Internationally Recognized Artist's Mural Will Rise at Critical Moment for Louisville
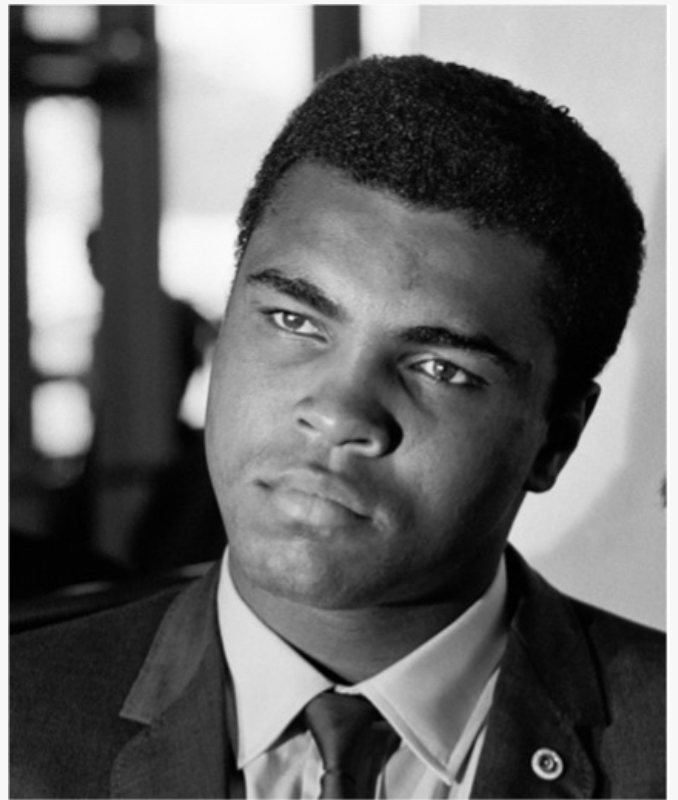
Shepard Fairey's 7-story image of Muhammad Ali takes on new significance in wake of tragedy

LOUISVILLE, KY, USA, April 14, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As Louisville begins the long process of healing after a mass shooting that left five people dead, the creation of a mural depicting the city's greatest champion will provide a moment for Louisville to focus on community.

Shepard Fairey, best known for creating the iconic "Hope" poster for the Barack Obama campaign as well as large-scale murals around the world, will visit Louisville next week to paint a mural of global humanitarian and heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali.

While Louisville native Eddie Donaldson (also known as the artist GuerillaOne) and the nonprofit Artists for Trauma have spent months bringing the project together, Ali's status as an international icon of peace makes it especially poignant after the events of April 10th.

The original Howard Bingham photograph that will form the basis for Fairey's mural. Mandatory credit: Photo by Howard L. Bingham ©

"After the mass shooting on Monday, I'm devastated for the victims, their families, and the entire community of Louisville," Fairey said. "I believe art is a tool of healing and peace so I hope the mural I'll be painting of Muhammad Ali, a United Nations Messenger of Peace, will serve the moment as well as encourage thoughtful reflection about peace and Ali's ideals into the future."

Fairey will begin work April 22nd on the mural, which is based on a photo by Ali's "personal photographer," Howard L. Bingham. Bingham is estimated to have captured a million images of Ali over three decades, and is also famous for his images of Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, Nelson Mandela, James Brown and others.

The 7-story mural will cover the East wall of the historic Chestnut Street Family YMCA - just two blocks from Ali's alma mater, Central High School. Facing Louisville's downtown, the huge mural will join a series of other significant public art projects contributing to the current renaissance in the Russell Neighborhood, a historically African-American neighborhood.

"The YMCA is grateful for the opportunity to support our community healing through this project," said Freddie Brown, Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for Greater Louisville YMCA. "Muhammad Ali, an exceptional Louisville native with an extraordinary legacy, demonstrated resilience throughout his life. This exceptional work will serve as a reminder that we all have greatness within and can bounce back from trials and tribulations. Our appreciation goes out to all those who made this happen."

Feedback and perspective from the YMCA Black Achievers helped shape the final design of the work, and Fairey will continue to engage with local artists and students at a public workshop hosted by Louisville Visual Art during his visit.

"I look forward to my time in Louisville as an opportunity to share ideas and have important conversations with members of the community," Fairey added.

"Shepard Fairey's work has become synonymous with idea of hope," Louisville Mayor Craig Greenberg said, "Right now, Louisville is especially in need of hope and outlets for processing these difficult moments, which is why it is so important that YMCA's Black Achievers and Louisville's artists will have a role in this creative process."

Fairey's visit, as well as the creation and ongoing maintenance of the mural, are made possible by many generous supporters, including the City of Louisville, Artists for Trauma, Kroger, Brooke Brown Barzun and Matthew Barzun, Danny Wimmer Presents, Phocus Water, Lonnie Ali, Greg Fischer, Esoteric Collection, and Indivisible Arts.

While Fairey is in town, his work will form the centerpiece of a soon to be announced exhibit at Common Art Gallery, part of the PORTAL arts venue in Louisville's Portland neighborhood. More information on the Outside Influence exhibit will be released in the next week.

Schedule of Events:

April 22nd: Work begins on Ali mural
April 25th: Public workshop at Louisville Visual Art (1538 Lytle St.), 6-8pm
April 26th: Public dedication of the mural, 1:30pm (specifics to come)

About Shepard Fairey

Shepard Fairey was born in Charleston, South Carolina. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Illustration at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, Rhode Island. In 1989, he created

the "Andre the Giant has a Posse" sticker that transformed into the OBEY GIANT art campaign, with imagery that has changed the way people see art and the urban landscape. After more than 30 years, Mr. Fairey's work has evolved into an acclaimed body of art, including the 2008 "Hope" portrait of Barack Obama, found at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery as well as the "We the People" series, recognizable from the 2017 Women's Marches around the globe. He has painted nearly 120 large-scale murals across six continents to date.

About YMCA of Greater Louisville

The Y is the nation's leading nonprofit committed to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. The YMCA has been listening and responding to the needs of our communities for more than 169 years. The Y is dedicated to building healthy, confident, connected and secure children, adults, families and communities. Learn more at ymcalouisville.org.

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