



MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mary Mack, Digital & Communications Manager
mmack@cocastl.org, 314.561.4878

COCA SELECTS ARTIST TO CREATE *COMMON GROUND*: A SITE-SPECIFIC ART INSTALLATION IN NEW FERRING EAST WING

Artist Olaniyi R. Akindiya of ArtWithAkirash Studio will debut the participatory installation September 28, 2020

ST. LOUIS, September 9, 2020 – On Monday, September 28, COCA – Center of Creative Arts will unveil *Common Ground*, a participatory installation designed and created by international artist, Olaniyi R. Akindiya, with the subtitle: *Ilọsiwaju – Work in progress, still constructing #2*. *Common Ground* captures the themes of community, gratitude, the connectivity of the arts, and the importance of inclusive and welcoming shared spaces. The installation celebrates the opening of COCA’s new Ferring East Wing following the close of the *Create Our Future* Campaign.

“*Common Ground* will be a unique “take” on a traditional ribbon cutting,” said Kelly Pollock, COCA Executive Director. “Rather than a stand-alone, one-time event, *Common Ground* is a site-specific, participatory celebration of what COCA’s community has built: An accessible, central place for the entire community to connect through the arts; to tell stories and envision our future.”

Akindiya is a world-renowned artist originally from Lagos, Nigeria; he currently resides in Austin, Texas. Akindiya was selected through a blind process by a panel of artists, designers, and community members. A pool of regional artists submitted entries in response to COCA’s open call to artists.

“*Common Ground* to me is a place to be together in this moment: An opportunity for us all to forget our differences, what positions we hold in society, or any of the other cultural forces that push us apart,” said Akindiya. “For this one moment, in this space, let us be one, be equal, be brothers and sisters, remember we are all from one family tree. From that vantage point, there is much more that unites us than separates us.”

The installation will be on display in COCA’s Millstone Gallery and the new Centene Commons from September 28-November 15. The installation uses moveable and shapeable corrugated plastic that will utilize the high arching spaces of the Centene Commons and the Millstone Gallery and includes elements of community involvement. In accordance with COCA’s Health and Safety Guidelines, small groups and individuals are invited to reserve time slots to engage with the exhibition and all participants will be required to wear masks and maintain social distancing precautions.

Common Ground is made possible by The Arthur and Helen Baer Charitable Foundation.

WHEN: September 28, 2020 – November 15, 2020

WHERE: COCA – Center of Creative Arts, 6880 Washington Ave, St. Louis, MO 63130

PHOTOS &

INTERVIEWS: The artist, along with representatives from COCA will be available for interviews upon request. Additionally, COCA can provide images of Akindiya’s previous work upon request. Contact Mary

Mack (mmack@cocastl.org, 314.561.4878)

ABOUT

THE ARTIST: Olaniyi Rasheed Akindiya aka AKIRASH, was born in Lagos, Nigeria. He earned his first BSC degree in Biochemistry from the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta Nigeria (1991), before going on to study Fine and Applied Art at Institute of Textile Technology Art & Design Lagos (1995). He now lives and works Austin Texas. His work focuses on moments of time, fleeting moments that can be easily forgotten or transformed; reflecting on rural versus urban life, the accelerated pace of development and social infrastructure. His works and performative activities play around social subjectivities of identity, Health, education, equality, gun violence, races, religion with dramatic components, breaking down conventional barriers.

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ABOUT COCA

COCA's mission is to *enrich lives and build community through the arts*. With a commitment to equity and access, COCA has served as a regional hub for learning in and through the arts for all ages from all backgrounds since its founding in 1986. It is the fourth largest multidisciplinary community arts center in the country, one of only 16 schools in the nation accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Precollegiate Arts Schools (ACCPAS), and a national leader in innovative arts education. COCA serves more than 50,000 people of all ages and skill levels, from enthusiastic amateurs to emerging professionals—all taught by a faculty of distinguished arts educators. We provide meaningful arts experiences in our own studios, gallery and theatres as well as in schools, community centers and corporate settings in order to build a vibrant St. Louis that is creative, connected and inclusive. Visit www.cocastl.org to learn more.