



Wadsworth Atheneum's Artist in Residency Program Continues to Connect Artists to Hartford Community

MATRIX 164 Artist Jan Tichy Collaborates with The Amistad Center's Teen Advisory Group to Create Public Art Installations

HARTFORD, Conn., May 1, 2012 – As part of its ongoing Community Engagement Initiative, the Wadsworth Atheneum will unveil its third and latest Artist Residency project this spring. The project, titled, *Lighten Up: A Public Art Project by the Teen Advisory Group*, is comprised of a series of public light-based artworks created jointly by museum MATRIX 164 artist Jan Tichy and the Amistad Center for Art & Culture's Teen Advisory Group (TAG). The works are site-specific, located at various organizations along Albany Avenue and adjacent neighborhoods in the North End of Hartford.

The museum will host an opening reception to celebrate the project's culmination at the Wilson-Gray YMCA Youth and Family Center on Sunday, May 20, from 7:30 - 9:00 pm. It will be free and open to the public.

Taking inspiration from the Wall of Respect in Chicago, Tichy's goal was to use public art as a way to inspire, encourage, and celebrate the community, which led him to select Upper Albany as the location for this project. On an early visit, Tichy toured Hartford, observing both famous landmarks and little-known neighborhoods. He noticed that while some areas of the city such as Frog Hollow/Park Street and downtown are home to many sculptures and painted murals, works of public art in neighborhoods surrounding Upper Albany are much fewer and farther between. His interest in past museum director Chick Austin and the Austin House were also factors in his selection, as the stretch of Albany Avenue that serves as the central artery for the selected sites connects downtown to the Austin House.

"In their interactions with the artist, TAG members learned about the artistic process, the role of public art in building community, and were encouraged to make unique artistic choices," said Johanna Plummer Georgette Auerbach Koopman Director of Education at the Wadsworth Atheneum.

"This is truly the most exciting and art-based project TAG has undertaken in its eight years, combining youth education and community service," said Olivia White, Executive Director of the Amistad Center for Art & Culture.

Lighten Up connects thematically with Tichy's work, but also empowers the teens in TAG to tell their own stories of Hartford through public art. Each work is unique and intended to evoke a different response in the viewer. For example, a sculptural work at St. Francis Hospital will use cool colors to evoke a sense of calm among patients and their families, while another work at the YMCA will emphasize the ways that the

tragedy of the Trayvon Martin case has resonated with people around the country. Other installation sites include Sigourney Square Park, the Old North Cemetery, and the empty pedestal in Aaron Fein Square.

The opening reception on May 20 will feature presentations by Jan Tichy and each of the young artists in TAG. A map of the artwork trail will be distributed to guests. Free, gated parking will be available. For more information about the reception, please email lauren.cross@wadsworthatheneum.org.

About The Artist Residency Program

The museum's Artist Residency program is part of its Community Engagement Initiative, a large-scale outreach program aimed to provide greater community access to the museum. Artists involved in the program work closely with Hartford community groups to plan, develop, and execute a collaborative project. Through this program, participants learn about the artistic process while celebrating what makes Hartford unique. Past projects include a spray paint mural created by youth at Mi Casa Family Services with MATRIX 160 artist Kim Shoenstadt, and a photography workshop at the Hartford Boys & Girls Club of Asylum Hill, inspired by the work of MATRIX 163 artist Claire Beckett.

Jan Tichy / MATRIX 164

On view now through August 5, 2012, *Jan Tichy / MATRIX 164* is the artist's first solo museum exhibition in the United States. Based in Chicago, Tichy combines elements of the visible and the invisible in darkened spaces with moving light, creating mysterious worlds that suggest lunar landscapes, secret military sites, and futuristic cities. Through a mixture of sculpture, video, photography, architectural models, and installation, his work addresses his interests in art and architecture, as well as politics. Tichy graduated with an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he currently teaches. For more information please visit www.thewadsworth.org/matrix-164/.

About The Amistad Center's Teen Advisory Group (TAG)

Founded about eight years ago, The Amistad Center's TAG is a unique program with the goal to encourage respect for diverse cultures and to produce art patrons and enthusiasts of the future. Most TAG members apply and join in their freshman year of high school and remain until graduation. The diverse group comes from a range of area public, magnet and private schools. This dedicated group meets once or twice a month for private tours with curators, informational sessions with museum staff, and to plan activities to engage their fellow teenagers. Please visit amistadartandculture.org to learn more about TAG and the Amistad Center.

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is located at 600 Main St., Hartford, Connecticut. The Museum is open Wednesdays to Fridays, 11 am – 5 pm and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am – 5 pm, and the first Thursday of every month 11 am – 8 pm. Please visit wadsworthatheneum.org for more information.

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