



ARTWORK **EVERYONE IS WELCOME! FOR THE PEOPLE OF FARGO (AFTER FRANZ KAFKA)**

ARTIST **TIM ROLLINS + K.O.S. (KIDS OF SURVIVAL)**

INSTALLED 2007  
FEDERAL BUILDING AND U.S. POST OFFICE  
FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA

Tim Rollins + K.O.S. (Kids of Survival) are internationally recognized for their collective art practice, which uses literary texts as the basis for their paintings and prints. Collaborating with students from local public schools and the Circle of Nations Wahpeton Indian School, Rollins + K.O.S. created a dynamic mural entitled *EVERYONE IS WELCOME! FOR THE PEOPLE OF FARGO (after Franz Kafka)* for the lobby of the Federal Building and U.S. Post Office in Fargo, North Dakota.

At studio workshops hosted by the Plains Art Museum, Rollins introduced the young North Dakota artists to *Amerika*, the comic novel written by Franz Kafka between 1911 and 1914. A wild urban fantasy of the immigrant experience, this coming-of-age novel chronicles the bizarre adventures of the young protagonist Karl Rossmann. After many trials and tribulations, Karl is ready to return to his homeland in humiliation when suddenly, at the end of the novel, he is recruited by a utopian commune whose motto is: "EVERYONE IS WELCOME! EVERYONE IS AN ARTIST!" Excited to join the group, Karl is whisked away to a large stadium where he observes hundreds of women standing atop golden pedestals playing whatever music they choose on long golden horns.

Using this democratic vision as inspiration, Rollins called out to the Fargo students: "show your freedom, your individual voices, your spirits, in the form of a golden horn." The children sketched while talking about the novel and their lives, and listening to music by famous American jazz artists, such as Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie. Afterwards, Rollins took the students' drawings back to his studio in New York City, where he and K.O.S. created the final work of art based on the drawings. Actual pages of Kafka's novel were glued onto a stretched canvas, making the novel's text the conceptual and physical foundation of the painting, and then the final design was painted directly over this large grid of pages. The finished work is a vibrant gold and black painting that incorporates the horn imagery sketched by the individual children with visual references to the Fargo area: the railroad tracks and the shape of the Red River.





By inviting the students to contribute their imaginative talents, Rollins + K.O.S. created an artwork that functions both as a beautiful painting and as a collective memory of the students' participation in the workshops. And, for those entering the building, the mural illuminates a strong presence of community and individual spirit. <sup>NA</sup>

**Tim Rollins + K.O.S.** have collaborated with students throughout the world for more than twenty-five years, creating paintings and prints inspired by literary classics, such as Aristophanes' *The Frogs*, Gustave Flaubert's *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, and Alex Haley's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Raised in rural Maine and educated at the University of Maine, School of Visual Arts, and New York University, Rollins began teaching art to educationally challenged students in the South Bronx in the early 1980s. Discovering that many of these kids had artistic talent but could not read well, he made reading the required point of departure for his art classes. Rollins worked with the students during the lunch hour and after school, and then founded the Art and Knowledge Workshop in 1982. In these workshops, the art-making method was consistent: read a book aloud and discuss its major themes while sketching. The final artwork was created by collectively combining elements from each of the individual drawings.

Today, K.O.S. is a changing roster of students. The original group named themselves K.O.S., or "Kids of Survival," in recognition of the skills they acquired through their participation in the workshops. In 1984, Rollins + K.O.S. received their first National Endowment for the Arts grant and, in 1987, they held their first workshop outside of the South Bronx. Their paintings are held in museum collections nationwide, including the Smithsonian Institution's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

MEDIUM ACRYLIC PAINT, WATERCOLOR, AND BOOK PAGES ON CANVAS

DIMENSIONS 9 FT X 13 FT

