

Community Based Art, Squalicum High School

Bellingham, WA

Category: Inclusion, Pro bono work

As Squalicum High School students and faculty gathered back together in the Fall of 2021 in a Covid-influenced world, several teachers pursued a grant to create a collaborative sculpture which would symbolize the ongoing process of unity and healing among the school community.

BioDesign Studio volunteered to work with art students and teaching staff to create a kinetic art installation to host 1300 acrylic pieces painted by every student in the school. Inspired by Jacob Hashimoto's art, this ambitious project was novel within the school district and endured a vast array of opportunities and challenges. In the end, determination and aspiration prevailed, resulting in a phenomenal permanent art piece that will serve to inspire students for years to come. This community art piece not only symbolizes unity and healing, but the importance of engaging every voice in the high school to create powerful and impactful placemaking.

We found this project powerful as it reinforced the healing potential of art *and* a shift in artistic creation processes to embrace community. BioDesign was not the originator of this art idea; we were the catalyst to enable the ambitious community-based artistic concept to become a reality. We volunteered our experience in art, project management, and construction documentation to facilitate a student-led schematic design process and assemble a fabrication team to construct the frame of the art. BioDesign also worked with the school district to gain approval for suspending this sizeable sculpture above a main ingress/egress corridor. The art exemplified the power of community, and we encourage our fellow landscape architects to tackle similar projects both within and outside of the academic environment.

Team: Volunteer/Professional Team included (but was not limited to):

- SHQS Faculty Kristen Ingman + Sarah Marshall, BioDesign Studio
- Architectural Elements
- Bellingham Schools Facilities
- Bellingham Public School Foundation
- Coffman Engineering, Dawson Construction
- ...and, of course, many amazing SHQS art and design students.