Artists for Life is happy to be part of the solution to violence

BY ALICE THORSON - THE KANSAS CITY STAR
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“Tell What You Know,” an artwork by KC artist Darryl Chamberlain, is part of the ongoing, multiverse "Hands Up, Don't Shoot: Artists Respond" exhibit in St. Louis, organized in response to the Michael Brown Jr. shooting in Ferguson.
A major, artist-led effort to highlight gun violence and promote discussion about how to reduce it placed numerous posters, designed by local and national African-American artists, in venues in Kansas City and beyond in 2014.

The Artists for Life Project, led by Kansas City artist Darryl Chamberlain, made its debut last March at the Artis Event reception hall in Kansas City, with a display of original artworks and a framed set of the posters created from them.

The reception included Kansas City Mayor Sly James; members of the Kansas City No Violence Alliance; agents of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; and numerous members of the community.

The project received a $2,000 Research and Development Award from the Rocket Grants program, funded by the Andy Warhol Foundation and administered by Kansas City’s Charlotte Street Foundation and the Spencer Museum of Art in Lawrence. The program later contributed an additional $4,000 to the poster project.

Chamberlain reports that the anti-violence artworks attracted widespread attention when they were exhibited last year at the Brown V. Board National Historic Site in Topeka and at Liberty City Hall.

“Tell What You Know,” an artwork Chamberlain created for the project, is part of the ongoing, multivenue “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot: Artists Respond” exhibit in St. Louis, organized by the Alliance of Black Art Galleries in response to the Michael Brown Jr. shooting in the St. Louis County suburb of Ferguson.

A key part of the Artists for Life Project involved distributing the posters to churches, businesses and other community gathering places. Another important component is an essay contest in response to the posters by students at the Genesis Promise Academy.

The more people are exposed to the posters, Chamberlain said, the more requests he gets from community groups to use them in various events.

“We are encouraged by the drastic drop in the murder rate in Kansas City,” Chamberlain said in a written statement. “We are proud to be among the many people whose efforts and voices have been lent to the problem and are encouraged by what has been accomplished by the joining hands to create synergy.”

• In addition to Chamberlain, these artists participated in the Artists for Life Project: George Mayfield, Erlene Flowers, Bonnye Brown, Lonnie Powell, Anthony High, Kim Cole, Keith Shepherd, Margaretre

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