

## You and Your Shape Are Now Connected: The *Shapes for Hamilton* Project Takes off at Picker Art Gallery

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The minute I walked into Little Hall, I saw a large number of people standing in a line that stretched all the way from the Picker Art Gallery to the entrance of Little. I walked into the Art Gallery a little hesitant, and almost immediately, I was overwhelmed – overwhelmed by the enormous array of unique two-dimensional blobs of matter that had conquered the walls. I walked slowly around the gallery, my mouth slightly open.



Close your mouth! It hit me after my first (of many) circumambulations. As my mind slowly started to function again, I realized that I was here to cover the art project for the Maroon-News. I checked why people were waiting in line. Everyone, from three-year-olds to sixty-one-year-olds, was waiting in line so that they could find their shape in a large database that matched every resident of Hamilton, NY to a shape in the room. The infectious happiness and the childlike curiosity of everyone permeated through the entire room.

*The Shapes Project*, started by Allan McCollum, has an ambitious goal of creating a unique two-dimensional shape for every human being on the planet. This is done with a system of making shapes by combining four different sections (each of which has a large number of variations) to

make one unique shape using Adobe Illustrator. At the rate the system is going, McCollum estimates that around 30 billion shapes will be created. The *Shapes for Hamilton* project was funded by the Art and Art History Department and was started last fall. All in all, there were 6,000 distinct 2-D shapes printed by University Printing. 6,000! And these shapes were put up by a few faculty members from the Art and Art History department and a group of very enthusiastic student staff. 6,000 shapes were put up in six hours. That's 1,000 shapes an hour!

Associate Professor of Art & Art History and Director of the Institute for the Creative and Performing Arts, DeWitt Godfrey, the man in charge of the Shapes for Hamilton project, had this to say about it: "I connect with art-work that engages with society and community. This project affords us the opportunity of bringing all the 6000 or so inhabitants of Hamilton together in one room. The shapes look the same from afar, but they're all unique when you get closer, just like us human beings. Usually people use symbols and logos to differentiate interest, class, politics etc., but here everyone is given a unique symbol that, ironically, serves to bring us together."

Just as Professor Godfrey was speaking, I heard a loud scream. The last shape had been put up by the student volunteers. The spontaneous pomp and cheer among the student volunteers drew me toward them.

"I like art a lot, and I've always wanted a chance to install art," senior Adam Hughes said. "We had a lot of fun putting these shapes up. It was a little high-stress in the end but we got it done in time."

When asked about his interest in Allan McCollum's art, Hughes said, "We had lunch with Mr. McCollum a couple of times. He's a really smart guy. I appreciate his philosophy of art because it's not elitist or exclusive, but very inclusive."

All in all, the Shapes for Hamilton project appeals to a large range of sensibilities, from aesthetic to populist. And it does this on an individual level with each and every one of us.

As Professor Godfrey said, "Each shape put up here is unique and every one of you at Colgate now has a corresponding shape that no one else will ever have. You and your shape are now connected forever."