

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Megan Hartzell, Downtown Wichita
Director of Communications
Phone: 316.264.6005
Email: megan@downtownwichita.org

FIVE ARTISTS SELECTED TO CREATE UNIQUE WORKS OF ART FOR GALLERY ALLEY
New works will transform urban alley into a permanent art destination

Wichita, KS – November 26, 2019 – Following a call for entry, five local artists have been selected to create work for the next phase of Gallery Alley. Located at 616 E. Douglas Avenue in downtown Wichita, the goal of this project is to transform the alley into a permanent destination for inter-sensory art experiences.

The new works will enhance the space in Gallery Alley, forming a fully accessible urban gallery for all members of the community. Artists were encouraged to create work with visual and tactile elements that would explore movement, light, pattern and sound. Selected artwork will encourage visitors to interact with the work through touch and other modalities to allow for full, inclusive and multi-sensory experiences.

Downtown Wichita received a grant from the Knight Foundation Fund at the Wichita Community Foundation to enhance Gallery Alley.

"Our community continues to look to improve quality of life, and through Wichita Community Foundation's partnership with the Knight Foundation, this placemaking investment will positively impact the core of our city," said Shelly Prichard, president and CEO of the Wichita Community Foundation.

Each of the selected artist proposals provides a unique approach for interaction. Proposals from the five artists listed below were selected.

Denise Irwin
Irwin is a Kansas native and graduate of Emporia State University (BS) and Wichita State University (MS). Previously, Irwin has worked on public art initiatives including a partnership with the Arkansas City Area Arts Council. Irwin has shown her work across the country and has served on the Arts Council and Wichita State University Arts Advocates boards.

Mike Miller
Miller is best known for his Machine-Nature Interface series of sculptures. The majority of his work is kinetic, and can be powered by anything from a motor and salvaged gears to the wind. Miller was born, raised and educated in Kansas and finds inspiration and materials for both the machine and the nature aspects of his work around his home and studio in rural Butler County. Learn more at **mikemillersculpture.com**.

Armando Minjarez
Minjarez is a Mexican interdisciplinary artist, designer and community organizer. He is cofounder of the Kansas based non-profit organizations The Seed House~La Casa de la Semilla, The NorthEnd Urban Arts Festival and art collective ICT ARMY of Artists, and most recently a winner of Knight Cities Challenge 2017 grant for the project Horizontes. Learn more at **armandominjarez.com**.

Laura Shank
Shank, a native Wichitan, has worked in the private sector as a 2D/3D designer and illustrator for more than 25 years, for companies such as Balco, Inc., Big Dog Motorcycles and Great Plains Industries. She received a Bachelor of Science degree from Southwestern College and has also studied graphic design at Wichita State University. Shank is also an artist working in



watercolor and mixed-aqueous mediums. Learn more at **laurashank.com**.

Tomiyo Tajiri
Tomiyo Tajiri grew up on Okino-Erabu-Shima, a small island located north of the Island of Okinawa. Tajiri moved to the United States in 1995 and soon thereafter began losing her vision, which now informs her creative process. Tajiri is known for fashioning accessories, decorations and origami designs out of traditional Japanese Washi paper and has given demonstrations and training classes in New York, Colorado, California and at the Wichita Art Museum.

Downtown Wichita worked in collaboration with Envision to identify works of art that are fully accessible to all members of the community, including individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

"Our goal to create an inclusive and accessible public art space has grown into so much more," said Heather Hogan, senior vice president of foundation and mission services at Envision. "The community will benefit from the works of art on display as well as from the diverse stories of the artists themselves, who represent a wide range of abilities and accomplishments. Gallery Alley will unify Wichitans in an entirely new way."

Artists are currently in the process of developing the artwork. Estimated project completion is May 2020.

"Artwork usually has a no touching rule, but in this case we want all members of the community to be able to experience the pieces. This project would not be possible without the Knight Foundation Fund at the Wichita Community Foundation and the collaboration of Envision," said Emily Brookover, director of community development for Downtown Wichita.

Follow Downtown Wichita on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to watch as the artists bring their proposed artwork to life.

###

About Downtown Wichita
Downtown Wichita is a private 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that amplifies the energy, capital, and growth of Downtown by empowering residents, visitors, and businesses to explore the possibilities of our city's core. Downtown Wichita is an affiliate of the Greater Wichita Partnership. Learn more at **downtownwichita.org.**