



ASIAN ARTS INITIATIVE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Asian Arts Initiative to Host FREE Pearl Street Block Party *On Saturday, September 28, visit Chinatown North to experience myriad visual art, participate in furniture-building and enjoy a free community meal*

PHILADELPHIA — Combining visual art, furniture building and a community feast, **Asian Arts Initiative's** first-ever **Pearl Street Block Party** (Sat., Sept. 28, 2-5 p.m.) celebrates Chinatown North's rich cultural diversity and artistic community. Organized in partnership with an array of artists and community stakeholders, the Pearl Street Block Party is an all-day neighborhood art festival made possible with funding from ArtPlace, the Educational Foundation of America, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and PNC Arts Alive.

During the Pearl Street Block Party, **free and open to the public**, the block will come alive with a range of activities, including:

- An interactive furniture build with Oakland, Calif.-based landscape architect **Walter Hood**, who is working with Asian Arts Initiative to re-envision Pearl Street as a vibrant community meeting place
- An array of multi-disciplinary projects created by Asian Arts Initiative's **Social Practice Lab** artists-in-residence, from visual art installations to live music and a mobile tea cart offering free drinks
- Displays and activities hosted by local galleries and community organizations, including Jose Sebourne, Marginal Utility, Practice, Vox Populi and Fleisher Art Memorial's ColorWheels mobile art studio
- Music and refreshments
- A community feast at 5 p.m. organized by Philly Stake founder **Theresa Rose**

Serving as both the physical and symbolic focus of the day's activities, the 1200 block of Pearl Street is an underutilized alleyway located just north of Asian Arts Initiative's Philadelphia headquarters, literally the backyard to everything from a homeless community shelter and contemporary art galleries to churches and brand-new loft apartments. With funding from the Educational Foundation of America, Asian Arts Initiative has commissioned Walter Hood to create schematic designs that incorporate a wide range of community input, re-envisioning Pearl Street as a vibrant public and civic space filled with art and life.

The Pearl Street Block Party will be centered around two main events: a **community furniture build** (2-5 p.m.), during which Hood will help attendees put together tables and chairs that will, at the culmination of the Block Party, serve as furniture for a **community feast** (5 p.m.) at which all attendees are invited to partake. (Advance registration is required for the community feast; email nancy.chen@asianartsinitiative.org to register.)

Throughout the afternoon, Block Party attendees can also view an array of projects created by Asian Arts Initiative's 2012-13 artists-in-residence:

- **Laura Deutch, Katya Gorker, Kathryn Sclavi, and Lee Tusman** created Hot Tea, a bicycle-propelled mobile tea cart that host a series of events highlighting underutilized spots as potential public gathering spaces in the neighborhood
- **Colette Fu** worked with the Overcomers at Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission to create pop-up cards combining Chinese zodiac symbols with neighborhood imagery and personal stories
- **Dave Kyu** created *Write Sky*, a project inviting neighborhood groups to propose messages to write in the neighborhood sky
- **Steve Parker** worked with Asian Arts Initiative's Youth Arts Workshop students, teaching them to make music and build instruments from recycled materials
- **Yowei Shaw** interviewed a range of community members and created an original audio playlist called *Really Good Elevator Music* to inspire listeners across the neighborhood when they find themselves waiting
- **Anula Shetty and Mike Kuetemeyer** designed an interactive, roving kiosk that invites a diversity of community members to record their own memories and impressions of the neighborhood's history
- **Ben Volta** also worked with Youth Arts Workshop students to create a site-specific public art installation at the PECO electrical substation at 11th and Callowhill Streets, exploring literal and metaphorical themes of "energy"

In addition, there will be live music and performance, activities and displays by local artists and community organizations — including Fleisher Art Memorial, Jose Sebourne, Marginal Utility, Practice and Vox Populi galleries, plus giveaways from the Trestle Inn. Two exhibitions will be on view in Asian Arts Initiative's galleries: *In Plain Sight: Isaac Lin* and *Skate Shop: Nin Truong and Asian Arts Initiative's Youth Arts Workshop*.

"The Pearl Street Block Party is not only a celebration of the diversity and richness of creative activity that is constantly happening in our neighborhood, but also an opportunity for Philadelphians to participate in all kinds of interactive art-making," says Asian Arts Initiative Executive Director **Gayle Isa**. "We come to work every day knowing that we're part of one of the most dynamic neighborhoods in Philadelphia, and we're excited to show off why on September 28."

The Pearl Street Block Party is organized by Asian Arts Initiative in partnership with the City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, with the support of the Callowhill Neighborhood Association.

Event Details

Pearl Street Block Party

Saturday, September 28

WHERE: Pearl Street between 12th and 13th streets; access via Asian Arts Initiative, 1219 Vine St.

WHEN:

1-2 p.m.: Dim Sum Brunch (ticketed VIP preview event; tickets available [here](#))

2-5 p.m.: Exhibitions, vendors, and community furniture build led by Walter Hood (FREE)

5-6 p.m.: Community meal organized by Theresa Rose (register by emailing Nancy Chen at nancy.chen@asianartsinitiative.org)

For more information, call 215-557-4055 or visit www.asianartsinitiative.org.

About Walter Hood

Walter Hood is a Professor at the University of California, Berkeley's Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design Department, and chaired from 1998 to 2002. He established his Oakland, California-based studio in 1992. His studio, Hood Design, has been engaged in architectural commissions, urban design, art installations, and research for almost twenty years. Earlier projects located in Oakland such as the Lafayette Square and Splash Pad Parks are regarded as transformative designs for the field of landscape architecture. Hood Design is also the designer for the gardens and landscape of the new De Young Museum; the new landscape for the California African American Museum in Los Angeles; and new Sculpture Terrace for the Jackson Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson, Wyoming. Recently, Hood won design competitions for the Center for Civil & Human Rights in Atlanta, GA; Garden Passage, a public artwork in Pittsburgh, PA; and a 1.1 megawatt photovoltaic array within the campus landscape at the University at Buffalo. In 2009-10 Walter Hood received the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Award for Landscape Design, and in 2010 was bestowed the title, Master of Design, by *Fast Company* magazine.

About Asian Arts Initiative's Social Practice Lab

Asian Arts Initiative's Social Practice Lab commissions and supports the work of creative individuals and organizations in our neighborhood of Chinatown and Chinatown North in Philadelphia. The goal of our Social Practice Lab is to allow for experimentation in a process that combines artistic excellence and innovation with building relationships, encouraging neighborhood development, and effecting positive change within the community.

For the inaugural 2012-2013 year, we invited seven artists in residence to develop and propose public art projects and initiatives that engage with and enliven our community. They are supported by members of our National Advisory Committee and a Local Resource Team of neighborhood representatives. Their residencies will culminate during the Pearl Street Block Party.

About Asian Arts Initiative: Creating Community Through the Power of Art

Connecting cultural expression and social change, Asian Arts Initiative uses art as a vehicle to explore the experiences of Asian Americans and the diverse communities of which we are a part.

Located in Philadelphia's burgeoning Chinatown North neighborhood, Asian Arts Initiative is a multidisciplinary arts center offering exhibitions, performances, artist residencies, youth workshops, and a community gathering space. Here, all people — across experience and skill levels, age, race, and class backgrounds — can view and create art that reflects our lives, as well as think critically and creatively about the future we want to build for our communities.

For more information, please call 215-557-0455 or visit www.asianartsinitiative.org.

About our Funders

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.

Arts at the Educational Foundation of America (arts@efa) is a national program that supports arts-driven approaches to social and economic revitalization of depreciated communities. By investing in artists, creative initiatives and cultural institutions, arts@efa hopes to encourage artistic and community collaboration, deepen local pride and champion the arts as an economic driver.

PNC Arts Alive is a five-year, \$5 million investment from The PNC Foundation that supports visual and performing arts groups with the goal of increasing arts access and engagement. For more information on PNC Arts Alive and the grant recipients, visit pncartsalive.com.

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation's Knight Arts Challenge is a \$9 million initiative funding innovative projects that engage and enrich Philadelphia's communities. Knight Foundation supports transformational ideas that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster the arts. The foundation believes that democracy thrives when people and communities are informed and engaged. For more, visit knightfoundation.org.



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To request photos, interviews and more information, please contact:
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