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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**San Francisco Arts Education Project presents**  
***WORDS, a text-centric exhibition***

**April 1 - 4, 2015 at the Catharine Clark Gallery**

*Students from San Francisco public schools exhibit work created with artists from the San Francisco Arts Education Project and the Interdisciplinary Arts Program*



*Art by Stephanie Go and Sophia Qin, Interdisciplinary Arts*

**SAN FRANCISCO** (March 18, 2015) – The San Francisco Arts Education Project proudly presents *WORDS, a text-centric exhibition* featuring artwork by students in San Francisco public elementary schools and by high school students in SFArtsED’s Interdisciplinary Arts Program. The show’s gala opening is from 6:30-9 p.m. on Wednesday April 1, and the exhibit remains up through Saturday, April 4. The Catharine Clark Gallery is at 248 Utah St., San Francisco.

Curated by SFArtsED Master Artist Richard Olsen, *WORDS* includes original creations by students in schools where they work with SFArtsED artists in residence. Those schools include Claire Lilienthal Alternative, Commodore Sloat Elementary, Gordon Lau Elementary, Hillcrest Elementary and McKinley Elementary. SFArtsED’s IA Program, led by Agelio and Delia Batle, is an after-school/weekend visual art and design intensive for seven high school students from the International Studies Academy, Lowell High School and the Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts.

SFArtsED Artistic Director Emily Keeler says she is delighted to show the work of SFArtsED’s visual arts programs from the in-school residencies and the new high school program, Interdisciplinary Arts, at the Catharine Clark Gallery. “The work, from students ages 6 to 16, investigates the intersection of text and image, is curated by Richard Olsen, who has curated numerous shows for us in the past 20 years. Students working with eight different artists will evince different approaches in a variety of forms – photographs, paintings, prints and video, with many of the works made collaboratively. The opening reception will also feature two in-process theatrical pieces from our New Works intensive, giving our guests a chance to

experience the wide range of SFArtsED's programs, which connect working artists with eager young people.”

From curator Richard Olsen: “Kids, even as they struggle to learn to form their letters, sense the magic of words – their power, their beauty, their humor, the histories embodied in them, even the structures in which they exist. One of the pleasures in working on this show was seeing youth and children engaging with words in so many ways. In one piece, the physicality of a word comes to the fore. In another, there is an open-ended play of its possible meanings. In yet another, the form, material and presentation of words play off their meaning in often surprising ways.



*McKinley Elementary, Second Grade*

SFArtsED artists Olsen, Alexis Arnold and Wendy Robushi worked with elementary school students for several months exploring the relationships between words, emotions and art, while the Batles, along with Zoe Farmer and Tiersa Nureyev, conducted similar exercises with the high school students.

The assignments were as varied as the ages of the young artists, K-12. “What would happen if you painted words on top of each other?” “Have someone write a color on your forehead and then make your face look like that color.” “Write a word in a way that conveys the opposite of what it means.” “What would you say if you were locked in a box?”

“Some of the works in this exhibition use words to create a larger narrative,” Olsen says. “Others treat words as the narrative. As the kids will tell you, the words they made aren’t only to be read but seen. In all the works, the form, material and presentation of words play off their meaning in often surprising ways.”

Agelio Batle says he and his students explored the neighborhood surrounding the Batles’ Potrero Hill studio. “The first walk was completely silent, and their task was to observe small, unusual details that drew their attention – a crack in the sidewalk, encroaching weeds, shadows that are cast in unusual ways, etc.,” Batle says. “Then we spoke to each other about how we might respond to these ‘details’ or ‘anomalies’ by making little poems that resonated between the words and the place. Working individually and/or in small groups, the students responded to the ‘street artifacts’ by constructing words from found materials or wrote words, using powdered chalk and water mixture. The resultant works were often poetic, funny, poignant and even heartbreaking (the word ‘family,’ for instance, was split between two sides of a crack in the sidewalk). The walks/artmaking took on an adventurous quality, with students looking at their surroundings in a way they had never experience – looking for places that spoke to them, but this time they could speak back and consequently share that dialogue with anyone who might walk by, since the works were left up to be worn away by the wind or rain in a few days.”

### **About SFArtsED**

Founded in 1968 (as the Alvarado School Arts Workshop) by renowned artist Ruth Asawa, SFArtsED has transformed the lives of children, their families, teachers, artists and volunteers. Programs include SFArtsED Summer, In-School Artist Teacher Residencies, After-School programs, The SFArtsED Players Musical Theater Company, SFArtsED Art & Design and apprenticeships for college and high school students. More than 200,000 San Francisco children have benefitted from SFArtsED Programs.

### **About Richard Olsen**

Mr. Olsen has taught visual arts with SFArtsED since 1993. He is an artist, writer and art educator. He was the head of the art department at Gateway High School and taught art education at the San Francisco Art Institute. Mr. Olsen has curated many shows with SFArtsED including at Rena Bransten Gallery, Southern Exposure Gallery, the SF Arts Commission Gallery and the SF Museum of Modern Art. Most recently, Mr. Olsen curated the wildly successful *INTERNATIONAL ORANGE: The Bridge Re-imagined* at the Mills



Building and in 75 "bridge" galleries around San Francisco. At SFArtsED, his students' work has won a number of awards including the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum's "Best of Design" award with a subsequent exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. He has lectured on art and education at UC Berkeley, SF State, the College of Notre Dame, the SF Museum of Modern Art and other institutions. He has also taught in public and private settings, including children deemed "severely emotionally disturbed." Mr. Olsen received his BFA and MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute.

### **About Interdisciplinary Arts**

The San Francisco Arts Education Project's Interdisciplinary Arts Program is a fully scholarshiped visual arts intensive for seven high-school students taught by renowned San Francisco artist Agelio Batle and his wife, Delia Batle, in the Batle Studio. The program has been designed to develop:

- technique – with some instruction to strengthen basic drawing along with basic skills in collage and 3-D fabrication. Students will also be taught to make and think in sculptural terms using primarily found material.
- artistic voice – skills will be applied to artworks that explore the idea of "self," personal interests and personal history. Among other tools, students will use Pinterest as a way of collecting images that excite them.
- creative thinking – students will be given a variety of free association exercises to help expand creative thinking, or, as Agelio calls it, sideways thinking. Students will be encouraged to address questions that have no correct or incorrect answer but rather lead to a searching, mind-opening thought process leading to unique solutions.

In the current school year, from October 2014 through May 2015, seven students are participating in discussions about contemporary art and artists, with regard to content, form and technical skill. Building the aesthetic thinker is vital to the art process, with thought an important preliminary skill before beginning hands-on work in the applied arts.

**For more information or to arrange interviews or photos,**  
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### ***WORDS, a text-centric exhibition*** ***FACT SHEET***

- WHAT** *WORDS, a text-centric exhibition*  
Curated by SFArtsED Master Artist Richard Olsen, *WORDS* features works by elementary school students in the San Francisco Arts Education Project's in-school visual arts residencies as well as works by high school students in SFArtsED's Interdisciplinary Arts program led by Agelio and Delia Batle.
- WHERE** Catharine Clark Gallery  
248 Utah Street, San Francisco
- WHEN** April 1-4, 2015  
Opening reception from 6:30-9 p.m., Wednesday, April 1  
Featuring student performances from SFArtsED's New Works workshop: excerpts of a student-created work with the Joe Goode Performance Group and songs from the new musical *STARTUP* by Alex Stein and Erin Bregman, staged by Erin Gentry