



## MEDIA RELEASE

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**Henry Art Gallery**

Faye G. Allen Center for the Visual Arts  
University of Washington  
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**Henry Announces a New Commission: *Sanctum* by James Coupe and Juan Pampin to be realized in 2012**



**Image from Coupe and Pampin's proposal for *Sanctum*.**

At the end of last year the Henry Art Gallery issued an open international call for artists, soliciting proposals for a site-specific, large-scale temporary media project to transform the façade of the museum's main entrance. The ultimate goal of this project is to engage an artist or artist team to create a visually striking and attention-grabbing work that exhibits a unique and captivating artistic vision, while engaging the thousands of UW students, faculty, staff, and visitors who pass by the Henry every day. The call resulted in 91 entries.

The selection committee that juried the proposals comprised: Sylvia Wolf, Director of the Henry Art Gallery; Elizabeth Brown, Henry Chief Curator; Sara Krajewski, Henry Curator; Christiane Paul, Whitney Museum Adjunct Curator of New Media Arts and Director of the Media Studies Graduate Program at The New School; Daniel Friedman, Dean of the University of Washington's College of the Built Environment; Bill True, Henry Board of Trustees Chairman; and Linden Rhoads, Vice Provost of UW Tech Transfer; Sarah Barton, MD, and Richard Barton, co-founder of expedia.com, zillow.com, and pozit.com

In late spring 2011, the jury selected three finalists, who were each given a stipend to further develop their concepts. Those three were Nataly Gattegno and Jason Kelly Johnson, design principles of Future Cities Lab; James Coupe and Juan Pampin, who are currently both Professors at the Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media (DXARTS), University of Washington; and Ed Purver, a New York-based artist whose practice includes participatory, interactive and site-specific installations with an orientation towards public art. The candidates made final presentations to the jury on Friday November 18<sup>th</sup>.

After careful consideration of all three proposals, the jury selected *Sanctum*, a project proposed by James Coupe and Juan Pampin that will investigate the narrative potential of social media as well as raise provocative questions about profiling and privacy in our day. Their project will create a locus of complex social networking activity that reaches out of the Henry Art Gallery to engage the passerby, whose demographic profile activates and gives shape to an emerging audiovisual narrative.

As individuals approach the Henry façade, they will see a bank of video monitors apparently reflecting faces from the crowd. They soon hear a curious cacophony of murmuring voices, that follows them as they walk by. Meanwhile, video surveillance cameras and computers with facial recognition software are analyzing them, using their demographic data to retrieve Facebook status posts and tweets from users with similar profiles. As they stop to look at the monitors they will see collected texts in narrative streams that appear as subtitles. These texts are generated from live and archived video footage captured on site. The narrative becomes a new form of oral storytelling as it is recited by text-to-speech software and beamed at passersby via ultrasound. *Sanctum* will be initiated and realized in 2012.

Coupe and Pampin are Professors at the Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media (DXARTS) at the University of Washington. **James Coupe** received his PhD in Digital Art and Experimental Media from the University of Washington and an MFA from the University of Edinburgh, UK. He works with systems, autonomy, and networks. His recent works (*re*)collector and *The Lover* use computer vision software to extract demographic and behavioral information recontextualized into narratives. **Juan Pampin** is an Argentine composer and sound artist with a Master of Arts in Computer Music from the CNSM de Lyon, France and a Doctorate of Musical Arts in composition from Stanford University. His work explores the territory delineated by the concepts of site, memory, and materiality, considering listening as an active process of self reflection.

The jury for this competition offered the following: "It was a pleasure and a privilege to review three such rich and varied projects. We express our thanks and appreciation to all three finalists for the thought, intelligence, and creativity that went into their presentations. Ultimately, we selected Coupe and Pampin's *Sanctum* for its artistic merit and conceptual rigor. This work integrates sound, visuals, and text to engage with highly relevant issues surrounding surveillance and profiling. By developing stories based on

Facebook posts, it explores the ambiguity of how we negotiate identity in social media. It also questions how computer-based systems create narratives on the basis of collected data. An interactive piece, it investigates the paradoxical relationship between voyeurism and exhibitionism. *Sanctum* has the potential of engaging every member of the University of Washington community, by opening a productive space for a critical encounter with contemporary technology.”



Image from Coupe and Pampin’s proposal for *Sanctum*.

Henry Director, Sylvia Wolf, adds: “We are particularly excited to launch this project in 2012, which marks the Henry’s 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary. From its founding in 1927, the Henry has championed contemporary art and fostered a campus- and region-wide culture of creativity. By commissioning a work that engages current topics in art and technology, the Henry fulfills its mission to advance the art, artists, and ideas of our time. We are deeply grateful to Sarah and Rich Barton, and to Linden Rhoads, for being the catalysts and benefactors of this important initiative. Their vision and support will provide a provocative and transformative experience for all who encounter *Sanctum*.”

## About the Henry Art Gallery

THE HENRY ADVANCES THE ART, ARTISTS, AND IDEAS OF OUR TIME.

Since its founding in 1927, the Henry Art Gallery has served the Pacific Northwest as a pioneer in bringing contemporary art and ideas to the region. The Henry is a hub for audiences of all ages to experience the discovery, wonder, and surprise that contemporary art, artists, and ideas provide. The Henry staff, board, and community are committed to taking risks, and fostering dialogue and debate. Exhibitions, collections, and public programs at the Henry stimulate research and teaching at the University of Washington, provide a creative wellspring for artists, students, and educators, and reveal a record of modern artistic inquiry from the advent of photography in the mid-19th century to the multidisciplinary art and design of the 21st century.

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