NEW CHILDREN'S EXHIBIT TELLS THE STORY OF A NEW GENERATION OF EAST ST. LOUISANS

ST. LOUIS, MO - The Sheldon Art Galleries presents East Side Renaissance, February 14 – April 11, 2020 in the AT&T Gallery of Children's Art. An opening reception is scheduled for Friday, February 14, 2020 from 5-7 p.m. The Sheldon Art Galleries are open Tuesdays, Noon – 8 p.m.; Wednesdays – Fridays, Noon – 5 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. and one hour prior to Sheldon performances and during intermission. Admission is free. For more information on exhibitions, visit TheSheldon.org.

Throughout the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years, under the guidance of the well-known local artist and East St. Louis, IL native, Edna Patterson-Petty, students from the Christian Activity Center (CAC) after-school program in East St. Louis produced multi-media artwork, repurposing found objects from around their city, incorporating items they have collected in their travels. The works tell the story of a new generation of East St. Louisans, full of ideas, dreams, talent and hope. This CAC program was funded by Go! International, and more information can be found at www.go-int.org.

Project organizer and program instructor Seth Hamilton says, “East St. Louis has a reputation, and our kids carry that with them. People think of our city as a place of dilapidation, corruption, violence and brokenness. We want to show another side of our city in this exhibit that tells a story that can be snuffed out by statistics and suburban gossip. Our kids are the rebirth of our city.”

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The exhibition created an opportunity for the children to learn about art and artists from Latin America and Africa, broadening their worldview while increasing their artistic skills. One of the projects on display resulted from a trip to Senegal and The Gambia by high school-aged students in 2016 and 2017. There the students met Gambian artist and author Yandeh Sallah-Muhammed, who created a coloring book, *African Guardians*, exploring the wealth and beauty of African heritage and culture from the many people who inhabit its different regions. Elementary students at CAC colored pages from the coloring book as their contribution to this exhibit.

Other students imported a special species of corn from Mexico, through contacts within Go! International’s global network of self-sustainability partners, that grows between 12 and 18 feet tall. Artwork hung amongst the corn reminds us that even when children come from a “broken” environment, with the right nourishment, nurturing and plenty of light, they will grow well beyond anyone’s dreams or expectations.

Edna Patterson-Petty is a working artist and a volunteer at CAC and holds studio art degrees and a graduate degree in Art Therapy. Seth Hamilton is an instructor of foreign language, martial arts, entrepreneurship and financial literacy programs at CAC and is also the CEO of GO! International, an organization that offers enrichment programs focusing on education, athletics and entrepreneurship, as well as organizing trips for students to Latin America and Africa. The Christian Activity Center’s mission is to prepare youth in East St. Louis for successful futures: spiritually, academically and physically.

The not-for-profit Sheldon Art Galleries exhibits works by local, national and international artists in all media. Over 6,000 square feet of the galleries’ spaces on the 2nd floor are permanently devoted to rotating exhibits of photography, architecture, music art and history, and children’s art. A sculpture garden, seen from both the atrium lobby and the connecting glass bridge, features periodic rotations and installations, and the Nancy Spirtas Kranzberg Gallery on the lower level features art of all media. The Sheldon actively supports the work of St. Louis artists in all mediums and features a dedicated gallery with museum-quality exhibits by St. Louis artists, past and present.

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