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Mural Arts names artists for 2015 citywide project

Stephen Salisbury, January 29, 2015

The Philadelphia Mural Arts Program has engaged 14 artists, some well-known throughout the art world, to create temporary public works over the next nine months in different parts of the city.

All of the works - in genres not necessarily associated with Mural Arts - will address social and political issues of importance to the city and the program, according to officials at the city agency.

"Open Source: Engaging Audiences in Public Space," an \$800,000 project, will roll out starting in late spring with two temporary skate-able sculptures created by British sculptor Jonathan Monk and based on works by the minimalist artist Sol LeWitt. Skaters and visitors to a to-be-selected skate park will be able to touch, step, and skate on the artwork during its six-month existence.

The project will culminate in October with a citywide festival focused on the completed works.

Jane Golden, executive director of Mural Arts, touted "Open Source" as advancing "Philadelphia's reputation for cultural innovation" and further positioning it "as a global city." And in a statement, "Open Source" curator Pedro Alonzo said that "in the spirit of open-source technology, the artists are invited to utilize [Mural Arts'] unique infrastructure and ongoing programs to engage communities and address issues all over the city."

Golden said no artworks would go into neighborhoods that expressed reservations about the subject matter, which could include criminal justice, behavioral health, the environment, and community reinvestment.

The use of the word *community* includes groups that share interests as well as those that share neighborhoods and physical space.

For instance, Caledonia Curry, who exhibits under the name SWOON, will address issues pertinent to women's shelters. She has been visiting a specific shelter, talking with women and officials there. A site for her not-yet-started work, which Golden said would address "healing and redemption," has not been selected.

A full list of projects will not be available until spring. Artists will begin their work at various times, and in October, a series of public events, including discussions, a party, tours, film screenings, lectures, and workshops, will unfold around Philadelphia.

In addition to Monk and SWOON, the artists involved are:

Ernel Martinez and Keir Johnston of AMBER Art and Design, a collective of five Philadelphia-based public artists; Steven and Billy Dufala, natives of the Philadelphia area known for infusing their multimedia art with humor and wit; Philadelphia visual artist and community arts educator Michelle Angela Ortiz; Jennie Shanker, a founding member of Philadelphia's Vox Populi Gallery; multimedia artist Sam Durant; Shepard Fairey, who recently completed Mural Arts' *Lotus Diamond*; JR, known for his large-scale photographs deployed on streets around the world; MOMO, who works outdoors with systems and homemade tools; Nigeria-born Odili Donald Odita, whose large installation *Give Me Shelter* was featured in the 52d Venice Biennale; visual artist Sterling Ruby; Shinique Smith, a featured artist in the 2005 International Istanbul Biennial; and visual artist Heeseop Yoon.