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FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS ANNOUNCES 2017 ELLSWORTH KELLY AWARD RECIPIENT

New York, NY, August 28, 2017 – Foundation for Contemporary Arts (FCA) is pleased to announce the second recipient of The Ellsworth Kelly Award, a \$40,000 annual grant created with Ellsworth Kelly during his lifetime and endowed by the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation to support museum exhibitions for contemporary artists. The recipient is The Underground Museum (Los Angeles, CA), for an exhibition of paintings by folk artist Abe Odedina, opening in spring 2019. The exhibition will be curated by The Underground Museum’s President and Founder, artist Karon Davis, and its Director, Megan Steinman.

The Ellsworth Kelly Award is a by-invitation, \$40,000 annual grant to support a solo exhibition by an emerging, mid-career, or under-recognized contemporary visual artist at a regional U.S. art museum or university or college art gallery. The program and selection process is administered by FCA. Applications in this cycle were solicited from a small number of institutions west of the Missouri River. In 2019, applications from institutions east of the Missouri will be invited. (The first recipient of The Ellsworth Kelly Award was the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania in 2016, for a solo exhibition of film, video, and sculpture by filmmaker and artist Cauleen Smith, to be held in fall 2018.)

The 2017 Ellsworth Kelly Award will support the first solo exhibition of Abe Odedina’s work in the United States. Born in Ibadan, Nigeria and now based in London, United Kingdom and Salvador Bahia, Brazil, Odedina is a painter whose work is influenced by the popular arts of Bahia and Pernambuco in Brazil and to date has only been exhibited in the United Kingdom. “[Odedina’s] paintings are starting points for a discussion about how black culture is captured and historicized, and how a collection of artworks might be defined not by established art world conventions but by the actual impact that the works have on their audiences,” said Ms. Davis. “In this way, Odedina’s practice expands how we think about the painting genre, and what is possible within the form.”

The Underground Museum’s proposed exhibition of Abe Odedina was selected by FCA’s Board of Directors, including Cecily Brown, Anthony B. Creamer III, Anne Dias, Robert Gober, Agnes Gund, Jasper Johns, Julian Lethbridge, Glenn Ligon, and T.J. Wilcox. In selecting the award, FCA’s Directors seek projects that are in the earliest stages of planning at the time of their application and require the financial catalyst provided by The Ellsworth Kelly Award to propel them from planning to realization.

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“The Underground Museum’s proposal exemplified Ellsworth Kelly’s vision to make a museum exhibition possible,” said Stacy Tenenbaum Stark, Executive Director of the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. “Ellsworth believed in the transformational power of museum exhibitions on an artist’s career. FCA is pleased that the 2017 Ellsworth Kelly Award will make possible this first U.S. exhibition of Abe Odedina’s work.”

About Abe Odedina

Abe Odedina was born in Ibadan, Nigeria in 1960 and currently lives in London and Salvador Bahia. Odedina, who is a trained architect, started painting on a trip to Brazil in 2007 where he fell under the spell of the popular arts of Bahia and Pernambuco. Now a full-time painter, Odedina describes himself as a folk artist. The ideas inspiring his work are rooted in the rich figurative and oral traditions of African art, infused with a trace of magic realism. His work is exuberantly non-elitist, celebrating the power of the everyday and the mythical. Odedina paints with acrylic on plywood, making flat surfaces with vibrant, stylized subjects that delight in the use of color and symbols to create a figurative and imaginative pictorial statement. Odedina’s bold and hybrid visual language conjures energy from the streets and surfaces from cities like Lagos, Salvador de Bahia, and Port-au-Prince: the walls of temples, beer parlors, and love motels – advertisements for barbers, vulcanizers, and healers.

About The Underground Museum

The Underground Museum (The UM) is the magnum opus of the late painter and installation artist Noah Davis (1983–2015) and his wife, artist Karon Davis. The duo envisioned The UM as a channel to bring “museum-quality” art to the inner city via evocative exhibitions, artist collaborations, film screenings, and wellness programs. The UM serves Arlington Heights, a low-to-moderate income community in Los Angeles, and the city’s thriving creative community, with unwavering conviction that increasing access to art will inspire, educate, and transform lives. The UM creates art-centric experiences that result in authentic relationships between artists, ideas, and people.

About the Foundation for Contemporary Arts (FCA)

Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts was established in 1963 by John Cage (1912–1992) and Jasper Johns. At that time, some emerging visual artists were beginning to experience modest financial success, while many of their peers working in dance, music, and theater struggled to find funding to present their work. Cage and Johns decided to organize a benefit exhibition at the Allan Stone Gallery to support their colleagues in the performance arts. Lee Bontecou, Elaine de Kooning, Willem de Kooning, Marcel Duchamp, Alex Katz, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Marisol, Barnett Newman, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Frank Stella, Elaine Sturtevant, and Andy Warhol were among the 67 artists who contributed to this landmark show. With proceeds from the exhibition, the Foundation began making grants to individual artists.

Now known as the Foundation for Contemporary Arts (FCA), its mission is to encourage, sponsor, and promote innovative work in the arts created and presented by individuals, groups, and organizations. FCA’s unrestricted, by-nomination grants support pioneering work across the fields of dance, music/sound, performance art/theater, poetry, and the visual arts. Established in 1993, the Grants to Artists program provides recipients with the financial means to engage in whatever artistic endeavors they wish to pursue. Each year, a group of artists and arts professionals are invited by FCA to propose one artist, collective, or performing group whom they believe would benefit from an award. The confidential

submissions are then reviewed by an advisory panel comprised of artists, arts professionals, and FCA's Board of Directors and the recipients are selected. FCA also assists artists and collectives who are in need of urgent work-related funding through the Emergency Grants program; requests are reviewed monthly by a volunteer panel of established artists that typically awards grants of between \$500 and \$2,500. More than 2,800 grants awarded to artists and arts organizations—totaling over \$12 million—have provided opportunities for creative exploration and development. To date, nearly 1,000 artists have made these grants possible by contributing paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, and photographs to the fifteen benefit exhibitions held over the years.

www.foundationforcontemporaryarts.org

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