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ARTIST PEDRO REYES TO REPRODUCE HIS WORK, “PALAS POR PISTOLAS” (GUNS INTO SHOVELS), IN NORTH LAWNDALE

CHICAGO—The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), a global leader in art and design education, announced a partnership with artist Pedro Reyes to reproduce his work, “Palas por pistolas” (Guns into Shovels), in the city’s North Lawndale neighborhood on September 23.

“Palas por Pistolas” was initially conceptualized as a response to the gun violence in the western Mexican city of Culiacán. Reyes organized a campaign for residents to turn in their weapons to be melted into shovels that were then used to plant trees. During the campaign, 1,527 weapons were collected and taken to a military zone to be crushed by a steamroller before shovels were created out of the weapon waste.

“Ten years ago, I started this project, Palas por Pistolas, to withdraw weapons from circulation in my home country, and 10 years after, I am grateful to have the opportunity to do a new installment of this piece in the city of Chicago,” said Pedro Reyes. “Guns spread death and suffering in the world, so I believe in making an effort to reduce the number of weapons out there, even if it seems an insurmountable task.” About the planting of trees, Reyes adds: “We are starting to see the catastrophic effects of climate change, so another crucial undertaking is to constantly plant trees; our survival depends on this. This is the transformative essence of this project: to turn an instrument of death and turn it into an instrument of life.”

The symbolic act of showing how an agent of death can become an agent of life will be reproduced during the Oaks of North Lawndale event on Saturday, September 23 from 10 a.m.–4 p.m. at Nichols Tower, 906 S. Homan Ave.

Reyes; members of the North Lawndale community; representatives from SAIC; Alderman Michael Scott Jr. and representatives from participating organizations, which include North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council, 2017 Year of Public Art Chicago, Enterprise Community Partners and L-Evated Chicago will plant 10 trees and place 10 stones on the campus of Homan Square. Reyes will oversee the production of “Palas por Pistolas.” These shovels will then be used to dig the holes to plant the trees.

SAIC at Homan Square

In 2015, SAIC opened its first permanent classroom outside of its downtown campus. Housed within Nichols Tower on the Homan Square campus, the school offers arts education to the residents of North Lawndale, holds classes for SAIC students and hosts an artist residency program. In 2016, the school was awarded a \$75,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in support of its Homan Square Arts Initiative.

About the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

For 150 years, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) has been a leader in educating the world's most influential artists, designers, and scholars. Located in downtown Chicago with a fine arts graduate program consistently ranking among the top three graduate fine arts programs in the nation by U.S. News and World Report, SAIC provides an interdisciplinary approach to art and design as well as world-class resources, including the Art Institute of Chicago museum, on-campus galleries, and state-of-the-art facilities. SAIC's undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate students have the freedom to take risks and create the bold ideas that transform Chicago and the world—as seen through notable alumni and faculty such as Michelle Grabner, David Sedaris, Elizabeth Murray, Richard Hunt, Georgia O'Keeffe, Cynthia Rowley, Nick Cave, Jeff Koons, and LeRoy Neiman. For more information, please visit saic.edu.

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