

# Personal Project

## What is the purpose and scope of the project?

Can I get Haverford to fund a non-art personal project that I'd like to do? That is the question the art piece Personal Project seeks to answer.

The Institution called Haverford is a social organism, composed of thousands of formal agreements, informal contracts, protocols, rituals, and habits between people. In this sense, it's a chaotic system: greater and much more complicated than the sum of its parts.

What counts as an art piece? In the eyes of individuals? According to culture? What does this Haverford organism see as art? What does it acknowledge as valuable? This piece both ponders these questions, and seeks to gain experimental evidence of their answers by probing the system.

I want to build a 24 foot diameter geodesic dome. This has been an aspiration of mine for several years. It will cost \$412.62. Can I get Haverford to pay for it if I make it into an art piece?

The completed dome will stand over 14' tall. It will be constructed of 165 struts made from steel tubing, held together with 61 bolts, 61 nuts, and 122 washers. Each strut will be between 4 and 5 feet long and together they will construct a triangulated mesh forming five eighths of a sphere. The floor space under the dome will be 450 square feet

The final piece will feature hanging labels attached to the parts that make up the structure, indicating the price and source of the material. Also, there will be a display visualizing the life-history of the money that funded the project: entering into the Institution, journeying through its various parts, interacting with this proposal, and finally leaving on order to purchase the materials used. These storytelling elements will be included to add a sense of narrative artness to the dome and increase the chance of it getting funded as an art project. The fact that this is required for this purpose will be noted.

The piece will be constructed outdoors in public and available for public, social-distanced viewing for one week, after which it will be disassembled and taken home with the artist. I aim to complete construction by the end of the semester. A detailed parts list is attached.

Can a personal project framed as an art piece get funding from the institution? Will the Haverford Organism validate this project? If so, how much derivation from the pure project will be required? Haverford will now make a decision with its money, giving us some insight into the way it classifies art, and the way it sees the world.

"The goal is basically to give the Haverford Alumni Magazine article writers a really hard time."

Will Harris-Braun  
2021/03/14

## How does it relate to your current or previous experience?

I'm at once an artist and a creator of technical projects (see <https://will.harris-braun.com>). With one foot in each of these overlapping yet often contradicting worlds, I have, over and over, had to reconcile the world of art with the world of the technical. How do we understand art and its limits? How do we perceive its influence in other spheres? When mixing art and technology, does one overshadow or subsume the other? Growing up with an understanding of both and an identity not completely in either, I've had to face these questions personally, and I believe it's important to face them as a culture.

Taught from an early age by my family, I've seen the world in terms of Social Organisms. These are creatures we don't understand yet. They form like mutants, undesigned, when a critical mass of humans organize together. Only lightly guided by things like "values" and "protocols," but largely uncontrollable, their biggest sensory organ—their largest, most sensitive eye—is Money, a catch-all value-representation system that those in power, unwittingly and for their own benefit, let loose to wreak havoc on others and destroy the globe. But maybe we can put a small microscope to these behemoths, see their internal structures, understand them—and thus ourselves—just a little better. An experiment like the one I've proposed is a part of this self-examination, and an exploration into making the idea of Social Organisms accessible, interesting, and visceral.

## How would support for the proposal enhance the project beyond what is already available through campus activities, clubs, or student organizations?

Monetary support from the Student Arts Fund would fund the purchase of the materials needed for this project. Support can also provide me with access to the metalworking tools in the Foundry (and the training with them) necessary to efficiently construct a structure like a geodesic dome which requires so many repeated parts. Lastly, support would also provide me access to organizational help I need to stage an outdoor showing of the work once it's complete. Support for a project like this isn't available through any clubs or student organizations. If only partial funding is available, I may be able to request supplemental funding for materials from the VCAM Maker Arts Space.