

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Media Contact:**

Jen Tran, for Asian Arts Initiative

jen@jentransconsulting.com

Amanda Kerdahi, for eo Studio

amanda@etootitigbe.com

Invasive Species Augmented Reality Public Art Installation to Open at The Cut

Four-week series of events kicks off with gallery opening followed by block party, two immersive performances, and more

PHILADELPHIA, PA - September 14, 2023 – On Friday, September 15, [Asian Arts Initiative](#) opens *Invasive Species: Eco/Systems Land Based Initiatives*, an interactive public installation at The Cut, a sub-street level, open-air green space that runs parallel to Callowhill Street from North Broad Street to 18th Street. This project, nearly two years in the making, is led by Eto Otitigbe ([eo Studio](#)) in collaboration with Asian Arts Initiative and 2022 Artists-in-Residence Dr. Ashley Gripper and Sonia Galiber (of Land Based Jaws and Soil Generation). Together, the lead artists have created an immersive mixed reality that invites visitors to use augmented reality (AR) to experience cross-pollination among urban plants, animals, humans, and their stories.

“By intersecting art and technology, we speculate about the future, engage in playful discovery, resist oppressive forces, and instigate transformative change,” said Eto Otitigbe, founder of eo Studio. “This project is exceptional thanks to numerous collaborators who think deeply about the safekeeping of the land and its people.”



From September 15 through October 15, the on-site installation will include sound sculptures that are installed at the 18th Street pedestrian bridge that traverses the Cut between Callowhill Street and Spring Garden Street. Using visitors' mobile devices, the augmented reality explores the Cut as a complex and nurturing habitat and scrutinizes the term "invasive species," offering insight into the way we see flora, fauna, and each other, as well as what we don't see. This AR technology is powered by Scavengar to provide a truly immersive experience using multiple senses and a new level of interaction with art. Used by top brands and arts and culture organizations all around the world, Invasive Species will be the first time Scavengar's technology will be deployed in Philadelphia.

Throughout the project, eo Studio, Ashley, and Sonia have interviewed individuals engaged in urban farming, community organizing, climate justice and the arts to collect narratives of the land. The interviews will be incorporated into the final multimedia performance that will take place at the Cut on Saturday, October 7 and Sunday, October 8.

Admission is free and open to all for all events. In addition to the outdoor exhibition that runs through October 15, Asian Arts Initiative will host the opening celebration at its gallery at 1219 Vine Street on September 15 from 6:00 – 8:00 pm. Artworks inspired by the Invasive Species project will be on display and the artists will be present. Asian Arts Initiative is also hosting a Block Party on Saturday, October 7 at 2:00 – 6:30 pm at Matthias Baldwin Park near the Cut. The Block Party celebrates the launch of Invasive Species and aims to bring together members of the neighboring communities, meet the lead artists, and enjoy music, poetry, dance offerings, with local food and drinks.

For the full calendar of *Invasive Species* related programs and to pre-register for events, please visit <https://invasivespeciesecosystems.org>.

Invasive Species is a project of *Eco/Systems Land Based Initiatives*, funded by the Our Town Grant of the National Endowment for the Arts. Our Town projects advance local economic, physical, or social outcomes in communities, ultimately laying the groundwork for systems change and centering equity. These projects require a partnership between a nonprofit organization and a local government entity, with one of the partners being a cultural organization. Asian Arts Initiative is pleased to partner with SEPTA and the City of Philadelphia to present *Eco/Systems: Land Based Initiatives* in 2023.

High resolution images available [HERE](#). To attend the press preview demonstration on September 15 at 4:30 pm, please contact Jen Tran.

###



About Eto Otitigbe & eo Studio

Founded by Eto Otitigbe, eo Studio collaborates with artists, designers, researchers, and cultural workers to develop polymedia installations and public art projects. Current collaborators for the Invasive Species project include Chrissy Brimimage, Michael DiCarlo, Rudy Gerson, and Amanda Kerdahi. Recent eo Studio projects include Cascode, a permanent public artwork at The University of Pennsylvania, and Tankugbe Incubation Lab, a project that develops a series of mixed reality installations. eo Studio is a 2023 Creative Capital recipient for Tankugbe Incubation Lab.

Eto Otitigbe is a polymedia artist whose interdisciplinary practice includes sculpture, performance, installation, and public art. Through his interdisciplinary practice, he is interested in recovering buried narratives and giving form to the unseen. His public art intersects history, community, and biophilic design. Otitigbe is a recipient of the 2022 Augustus St. Gaudens Fellowship. Otitigbe is an Assistant Professor in the Art Department at Brooklyn College. For more information, visit www.eototitigbe.com or on Instagram @e_o_studio.

About Ashley Gripper aka Dr. Grip

Ashley is a fifth generation Philadelphian with North Philly roots that trace back to South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, and Texas. She is an environmental health scientist, an educator at heart and in practice, and a creator of nurturing spaces and experiences that nourish people's spirits and desire for building community. Ashley founded and is now co-leading Land Based Jaws, a spiritually-rooted and spiritually-grounded project that offers land-based skills and healing workshops for Black Philadelphians. All of her work – interpersonally, professionally, and academically - is about helping Black folks' re-member and reclaim our relationships to the Creator, to our ancestors, to each other, and to our Earth mama. Ashley was a co-creator of Philadelphia's First Urban Agriculture Plan, a multi-year project that has defined new ways to collaborate and share decision-making among grassroots organizers, City agencies, and urban planning firms.

About Sonia Galiber

Sonia is a grower, educator, political organizer, and artist. As a member of Soil Generation, she does land, food, and environmental policy work, graphic design, and contributes to healing modalities and developing core theories. Philadelphia's first Urban Agriculture Strategic Plan and Soil Generation's Agroecology FROM the People are among the works she has helped co-create. Sonia is also an herbalist, hot sauce maker, and an artist of Japanese calligraphy and self-taught illustration. She was born in Okinawa, lived in Maryland, and now Philadelphia. Sonia draws inspiration from her Afro-Okinawan roots and her deep reverence of the mystical natural world.

About Asian Arts Initiative

Located in Philadelphia's Chinatown North, Asian Arts Initiative is a multidisciplinary arts center offering exhibitions, performances, artist residencies, youth workshops, and a community gathering space. Here, all of us can view and create art that reflects our lives, and think critically, creatively about the future we want to build for our communities.

About the Cut

The Cut is an open air section of land that runs below street level, connecting the Viaduct to the



Tunnel. It runs from North Broad Street near the old Inquirer Building to behind the Rodin Museum, where 22nd St meets Pennsylvania Ave. It's lined with 30-foot high stone walls and crossed by a series of bridges that support the city's north and south bound streets. For questions regarding The Rail Park and the Three-Mile Vision, please contact Rebecca Cordes Chan, Executive Director, Friends of the Rail Park, rebecca@therailpark.org, 215-485-2221.

About the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States.

About William Penn Foundation

The William Penn Foundation, founded in 1945 by Otto and Phoebe Haas, is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Greater Philadelphia region through efforts that increase educational opportunities for children from low-income families, ensure a sustainable environment, provide inclusive and equitable public spaces and arts and culture experiences, and advance philanthropy in the Philadelphia region. Learn more at www.williamPennfoundation.org.