My name is GiGi Miller and I received my BFA from The University of Texas at Austin with a focus on ceramics and installation sculpture. Growing up in Gonzales, TX, I visited family in the San Antonio area several times a year and often spent summers swimming in Medina Lake. When I first visited Helotes, I fell in love with the natural beauty of the area and even dreamed of living in Helotes after graduating from college. So naturally, I was very excited to learn about this call. Therefore, it is with great enthusiasm that I submit this letter to the Community Arts Grant Committee to state my interest in the Community Arts Grant Programs’ major art sculpture project.

In 2013 I began creating sculptures for the public. My major works to date include 5 large mosaic sculptures; a 6’x8’mosaic wall; and 5 mosaic benches. As a public artist, I have received Boerne’s People’s Choice Award (2020), been featured on the cover of Texas Hill Country Magazine (Jan-Mar 2016), been honored as the Featured Artist on PublicArtist.org (2015), received the Encore Award from the Lampasas Association for the Arts, and have been selected to display my works at multiple sculpture gardens and gallery shows.

My goal with my designs is to create iconic works. My design process begins with sketches of the proposed work. Next, I typically make a maquette to help stakeholders better imagine the final work. Once the design is finalized, if it is a sculptural work, I sculpt a base form. Finally, I create my hand-made tiles and apply them. This sculpture will prominently display the city name so that it can be used for official marketing campaigns, and so that it will make Helotes stand out in any images posted on social media that include the sculpture.

To date, my body of work has been primarily focused on creating sculptures for public parks and playgrounds, so my works must be safe and durable. As a member of many professional arts organizations, I have taken courses from other career public artists to learn best practices for creating durable public works that require minimal maintenance. My process received the approval of the City of Austin’s art conservator, which required the use of techniques and materials that would last a minimum of 20 years with minimal maintenance. I have also developed relationships with several fabricators with extensive public art experience to enhance the diversity and quality of my projects.

I take particular pride in working with all stakeholders through each stage of a project to incorporate their feedback. My aim is to ensure satisfaction with the finished work. I host community-inclusive tile making events as part of my social practice, wherein community members and stakeholders are invited to create handmade clay tiles that I glaze and fire for inclusion in the final work. This type of creative place-making helps community members feel a special connection to both the place and the work of art. One other fun aspect of my work is that the finished sculpture becomes an “I spy” game where observers can hunt for specific images drawn into the tiles, along with other small figurines that I include among the tiles. A list of hidden items can be created and added to the chamber of commerce or city website as a fun activity for visitors to participate in.

I am very excited about this potential opportunity and I really appreciate your time in considering my qualifications. As a Texas native who lives in the Hill Country, it would be extremely meaningful to me to be given the opportunity to create an amazing sculpture for the Old Town Helotes traffic circle that would complement the beauty of the surroundings and would also include community made tiles. I believe my bright, colorful, hand-made tiles; my fun, whimsical style; and my experience creating safe, durable public works - all combine to make my work a natural fit for this project. I look forward to hearing back from the Community Arts Grant Committee and hopefully working with you all in the very near future.