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Houston Arts Alliance Announces \$1.34 Million Exterior Artwork Commission as Part of George R. Brown Convention Center Renovation

HOUSTON (Sept. 21, 2015) - Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) announces that Joe O'Connell + Creative Machines was recently awarded the \$1.34 million commission to create a major exterior artwork as part of the renovation of the George R. Brown (GRB) Convention Center. Entitled *Wings over Water*, the massive kinetic sculpture within the *Fountain of the Americas* fountain promises to be a destination for Houstonians and convention center visitors alike.

One of the governing metaphors behind the redesign of the GRB Convention Center is migration. "The connection between avian and human migration reflects Houston's diverse population, but also the idea that people come to Houston from throughout the Americas and beyond," states artist Joe O'Connell. "*Wings over Water* reinforces and enhances this theme by creating an icon of migration and the flight of birds within the fountain. In addition, the sculpture expands on the metaphor of flight to depict the sense of potential and change, as well as a nod to Houston's aerospace heritage."

"*Wings over Water* within the *Fountain of the Americas* will bring visitor interaction through dynamic public art to the front door of the George R. Brown," says Dawn Ullrich, president and CEO of Houston First Corporation, which manages the convention center. "Building off of the energy of Discovery Green park, the renovations to the Brown itself and the other projects in the Convention District are designed to expand this space as a gathering spot for both locals and visitors to the city. We believe Joe O'Connell and his team at Creative Machines bring the type of innovative vision necessary to make this sculpture an attraction all its own."

"The design for *Wings over Water* was chosen by a peer review panel from four finalists out of 94 submissions from HAA's open call," stated Jonathon Glus, president + CEO of HAA. "Our Civic Art + Design program will work with O'Connell + Creative Machines over the next year in helping realize and install what promises to be a hallmark of public art and a signature work for Houston."

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With a huge pool of water (approximately 24 feet by 62 feet) as its base, the kinetic sculpture (approximately 25 feet wide x 35 feet high) has a massive wing made of stainless steel and kinetic, polycarbonate “feathers.” The wing will move in a smooth and natural motion—inviting viewers to spend a few minutes watching the mesmerizing movement of the undulating surfaces.

The fountain itself will have an interactive component. A sensor will allow visitors to control the lighting with a wave of the hand. When no one is interacting with the sculpture, the fountain will cycle through preprogrammed effects of movement creating a constantly changing visual experience.

The monumental sculpture will create unique views from every sight line and also for viewers looking down from neighboring buildings. Due to the sculpture’s constant movement, the viewers’ experience will also constantly change, thereby drawing visitors to the site to watch its evolution. During the day, the translucent wing will cast shadows onto the surface of the fountain and the surrounding hardscape. At night, the LED lighting will illuminate the translucent wing allowing the wing to be a kinetic beacon of light in the landscape. The sculpture’s curvilinear forms will be in stark contrast to the largely orthogonal architecture that surrounds it.

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About Houston Arts Alliance

Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) is a nonprofit, public-private initiative that invests in Houston’s arts and cultural sector, advances Houston’s reputation as an arts and culture destination, and works to elevate the quality of life for all Houstonians through arts and culture. As the city’s designated local arts agency, HAA provides programs and services for the arts and cultural sector and awards approximately 225 grants annually to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and individual artists. The Alliance is the custodian of the city’s art collection; takes permanent and temporary art to Houston’s public spaces; presents free Folklife + Traditional Arts programming; nurtures up-and-coming arts organizations through its capacity building programs; connects the business community with the arts; convenes the field as necessary, and provides the latest information and research on cultural policy, economic development and Houston’s folklife.

HAA’s primary partner is the City of Houston. Approximately 55% of HAA’s budget comes from Hotel Occupancy Tax and 30% from the City of Houston’s Percent for Art Program, which supports commissions of new civic art projects as well as conservation of existing artworks. The remaining 15% of HAA’s budget comes from private fundraising (grants/contributions/other revenue) for programs and special projects. HAA is committed to raising funds for only those projects and initiatives that the Arts Alliance is uniquely positioned to provide the community.

For more information, visit houstonartsalliance.com. For events in the region, visit Artshound.com.