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ARTS AND EDUCATION COUNCIL UNVEILS LARGE-SCALE MURAL BY CELEBRATED ARTIST FNCH ON INCUBATOR IN GRAND CENTER ARTS DISTRICT

50-foot mural is the first commissioned by the Gateway Foundation

ST. LOUIS, July 17, 2019 – Fans of St. Louis now have one more reason to celebrate the Gateway City. Today, the Arts and Education Council will unveil a 35-foot by 50-foot mural on the East side of their incubator, the Centene Center for the Arts, located in the heart of the Grand Center Arts District. The mural, titled “St. Louis Honey Bears”, is an original artwork commissioned by the Gateway Foundation.

“St. Louis Honey Bears” was painted by fnch, a St. Louis native based in San Francisco whose work has become wildly popular on Instagram and can be found in Chicago, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco, St. Louis and Tel Aviv. This mural is the artist’s first large-scale work in his hometown and his largest to date.

In a nod to St. Louis, the mural features four of his signature honey bears, which are intended to spread happiness as they surprise and delight people. Blues Bear commemorates the St. Louis Blues’s 2019 Stanley Cup victory; Artist Bear honors the Arts and Education Council’s Centene Center for the Arts on which the mural is painted; Violin Bear references the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra’s historic Powell Hall, the Fabulous Fox Theatre, and The Sheldon Concert Hall & Art Galleries, all of which are nearby; and Fancy Bear references St. Louis’s Gilded Age history and the 1904 World’s Fair.

“This mural reflects all the creativity happening inside our Centene Center for the Arts incubator, home to 20 arts organizations, and is a great example of the pure joy the arts can bring to our lives,” said Cynthia A. Prost, Arts and Education Council president and CEO.

The mural was created using multi-layered stencils and spray paint. It is the first mural funded by the Gateway Foundation, which has purchased more than 30 sculptures in the St. Louis region since 1986 and opened the Citygarden sculpture park in downtown St. Louis in 2009.

“We are proud to have partnered with the Arts and Education Council on a mural that celebrates our great city,” the Gateway Foundation said. “The Arts and Education Council is an organization that shares our commitment to increasing access to the arts in St. Louis.”

Nearly 100 people are expected to welcome the artist and the mural to St. Louis at the July 17 public unveiling.

“I grew up in St. Louis and have a lot of family in the area, so it’s cool to create one of my murals here, especially at this size, and have such an enthusiastic response from the community. Everybody deserves great art,” said fnch.

For more information about the Arts and Education Council and “St. Louis Honey Bears”, visit KeepArtHappening.org/fnch.

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About the Arts and Education Council: *Keep Art Happening.* – The Arts and Education Council builds appreciation, participation and support for the arts and arts education throughout the St. Louis region, shaping a more vibrant arts community for all. The Arts and Education Council ensures the 16-county, bi-state region is rich with arts and cultural experiences through programs and services that support more than 70 organizations each year, including: operating support grants; arts incubation at the Centene Center for the Arts; PNC Program Grants; the Creative Impact Fund with lead support from the Bayer Fund; the Maritz Arts and Education Fund for Teachers; Bayer Fund Rural Community Arts and Education grants; the Art Education Fund, underwritten by Wells Fargo Advisors; the Catalyst Innovation Lab; the Katherine Dunham Fellowship; Catalyst Conversations; the stARTup Creative Competition; Leadership Roundtables; Arts Marketers; the St. Louis Suburban Music Educators Association; the Keep Art Happening Scholarship; and the St. Louis Arts Awards.

The Arts and Education Council is entirely funded by individual donors, corporations and foundations in the St. Louis region. Since its inception in 1963 as the region's only privately-supported united arts fund, the Arts and Education Council has raised and distributed more than \$100 million in private funding for the arts – a significant contribution that directly impacts the quality of life in our region. The Arts and Education Council meets all 20 Better Business Bureau Charity Standards and has earned the Wise Giving Seal of Approval, a three-star rating from Charity Navigator and a Guidestar Exchange Gold Participant rating.

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About the Gateway Foundation – Founded in 1986, the Gateway Foundation seeks to enrich life and culture in the St. Louis area by supporting efforts to acquire, create or improve tangible and durable art and urban design. In 2009, the Foundation's largest project, a two-block sculpture park called Citygarden, opened in downtown St. Louis in the Gateway Mall. From prominent public sites downtown to community college campuses in St. Louis County, the Foundation also has purchased and installed more than 30 sculptures in the area. Additionally, the Foundation has arranged for and funded the lighting of the Gateway Arch, the Old Courthouse, the Civil Courts Building, the City's three landmark Water Towers, and other prominent structures, and has funded the building and maintenance of several city playgrounds and parks. More information is available at gateway-foundation.org and citygardenstl.org.

About fnnch - Originally from St. Louis, fnnch is a San Francisco-based street artist who wants more art in more places. He believes everyone can appreciate art and anyone can make it. His work can be found all over the world, including Chicago, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco, St. Louis and Tel Aviv. "St. Louis Honey Bears" is his first large-scale mural in his hometown and his largest to date.

fnnch's signature honey bears are intended to surprise and delight people and entice them to look up from their phones. Quite simply, they spread happiness. He also paints other pop art and nature images, including lips, birds and bugs. He paints with multi-layered stencils, and he has developed several techniques that help him execute quickly and accurately. For more information, visit fnnch.com or [instagram.com/fnnch](https://www.instagram.com/fnnch).

PHOTOS:

1. fnnch, *St. Louis Honey Bears* (in progress), 2019. Original artwork commissioned by the Gateway Foundation, St. Louis, Missouri. Photo by ProPhotoSTL.
2. fnnch, *St. Louis Honey Bears*, 2019. Original artwork commissioned by the Gateway Foundation, St. Louis, Missouri.

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