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CONTACT: Anne Delaney, Public Art Reston, Executive Director

T: 703-880-1177 | C: 202-262-0152

12001 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston, VA 20191

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Public Art Reston Selects Artist Ben Volta for its Colts Neck Road Underpass Project

RESTON, VA—Philadelphia artist and educator Ben Volta has been selected to create a permanent public artwork for the Reston community at the Colts Neck Road Underpass. A 2015 recipient of a Pew Fellowship in the Arts, Volta is known for his public artwork, including intricate public murals and sculptures, working within the fields of education, restorative justice, and urban planning. He has a participatory approach to making art and has worked with numerous organizations and schools.

According to Volta, his practice “stands on the belief that art can be a catalyst for change, within individuals as well as the institutional structures that surround them.”

Volta—who as a young artist was a member of the groundbreaking art collective “Tim Rollins and K.O.S.” (Kids of Survival), in the south Bronx section of New York City—earned his certificate in sculpture from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 2002 and his BFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 2005.

After finishing his academic studies, Volta began working with teachers and students in Philadelphia public schools to create participatory art “rooted in an exploratory and educational process.” Over the past decade and through hundreds of projects, he has developed his collaborative process in partnership with public schools, art organizations, and communities. The National Academy of Sciences also has recognized his work, which integrates art with math, science and reading.

The *Public Art Master Plan for Reston*, adopted in 2008, identifies Reston’s underpasses as locations for new artworks. The Colts Neck Road underpass project—a partnership between Public Art Reston, Reston Association, and Atlantic Realty Companies/Integra Care—will be the second of Public Art Reston’s permanent public artworks at an underpass. The first, commissioned in 2009 for the Glade Drive underpass, is the mosaic mural, “Emerge,” by artist Valerie Theberge, who collaborated with students from Reston’s Hunters Woods Elementary School for the Arts and Sciences. For the Colts Neck Road underpass project, Volta will be collaborating with students from Hunters Woods and Dogwood elementary schools.

In its “call” for an artist, Public Art Reston specified that the selected artist: “address the spirit of the Hunters Woods Neighborhood; respond to the cultural diversity of the community; and develop an artwork that identifies the underpass as a civic facility within the fabric of the surrounding neighborhood.”

According to Anne Delaney, Public Art Reston’s executive director, Volta was the unanimous choice of both an art selection committee, designated especially for this project, and Public Art Reston’s Public Art Committee. She said, “We are very excited to work with Ben Volta, who has extensive experience with community engagement and creates powerful and colorful artworks. She added, “The project is an opportunity for infrastructure beautification, engagement, education, and inspiration. It will promote active use of the underpass that links residential areas, Hunters Woods Village Center, two schools, two senior facilities, and two community centers.”

Thanks to a proffer commitment by Atlantic Realty Companies to improve the exterior facades of the Colts Neck Road underpass as a part of the development of Hunters Woods at Trails Edge, a senior living community, the developer is contributing \$60,000 towards the permanent artwork. Public Art Reston is raising additional funds to enhance not only the exterior walls but also the interior walls of the underpass.

In addition to Atlantic Realty Companies, project supporters to date include: ARTSFairfax, Reston Community Center, JBG SMITH, Virginia Commission for the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, Pat & Steve Macintyre, Lake Thoreau Entertainment Association, and many other individuals.

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