

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 14, 2019

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DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY TO SHINE IN ANTICIPATED LARGE-SCALE SILO MURAL

This week, well-known Australian artist Guido van Helten will begin painting at the Ardent Mills grain silos located on the Minnesota River in the Old Town district at the heart of downtown Mankato, Minnesota. The project was initiated as a commission and community fundraising effort by CityArt, a joint group made up of the City Center Partnership and the Twin Rivers Council for the Arts.

After having finished works on Outback water towers in a drought-stricken area of his home state of Queensland in Australia, in Poland, Jordan, and Canada, van Helten arrived back from working in Portugal to fresh snows in Minnesota ready to get underway on this new work. Water conservation has been a recurring theme this year as the artist has worked on the two 120 foot tall water tower projects in drought-ridden Outback Australia, as well as in the Middle East with aid organisations USAID and Mercycorp.

After two visits and community consultations, the artist has finalised the design and van Helten is preparing to begin the installation phase of the project in Mankato. The silos are 122 feet tall and the design will be able to be viewed from multiple viewing points along the river and throughout the city. Once the artwork is complete, the mural in Mankato will stand as the latest installment in the continuation of a connected narrative throughout the Midwest celebrating identity and regional stories. In recent years, the artist has installed celebrated works in Faulkton, South Dakota and in Fort Dodge, Iowa.

The artist visited Mankato in September 2018 and returned this year for another visit to get to know local residents and to understand the history and narrative of the area prior to creating a design for this major public artwork. The concept is a summary of experiences, observations, and discoveries in colour and culture in Mankato utilising the Education Day at the Mankato Pow Wow 2018/19 as a backdrop for the photographs on which the design of the mural is based. This design brings together the shared ideals of community,

diversity, and inclusion; and it pays respect to history while encouraging a positive dialogue on the future identity of the Mankato area.

Through consultation with various Native and non-Native leaders and community representatives, the artist worked with local photographer Sara Hughes to capture images that would illustrate community diversity, inclusion, and participation. By experiencing the shared cultural experiences at the Mahkato Wacipi, van Helten found inspiration for the design at the Education Day.

The mural will be dynamic, with a comprehensible community focus that will echo the surrounding landscape and architecture. It is the intent for each viewer to derive their own meaning from the work; and it will ideally be an invitation for a fresh, direct and friendly dialogue to occur in the surrounding region as a result.

Statement from the artist

“I’m pleased to be beginning this project here in Mankato. After quite some time planning and thinking about this piece, I have found so much inspiration in the area and have had experiences that support my ideas for quite possibly one of my largest artworks to date.”

Statement from Twin Rivers Council Director, Noelle Lawton

Statement from Ardent Mills Director

“We are honored our elevator will serve as the canvas for a mural that welcomes all those who live, work and visit our community. We are pleased to support the mural project and can’t wait to see it all come to life.”

ABOUT the artist

Guido van Helten is an Australian born visual artist and photographer (1986). He is an internationally recognised artist creating contemporary street art throughout the world which is underpinned by his exploration of community and identity generated through photography and large-scale mural installations.

Born in Canberra and growing up in inner city Melbourne Australia, the artist was influenced at a young age by traditional graffiti movements leading to an early introduction aerosol at a young age. After graduating with a Bachelor of Visual Arts majoring in Printmaking at Southern Cross University, Guido began the development of his contemporary work now closely aligned with the movement of large-scale muralism across the world. His work has developed out of his keen interests in travel, photography, architecture and learning about cultures in connection with their landscapes.

Receiving attention for his work in regional communities around Australia, Guido was nominated for the Sir John Sulman prize at the Art Gallery of NSW in 2016 for his work in the community of Brim, Victoria. These interests and his ability to work on largescale projects have spurred commissions across the world throughout Europe, Scandanavia, the United States and Australia.

For an artist Press Kit, please contact Margot Strasburger (listed above)

FOR IMAGES, please find high-resolution versions available for use with appropriate credits at [this link](#).

ABOUT CityArt

CityArt is a partnership of the City Center Partnership and the Twin Rivers Council for the Arts to provide free and accessible public art for the community's enjoyment.

City Center Partnership serves as a catalyst and supports private and public investment in City Center projects, programs and initiatives. The City Center Partnership is an affiliate of Greater Mankato Growth, Inc.

Twin Rivers Council for the Arts raises the profile of arts in the Greater Mankato area by acting as a united, collaborative voice. As an arts and culture tourism hub, Twin Rivers provides innovative programming and professional development opportunities, and connects people to the arts through advocacy, education and community development.

Links:

www.guidovanhelten.com

www.cityartmankato.com

www.thingsthatarenice.com (Sara Hughes, local photographer)