



ASIAN ARTS INITIATIVE

1219 VINE STREET * PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107 * (215) 557-0455

Press Contact:

Canary Promotion | Office: 215-690-4065

Carolyn Huckabay,

carolyn@canarypromo.com

www.canarypromo.com/asianarts

www.asianartsinitiative.org

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Asian Arts Initiative announces inaugural Social Practice Lab artist roster

Yearlong artists-in-residency program will commission and support the work of creative individuals and organizations in Philadelphia's Chinatown North neighborhood

PHILADELPHIA — Combining artistic innovation with neighborhood development, **Asian Arts Initiative** presents the inaugural year of its **Social Practice Lab** artists-in-residency program. Created with major support from **ArtPlace** and the **Nathan Cummings Foundation**, the Social Practice Lab (SPL) will commission and implement the work of creative individuals and organizations in Philadelphia's Chinatown North, encouraging neighborhood development and effecting positive community change via inspiring, innovative multidisciplinary art projects.

The inaugural year of SPL will support a diverse group of artists working in a variety of fields, including found sound, visual arts and culinary arts. Among the seven selected artists, potential project ideas range from a Reading Viaduct installation by well-known visual artist **Benjamin Volta**, a digitally accessed oral history panorama by media artists **Anula Shetty** and **Michael Kuetemeyer**, and many more. *(Artist project descriptions follow below.)*

Beginning with an intensive orientation retreat in mid-September, SPL artists will work with a national advisory board *(see below for board roster)* as well as a team of local community leaders, embedding themselves in Chinatown in order to develop workshops, forums, public installations and performances over the course of a year (September 2012 to September 2013). The goal of the artists' culminating projects is to spark deep dialogue, encourage collaborative brainstorming and vocalize the concerns and ideas of a neighborhood on the precipice of economic and social change.

"For Asian Arts Initiative, it is an unprecedented opportunity to host such an impressive group of artists, and to have the luxury of a full year to explore the possibilities of art to imagine and influence our neighborhood's future," says **Gayle Isa**, Executive Director at Asian Arts Initiative.

Adds **Jeremy Nowak**, president of the **William Penn Foundation**, “It is an exciting time to have ArtPlace working with our local partners in Philadelphia. Culturally driven development practices show great promise for our city, and we think that the national focus brought by ArtPlace will help to leverage additional investments in Philadelphia.”

Each SPL project will include a visual art installation or performance-based public presentation in 2013, which will be part of Asian Arts Initiative’s Neighborhood Spotlight Series presented by PNC Arts Alive and the Knight Arts Challenge Philadelphia.

Artist/Project Bios

Laura Deutch/Less Tusman/Kathryn Sclavi/Katya Gorker (Philadelphia)

Laura Deutch is a media artist and educator who uses participatory processes to engage communities in expanded documentary production. Her team plans to engage residents, organizations and small businesses in a series of activities culminating in a locally sourced outdoor meal that highlights the unique and varied assets of the Chinatown North neighborhood.

Colette Fu (Philadelphia)

Colette Fu creates one-of-a-kind collapsible artist books that combine photography and pop-up paper engineering. For SPL, she proposes to create a pop-up re-creation of the flavors of locally owned Chinatown restaurants with color photos, recipes and stories in both Chinese and English relating to the origins of the dishes.

Jong Kyu Kim (Philadelphia)

Jong Kyu Kim is Percent for Art Project Manager for the City of Philadelphia. Kim will interview community members in Chinatown and Chinatown North, unearthing implicit codes that govern daily life in the neighborhood — average walking pace, clusters of niche commerce, acceptable uses of public sidewalks — and compile the findings into a self-published small book titled *Chinatown Codes*.

Steve Parker (Austin, Texas)

Steve Parker is a musician, composer and educator who is presently a Donald D. Harrington Fellow at the University of Texas at Austin and Artist-in-Residence at the Blanton Museum of Art. His project will involve collecting sound artifacts from the Chinatown community and creating a concert program of musical compositions that use these artifacts. He will partner with students, teachers and musicians from the community, collaborating to compose, rehearse and perform the work.

Yowei Shaw (Philadelphia)

Yowei Shaw is an independent audio producer, youth radio educator and second-generation Chinese-American. She proposes to create a cell phone audio tour of Chinatown North, a walking narrative adventure featuring the voices and stories of local community leaders.

Anula Shetty/Michael Kuetemeyer (Philadelphia)

Anula Shetty and Michael Kuetemeyer are award-winning media artists whose work has been screened at MOMA, the Flaherty Film Seminar and film festivals and museums worldwide. Their public art and online project will include digital media workshops with communities in Chinatown and Chinatown North, and will culminate in a series of interactive, 360-degree oral history panoramas of specific streets and locations in the neighborhood.

Benjamin Volta (Philadelphia)

Benjamin Volta is a visual artist whose projects combine academic learning and life-skill development with an audacious inspiration to create great art within an unexpected context. His

proposed work will visualize a constellation of points, shapes and stories that have built the Chinatown North community; with the installation imagined to wrap the entire interior surface of a cavelike tunnel under the Reading Viaduct.

The Social Practice Lab National Advisory Committee is composed of the following members: **Edgar Arceneaux**, artist and executive director of Watts House Project in Los Angeles, CA; **Andrea Bowers**, visiting artist at CalArts in Los Angeles, CA; **Rick Lowe**, founder of Project Row Houses in Houston, TX; **Pepón Osorio** of Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, PA; **Meredith Warner** of The Action Mill in Philadelphia, PA; **Risë Wilson**, founder of The Laundromat Project in New York City; and **Sue Bell Yank**, assistant director of academic programs at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, CA. Guest curator is **Aimee Chang**, director of engagement at the University of California–Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

About Asian Arts Initiative

Asian Arts Initiative is a community-based arts center in Philadelphia that engages artists and everyday people to create art that explores the diverse experiences of Asian Americans, addresses our social context, and imagines and effects positive community change. Recently relocated due to the expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center, Asian Arts Initiative is now in a new home at 1219 Vine Street, where we are contributing to the revitalization of Vine Street and Chinatown North. For more information, please call 215-557-0455 or visit www.asianartsinitiative.org.

Asian Arts Initiative's Social Practice Lab is made possible with dedicated support from the Nathan Cummings Foundation (www.nathancummings.org) and ArtPlace (www.artplaceamerica.org). ArtPlace is a collaboration of twelve of the nation's leading foundations, eight federal agencies including the National Endowment for the Arts, and six financial institutions to accelerate creative placemaking across the U.S. Participating foundations include Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Ford Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, The McKnight Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, Rasmuson Foundation, The William Penn Foundation, The Robina Foundation, and an anonymous donor.

Additional support for the Social Practice Lab has been provided by the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage through the [Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative](#), [PNC Arts Alive](#), and the [John S. and James L. Knight Foundation](#).



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To request photos, interviews and more information, please contact:
Canary Promotion, 215-690-4065
Carolyn Huckabay, carolyn@canarypromo.com