Artist Selection Announced for First Major Public Art Work in Durham SmART Vision Plan

Monumental Art Wrap of the Corcoran Street Garage will create signature gateway for Downtown Durham’s Blackwell, Corcoran, Foster Corridor

“Meet the Artist Open House & Discussion” on Friday, October 27th

Durham, NC— Durham Arts Council, the North Carolina Arts Council, City of Durham, and the SmART Resource Team have announced the selection of Olalekan Jeyifous as the artist to create the monumental Art Wrap for the Corcoran Street Garage, which is the first major public art work of the Durham SmART Vision Plan. His selection follows a rigorous review of 107 artist applications from across the United States. Olalekan, known as “LEK”, is a Nigerian-born artist, architect and designer from Brooklyn, New York. He has created major sculptures, designs, murals, installations, and public art for clients, events and exhibitions in the United States and internationally, including a monumental 50' x 50' x 50' sculpture, “Crown Ether”, for the 2017 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in California.

The Art Wrap of Corcoran Street Garage focuses on activating and transforming the visual experience between the American Tobacco and City Center Districts. Olalekan Jeyifous will design and oversee fabrication and installation of large scale art banners that will wrap the exterior south and southeast façades of this large City parking garage. The Corcoran Street Garage, is owned by the City of Durham, was built in 1964, and is a contributing structure to the downtown historic district.

Durham Arts Council, 120 Morris St. in downtown Durham, will host a “Meet the Artist Open House & Discussion” on Friday, October 27th from 3:00 pm – 6:30 pm at DAC, where the community can meet LEK, see his concept designs, provide feedback, learn about his artistic vision for this project and also hear more about the SmART Vision Plan for the Blackwell/Corcoran/Foster corridor in downtown Durham.

Durham is one of four communities chosen to be part of the N. C. Arts Council’s SmART Initiative, which supports arts driven economic development projects that transform downtowns. Since 2012, the N.C. Arts Council has provided staff resources, public art consultants and significant funds to create a plan for downtown Durham’s Blackwell, Corcoran, Foster Street corridor and to develop the first project on the corridor.

Additionally, the Durham SmART project is supported by a prestigious National Endowment for the Arts “Our Town” Grant; grants and technical support from the City of Durham; financial and staff support from the Durham Arts Council; additional grant support from Durham County, Duke University, Nasher Museum of Art, and Downtown Durham, Inc., plus technical support from Durham Area Designers, and the Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau. Durham Arts Council is the local lead agency for the Durham SmART Initiative. Over 26 local, state and national partners have been engaged in this major SmART initiative.
The SmART Initiative focuses on transforming the North/South Corridor of Blackwell/Corcoran/Foster Streets through creative place making. The SmART Vision Plan is a multi-year, $10 million public art and urban design strategy that fully envisions a dynamic, art-infused, colorful, and connected North/South corridor that draws pedestrians into an exciting daytime and nighttime environment where they will be enticed to stay and to visit multiple locations along the corridor. This arts-driven economic development strategy can be a key factor in downtown Durham’s future development and success. Renowned landscape architect, urban designer and public artist Mikyoung Kim completed an Artscape Vision Plan for the Durham SmART Initiative in 2015 as a framework for a reimagined downtown Arts & Entertainment District. Mikyoung Kim’s community design process, involving over 200 community members and businesses, focused on this prominent north-south corridor with deep historic/cultural roots. The plan connects 3 distinct districts along the corridor – American Tobacco, City Center, & Durham Central Park respectively. Improved pedestrian access and artfully designed public spaces will support arts based events & greater participation for residents and visitors in this rapidly transforming city.

With the launch of work on the Corcoran Garage Art Wrap as the first major project, the Durham SmART Initiative is underway with early implementation work defined in the SmART Vision Plan -- connecting the cultural hubs/districts in downtown Durham through key elements of public art, design lighting, wayfinding systems, outdoor enhancements, pedestrian amenities and green space improvements.


Mikyoung Kim Design: http://myk-d.com/

The Selection of Artist Olalekan Jeyifous
The SmART Resource Team, the Durham Arts Council, and the North Carolina Arts Council professional staff were impressed by and greatly appreciated this artist’s ability to see the essence of the SmART corridor (Blackwell, Corcoran, Foster Streets), especially the interplay of its historic buildings, new buildings, public spaces and its rapidly evolving private sector embrace of the arts and entertainment corridor value. His concept design proposal blends the historic and new in a colorful and understandable artistic expression at an important downtown entrance location that will be viewed by residents and visitors of all ages – daytime and nighttime - as they attend arts, entertainment, dining and business activities. Stated Mr. Jeyifous, “For this proposal, my inspiration derived, to a certain degree, from the Dutch artist, M.C. Escher’s series of ‘Metamorphosis II and III’, woodcut prints as well as my desire to reinforce the objectives of the Durham SmART Vision plan to transform the 3 districts into a vibrant cultural destination.” Click for more information on Olalekan Jeyifous. Olalekan Jeyifous TED talk.

“The initial design concept from Olalekan Jeyifous is very exciting and vibrant and will truly transform the North South corridor downtown. I have long wanted large scale iconic artwork and imagery on this Corcoran Street garage structure, and look forward to the realization of this major installation. This is the launch project of the ten-year SmART Vision Plan which promises to take Durham to the next level as a vibrant cultural destination; enhancing the pedestrian experience and connectivity between major cultural, entertainment and business assets in our downtown district,” stated Durham Mayor, William V. “Bill” Bell.

Timeframe for Creation of the Art Wrap
Following the public workshop and open house on October 27th, LEk will finalize his design. Completion of fabrication and installation is projected for May/June 2018. The current weathered banner depicting ADF
dancer Andrew Lamar that has been in place on a portion of the garage for ten years will be de-installed and creatively repurposed, working with American Dance Festival.

**National Endowment for the Arts “Our Town” Grant**

Durham Arts Council has received an award of $100,000 from the NEA “Our Town” program to support this Phase 1 implementation of the Durham SmART Vision Plan. The NEA Our Town grant program supports creative placemaking projects that help to transform communities into lively, beautiful, and resilient places with the arts at their core. “For six years, Our Town has made a difference for people and the places where they live, work, and play,” said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. “Projects such as the one led by Durham Arts Council help residents engage the arts to spark vitality in their communities.”

For a complete list of projects recommended for NEA Our Town grant support, please visit the NEA web site at arts.gov. The NEA’s online resource, Exploring Our Town, features case studies of more than 70 Our Town projects along with lessons learned and other resources.

**NOTE:** For radio or television broadcast, NEA requires the following voice-over language: “This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. On the web at arts dot gov.” For television broadcast, display of the Arts Endowment logo and web address is required.

**About North Carolina Arts Council**

The North Carolina Arts Council launched its work in 1967 as awareness for the importance of arts to all citizens was becoming a national movement. In the ensuing fifty years the arts in North Carolina have come to be valued as one of our state’s most durable and productive assets. Our state’s arts infrastructure reaches into all 100 counties through one of the most highly developed and effective networks of local arts councils in our nation. An abundance of outstanding artists and arts organizations continues to enrich our communities. These people and institutions improve quality of life, educate and inspire our youth, and stimulate an extraordinary amount of economic activity. Learn more about our 50th Anniversary Statewide Arts Celebration at [www.ncarts50.org](http://www.ncarts50.org).

**About Durham Arts Council, Inc.**

The Durham Arts Council (DAC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization which has supported the arts in Durham, NC and the Triangle Region since 1954. Today DAC serves more than 400,000 visitors and program participants, 1,000+ artists, and 60+ arts organizations each year through classes, artist residencies, exhibits, festivals, grant programs, technical support and information, arts advocacy, creative economy and creative place-making initiatives. Our Mission: Durham Arts Council, Inc. is a catalyst in the cultural development of Durham - it leads, inspires, and promotes excellence in and access to the creation, experience and active support of the arts for all the people of our community. For more information visit [www.durhamarts.org](http://www.durhamarts.org).

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