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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

—Line 48: Should “urge and need” be “urgent need”?  
—Line 120: Office HQ? As in TV show (uppercase italic) or generically (lowercase)?

**HEADLINE ELEMENTS:**

####BEGIN HED####

1 Sticking it to corporate culture

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 ‘Tape Art Mega Corp’ comes to Brattleboro to make up  
3 an office environment with painter’s tape and imagination

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 “Step into the world of Tape Art Mega Corp. (TAMC),  
6 where creativity meets corporate chaos — and everyone’s hired  
7 on the spot.”

8 So opens a recent press release from Brattleboro  
9 Museum & Art Center (BMAC). While an empty office suite on  
10 the first floor of 28 Vernon St. awaits BMAC’s future plans, it will

11 become, from March 21 to 29, the site of TAMC’s latest  
12 installation: a bustling new “corporate headquarters” created  
13 “from top to bottom using nothing but imagination and rolls of  
14 colorful tape.”

15         And we’re all invited to help build it.

16         For those nine days starting this Saturday, artists Michael  
17 Townsend and Leah Smith will lead this “part immersive  
18 installation, part comedy, and all-community artmaking” event.

19         The duo, based in Providence, Rhode Island, promise a  
20 “playful, participatory art experience” as visitors of all ages  
21 “clock in for a shift to play, create, and laugh together as they  
22 help build a world out of tape” — anything and everything from  
23 cubicles to trophies “in this workplace gone wonderfully off the  
24 rails.”

25         Exclusively using rolls of tape as their medium to  
26 transform everyday walls into large-scale temporary murals,  
27 Townsend and Smith have created public art to communities  
28 across the United States and beyond.

29         Townsend’s work is earning a wide audience through a  
30 2024 documentary, [Secret Mall Apartment](#). The film, now  
31 streaming on Netflix, chronicles how he and several other artists  
32 clandestinely created and kept an apartment in a nook they  
33 discovered deep in the structure of Providence Place.

34         That supersized shopping haven built in 1999 had left  
35 many in Providence dismayed over its culture-eradicating impact.  
36 Hardly a hangout den, the apartment was where many Tape Art  
37 projects — and TAMC’s modus operandi — were hatched.

38         No stranger to quirky, Townsend started at Rhode Island  
39 School of Design (RISD) for a bachelor’s degree in printmaking in  
40 1989 and soon became an instructor at the top-ranked art school.  
41 Townsend spoke recently with *The Commons* from his old  
42 Providence mill loft home.

## 43 'Something happened right

## 44 here'

45 Back in 1989, Townsend started developing Tape Art as,  
46 he says, "a collaborative [and temporary] method of making art."  
47 Reflecting on its evolution, he recalls that one night early on he  
48 and new first-year RISD friends began exploring "a city that was  
49 effectively abandoned because Providence was going through a  
50 big transition at that time. Our night ended with an urgent need  
51 to draw on the ground "some sort of shorthand" for their night's  
52 experiences.

53 "We drew [in tape] a life-size person holding an 8-foot  
54 balloon [...] in a police silhouette outline style," which, he  
55 observes, "is always a way of saying, 'While you were asleep,  
56 something happened right here.'"

57 "The following night, before the sun came up, we went  
58 out and removed that drawing and put down a better drawing —  
59 life-size dinosaurs; 24 hours later, we ripped up that drawing and  
60 drew a chariot crash."

61 And then, for months, "we just crashed things,"  
62 Townsend says.

63 "Crash a plane, crash a train, crash a roller coaster, crash  
64 Noah's Ark. When it rained, we couldn't draw on the ground, so  
65 we just moved it into covered spaces and did the same style, life-  
66 size silhouettes. Those became sort of living murals. And that's  
67 how Tape Art started."

68 Thirty-seven years later, Townsend — teamed with Smith  
69 for the last 15 years — is "the in-house Tape Art crew. We're the  
70 travel team in an art ecosystem where not a lot of money is being  
71 passed around." So they do "the international travel and the  
72 residency work where we go to a place and dig in for a while."

73 The majority of their work, Townsend explains, "falls into  
74 big murals. That's when we go park ourselves in front of a  
75 building and do a drawing that's two or three stories high, 100

76 feet across. As a performance piece, we just draw all day. We did  
77 one of those on the front of [BMAC].”

## 78 **‘Just so human’**

79 BMAC director Danny Lichtenfeld describes the  
80 museum’s “special little history now growing” with TAMC, dating  
81 from a 2022 collaboration with ArtLords, refugees who’d been  
82 members of an art collective in their country of origin,  
83 Afghanistan.

84 “We met them soon after they came and started talking  
85 about supporting them and doing a mural project in their new  
86 hometown,” he says.

87 At the same time, Lichtenfeld continues, “BMAC was in  
88 conversation with Townsend and Smith about an installation.”

89 What resulted was a rich collaboration among all,  
90 through which 17 temporary murals were created around  
91 Brattleboro. At the close of that creative undertaking, BMAC  
92 committed to having the Tape Art team do a dedicated project  
93 “that really showcased what they do. So about a year later, they  
94 came for a few weeks and taped the whole museum blue,”  
95 Lichtenfeld recalls.

96 Townsend explains. “We were given the exterior of that  
97 building, a marvelously complex thing for us because we’re used  
98 to big blank walls. Give us brutalist architecture, we’re in heaven,  
99 right? But [BMAC] is just stones and mortar.”

100 They meticulously turned every stone blue, ensuring that  
101 the mortar remained clear. To honor the New Hampshire-sourced  
102 stones — which, he imagined, might have had yearnings to head  
103 graves — they drew on each a tiny vignette of a ground plane, a  
104 gravestone, a coffin or skeleton underground, a tree in a cloud.

105 That was repeated some 3,000 times, he adds.

106 “Just so human,” says Townshend.

107 Lichtenfeld elaborates on where the relationship with  
108 TAMC went from there. “Fast forward: now we’re friends, and  
109 Michael becomes the subject of this incredible documentary,

110 Secret Mall Apartment, of which BMAC arranged a two-night  
111 showing at the Latchis, followed by a Q&A with Townsend and  
112 one of the film’s makers.”

113           When they were in town for the screenings, Lichtenfeld  
114 took them to the 28 Vernon St. space next door to the museum.

115           Townsend jumped.

116           “Oh, my god, we would love to do a project in here,” he  
117 said.

118           And so the idea was born to to take the very 1990s  
119 corporate-like office environment of 28 Vernon St., “and make it  
120 a crazy kooky office HQ kind of thing — all out of tape.”

121           “For nine days straight, Leah and I will be the managers  
122 from Tape Art Megacorp,” Townsend explains. “We’ll onboard  
123 people to give them a job for an hour or longer, if you want to  
124 stay.”

125           Lichtenfeld adds that “anyone is invited to just drop in  
126 and get swooped into this zany world of making things out of  
127 tape.”

128           The event will end Sunday, March 29, at 4 p.m., when  
129 “we’re going to have an office pizza party and tear all the tape  
130 down.”

## 131           **A ‘wide-ranging performance** 132 **piece about corporate culture’**

133           The Brattleboro project is significant for TAMC because  
134 they’re running out of tape. The best product for their work,  
135 Townsend explains, was a painter’s tape manufacturer’s failure  
136 which, “accidentally, is the perfect drawing tape. I can’t  
137 overemphasize how narrow a spectrum of needs this tape has to  
138 fit in order to work well for drawing.”

139           To TAMC’s dismay, the company stopped making this  
140 tape four years ago.

141           “We bought up the last of it that exists on the planet.  
142 We’ve known that 2026 was going to be the year we would start

143 to run out of it based on our regular tape usage. So as we sit here  
144 today, we're looking at the last several hundred rolls."

145 A quest for a new source in the U.S. — and in Europe  
146 and even in India — turned up no proper replacement, so the  
147 duo will head to China this summer to visit two or three factories  
148 a day, hoping to find one where "we're praying that someone  
149 there either has it or is willing to help us develop it."

150 Thus, the BMAC project "is a bit emotional for us," says  
151 Townsend "because we're going to be giving [the last of our] tape  
152 to the fine people who come to this installation. We want these  
153 last hundreds of rolls to have a really excellent impact."

154 The aim, Townsend adds, is "to provide an opportunity to  
155 draw in a collaborative fashion that's going to consume the  
156 interior of this administrative building. We just want to make sure  
157 that people have that deep sense of satisfaction that Tape Art can  
158 provide. Especially for people who don't feel necessarily secure  
159 about making art. There'll be a wild range of opportunities to  
160 make different types of things.

161 "We'll have a lot of emergencies for things that need to  
162 be drawn ASAP, and they'll be needs for advertisements and  
163 jingles and promotional campaigns and then a lot of in-house  
164 stuff we need [...]. It'll be a wide-ranging performance piece  
165 about corporate culture through the lens of making art.

166 "Leah and I have done a lot of corporate leadership  
167 training with high-end executives. We did a decade with General  
168 Electric. We worked with IBM. We worked with Siemens. We've  
169 been in the absolute trenches of using Tape Art as a tool to help  
170 executives understand their leadership journey."

171 For the uninitiated, he adds that "the way you draw is  
172 you remove a strip of tape [6 inches to 2 feet long] which you  
173 can manipulate on the wall very easily. We'll show everybody  
174 how to curve the tape and make it sculptural. As art educators,  
175 we spend a lot of time introducing Tape Art to new audiences. I  
176 personally have worked with over 60,000 first-time tape artists"  
177 in myriad demographics.

178           The therapeutic benefit of Tape Art, Townsend explains,  
179 “mostly comes from having the freedom to draw on surfaces that  
180 you would never get to draw on.”

181           The nice thing about Tape Art, he adds, “is that there’s  
182 not “a 1,000, 2,000-year history of art backing it up,” so assessing  
183 quality is uncharted territory.

184           When asked about environmental impact, Tape Art  
185 assures: “the tape we use is made with recycled paper that is at  
186 its end-of-life, which means that it cannot be recycled any more  
187 since the fibers have been broken down too much from previous  
188 recycling processes.”

189           Reassurance is redoubled with the nature of the genre:  
190 “It’s always collaborative,” Townsend explains. “It’s always  
191 spontaneous. It always tells stories.”

192           That may be a happy antidote for these times.

## 193           **A ‘gangbusters spring’**

194           The TAMC project, Lichtenfeld explains is part of a  
195 “gangbusters” spring, in which several other exhibits will be  
196 opening in BMAC galleries featuring artists from across the U.S.  
197 and from Costa Rica, all exploring the relationship between  
198 humans and the natural world.

199           In the last few years, Lichtenfeld adds, “we have  
200 sustained the highest levels of visitor attendance and  
201 participation in our programs that we’ve ever experienced.”

202           In part, he attributes that to BMAC’s effort to extend its  
203 communications reach beyond Brattleboro. In addition, after  
204 fluxes in admission fees necessitated by Covid and some resulting  
205 epiphanies, BMAC has stopped charging admission altogether,  
206 “and that has definitely made a difference in our attendance,”  
207 Lichtenfeld adds.

208           “Even though it was a small admission, just the notion  
209 that it’s free” has generated a draw, he says.

210           “Let’s say you’re here 15 minutes early to meet  
211 somebody at the Co-op. You can just pop across the street and

212 breeze around for a minute. Something else that's had an impact  
213 is that we continue to really lean into collaborating with other  
214 organizations and players in the community."

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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215 Find Tape Art Mega Corp. takes place at at 28 Vernon St.,  
216 Brattleboro (the office building next door to the Brattleboro  
217 Museum & Art Center). Drop-ins are welcome anytime from 10  
218 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 21 and Sunday, March 29 and  
219 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. from Monday, March 22 to Saturday,  
220 March 28. Come for an Office Pizza Party from 4 to 6 p.m. on  
221 Sunday, March 29 to help tear down the tape. For more  
222 information, visit [brattleboromuseum.org](http://brattleboromuseum.org).

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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