



STONYBROOK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MURAL COMPETITION WINNERS CHOSEN FOR JAMAICA PLAIN BUILDING

JAMAICA PLAIN, SEPTEMBER 7, 2021 - After years of planning by the Stonybrook Neighborhood Association (SNA) and SSG Development and Construction, the exterior walls of an Extra Space Storage facility at 141 McBride Street in Jamaica Plain will be transformed into works of public art that celebrate the surrounding community. Two areas of the building totaling 2,500 sq. ft. will display new murals by Boston-based artists.

Julia Csekö and Sharif Muhammad created the winning proposals, selected out of a group of eight semifinalists (four for each area), including: Kit Collins, Alexander Cook, Rixy Fernandez, Felipe Ortiz, Chanel Thervil, and Sophy Tuttle. Based on previous artwork submitted by the original pool of over 30 highly-qualified applicants, the semifinalists were each awarded \$500 to submit site-specific designs. Csekö's design will be located on the east side of the building while Muhammad's will be on the northwest corner. The competition entailed a 5-month process, utilizing a jury of seven art professionals and JP community representatives to choose the final artwork. Submissions were evaluated using criteria including relevance of the theme to Jamaica Plain and uniqueness of artistic vision. The winners will each receive a cash prize of \$5,000.

Winning Artist Info:

Julia Csekö: artist, independent curator, educator at Montserrat College of Art, 2021 Somerville Arts Council Fellow, 2021 Somerville Museum Community Curator Grantee.

Csekö grew up in Rio de Janeiro, and immigrated to Boston after receiving her MFA in 2013 from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University. In Summer 2020 Csekö was a Visiting Artist at Emerson College. In 2019 the Downtown Boston Business Improvement District commissioned her to create a mural at Winter Place in partnership with the Boston Literary District. In 2018 Csekö was invited to the Assets for Artists MassMoCA residency program where she further investigated her multi-disciplinary practice as a sculptor, painter, and performer. Csekö brings to her art practice many

years as a community organizer while living in Brazil. Her work is built around conversations focused on paradigm shifts from a competitive to a collaborative mindset.

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Sharif Muhammad: family man, educator, and visual artist, Jamaica Plain resident.

Sharif Muhammad holds a BA in Graphic Design from UMass Amherst and a M.Ed. in Instructional Technology from Bridgewater State University. He has taught at Boston Day & Evening Academy for 19 years. With a primary focus on digital art, Muhammad's artistic purpose is to represent, empower, uplift, glorify, and to give voice to black and brown people. He uses his art to unpack the spectrum of complex feelings derived from the history and experiences of people of color. 2021 has been a breakout year for Muhammad. In addition to juried shows and exhibits around Boston, he was featured in the *Boston Globe*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and on the cover of *Art New England* magazine. He also received the Boston Celtics' 2021 Heroes Among Us Award.

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MFA curator Karen Haas described her juror experience: "As a long-time resident of Jamaica Plain, I was honored to be invited to collaborate with such an impressive group of jurors to choose designs for the Stonybrook Neighborhood Association mural project. It was exciting to see the wide range of submissions and to ultimately hone in on the work of these two artists, one who honors the voices of local leaders and the other who represents the diversity of our community."

Juror Sabrina Dorsainvil, artist and Director of Civic Design in the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics commented: "I want to thank all the talented and thoughtful artists for sharing their work with us. This decision was far from easy but our two finalists have brought forward very important messages. I hope they spark conversations and reminders to connect to each other and remember who we are and can be."

Once they are painted, the murals' unveiling will be scheduled for the fall; details on sponsors and event programming will be forthcoming.

The murals are a result of ten years of SNA advocacy for a community benefit package associated with the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA)-approved project at 3521-9 Washington Street, which transformed this once contaminated property into a large mixed-use development. Other benefits include the Burnett Street Community Garden and Park, a community meeting room in the Extra Space building, and an expansion of the abutting Southwest Corridor Park.

The SNA's Jennifer Uhrhane, who led the mural organizing committee, described the culmination of this long term effort, "I am thrilled we were able to achieve this amazing opportunity for artists on such a large scale in JP. It will be part of the landscape for a long time, and hopefully will inspire more collaborative cultural efforts between neighbors and developers at this time of very active development. I'm also very grateful for the thoughtfulness of the jurors' deliberations."

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The Stonybrook Neighborhood Association (SNA) is a group of residents committed to meeting our neighbors and working together to address community issues. Our neighborhood is a multicultural, economically diverse neighborhood of longtime residents and relative newcomers. We treasure our community's historic character, close proximity to parks and public transportation, and community institutions. We are a vibrant, interconnected urban neighborhood where families can grow, all people are welcomed, and neighbors are supported through all stages of their lives. The Stonybrook neighborhood is roughly bounded by Rockvale Circle to the north, Franklin Park to the east, the Arborway to the south, and the Southwest Corridor Park to the west.

The Jurors:

Crystal Bi Wegner, artist, educator, and Creative Civic Design Lead, Design Studio for Social Intervention, Jamaica Plain Resident

Bi Wegner is a former art teacher and mural club facilitator at Jamaica Plain's Margarita Muñiz Academy and English High School. She is currently working at the Design Studio for Social Intervention to design tools for co-creating a more equitable, beautiful, and welcoming public. Bi Wegner is a New England Foundation for the Arts 2020 Creative City Grant recipient. She is also an MFA candidate in MassArt's Dynamic Media Institute, studying experience design for socially-engaged art.

Sabrina Dorsainvil, Director of Civic Design, City of Boston Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, Jamaica Plain Resident

Dorsainvil is an artist, designer, and illustrator. She received her BA from MassArt in Industrial Design and her MS from Parsons School of Design in Design and Urban Ecologies. As a civic designer, her work centers on the human experience and uses creative approaches to address issues within public health, the built environment and human rights. Her artwork focuses on storytelling and finding simple ways of celebrating people and their humanity. Dorsainvil is a national board member for the Creative Reaction Lab and was a 2017-18 Neighborhood Salon Luminary with the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

Michael Ferrigno, District Manager, Extra Space Storage

Ferrigno has been in the self storage industry for over 16 years. A graduate of SUNY Brockport, he has been a District Manager with Extra Space Storage since 2004.

Rob "ProBlak" Gibbs, visual artist, organizer, Co-founder, Artists for Humanity (AFH), Director of the Paint Studio and Programming, AFH

ProBlak is a painter, muralist, and graffiti artist driven by his vision to beautify the predominantly black and brown communities of Boston. Throughout his career, Gibbs has focused on arts education and conducted workshops for a range of organizations, from Girls Inc. to the Boston Foundation. He has received a number of awards, including Mass Industry Committee's 2006 Graffiti Artist of the Year and Boston Celtics' 2020 Heroes Among Us. In 2019 he curated an exhibition for Boston Art & Music Soul (BAMS) Fest and in 2020 completed an artist residency, co-leading "The Mural Project," at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Karen Haas, Lane Curator of Photographs, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Jamaica Plain Resident

Haas has been a curator at the MFA since 2001, where she focuses on American photography. She received her BA in Art History from Connecticut College and an MA in the History of Photography from Boston University. Prior to working at the MFA, she held curatorial positions at several museums and private collections, including the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the Boston University Art Gallery, and the Addison Gallery of American Art in Andover.

Jenny Jones, Jamaica Plain Coordinator for Garden Stewardship, Southwest Corridor Park Conservancy (SWCPC), Jamaica Plain Resident

Jones is originally from England and was an IT professional for 40 years. She volunteers with the Southwest Corridor Park Conservancy (SWCPC) and coordinates the volunteers and garden stewards for Jamaica Plain. She paints murals in the Park, does liturgical art and environment projects for her church, organizes her Jamaica Plain neighborhood with block parties and street wide yard sales, and has been known to do very elaborate lanterns for the Lantern Parade around Jamaica Pond.

Constanza Robles, Development Consultant, Urbano Project, Inc. in Jamaica Plain

Robles came to Boston to pursue her doctorate in the History of Art and Architecture at Boston University. She is currently working on her dissertation about Latin American art and how it is portrayed in world fairs. Robles also collaborates with Urbano Project in grant writing and fundraising. Robles earned an MA in Theory and Art History at Universidad de Chile, a BA in Hispanic Literature and Linguistics and a BA in Aesthetics at Universidad Católica de Chile. Before moving to the US, she was adjunct professor in the Aesthetics Department at Universidad Católica.