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**The Arkansas Arts Center holds a Groundbreaking Ceremony  
to celebrate the beginning of construction for its stunning new facility**

*Designed by award-winning architect, Jeanne Gang and Studio Gang, and noted landscape architect, Kate Orff and SCAPE, the project is slated for completion in 2022*

**Little Rock, AR, October 1, 2019** – The **Arkansas Arts Center** (AAC) held a mid-morning Groundbreaking Ceremony today to commemorate the beginning of construction of its stunning, reimagined Arts Center. Upon completion in 2022, the current facility will be entirely transformed through an exciting design by renowned architect **Jeanne Gang** and her practice, **Studio Gang**. The project also includes a landscape design that will connect the AAC with the surrounding MacArthur Park, by award-winning designer **Kate Orff** and **SCAPE**. Both Jeanne Gang and Kate Orff are MacArthur Fellows who have received prestigious “Genius Grants” from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

“As we gather to commemorate the beginning of construction, today marks a major step forward toward ensuring that the Arkansas Arts Center is an important and flourishing cultural resource now and in the future,” said **Campaign Co-Chair Warren Stephens**. “This is a truly historic day in the life of our city, state, and region.”

“Today, we commit to ensuring that the Arkansas Arts Center will be a cultural beacon for the region, showcasing art that educates, inspires, provokes, and beautifies our lives. All people, from young to young at heart, will gather here as a community to celebrate, learn, and cross boundaries,” said **Arkansas Arts Center Executive Director, Dr. Victoria Ramirez**. “The project embraces the Arkansas Arts Center’s rich history and looks forward to a future that exceeds our expectations. I am honored to be working with all of you to make this vision a reality.”

Architects **Jeanne Gang** and **Kate Orff** spoke at the Groundbreaking Ceremony, relaying key points about the project’s design and impact.

“The design for the reimagined Arkansas Arts Center features new and renovated spaces for gathering and community events to create dynamic connections among the state-of-the-art galleries and exhibitions, renovated Museum School, and upgraded Children’s Theatre,” said **Jeanne Gang, Architect and Founding Principal of Studio Gang**. “One of our main goals for the project is to allow the architecture to invite interaction, discovery, creativity, and learning.”



“The site design will provide a seamless transition between the Arkansas Arts Center and MacArthur Park,” said **Kate Orff, Founder of SCAPE**. “With native plantings, a tree canopy, walking paths, and a great lawn for events, the landscape design will provide useable and accessible space for visitors, and create a true ‘Arts Center in the Park’.”

The project is made possible through ***Reimagining the Arkansas Arts Center: Campaign for Our Cultural Future***, a \$128 million fundraising campaign, which will fund the new Arts Center for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and provide support for transition, opening, and endowment. At the Groundbreaking Ceremony, **Campaign Co-Chairs Harriet and Warren Stephens announced that the Campaign has now raised more than \$122.7 million of its \$128 million goal to-date.**

The campaign includes a commitment of **\$31,245,000 from the City of Little Rock**, which is being generated through a hotel-tax revenue bond. Lead donors include **Windgate Foundation, Harriet and Warren Stephens, the State of Arkansas, and Winthrop Rockefeller Charitable Trust**. The Campaign now has twenty-two “21<sup>st</sup> Century Founders” – donors who are contributing gifts of \$1 million to \$35 million. Thirty-two families and foundations are now leadership donors to the campaign, having given between \$100,000 and \$1 million. There are many others who have donated gifts, as well.

“We remain incredibly grateful to all of the donors to-date, the City of Little Rock, and the State of Arkansas for saying ‘yes’ to Art, and to the Arkansas Arts Center,” said **Campaign Co-Chair Harriet Stephens**. “The project is grand in scope and impact and will need the participation of many to reach an ambitious goal. As we anticipate the Grand Opening in 2022, we look forward to involving many more people in the campaign.”

**AAC Board of Trustees President, Merritt Dyke, and Little Rock Mayor, Frank Scott, Jr.** also spoke to commemorate the occasion. **Harriet and Warren Stephens, Dr. Victoria Ramirez, Jeanne Gang, Kate Orff, Merritt Dyke, and Mayor Frank Scott, Jr.** were then joined by **AAC Foundation Board Chair, Robert W. Tucker for the ceremonial groundbreaking**. The celebration included performances by the Parkview Arts and Science Magnet Jazz Ensemble, the Episcopal Collegiate School Choir, and the Episcopal Collegiate Percussion Band for the capacity crowd.

During construction, the Arkansas Arts Center has moved from its current facility in MacArthur Park into a temporary location at the Riverdale Shopping Center at 2510 Cantrell Road in Little Rock. Classes, education programs, and performances will continue at the temporary location from Fall 2019 through the new Arts Center’s planned Grand Opening in 2022.

Find high-resolution images and more information [here](#).

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**About the Arkansas Arts Center** – The Arkansas Arts Center (AAC), located in Little Rock, AR, is the state’s premier center for visual and performing arts, with a world-class collection of more than 14,000 works of regional, national, and international art. The AAC features the award-winning Children’s Theatre and popular Museum School, and offers a robust schedule of performances, art classes, special exhibitions, education and public programs, and events. The AAC also provides extensive touring programs in communities, including the Children’s Theatre on Tour, the Artmobile and traveling exhibitions. Through visitation and outreach, the AAC reaches more than 400,000 young people and

adults each year. In addition to providing essential programs for the local community, the AAC receives visitors from throughout the state, region, nation, and world.

**About Studio Gang** – Studio Gang is an architecture and urban design practice headquartered in Chicago, with offices in New York, San Francisco, and Paris. Founded and led by MacArthur Fellow Jeanne Gang, Studio Gang’s award-winning work ranges in scale and typology from the 82-story Aqua Tower to the 14-acre Nature Boardwalk at Lincoln Park Zoo, both located in Chicago. Gang has been recognized for a design process that foregrounds the relationship among people and their environments, and is the only architect named to TIME Magazine’s list of the 100 Most Influential People of 2019. Studio Gang is currently designing cultural and civic projects across the Americas, including an expansion to the American Museum of Natural History in New York, a new Center for the University of Chicago in Paris, a new United States Embassy in Brasilia, and a Global Terminal at O’Hare International Airport in Chicago. This is Studio Gang’s first project in Arkansas.

**About SCAPE** – SCAPE, founded by landscape architect and MacArthur Fellow Kate Orff, is a design-driven landscape architecture and urban design studio based in New York. They believe landscape architecture can enable positive change in communities through the creation of regenerative living infrastructure and public landscapes. SCAPE works to integrate natural cycles and systems into environments across all scales, from the urban pocket-park to the regional ecological plan. They do this through diverse forms of landscape architecture – built landscapes, planning frameworks, research, books, and installations – with the ultimate goal of connecting people to their immediate environment and creating dynamic and adaptive landscapes of the future.