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WALL BALL 2023

VOICES OF THE COMMUNITY

Mural Arts Philadelphia Celebrates the Voices, Stories, and Murals in Our Community at Wall Ball 2023 Gala Fundraiser on April 27, 2023

Honoring artists, community, and the Community Murals program at Mural Arts

Philadelphia, PA – April 11, 2023 – Mural Arts Philadelphia announces Wall Ball 2023, an annual gala fundraiser celebrating public art and the power of community, to be held on Thursday, April 27, 2023, at the 2300 Arena in South Philadelphia. Presented by Citizens, this year’s event will recognize Mural Arts’ Community Murals department. This unique initiative empowers individuals by giving voice to every person in every part of the city, lifting untold stories, and highlighting local heroes and history. Tickets start at $250 and can be purchased at https://wallball.muralarts.org/.

This year, Mural Arts is bringing a Def Poetry Jam Reunion for Wall Ball 2023 to celebrate the incredible work of Sonia Sanchez, Philadelphia’s first poet laureate. Sonia, along with artist Danny Simmons are Mural Arts’ 2023 Visionary Artist Awardees. The event will also honor Leslie Richards, CEO & General Manager of SEPTA, for her tireless advocacy and partnership with Mural Arts, which has transformed transit stations and provided same-day wages to hundreds of unhoused Philadelphians through its Color Me Back program.

Seven acclaimed poets - Bonafide Rojas, Khemist Mayfield, Ursula Rucker, Derick Cross, Vanessa Hidrany, Kraal ‘Kayo’ Charles, and Lamar Mason - will be in attendance, most of whom will perform in the style of the iconic Def Poetry Jam television series. Lezlie Harrison, vocalist, bandleader, and on-air
radio host at the preeminent jazz radio station, WBGO, will be the MC and will perform during the evening. The event is expected to bring together Mural Arts supporters, artists, local government officials, and community and business leaders for a night of celebration and fundraising towards Mural Arts’ mission of transforming public spaces and individual lives through art.

"Through our Community Murals department, we collaborate with community members to imagine and lead projects that build social capital, develop a sense of communal ownership over space, represent diversity, and empower people to make change in their city," said Jane Golden, Executive Director of Mural Arts Philadelphia. "These community murals not only highlight important figures and themes from Philadelphia's history but also bring together neighbors and new friends, reminding us of who we are and where we are going."

“For the past 20 years, Citizens has been a proud partner of Mural Arts,” said Dan Astolfi, Executive Vice President for Commercial Banking at Citizens and Vice Chair of Mural Arts Philadelphia's board. “We are thrilled to highlight the Community Murals Program at Wall Ball this year. Both Citizens and Mural Arts strive to empower people to reach their potential – be it through art, education, or financial stability - so that communities can thrive.”

The Wall Ball Committee, consisting of Danielle Hankin, Keith Lewis, Sarena Snider, Kimberly J. Allen, Dan Astolfi, Tara Theune Davis, Julia Fleischner, Nicole Gainer, Jane Goldblum, Margelle Liss, David Pudlin, Courtney Robinson, RJ Rushmore, and Alexis & Max Tuttleman, has been working tirelessly to ensure that this year's event is a night to remember.

"We are excited to showcase the incredible talent of Mural Arts' artists and the transformative power of art at Wall Ball 2023," said Julia Fleischner, Wall Ball Committee member and Chair of Mural Arts’ Board of Directors. "We are grateful to our partners Catering by Design, Colibri Workshop, Kimpton Hotel Palomar Philadelphia, Signature 57, and Witty Gritty for their support in making this thrilling event possible."

At Wall Ball 2023, Mural Arts will honor:

- **Danny Simmons, Artist**
  Danny Simmons is a published author, poet, painter, and philanthropist. He is a leader in the art world with his philanthropic ventures, artistic talents, and creative mind and drive. Danny Simmons played an instrumental role in the conceiving of and co-producing the hit HBO show Def Poetry Jam and won a Tony Award for the Broadway version of the show. Today, his works appear in the Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Smithsonian, the United Nations, the United States State Department Collection, the PAFA Collection, the Brooklyn Museum, and more. He continues to thrive at his ‘home gallery’ in Philadelphia, PA.

- **Sonia Sanchez, Poet, Activist & Writer**
Sonia Sanchez is the author of more than 20 books and a recipient of the 2022 Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize. *Does Your House Have Lions?* was a National Book Critics Circle Award finalist. Sanchez is the Poetry Society of America’s 2001 Robert Frost Medalist and a Ford Freedom Scholar from the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. In December 2011, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter selected Sonia Sanchez as Philadelphia’s first poet laureate, calling her “the longtime conscience of the city.” Sanchez has lectured at more than 500 universities and colleges in the United States and has traveled extensively to read her poetry. Sanchez lives in Philadelphia.

- Leslie Richards, CEO & General Manager of SEPTA

Leslie S. Richards is the CEO and 11th General Manager of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), the sixth largest public transportation agency in the U.S. that enables the five million residents of the Greater Philadelphia region to connect to each other. A staunch advocate for women and diversity in transportation and government, Richards has been recognized for her leadership in the industry and commitment to public service. She lives with her husband in Philadelphia.


About Mural Arts Philadelphia:
Mural Arts Philadelphia is the nation's largest public art program, dedicated to the belief that art ignites change. For over 35 years, Mural Arts has united artists and communities through a collaborative and equitable process, creating over 4,000 artworks that have transformed public spaces and individual lives. Mural Arts aims to empower people, stimulate dialogue, and build bridges to mutual understanding through projects that attract artists from Philadelphia and around the world and programs that focus on youth education, restorative justice, mental health and wellness, and public art and its preservation. Popular mural tours offer a firsthand glimpse into the inspiring stories behind Mural Arts' iconic and unparalleled collection, earning Philadelphia worldwide recognition as the "Mural Capital of the World." For more information, call 215-685-0750 or visit muralarts.org. Follow us on social media: @muralarts on Twitter and Instagram, MuralArtsPhiladelphia on Facebook, and phillymuralarts on YouTube.

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