WALKER ART CENTER ANNOUNCES ARTIST ANGELA TWO STARS AS FINALIST FOR INDIGENOUS PUBLIC ART COMMISSION IN THE MINNEAPOLIS SCULPTURE GARDEN

MINNEAPOLIS, SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 — The Walker Art Center announces the selection of artist Angela Two Stars as the finalist for the Indigenous Public Art Commission, a special project in which a new work of public art is commissioned by the Walker, acquired for the collection, and sited in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden in the fall of 2020. This is the first work by Two Stars to enter the Walker’s world-renowned collection of contemporary art.

The proposal by Two Stars (Dakota, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, b. 1982) was selected by the Indigenous Public Art Selection Committee and Walker Art Center curatorial staff, from a pool of three semifinalist proposals that were chosen from more than 50 national and international submissions. The Indigenous Public Art Selection Committee is a group of seven Native artists, curators, writers, and knowledge keepers based in Minnesota, South Dakota, and New Mexico who have been working since early 2018 with Walker curatorial staff to shape a process, generate the Call to Artists, review proposals of a new work of art, and select a commissioned project for the Walker campus or Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. The Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is a project of the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.
Walker executive director Mary Ceruti, who worked closely with the Walker curatorial team and Indigenous Public Art Selection Committee in the selection of the proposal, notes, "I am thrilled with the selection of Angela Two Stars as our next commission for the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. Angela's proposal makes poetic connections between land, water, and language. I know visitors to the Garden will find it welcoming and generous. I am grateful for the partnership and dialogue with the Indigenous Public Art Selection Committee, which shaped this process, and contributed to its success."

Two Stars will work closely over the next year with the Walker and a variety of consultants on the development and production of the work, and will be supported by the Walker throughout the process, with completion and installation planned for fall 2020.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Based in St. Paul, Minnesota, Angela Two Stars has been working for the past 10 years as a visual artist, arts administrator, educator, and curator. She received her BFA from Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids, MI, in 2017. Her work has been exhibited at the Sioux Art Museum in Rapid City, SD; the Watermark Art Center in Bemidji; and the Grand Rapids Art Museum, among other gallery and nonprofit spaces. While her area of focus began in printmaking and drawing, Two Stars has been increasingly drawn to the impact public art can have. Most recently, her work in the public realm has been visible in the region along the shores of Bde Maka Ska, part of Minneapolis’s Chain of Lakes, with a piece on which she collaborated with artists Sandy Spieler and Mona Smith, dedicated in June 2019. Two Stars is also one of 15 artists selected by the City of Minneapolis to create a mural project on glass for the city’s new Public Service Building in 2020. Two Stars has recently been named as Director of All My Relations Arts, which is overseen by Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI), an American Indian community development intermediary organization.

ABOUT THE COMMISSIONED WORK

In her proposal, Angela Two Stars has conceived of a sculpture that is simultaneously a sculptural form, a gathering space, and an interactive work that provides a site for a broad audience to engage with Dakota language. Two Stars plans to incorporate text as well as a range of medicinal plants native to Minnesota, which represent a healing reconnection with Dakota language, culture, and traditional teachings.

The sculpture’s planned ringed configuration recalls a rippling drop of water. The work is rooted in an acknowledgment of the role that water plays to the Dakota people—the name Minnesota originates from the Dakota phrase *Mni Sota Makoce*, Land Where the Waters Reflect the Clouds. Two Stars’s proposed work will be composed of seven sections, each representing the Očeti Šākowiniŋ, meaning people of the Seven Council Fires, known also as the Great Sioux Nation. This group, which includes speakers of the Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota dialects, is made up of the Mdewakantōwin (Mdewakanton), Wahpekute (Wahpekute), Wahpeton (Wahpeton), Sisitōwin (Sisseton), Ihaŋktonwaŋ (Yankton), Ihaŋktonwāna (Yanktonai), and Titaŋwaŋ (Teton). Members of the Očeti Šākowiniŋ nations live largely in
Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North and South Dakota as well as in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

As Two Stars has noted in her artist statement, "Language revitalization is a healing medicine for Dakota people. Our identity is grounded in our language. Our ceremonies, songs, and stories are rooted in language. Without our language, we would lose those ceremonies, those songs, those stories. We would lose an integral part of who we are as Dakota people. ... My story of healing has come from my language journey."

ABOUT THE SELECTION PROCESS

The Indigenous Public Art Selection Committee is a group of seven Native artists, curators, writers, and knowledge keepers based in Minnesota, South Dakota, and New Mexico. The Committee has been working since early 2018 with Walker curatorial staff to shape a process, generate the Call to Artists, review proposals for a new work of art, and select a commissioned project for the Walker campus or Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.

The Indigenous Public Art Selection Committee is composed of Kate Beane, PhD (Flandreau Santee Sioux), director, Native American Initiatives, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul; Lann Briel (Ojibwe, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa), program officer, Jerome Foundation, Minneapolis; Louise Erdrich (Ojibwe, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa), author and founder, Birchbark Books, Minneapolis; Candice Hopkins (Tlingit), independent curator, Albuquerque, NM; Lori Pourier (Oglala Lakota), president, First Peoples Fund, Rapid City, SD; Iyekiyapinawin Darlene St. Clair (Dakota, Citizen of Lower Sioux), associate professor of American Indian Studies and director of the Multicultural Resource Center, St. Cloud State University; and Rory Wakemup (Ojibwe, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa), artist and former director, All My Relations Arts, Native American Community Development Institute, Minneapolis. Prior to the selection process, important early collaboration in shaping the Call to Artists was provided by Gwen Westerman (Dakota, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate), author, artist, and professor of English and director of the Humanities Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato; and Glenn M. Wasicuna, (Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, Manitoba), adjunct faculty, department of World Language and Cultures, Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Following a Call to Artists for the commission on January 16, 2019, which closed in the spring of 2019, Walker staff led a series of five free workshops from January through April throughout the region for interested artists and members of the public. Workshops, which provided greater context on the Call to Artists, information on how to apply, and opportunities for questions, were held at the Plains Art Museum, Fargo, ND (January 18, 2019); Sisseton Wahpeton College, Sisseton, SD (January 19, 2019); Mystic Lake Center, Prior Lake, MN (January 26, 2019); the Watermark Art Center, Bemidji, MN (March 30, 2019); and the Walker Art Center (April 22, 2019).

Two Star’s upcoming commission, which will be installed in the fall of 2020, will enter the Walker’s permanent collection, and is one of two new outdoor commissions to date in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden since the park’s 2017 renovation. The first new commission, a work by Twin Cities–based artists Ta-coumba Aiken and Seitu Jones titled Shadows at the Crossroads (2019), was installed in June 2019. Two Stars’s project joins other works by
Indigenous artists in the Walker’s collection, including pieces by Frank Big Bear, Julie Buffalohead, Andrea Carlson, Jim Denomie, Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds, George Morrison, the collective Postcommodity, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, and others.

ABOUT THE WALKER ART CENTER AND MINNEAPOLIS SCULPTURE GARDEN

The Walker Art Center is an interdisciplinary contemporary art center committed to supporting the creative expression of artists and the active engagement of audiences. The museum, located near downtown Minneapolis, is situated on land shaped by glaciers more than 10,000 years ago. The area was once an expanse of marshland used for hundreds of years as a seasonal camp by the Dakota and Ojibwe people. In the late 1800s, the site held an armory and parade grounds. Formal gardens and a series of sports fields were established here in the early 1900s. When the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden opened in 1988 as a collaboration between the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and the Walker Art Center, it was one of the first major public/private urban sculpture parks of its kind in the United States. The Wurtele Upper Garden, a landscaped hillside expanse adjacent to the Walker, is the newest outdoor space on the Walker campus and includes pedestrian walkways, sculpture, and sites for public events.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS