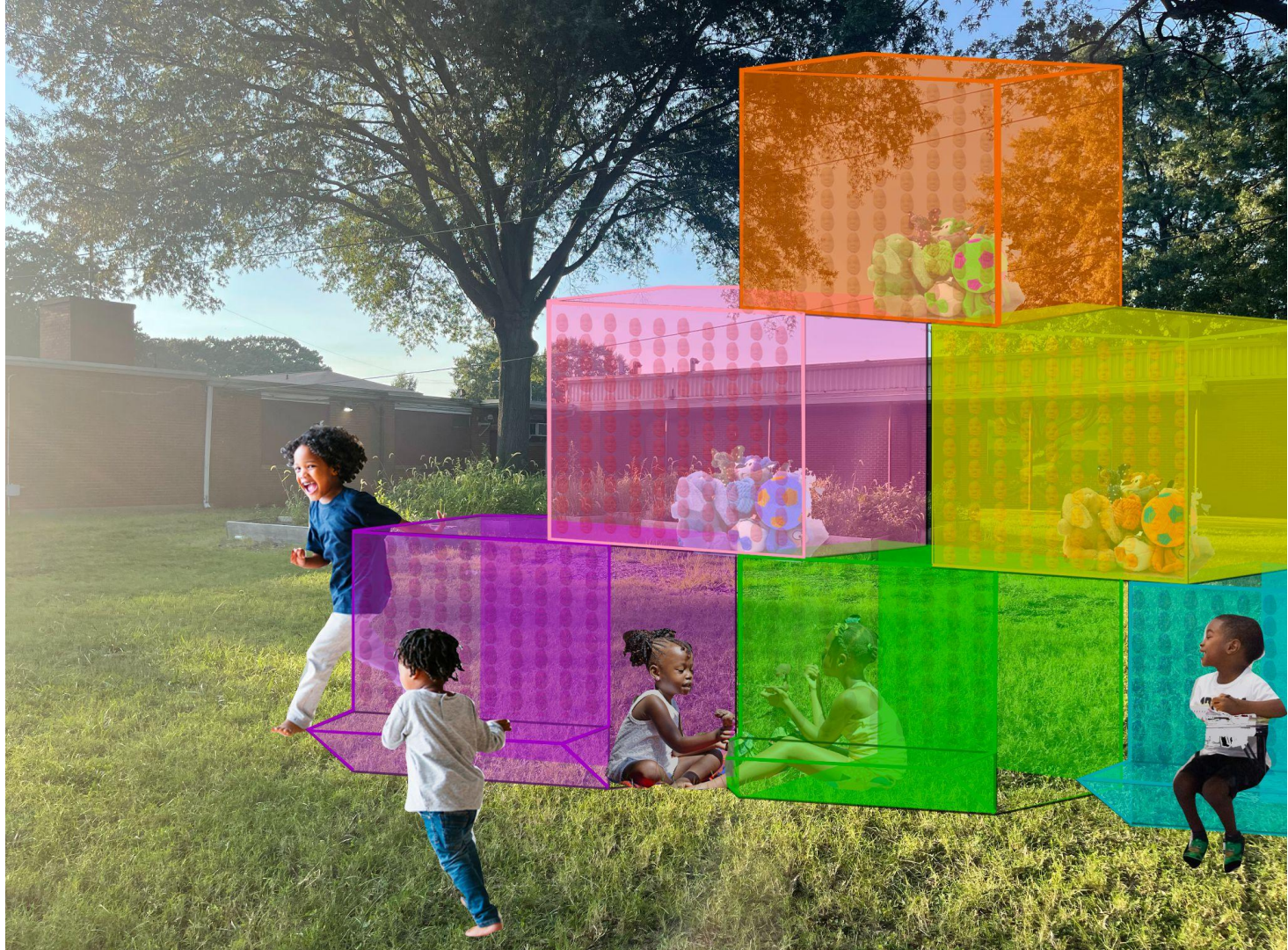
COMPLE

portal

▲ The larger installation could also be placed further away from the playground.







THANK YOU

- NASTASSJA SWIFT



Natya Smith



Public Art Installation | Budget

| Line Item | Estimated Cost |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Artist Fee | \$5,000 |
| Engineering Report | \$1,500 |
| Materials | \$12,000 |
| Fabrication | \$18,000 |
| Installation | \$2,000 |
| Equipment Rental | \$2,000 |
| Site Prep | \$1,000 |
| Project Management | \$3,500 |
| Public Programming | \$1,500 |
| Documentation | \$1,000 |
| Maintenance | \$1,500 |
| Print + Marketing | \$1,000 |
| Total | \$50,000 |