

FAIRMOUNT PARK ART ASSOCIATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DEDICATION OF NEW PERMANENT PUBLIC ART LANDMARK IN NORTH PHILADELPHIA***Common Ground* for Project H.O.M.E.'s St. Elizabeth's Community Center**

PHILADELPHIA, PA. The Fairmount Park Art Association will dedicate *Common Ground*, a new public art landmark created for Project H.O.M.E by artists John Stone and Lonnie Graham in collaboration with Lorene Cary and consulting architect George Clafren. An open house celebration will be held on **Thursday, June 4 from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.** The event will be held on-site at Project H.O.M.E.'s St. Elizabeth's Community Center (23rd and Berks Streets) and will include a short dedication program at 5:30 p.m. The press is invited to attend.

Common Ground was commissioned through the Art Association's ongoing program *New•Land•Marks: public art, community, and the meaning of place*, which brings permanent and distinctive public art to communities outside the city's center. Located on the "footprint" of St. Elizabeth's Church, which was destroyed by fire in 1995, *Common Ground* will provide unique meeting spaces for the community to gather, reflect, and celebrate. The centerpiece of *Common Ground* is an open-air *Sanctuary* that rises where the altar of St. Elizabeth's once stood. Surrounding the site is an *Inspirational Gateway* that features the words "Hope," "Strength," and "Experience." A *Common Room*, located inside the church's former rectory, is an indoor meeting space that has been redesigned by the artists and includes handmade light fixtures, photographs and quotes from elder community members, and a white oak table crafted from a single plank of wood rescued from a farmhouse in Pennsylvania.

Common Ground was conceived to commemorate and build on the significant improvements that have been made in the St. Elizabeth's neighborhood and will serve as a permanent public reminder of this community's determination to rebuild and restore its physical and social fabric. By presenting the community front and center – in photographs, words and artifacts – the artists have paid tribute to the people who have made this change possible. "When we lost the church we thought all hope was gone, but this is a new beginning for the neighborhood," said Helen Brown, local resident and Community Organizer at St. Elizabeth's Community Center.

The three renowned African-American artists involved with the project each have close ties to the St. Elizabeth's community. Lonnie Graham, who was named Pennsylvania Artist of the Year in 2005, is an internationally exhibited photographer who has been capturing images of the neighborhood for years. Sculptor and designer John Stone had worked in the past as a construction manager at Project H.O.M.E. and had helped clear out St. Elizabeth's Church before its demolition. His past exhibits include Philadelphia venues such as the Levy Gallery at the Moore College of Art and Design. Writer and activist Lorene Carey is the award-winning author of *The Price of Child* and founder of Art Sanctuary at the nearby Church of the Advocate.

Common Ground was made possible with the generous support of The William Penn Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Samuel S. Fels Fund, The Barra Foundation, The Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation, Union Benevolent Association, The Honickman Foundation, Connelly Foundation, Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation, Macy's Foundation, and an anonymous donor. The work will be donated to Project H.O.M.E.

About Project H.O.M.E.: Project H.O.M.E. (Housing, Opportunities for Employment, Medical Care, Education) empowers people to break the cycle of homelessness, address the structural causes of poverty, and attain their fullest potential as members of society. Since 1995, Project H.O.M.E. has been working with neighborhood residents, corporations, foundations, government, faith communities and others to revitalize the St. Elizabeth's/Diamond Street neighborhood.

About the Fairmount Park Art Association: Chartered in 1872, the Fairmount Park Art Association is the nation's first private, non-profit organization dedicated to integrating public art and urban planning. Art Association projects include masterworks such as the *Cowboy* on Kelly Drive and *Billy* in Rittenhouse Square, as well as contemporary projects such as Mark di Suvero's *Iroquois*, which was recently installed on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

About *New•Land•Marks*: Developed as a "public art laboratory" to explore best practices for the field of public art and to support the work of artists in community contexts, the *New•Land•Marks* program encourages projects that celebrate community identity, commemorate untold histories, inspire civic pride, respond to the local environment, and invigorate public spaces. Currently underway is *The Labor Monument: Philadelphia's Tribute to the American Worker* for Elmwood Park in Southwest Philadelphia. **To request photographs or arrange an interview with the artists, please call the Art Association at 215.546.7550.**

Common Ground
Project H.O.M.E.'s St. Elizabeth's Community Center
1845 N. 23rd Street
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www.fpaa.org/CG_Dedication.html