

1,419 views | Oct 4, 2018, 03:27pm

How One Simple Question Changed This Woman's Career



Jeryl Brunner Contributor ⓘ
Women@Forbes

f While Cynthia Noble's great passion was making and looking at art, she didn't seriously consider a career in that field. Instead, the
tw International Studies major had planned to attend law school. Yet everything changed when she had a pivotal conversation with her
in trusted advisor. After sharing her concerns about law school, he posed one simple question:

"What do you like?" he asked.



Cynthia Noble CAROLINE MANRIQUE

“It became clear that I would realign toward art,” says Noble. So she shifted gears completely. During the remainder of her time at college she took every possible art history course. She went on to get an M.A. in contemporary art, history, theory and criticism from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She became a lecturer at the school and worked at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Northwestern University. Since then her career was prospered. She is also affiliated with Northwestern University and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Noble is currently the Executive Director of Art on theMART in Chicago, a one-of-kind digital art projection system. A major philanthropic gift to the city, this digital art installation spans across 2.5 acres (two football fields). “Utilizing state-of-the-art technology, including thirty-four calibrated projectors that project at over a million lumens,” says Noble of the installation that is projected on a historic art deco building. Besides its massive scale, Art on theMART is public art, free of sponsorships and branding on the façade. Plus, as specified in a partnership with the City of Chicago, it will be on view for at least thirty years.



Art on theMART | JOSHUA BROTT, OBSCURA DIGITAL

On September 29 thousands came to view the inauguration of world's largest permanent digital art projection. "To see 32,000 people gathering to witness the unveiling was deeply moving," says Noble. "This is a historic moment for art, design and technology. The project is a window into how the three disciplines are evolving independently and together. In that sense, it is a way of understanding the shared creative culture of our time. It is a platform of communication, a means of expression and a catalyst for dialogue. It is nothing short of essential as we work to better understand each other in these complex times."

Jeryl Brunner: How did you curate the artists and decide who should participate?

Cynthia Noble: We selected the artists for the inaugural set of projections in two ways. First, we partnered with the Terra Foundation for American Art. The Terra recommended two artists, Jan Tichy and Jason Salavon, who were accepted by theMART in consultation with theMART's Curatorial Advisory Board. The Board is comprised of key members of the art community in Chicago, including curators and artists. Additionally, theMART procured work from internationally recognized artist Diana Thater, based in Los Angeles, and from Zheng Chongbin, who splits his time between China and San Francisco.

It was important for us to honor the artistic DNA of Chicago and also represent the reality of Chicago as a global city. We included works which function on multiple levels and engages all audiences. We were also excited to feature the original work of our tech partner Obscura Digital, which is a pioneer in exploring the intersection of art and technology. The inaugural collection of high caliber works serves as an invitation to future Art on theMART artists and cultural organizational partners to imagine the potential with us.

Brunner: How do you see Art on theMART fitting into Chicago's legacy of public art?

Noble: Chicago has an incredible trajectory of public art. Beginning in the late nineteenth century with figurative, heroic works funded by Benjamin Franklin Ferguson, public art was an important feature in the nascent cityscape. In the mid-twentieth century, Chicagoans welcomed the now-iconic abstract works, including the infamous Picasso in Daley Plaza and Calder's elegant Flamingo. With the development of Millennium Park, Chicago was established on the global cultural map with Anish Kapoor's Cloud Gate (aka "The Bean") and Jaume Plensa's Crown Fountain, which was an early, bold example of new media public art. These latter two works were installed about 14 years ago so Art on theMART is a timely update.

Brunner: What is one of your favorite elements of Art on theMART?

Noble: One of the fascinating aspects of Art on theMART is its site-specificity. The façade is not exactly comparable to a movie or computer screen. Rather it has an intricate textural surface with a significant area composed of windows. Also, the projection coverage area is more than a rectangle and includes three towers. There is also the opportunity to incorporate the sophisticated LED lighting system recently installed at the crown. These surface and geometric particularities presented the artists with creative challenges that have resulted in very interesting work. Another aspect of site-specificity is theMART's location on the Chicago River.

For example, Zheng Chongbin has responded to that by incorporating abstract flows of water into his work for Art on theMART. Also, given that theMART is primarily home to design and technology companies, it is fitting that theMART has joined Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events Commissioner Mark Kelly in shaping the vision of an inspired and truly twenty-first century city.

I profile people who are guided by a deep and unshakable passion for what they do. Following their joy inspires them to think outside the box, take risks and triumph. How awesome to do what you love and thrive! My publishing credits includes O, the Oprah Magazine, Parade, Th... MORE

Jeryl's book, My City, My New York:Famous New Yorkers Share Their Favorite Places, where hundreds of notables share their favorite NYC locales, can be found here. Visit jerylbrunner.com.