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A catalyst for public art rooted in the Reston community: Ben Volta, Colts Neck Road Underpass artist, to talk about the project at RCC Hunters Woods June 3

RESTON, VA—Philadelphia artist and educator Ben Volta, selected by Public Art Reston to create a permanent public artwork at the Colts Neck Road Underpass, will talk about the project with filmmaker Rebekah Wingert and Hunters Woods Elementary School art teacher Norma Morris at the CenterStage at Reston Community Center (RCC) Hunters Woods on Monday, June 3, at 7:30 p.m. Volta also will be available afterward to meet with audience members. The event is free and open to all.

A 2015 recipient of a Pew Fellowship in the Arts, Volta is known for his public artwork, (including intricate 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.

Volta is working directly with Reston community members on this project, which will beautify the underpass and promote its use. He has already done workshops with students at Dogwood Elementary School. In addition, he will give workshops at Hunters Woods Fellowship House, Southgate Community Center and Hunters Woods Elementary School. He also will hold a community workshop, open to the public, in late June.

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 Hunters Woods Elementary School.

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.” It also required that whoever was selected would “engage the community—students, their parents and teachers, pedestrians and bicyclists—through direct involvement in the creation of a work of art.”

According to Anne Delaney, Public Art Reston’s executive director, Volta was the unanimous choice of both an artist 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 an underpass that helps link residential areas, Hunters Woods Village Center, two schools, two senior facilities and two community centers.”

The project and related programs are supported by: Atlantic Realty Companies, **ARTSFAIRFAX**, Reston Community Center, JBG SMITH, Virginia Commission for the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, Pat and Steve Macintyre, Lake Thoreau Entertainment Association and many individuals.

The artist's presentation will be at the CenterStage at Reston Community Center Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Rd, Reston, VA 20191; phone: (703) 476-4500. No tickets are required; the event is presented free of charge.