

Third Ward's first handmade public artwork to create ongoing dialogue about past, present & future

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MILWAUKEE – Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design (MIAD) President Robert Rindler has announced that Stratiformis, the first handmade public artwork in the Historic Third Ward, will be dedicated in Catalano Square on Wednesday, May 3, 3:30 p.m.

The dedication of the work by artist Jin Soo Kim culminates the more than year-long collaborative Open Art Project initiated by MIAD in fall 2004.

The project was designed to enhance the city's landscape with a new work of art by a nationally known artist, engage and educate MIAD college students about public art through their work with the artist, and increase community understanding and appreciation of the process of choosing and creating public art. (See attached Q & A.)

"Stratiformis is unique," said MIAD Professor of Sculpture and Open Art Project Director Jill Sebastian, "because it is a handmade public work by a nationally known artist executed with a MIAD student crew from found objects from the Third Ward's past. By blending vestiges of industrial times with the post-modern within a natural look that is integral to the site, Stratiformis is history in its most tangible form and creates an ongoing public conversation about the Third Ward's past, present and future."

Kim, who was born in Korea and came to the U.S. in 1974, is on the faculty of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her works engage the public through unusual uses of found objects and can be viewed in major U.S. cities and around the world.

Stratiformis derives its name from a cloud formation that inspired the artist to suspend objects, which were provided by Reliable Knitting and its late president, Isabelle M. Polacheck, within the piece.

"I believe that with the public's and students' input I have created a public work that embraces the varied influences and context of the Historic Third Ward," said Kim. "My hope is that Stratiformis will connect people to their sense of time in the meeting ground of Catalano Square."

An Open Art Panel of diverse community and arts leaders selected Kim from among three artists of national repute following public presentations of the artists' visions and opportunities for real-time and online community input. More than 500 people attended the presentations and more than 1,000 people visited the Open Art portion of MIAD's web site in fall 2004.

(MORE)

Open Art Panel members include: Diane Buck, educator and writer; Raoul Deal, Artist in Residence and Lecturer, Cultures in Communities Program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; Robert Greenstreet, Planning Director, City of Milwaukee and Dean, UWM School of Architecture and Urban Planning; Carmen Haberman, Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation; Josie Osborne (non-voting coordinator), MIAD Director of Outreach and artist; Janeen Shavers, artist; Lynde Uihlein, BRICO Fund; and Jason Yi, MIAD Professor of Foundations and artist. Betsy Erskine served as Project Coordinator.

Alumna Alisa Toninato '05, leader of the MIAD student team that worked with Kim, said, "The Open Art Project made the choices about public art more democratic by asking the public what they think and feel. That democracy, from the beginning, essentially integrates the people who experience it and creates a more personal and wanted artwork to happen.

"I think we were all fortunate to have been part of the sculpture's development after that as well, including our dialogue with the Third Ward's veteran business owners and stakeholders, because this sculpture will influence more conversations beyond our own. And this is a good thing in the community; it's the function of strong public art."

"MIAD is extremely grateful to the members of the Open Art Panel, the public and all the project's supporters for providing such an invaluable creative learning experience for our city and for MIAD students, who participated in all phases of the project," said president Rindler.

"The dedication on May 3 will be the realization of a truly artistic and educational endeavor, and we are especially pleased that Mayor Tom Barrett and Dean Greenstreet are among the honored guests scheduled to speak."

Kim will be working with MIAD students on the final fabrication and installation of the sculpture in the square throughout April and requests that the press respect the artistic process and schedule interviews in advance for the week of April 24.

The Open Art Project received generous funding from the Mary Nohl Fund of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Joanne Johnson Public Art Fund and the Milwaukee Arts Board. Reliable Knitting supplied material support and numerous individual donors and entities such as New Land Enterprises contributed funds, materials or services. The project is also supported financially by MIAD and by generous donations of time by MIAD staff, who facilitated the project. Stratiformis is dedicated to the late Joanne Johnson in honor of her passion for public art.

MIAD is Wisconsin's only fully accredited, independent college devoted exclusively to the education of professional artists and designers. Founded in 1974, it today enrolls 650 talented students from across the country who are taught by artists and designers recognized regionally and nationally for their professional and educational accomplishments. Its unique academic approach blends curricular and extracurricular experiences, a community service requirement, and liberal studies in 11 majors culminating in the bachelor of fine arts degree. As critical thinkers, MIAD's graduates are educated to be Wisconsin's and the Midwest's next "creative class" – people who become change agents not only in art and design, but also in our culture and society. 80 percent of MIAD's graduates remain in Wisconsin, contributing a vital "brain gain" to the state.