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Showroom Opens Doors, Sets Scene for Organization's Future

OKLAHOMA CITY (March 20, 2015) – Showroom at Oklahoma Contemporary — four shipping containers, repurposed as an innovative two-story, 1,173 square-foot gallery located at NW 11th and Broadway — opens to the public with a ribbon-cutting and open house Thursday, March 26.

Designed by HSE Architects, the Showroom serves as the first step toward Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center's future home on the 4.6-acre site, temporarily housing exhibitions, events and an art library.

"We built the Showroom as a resource for anyone who wants to be part of the contemporary cultural moment," said Gretchen Wagner, artistic director and chief curator. "As a destination for downtown Oklahoma City, the Showroom is a place for visitors to learn about issues and topics influencing today's painting, sculpture, installation, performance, video, architecture and design, among other forms."

One resource is the building's growing library. Wagner encourages visitors to "Browse the stacks, pick a book and relax with a good read" over a lunch hour or on a visit to downtown.

In addition to reading about contemporary art, visitors can see it. The Showroom features creative video and new media works in an ongoing exhibition series, beginning with painter and video artist Alex Hubbard.

"Artists today are taking advantage of all mediums available, especially those digital, to voice their visions and to craft a nuanced and expressive view of the world around them. The Showroom is the venue in OKC to experience this activity regionally, nationally and internationally," Wagner said. After starting with Hubbard's *Annotated Plans for an Evacuation* and *Hit Wave II*, the Showroom will offer new exhibitions in July and September.

Visitors can also take a piece of the experience – and of contemporary art – with them. A retail kiosk offers jewelry by Jaclyn Meyer and Orly Genger, whose *Terra*, made of 1.4 million feet of recycled rope, sits at Campbell Park, just out the Showroom's windows.

Also for sale: Arcangel Surfware, products designed by artist Cory Arcangel for surfing the web. In addition to retro T-shirts and printed iPad cases, Arcangel's zines include code to construct a piece of his digital artwork.

"If one has some knowledge of programming, one can input the code and create an 'authentic' Cory Arcangel piece," Wagner said. "Cory is all about playing with the system and putting art in people's hands."

Putting art in people's hands, eyes and ears is exactly what Oklahoma Contemporary intends. The Showroom is an introduction to all the organization plans to offer in its new arts campus, which will include a 50,000-square-foot

building with classrooms, galleries, a dance studio and a black-box theater. “We’ll have it all under one roof: production, presentation and performance facilities,” Wagner said.

With an emphasis on arts education, Oklahoma Contemporary’s planned location will offer a high-tech, new media curriculum – with programs in filmmaking, animation, publishing, photography, web design and 3-D printing – in addition to expanded youth and adult classes in ceramics, fiber, painting, sculpture, drawing and dance. An existing 10,000-square-foot building will be remodeled to house an Industrial Arts program, focusing on wood, ceramics, metal and jewelry.

The unique Showroom sets the scene for the organization’s future, said Todd Edmonds, principle architect with HSE. “These four steel boxes, of the millions abandoned worldwide, get new life and purpose as the Showroom – echoing Oklahoma Contemporary’s upcoming transformation and move to NW 11th and Broadway.”

As construction gets closer, the Showroom will offer a sneak peek at plans for the new campus, designed by Elliott + Associates. Donna Rinehart-Keever, Oklahoma Contemporary’s executive director, says it’s an exciting time for the organization. “We’re moving ever closer to becoming a part of the cultural campus in downtown for all of Oklahoma!”

In the meantime, residents and visitors can explore the Showroom themselves. The ribbon-cutting begins at 2:30 p.m. Thursday, with an open house from 5:30-7 p.m. at 1146 N. Broadway Dr. The Showroom will be open 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays and 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday, with special events tied to Automobile Alley’s Shop Hops. Details about additional activities can be found at oklahomacontemporary.org/showroom.

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High-resolution images of the Showroom, Todd Edmonds and Gretchen Wagner can be found at <http://bit.ly/OCACShowroommedia>. Press tours of the Showroom will be offered 3-4:30 p.m. Thursday. Past press releases and additional information are archived at <http://oklahomacontemporary.org/about/media>.

About Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center

Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center is a regional 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization that encourages artistic expression in all its forms through education and exhibitions. Founded in 1989 by businessman and philanthropist Christian Keesee and Kirkpatrick Foundation Director Marilyn Myers, Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center offers contemporary arts exhibitions throughout the year, free to the public, as well as youth art camps, adult art classes, workshops and lectures. Marfa Contemporary is the organization’s first regional extension.