

## FAIRMOUNT PARK ART ASSOCIATION

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**UNVEILING OF NEW LABOR MONUMENT IN SOUTHWEST PHILADELPHIA**

Community members and union representatives will unveil  
*The Labor Monument: Philadelphia's Tribute to the American Worker*

PHILADELPHIA, PA. The [Fairmount Park Art Association](http://www.fpaa.org) will dedicate [\*The Labor Monument: Philadelphia's Tribute to the American Worker\*](#) by artist **John Kindness** on Friday, October 1<sup>st</sup> from 5-7 PM in Southwest Philadelphia's Elmwood Park (71<sup>st</sup> Street and Buist Avenue). The event is free and open to the public and will include a short dedication program featuring the artist, community members, elected officials, and labor leaders. Labor union representatives who will help unveil seven bronze *Work Button Tables* include: **Evelyn Thoroughgood, Homecare Worker, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Healthcare PA Executive Board; Joseph J. Dougherty, Financial Secretary Treasurer/Business Manager Ironworkers Local 401; Herman (Pete) Matthews, President American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) District Council 33; Vince Panvini, Director of Governmental Affairs, Sheet Metal Workers International Association; Wendell W. Young III, President Emeritus, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1776; and Mark Dudzic, National Coordinator of Labor Campaign for Single Payer, United Steel Workers (USW); and Joseph Truax, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) District Council 21.** *The Labor Monument* is the Fairmount Park Art Association's newest artwork commissioned as part of its program *New•Land•Marks: public art, community, and the meaning of place* and was completed in cooperation with the Friends of Elmwood Park and Philadelphia Parks & Recreation.

***"The Labor Monument will have an immediate positive presence and will become a symbol of the ongoing revitalization of the park and the Elmwood community,"*** says **Cathy Brady**, a member of the Friends of Elmwood Park and an organizer for SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania, who has lived along the park for 21 years.

***The Labor Monument: Philadelphia's Tribute to the American Worker*** commemorates the significant contributions of organized labor nationwide and Philadelphia's working class history. Celebrating Philadelphia's pivotal and unique role in the American labor movement, the artwork transforms Elmwood Park into a community gathering space and an outdoor history lesson. Workers of earlier generations often wore blue denim clothing, with metal work buttons that bore a variety of images and slogans. Inspired by these buttons, the artist created seven large-scale ***Work Button Tables*** in bronze. Each bronze relief sculpture represents an important person or event in labor history. Located in the center of Elmwood Park, the *Work Button Tables* will be installed in a circle surrounded by seven benches. Blue paving and brick detailing around the seating elements suggest the denim and stitching on workers' clothing.

**Elmwood Park** is a 7-acre city park located on 71<sup>st</sup> and 72<sup>nd</sup> Streets between Buist and Dicks Avenues in Southwest Philadelphia. From the late nineteenth century through much of the twentieth, Southwest Philadelphia prided itself on its thriving working class neighborhoods. Many thousands of Philadelphians raised their families there. They worked for major

industries such as the Hog Island Shipyard, Fels Naptha, General Electric, and Westinghouse. Elmwood Park was originally developed as a centerpiece for the community, a gathering place where workers and their families could relax, socialize, and enjoy the park's natural resources. Today, the park has been revitalized and is a fitting site for *The Labor Monument*. The revitalization efforts have been led by the Friends of Elmwood Park, a community organization chartered in 1995 to secure and beautify the park.

**Artist John Kindness** was born in Belfast, Ireland and currently lives and works in London, England. Kindness' father worked in the shipyards of Belfast, and his working class roots were a source of inspiration as he worked with the Friends of Elmwood Park to create a unique tribute to the American worker in Philadelphia. Kindness has completed a number of major art projects in his native Ireland. He has exhibited extensively in Europe and the United States and his artworks are included in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Irish Museum of Modern Art; National Gallery of Ireland; and the Victoria & Albert Museum, among others. In 1997, the artist was featured in a solo exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania and was artist-in-residence at Philadelphia's Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial. The artist returned to Philadelphia in 2009 to collaborate with writer Wendy Steiner on *The Loathly Lady*, an animated opera performed at the University of Pennsylvania's Irvine Auditorium, which featured projections of Kindness' original artwork.

*The Labor Monument: Philadelphia's Tribute to the American Worker* was made possible through the generous support of the Fairmount Park Art Association, William Penn Foundation, Claneil Foundation, Samuel S. Fels Fund, Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, and through donations from many local, national, and international trade unions including Service Employees International Union (SEIU); International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT-PATCH); Sheet Metal Workers International Association; United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW); and United Steel Workers (USW), among others.

The Labor Monument has been developed through the Fairmount Park Art Association's program ***New•Land•Marks: public art, community, and the meaning of place***, which brings artists and communities together to plan and create new works of public art. *New•Land•Marks* encourages projects that celebrate community identity, commemorate untold histories, inspire civic pride, respond to the local environment, and invigorate public spaces. *The Labor Monument: Philadelphia's Tribute to the American Worker* is the fifth project to be commissioned through this groundbreaking program.

***The Fairmount Park Art Association*** is the nation's first private, nonprofit organization dedicated to integrating public art and urban planning. Founded in 1872, the Art Association works to promote the appreciation of public art through programs and advocacy efforts that commission, interpret, and preserve public art in Philadelphia. We serve hundreds of people directly through our commissioning and educational programs, and thousands indirectly, as they benefit from the accessibility of public art that is one of Philadelphia's hallmarks and a key contributor to its quality of life.

**To request photographs or arrange an interview with the artist, please contact Susan Myers at 215.546.7550.**