

## Office of Cultural Affairs

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Contact**

Kerry Adams Hapner, Director of Cultural Affairs, City of San José  
(408) 793-4333; kerry.adams-hapner@sanjoseca.gov

Elisabeth Handler, Public Information Manager  
Office of Economic Development  
(408 535-8168); elisabeth.handler@sanjoseca.gov

## **New Artworks from Burning Man Coming to Downtown San José**

***The San José Office of Cultural Affairs and Burning Man Project announce the next artworks in the Playa to Paseo partnership.***

SAN JOSE, Calif. (October 17, 2018) – The City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs and Burning Man Project are pleased to announce that two artworks, *XO* and *HaHa*, by Laura Kimpton with Jeff Schomberg, will be coming to downtown San José as part of the *Playa to Paseo* partnership. Installed at San Jose City Hall and Hammer Theatre Plaza, respectively, *XO* and *HaHa* will be up from October 20, 2018 through February 28, 2019. A celebration for the artworks will be held at Hammer Theatre Plaza on December 7, 2018 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

“We are thrilled to bring *XO* and *HaHa* to downtown during the popular holiday season. Iconic, they will engage the thousands of downtown visitors at this time. We invite people to play with art, snap their photos, and enjoy the creative expression they offer,” said Office of Cultural Affairs Director, Kerry Adams-Hapner.

*Playa to Paseo* is a three-year partnership between the City of San José and Burning Man Project to site temporary artworks throughout San José as an invitation to play, engage, and participate in art-making city-wide. In selecting artwork for the *Playa to Paseo* initiative, special attention is paid to highlighting works that represent the diversity of art at the annual Burning Man event. Previous work showcased through the initiative includes the high-energy light installation *Sonic Runway*, the whimsical penny-bear *Ursa Mater*, and the contemplative mechanical female figure *Tara Mechani*. The next artworks in the series, *XO* and *HaHa*, were highlights of past Burning Man events. *HaHa* debuted at the most recent event in August 2018 and a twin of *XO* is currently on view as part of the Smithsonian’s Burning Man exhibition, *No Spectators: The Art of Burning Man* in Washington D.C.

Comprised of large-scale metal letters, *XO* stands 12 feet tall and the “H’s” in *HaHa* measure 12 feet and the “a’s” measure 6 feet. The metal letter forms are perforated with bird cutouts. The birds are a visual symbol meant to free viewers from their neuroses, fears, and self-doubt. These monumental word sculptures often evoke varied emotions and interpretations, and can mean different things to different people.

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According to Kimpton, *XO* is a love letter to the community. It is reminiscent of how many of us sign off on letters, emails, and texts. It is what we use to make sure that the people we interact with know our affection and love. In a time of division and strife felt across the United States, *XO* reminds us to share love and kindness with each other, to help create a world where love is the sentiment connecting us, through our thoughts, words and actions. Its siting in City Hall Plaza is symbolic of local government's love of San Jose and its community.

Kimpton's *HaHa* is a celebration of life in tribute to the late Burning Man Founder Larry Harvey who passed away this spring, and loved ones who have departed before us. She says, "It is a reminder to celebrate the time we had with them. To raise our proverbial glass in celebration to all they did to create this wonderful, joyful life we have as part of Burning Man. While their losses are felt keenly and we mourn their parting from this physical life, we know that they, and Larry in particular, liked to revel in the moment, seize the day, and share laughter and fun whenever and wherever possible. Even in the darkest moments, the darkest times, we need to cling to this remembrance of joy and laughter. This sculpture is a reminder, a touchstone, and a celebration." *HaHa*'s placement at Hammer Theatre Plaza also speaks to the power of art to bring joy and laughter to people's lives.

### **Artist Bios**

**Laura Kimpton** is the conceptual force behind the *Monumental Word Series* that began back in 2009 at the annual Burning Man art event in Nevada. Works have been displayed at the Sundance Film Festival, the TED Conference, University of California Riverside, the BottleRock Music Festival in Napa, California. Most recently her sculpture, *XO*, was installed as part of the Smithsonian show celebrating the art and craft of Burning Man. Other sculptures in the *Monumental Word Series* have been purchased by the City of Arlington, Texas for the Dallas Cowboy's Football Stadium, the City of Reno, Nevada, the Paradise Ridge Winery in Santa Rosa, California, the Venetian in Las Vegas, Nevada, the City of West Palm Beach, Florida, and the Grand Hyatt and Apple for San Francisco's Union Square, as well as several prominent private collections across the country.

**Jeff Schomberg** has collaborated with Laura in building and installing her revolutionary conceptual designs. He is a sculptor and installation artist. Leveraging keen fire art skills, his unique style incorporates welded steel, stone and found objects. Schomberg has created all of the letters for the *Monumental Word series*, and has overseen more than 20 large-scale installations.

### **About Playa to Paseo**

The partnership between Burning Man Project and the City of San José is intended to call forth to the San José artist community and invite participation in imagining the way that temporary art can invigorate public spaces across San José's 180-square-mile landscape.

### **About Burning Man Project**

Burning Man Project, a nonprofit organization, produces the annual Burning Man event in Black Rock City, and works year-round to extend and facilitate the culture that has grown from the event into the larger world. Burning Man Project provides inspiration, connection, education, and grants to a creative ecosystem of builders, makers, artists, and community leaders. Its work spans six interconnected program areas: Art, Education, Civic Involvement, Culture, Philosophical Center, and Social Enterprise. An ever-growing global network supports and furthers these efforts in 44 U.S. states and 37 countries around the world.

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**About the City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs**

*The City of San José recognizes that the arts and culture are essential elements in the character and quality of life in a vibrant community and seeks to ensure that San José is an effective hub of a wide array of arts and cultural opportunities throughout Silicon Valley. The Office of Cultural Affairs, a division of Economic Development Department in the City Manager's Office, is the lead City of San José agency for stewarding a vibrant arts sector. It achieves this mission through public art and placemaking, arts funding, special event coordination, creative entrepreneur work-force development, cultural facility stewardship, and, among other items, cultural policy. Visit <http://www.sanjoseculture.org>*

**About the City of San José**

*With more than one million residents, San José is one of the most diverse large cities in the United States and is Northern California's largest city and the 10th largest city in the nation. San José's transformation into a global innovation center has resulted in one of the largest concentrations of technology companies and expertise in the world. In 2011, the City adopted Envision San José 2040, a long-term growth plan that sets forth a vision and a comprehensive road map to guide the City's anticipated growth through the year 2040.*

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