

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***Not For Sale* exhibition will transform
Oklahoma Contemporary walls with graffiti by local artists**

In honor of Hip Hop Month in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Contemporary is pleased to announce *Not For Sale: Graffiti Culture in Oklahoma*. The exhibition, showcasing graffiti created by some of the state's most talented artists, will run Oct. 5 to Nov. 30.

Not For Sale will feature 10 artists who have been an integral part of the Oklahoma graffiti scene. Artists will paint directly on the walls of the gallery, transforming Oklahoma Contemporary into a vivid and exciting display of styles. These artists are part of a culture that promotes creative expression to individuals who have not always had access to the art world.

“Graffiti is often referred to as a form of rebellion, but I want to change that perception with this exhibition,” said Angel Little, guest curator for *Not For Sale*. “This is a chance for people who aren’t familiar with graffiti to see it in all forms. It’s a chance for people to understand that graffiti has changed and saved lives. Artists do it to connect with and improve their communities. The artists in this show — from Oklahoma City and Tulsa — are the driving force behind the change and it’s inspiring to see them come together in a gallery environment and with this kind of influence to create something positive.”

The artwork in *Not For Sale* finds its roots in the graffiti movement that emerged in the early 1970s in Philadelphia. Graffiti art is mostly based on text – in particular, the writing of an assumed name that serves to promote the artist. Graffiti has flourished worldwide in large part because it operates outside of the art world’s elite institutions — it therefore is an art form open to anyone. The exhibition title, *Not For Sale*, makes reference to the fact that graffiti is primarily made for fame and not for money and can be seen by everyone, not just those with access to museums and galleries.



Image: Kris Kanaly poses next to his mural during Plaza Walls 2016.

“In recent years, graffiti has become increasingly accepted by the art world as a legitimate, innovative art form requiring great skill,” said Jennifer Scanlan, exhibitions and curatorial director at Oklahoma Contemporary. “At Oklahoma Contemporary, we celebrate creativity in all forms. *Not For Sale* gives us the opportunity to showcase the artistic talent of graffiti writers here in our state. By putting the works in a gallery setting, we want visitors to really consider the ways in which these are similar to a painting that might be hung on the wall — the use of color, the composition and the ideas the artists are trying to convey.”

While graffiti’s often illegal placement on subways, trains and walls has added to its appeal as a form of rebellion, the artists in *Not For Sale* have used their skills in many legitimate fields, from mural commissions to graphic design to fine art that sells in galleries. Guest curators Chris SKER and Little have secured the talents of skilled and experienced graffiti artists with an Oklahoma connection. All of the artists are Oklahoma-born, with the majority currently living and working in the state.

Featured artists include SKER, JASPYR, CODAK Smith, SADAT, David HEK, SEAPO, GERM, ENTAKE, MANIK and RHAK.

“This is the place where my life’s journey began,” said muralist CODAK Smith. “As someone who was born in Oklahoma and is fortunate enough to travel extensively throughout the United States and overseas to showcase my art, it is a great honor to bring my work back home and contribute to the growing mural arts scene in Oklahoma.”

Oklahoma Contemporary has planned a series of programs for youth and adults that look at graffiti’s place as one of the “four elements of hip hop” — including emceeing, breaking (formerly known as breakdancing) and DJing. Workshops and performances will allow everyone to celebrate November as Hip Hop Month in Oklahoma City, as designated by Mayor Mick Cornett in 2016. On Oct. 19, Oklahoma Contemporary will partner with the Ralph Ellison Foundation to present *Soul of an Underground*, an evening of performance, combining music, spoken-word poetry and movement.

On Nov. 4, Oklahoma Contemporary will host the ONEsoul Charity Event Hip Hop Jam. This event features dance battles and open floor dancing, live graffiti competitions, musical performances, food trucks, indoor art projects and more. From noon to 7 p.m., the focus is on families, with workshops, kid showcases and performances. After 7 p.m., visitors over 21 can enjoy adult beverages as the mood changes to a more adult environment.

“From the streets of the South Bronx to the shores of the South China Sea, hip hop has grown into a truly global artistic and cultural phenomenon over the past half century,” said Jeremiah Matthew Davis, artistic director for Oklahoma Contemporary. “With *Not For Sale*, we’re celebrating Oklahoma’s contribution to this rich creative movement. This show gives us the opportunity to explore the intersection of multiple art forms — music, poetry, dance, fashion and, of course, visual art. As KRS-One will tell you, ‘Yes, the other side of hip hop is representin’ the visual.’ Through classes, panel discussions and several live events with community partners, Oklahoma Contemporary will represent graffiti’s creative vibrancy to the fullest.”

For more information, visit oklahomacontemporary.org.

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A media kit, including this press release and high-resolution images of *Not For Sale: Graffiti Culture in Oklahoma* works, is at <http://bit.ly/OCNotForSaleKit>. Past press releases and additional information are archived at oklahomacontemporary.org/about/media. Interviews with exhibitions staff can be organized through Director of Communications Lori Brooks (lbrooks@okcontemp.org).

About Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center

Currently located at State Fair Park, Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center aims to encourage artistic expression in all its forms through education and exhibitions. We endeavor to instill in the public a lifetime appreciation of the arts and enthusiasm for creative practice through a broad range of educational programs, exhibitions and cultural offerings, including:

- Youth art camps that help students begin a lifetime relationship with art and creativity.
- Art classes and workshops where students of all ages find the chance to learn and grow.
- Exhibitions that feature the work of emerging and mid-career artists.
- Free public lectures, artist talks and events that enrich Oklahoma City’s cultural offerings.

Oklahoma Contemporary is in the midst of a capital campaign to create a spectacular new arts education and cultural resource on a 4.6-acre site at NW 11th and Broadway in Oklahoma City. The arts education campus will include:

A four-story, 50,000-square-foot building with classrooms, galleries, a dance studio and a flexible theater space to promote learning about the artists of our time and educating those to come. Expanded classes in ceramics, fiber, painting, sculpture, drawing and dance, plus a new media curriculum with programs in filmmaking, animation, photography, web design and 3-D printing. A remodeled 10,000-square-foot building will house an Industrial Arts program, focusing on wood, ceramics, metal and jewelry. Grounds with space for outdoor sculpture exhibits, children's art education activities and outdoor music, movie and drama productions.

Oklahoma Contemporary is a regional 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization founded in 1989 by businessman and philanthropist Christian Keese and Kirkpatrick Foundation Director Marilyn Myers.