

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WALL BALL²⁰²³

VOICES OF THE COMMUNITY



Mural Arts Philadelphia Celebrates the Voices, Stories, and Murals in Our Community at Wall Ball 2023 Gala Fundraiser on April 27, 2023

Honoring artists, community, and the Community Murals program at Mural Arts

Philadelphia, PA – April 11, 2023 – [Mural Arts Philadelphia](https://www.muralarts.org/) announces **Wall Ball 2023**, an annual gala fundraiser celebrating public art and the power of community, to be held on Thursday, April 27, 2023, at the 2300 Arena in South Philadelphia. Presented by [Citizens](https://www.citizens.org/), this year's event will recognize Mural Arts' Community Murals department. This unique initiative empowers individuals by giving voice to every person in every part of the city, lifting untold stories, and highlighting local heroes and history. Tickets start at \$250 and can be purchased at <https://wallball.muralarts.org/>.

This year, Mural Arts is bringing a *Def Poetry Jam Reunion* for Wall Ball 2023 to celebrate the incredible work of Sonia Sanchez, Philadelphia's first poet laureate. Sonia, along with artist Danny Simmons are Mural Arts' 2023 Visionary Artist Awardees. The event will also honor Leslie Richards, CEO & General Manager of SEPTA, for her tireless advocacy and partnership with Mural Arts, which has transformed transit stations and provided same-day wages to hundreds of unhoused Philadelphians through its [Color Me Back](https://www.colormeback.org/) program.

Seven acclaimed poets - Bonafide Rojas, Khemist Mayfield, Ursula Rucker, Derick Cross, Vanessa Hidrany, Kraal 'Kayo' Charles, and Lamar Mason - will be in attendance, most of whom will perform in the style of the iconic *Def Poetry Jam* television series. Lezlie Harrison, vocalist, bandleader, and on-air

radio host at the preeminent jazz radio station, WBGO, will be the MC and will perform during the evening. The event is expected to bring together Mural Arts supporters, artists, local government officials, and community and business leaders for a night of celebration and fundraising towards Mural Arts' mission of transforming public spaces and individual lives through art.

"Through our Community Murals department, we collaborate with community members to imagine and lead projects that build social capital, develop a sense of communal ownership over space, represent diversity, and empower people to make change in their city," said **Jane Golden, Executive Director of Mural Arts Philadelphia**. "These community murals not only highlight important figures and themes from Philadelphia's history but also bring together neighbors and new friends, reminding us of who we are and where we are going."

"For the past 20 years, Citizens has been a proud partner of Mural Arts," said **Dan Astolfi, Executive Vice President for Commercial Banking at Citizens and Vice Chair of Mural Arts Philadelphia's board**. "We are thrilled to highlight the Community Murals Program at Wall Ball this year. Both Citizens and Mural Arts strive to empower people to reach their potential – be it through art, education, or financial stability - so that communities can thrive."

The Wall Ball Committee, consisting of Danielle Hankin, Keith Lewis, Sarena Snider, Kimberly J. Allen, Dan Astolfi, Tara Theune Davis, Julia Fleischner, Nicole Gainer, Jane Goldblum, Margelle Liss, David Pudlin, Courtney Robinson, RJ Rushmore, and Alexis & Max Tuttleman, has been working tirelessly to ensure that this year's event is a night to remember.

"We are excited to showcase the incredible talent of Mural Arts' artists and the transformative power of art at Wall Ball 2023," said **Julia Fleischner, Wall Ball Committee member and Chair of Mural Arts' Board of Directors**. "We are grateful to our partners Catering by Design, Colibri Workshop, Kimpton Hotel Palomar Philadelphia, Signature 57, and Witty Gritty for their support in making this thrilling event possible."

At Wall Ball 2023, Mural Arts will honor:

- **Danny Simmons, Artist**

[Danny Simmons](#) is a published author, poet, painter, and philanthropist. He is a leader in the art world with his philanthropic ventures, artistic talents, and creative mind and drive. Danny Simmons played an instrumental role in the conceiving of and co-producing the hit HBO show Def Poetry Jam and won a Tony Award for the Broadway version of the show. Today, his works appear in the Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Smithsonian, the United Nations, the United States State Department Collection, the PAFA Collection, the Brooklyn Museum, and more. He continues to thrive at his 'home gallery' in Philadelphia, PA.

- **Sonia Sanchez, Poet, Activist & Writer**

[Sonia Sanchez](#) is the author of more than 20 books and a recipient of the 2022 Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize. *Does Your House Have Lions?* was a National Book Critics Circle Award finalist. Sanchez is the Poetry Society of America's 2001 Robert Frost Medalist and a Ford Freedom Scholar from the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. In December 2011, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter selected Sonia Sanchez as Philadelphia's first poet laureate, calling her "the longtime conscience of the city." Sanchez has lectured at more than 500 universities and colleges in the United States and has traveled extensively to read her poetry. Sanchez lives in Philadelphia.

- **Leslie Richards, CEO & General Manager of SEPTA**

[Leslie S. Richards](#) is the CEO and 11th General Manager of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), the sixth largest public transportation agency in the U.S. that enables the five million residents of the Greater Philadelphia region to connect to each other. A staunch advocate for women and diversity in transportation and government, Richards has been recognized for her leadership in the industry and commitment to public service. She lives with her husband in Philadelphia.

Sponsors supporting the Mural Arts Philadelphia Wall Ball 2023 include, Presenting Sponsor: Citizens; **Leadership Sponsors:** Brownstein and Pam & Tony Schneider; **Premier Sponsors:** Independence Blue Cross, Sheller Family Foundation, G.S. Peter & Janie Gross; **Visionary Sponsors:** Glenmede Trust Company, Sarena Snider, Julia & David Fleischner, Jane & Joseph Goldblum, Margaret Harris & Phil Straus; **Muse Sponsors:** Ballard Spahr, Blank Rome LLP, Comcast Corporation, Leslie A. Fleischner, Hanglely Aronchick Segal Pudlin & Schiller, Hankin Management Company at the Arsenal, Margelle & Shelly Liss, Brian & Christy Pedrow, David & Helen Pudlin, Anne & Bruce Robinson, Robert Saligman Charitable Foundation, SEPTA, Eileen & Jon Weiswasser; **Collector Sponsors:** Danella Companies, EJF Philanthropies, Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP, International Materials Foundation, Harold & Peggy Katz, Susanna Lachs & Dean Adler, Gretchen & Jay Riley, ROE, The Paul & Emily Singer Family Foundation, Jamie & Amy Snider, and Tuttleman Foundation; **Patron Sponsors:** Kimberly J. Allen, A.P. Construction, Inc., Athena Contracting Inc., Bank of America, The Ball Family Foundation, Kevin & Joselyn Basden, BNY Mellon, Borrelli Steel Fabricators, LLC, Bowe and Gant Electrical Services, CAL Automotive, Communications Test Design, Inc., Cozen O'Connor, Linda DeJure, Dillworth Paxson LLP, Dina Wind Art Foundation, East Bay Merchant Partners, ECBM, Jill & Mark Fishman, Gessler Construction Co Inc, Danielle Hankin, Independence Foundation, Justi Group, Inc., Joanna Lack & Brendan Lowe, Marcello Luzi & Gregory R. Seitter, Laura and Marc McKenna, Leslie Miller & Richard Worley Foundation, Carolyn Bedrosian Nagy, Parkway Corporation, Parx Casino, PennEngineering & Manufacturing Corp., Penn Medicine, Philadelphia Eagles, PMC Group, Jennifer Porges & Joseph Manko, Jr., Pulse Technologies, Inc., RSM US LLP, SHIFT Capital, Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP, TEC Elevator, Univest, and Ken & Judy Weinstein; **Partners:** Catering by Design, Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants, Signature 57, and Witty Gritty.

About Mural Arts Philadelphia:



Mural Arts Philadelphia is the nation's largest public art program, dedicated to the belief that art ignites change. For over 35 years, Mural Arts has united artists and communities through a collaborative and equitable process, creating over 4,000 artworks that have transformed public spaces and individual lives. Mural Arts aims to empower people, stimulate dialogue, and build bridges to mutual understanding through projects that attract artists from Philadelphia and around the world and programs that focus on youth education, restorative justice, mental health and wellness, and public art and its preservation. Popular mural tours offer a firsthand glimpse into the inspiring stories behind Mural Arts' iconic and unparalleled collection, earning Philadelphia worldwide recognition as the "Mural Capital of the World." For more information, call 215-685-0750 or visit muralarts.org. Follow us on social media: @muralarts on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/muralarts) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/muralarts), [MuralArtsPhiladelphia](https://www.facebook.com/MuralArtsPhiladelphia) on Facebook, and [phillymuralarts](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCphillymuralarts) on YouTube.

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Tamara Yvette Day, Signature 57
On behalf of Mural Arts Philadelphia
tday@signature57.com