



Oklahoma Contemporary Offers a New Venue for the Arts

Shipping containers slated for new exhibitions; programs in Downtown OKC

OKLAHOMA CITY (Nov. 13, 2014) – Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center recently began its move to downtown Oklahoma City by constructing a temporary structure at its future location at NW 11 and Broadway along Automobile Alley. Four recycled shipping containers will provide space to present art created by living artists from the region, United States and abroad while the organization prepares to build its permanent home on the 4.6 acres.

Open to the public, with no admission, the building will offer a gallery space featuring changing exhibitions of new media and video art, a library, reading room and bookshop presenting contemporary art publications and an area showcasing the design plan for the new building.

“We named the containers the Showroom at Oklahoma Contemporary in reference to its location on historic Automobile Alley,” said Artistic Director and Chief Curator of Oklahoma Contemporary Gretchen L. Wagner. “We are pleased to be a part of the dynamic growth in Automobile Alley and Downtown Oklahoma City.”

Todd Edmonds, HSE architects partner, designed the Showroom at Oklahoma Contemporary. Edmonds said the steel containers were ideal for the transitory space due to their low cost and ability to be transformed into other uses.

“There are approximately 6 million containers in use worldwide,” explained Edmonds. “Most are abandoned in port because it is more expensive to return them empty than to discard them. Repurposing the steel boxes gives new life and new meaning to the industrial boxes, similar to Oklahoma Contemporary’s transformation with the move downtown.”

Erected on the southwest corner of the new site, the temporary structure consists of four containers: two containers placed side-by-side support a third container set at a 90-degree angle. A fourth container connects ground-floor galleries to a second-floor exhibition space. One end of the container will face the future building site to allow visitors to view ongoing developments.

The 1,173 square-foot showroom space is designed with a steel staircase and stainless steel fixtures, playing off the structure’s original industrial purpose.

“The Showroom at Oklahoma Contemporary is the beginning of an exciting new chapter in our history,” says Donna Rinehart-Keever, executive director of Oklahoma Contemporary. The nonprofit obtained the land in 2012 after spending 23 years at its current home at State Fair Park.

Oklahoma Contemporary has already begun populating the new site with art. A large-scale sculptural installation made of recycled rope by New York-based artist Orly Genger was recently installed in Campbell Art Park, which is adjacent to Oklahoma Contemporary’s new location. The organization plans to work with Oklahoma City to host additional public art and programs in the three-block park.

“Having the Showroom at Oklahoma Contemporary open while our permanent building is being constructed offers Oklahoma City residents another opportunity to experience and learn about contemporary art, while witnessing another part of Oklahoma City’s remarkable transformation,” said Wagner. “This is a small representation of the major plans we envision for this site.”

After completion of the permanent facility, the Showroom at Oklahoma Contemporary will be removed from the site and relocated to a future location to be determined later. Oklahoma Contemporary is still in the design and planning stages for the permanent building with architect Rand Elliott, Elliott + Associates. The organization plans to break ground in summer 2015 with completion estimated in spring 2017.

The new building will provide facilities for Oklahoma Contemporary to present world-class visual art, performance and education programs, cutting-edge galleries, a black-box theater and studio and classrooms equipped for artists and students to work with a range of mediums; from ceramics to digital to dance will be included.

“This is an exciting time for Oklahoma Contemporary, but it is also an exciting time for Oklahoma City as the projects come to life and provides accessible art for all,” said Rinehart-Keever.

About Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center

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

For more information, please call 405.951.0000 or visit OklahomaContemporary.org.

###