

DO NOT LOOK BEHIND THIS WALL

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TO: Village of Southampton, Mayor's Office, Village Board
23 Main Street, Southampton, NY 11968

FR: Toni Ross, participating artist in *A Sense of Place*

DA: January 18, 2017

RE: Plan for installation at Southampton Arts Center, exhibition dates: Feb 24 - Apr 9, 2017

As a part of my participation in the upcoming group exhibition, "A Sense of Place," I would like to partially expose the wonderful altar that is hidden behind a wall in the transept gallery at Southampton Arts Center. It would be a great discovery for visitors, as many have no idea of its existence.

My work is often responsive to the environment in which it is sited. In this case I plan to turn the wall itself into the artwork. Let me outline a few aspects of my proposal:

- In appreciation of the town's concern about my addressing this surface, I have decreased the scale of the opening and would now like to cut a hole in the wall about 35 inches high and 6 inches wide centered at eye level (60 inches).
- This would require sliding through sheetrock and cutting a single two by four in the center area only. Since it is not a structural or loadbearing wall, the temporary cutting of a two by four will not impact its integrity; nonetheless, I would immediately reinforce the center post with crossbeams.
- Upon the closing of the exhibition, I will restore the wall back to its original condition. I will not impact, touch, or otherwise alter the altarpiece. My aim is simply to show what has been heretofore unseen.
- Further, as you are aware, two of the free-standing walls in the transept gallery are unfinished sheetrock walls. I know the town and the museum would like to see the wall facing the auditorium finished out. As part of my plan, I would make a donation to the museum for finishing this wall, which can be accomplished at the same time I restore the altarpiece wall.

I'm concerned that my initial request may not have adequately described my plans for restoration. The wall will be completely returned to its original state, with any and all improvements at my cost. I have created two other site-specific installations local: one at Marder's Nursery through a commission by the Parrish Art Museum, the other at the Parrish itself. I'm happy to refer you to the professionals that can vouch for my work ethic and my commitment.

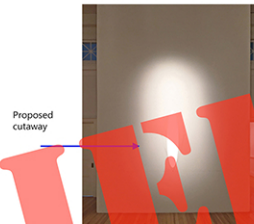
I am grateful to the town for continuing to keep this building as an arts center and a welcoming and much needed community space. I look forward to taking part in this exhibition and to offering my support of this important village landmark.

I hope to begin work on February 2. Enclosed are some sketches and relevant installation details.

I look forward to hearing from you,

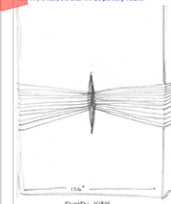
Sincerely,

Toni Ross

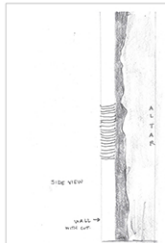


West wall w drawing notations and cutaway

Frontal view of West wall with incision cut into sheetrock. Around the opening, twine is attached from the center to the edges of the wall and around its sides. Through the hole in the wall, the altar will be partially visible.



Proposed incision with wrapped twine



View of wall from the side, with twine



Images extracted from Donna De Salvo's daring 1993 exhibit and catalogue titled, *Past Imperfect: A Museum Looks at Itself*.

In the exhibition, De Salvo examined the pictures, objects, objections and ephemera that comprise and create a cultural institution, in this case, The Parrish Art Museum, long housed at 25 Jobs Lane in the village of Southampton.

On the left, video stills of museum staff as they cut away sheetrock to reveal the composite altarpiece hidden behind a false wall in the transept gallery.

On the right, in the exhibition, De Salvo, then the Parrish's chief curator, invited the viewing public to enjoy a glimpse of the legendary altarpiece commissioned by Samuel L. Parrish, who, like many of his contemporaries, collected examples of European paintings and sculpture, some of them originals, many replicas.

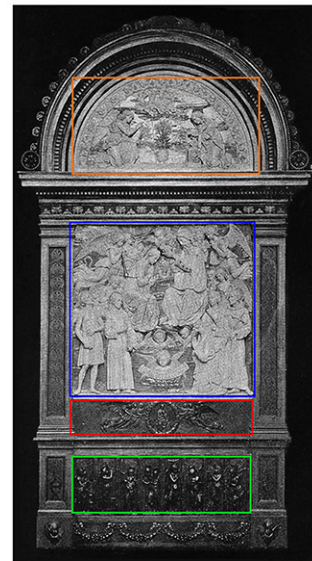
From De Salvo's catalogue essay:

"When we undertook this exhibition, rumor had it that most of the plaster and marble replicas had been removed from the museum during the 1950s but that a large altarpiece made of copies of della Robbia and Ghiberti sculptures remained on the premises. In fact, the last gallery in the museum did have a large, three-sided wall with edges that protruded awkwardly over the room's wainscoting - a structure that looked out of place in the room's carefully defined lines, as though it were an attempt to cover something up. Archival photographs and the recollection of former staff members and trustees indicated that the altarpiece was probably behind that wall."

Donna De Salvo



"The Art Museum at Southampton, 1897 - 1932" Transept gallery looking west, showing partially uncovered composite altarpiece (at rear)



COMPOSITE ALTARPIECE, 1914
Terra-cotta and plaster, 18 x 8 ft

AFTER ANDREA DELLA ROBBIA (1435-1525)

The Annunciation, n.d.
Terra-cotta reproduction

The Coronation of the Virgin, n.d.
Terra-cotta reproduction

AFTER Ghiberti (1378-1455)

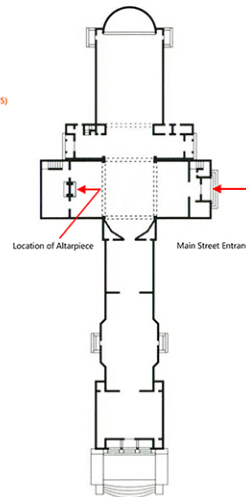
The Angels Bearing a Wreath, n.d.
Painted plaster cast

AFTER LUCA DELLA ROBBIA (1400-1482)

Madonna and Child, n.d.
Painted plaster cast

AFTER DONATELLO (1386-1466)

The Musical Angels, n.d.
Painted plaster cast



Originally, the public entered the museum from Main Street, making the Altarpiece one of the most dominant features of the galleries.