

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SFJAZZ COMMISSIONS SANDOW BIRK AND ELYSE PIGNOLET
TO CREATE MURALS FOR THE SFJAZZ CENTER**

(San Francisco, CA, September 22, 2012) – SFJAZZ, the leading nonprofit jazz organization on the West Coast, today announced the commission of three murals by artists Sandow Birk and Elyse Pignolet to be installed in the currently under construction SFJAZZ Center, the nation's first stand-alone building dedicated to jazz. The murals will be titled "Jazz and the Nation," "Jazz and the City," and "Jazz and the Afterlife." The SFJAZZ Center, designed by award-winning architect Mark Cavagnero, will open on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 21, 2013. Located at Franklin and Fell Streets in San Francisco's vibrant Hayes Valley, the SFJAZZ Center will be a hub of art, music, culture, and community and will take its place alongside major arts institutions such as the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera, and San Francisco Ballet in the Civic Center performing arts district.

Birk and Pignolet will create two murals "Jazz and the Nation" and "Jazz and the City" for the Center's second floor lobby. The two murals will combine to form one overall composition - a fictionalized cityscape made up of influential and important jazz venues from across the United States and San Francisco. They will also depict historical images and references of jazz from its roots in African music and the early days of New Orleans' second line traditions to the jazz styles of St. Louis, Kansas City, Chicago, New York, the West Coast, and Europe. The second mural includes great jazz venues and defining moments in the history of San Francisco jazz from the Fillmore District to the dot.com boom.

The third mural, "Jazz and the Afterlife," will be located in the green room of the center's auditorium. It is a parody of religious "Judgment Day" murals with club goers going up to a "heaven" of harps and bagpipes or down to a swinging party in a jazz "hell" where horns blast and jazz fans celebrate.

Sandow Birk said, "Since the history and scope of jazz is enormous and couldn't be contained in one mural, we have tried to depict *places* where jazz happened, to be located in the center where jazz will be happening now."

The ceramic tile murals by Birk and Pignolet draw on the extensive global traditions and history of blue and white "azulejo" murals made popular in Europe, Latin America, and Asia. The murals will be hand-painted by the artists on handmade ceramic tiles using underglazes. The tiles will then be glazed and fired for a permanent, glossy finish resistant to wear and spills. The murals are being created in Pignolet's studio in San Pedro, CA. The installation in the SFJAZZ Center is currently scheduled to begin on November 5, 2012.

Birk and Pignolet have collaborated on large-scale projects in the past, including large outdoor public murals for the Los Angeles Police Department, California

Lifeguards, and a station design for the LA Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Their work combines their interest in contemporary life and social issues, as well as their own unique and dynamic technical abilities.

SFJAZZ Trustee and acclaimed author Robert Mailer Anderson says, "Sandow and Elyse's murals will create a vibrant, complex, and historical vision of jazz that the community can use as a baseline for their own conversations about music and life. It's the building's perpetual song that will keep the SFJAZZ Center humming."

According to SFJAZZ Center architect Mark Cavagnero, "Music is the centerpiece of the new SFJAZZ Center, but the worlds of visual art, the spoken word, and culinary exploration are all included to enhance the intensity and singularity of each visit. Birk and Pignolet's murals will add depth and texture, giving the visitor a visual reference point worthy of its own exploration, like the music and building itself."

Los Angeles artist Sandow Birk is a well-traveled graduate of the Otis/Parson's Art Institute. With an emphasis on social issues, frequent themes of his past work have included inner city violence, graffiti, political issues, travel, war, and prisons, as well as surfing and skateboarding. His most recent project involves a consideration of the Qur'an as relevant to contemporary life in America. The recent "Sandow Birk's Divine Comedy" is now showing at the San Jose Museum of Art in San Jose, CA.

Born in Oakland, CA, Elyse Pignolet is an American with Filipino heritage, who lives and works in Los Angeles. She attended CSU San Francisco, and in 2001 she lived and studied in Madrid and Barcelona. Pignolet received a BFA in Ceramics from Cal State Long Beach in 2007. Her studies included an intensive ceramics tour through Mainland China and Korea in 2007. Pignolet works primarily in ceramics and her work has dealt with various themes including social issues, urban themes, and topics from contemporary news articles attempting to place the permanence and traditions of ceramics with the fleeting and transitory nature of the contemporary world.

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