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Internationally known artist Phillip K. Smith III to create 60th anniversary installation for College of the Desert

PALM DESERT, CA — Internationally known desert artist Phillip K. Smith III will work with College of the Desert (COD) this year to create a signature 60th anniversary installation for the College's main Palm Desert Campus.

Smith is a Coachella Valley native and former College of the Desert student who received bachelor's degrees in fine arts and architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design. From his Palm Desert studio, he creates light-based work that draws upon ideas of space, form, light, environment, and change.

"We are so pleased that Phil has agreed to work with us this year to create a signature 60th anniversary installation for permanent placement on our campus – honoring our past and inspiring future generations to continue the dream," said COD Superintendent/President Joel L. Kinnaman, Ed.D.

"We hope this installation can become part of a future biennial Desert X event as a parallel program on our campus, adding another chapter to the COD story," Kinnaman said.

For the first Desert X exhibition in 2017, Smith created a fascinating installation, *The Circle of Land and Sky*, that featured 300 mirrored posts creating a reflective space within the desert, composed entirely of the environment's two most prominent physical characteristics: land and sky. It was built in the open desert off Portola Avenue at Frank Sinatra Drive in Palm Desert. The nonprofit Desert X is expected to return to the desert for two-and-a-half months on Feb. 9, 2019.

"I remember sitting in the hallway of the Liberal Arts Building working on an abstract drawing of the arches of COD," Smith said of his time at the College. "I was taking these classes because I was interested in applying to architecture schools, to arts schools, and, at that point, my portfolio was not up to snuff. I needed to build up the substance of my portfolio and I was able to do that by taking classes here at COD."

"As a result of those drawings – I actually used that drawing of COD in my portfolio – I was accepted to the Rhode Island School of Design," Smith continued.

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"Growing up here in the desert, I've always been aware of the impact of College of the Desert," said Smith, who has also created art installations for the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival.

"And so with this commission, it's a real honor to think about bringing to the artwork's concept, the sense of impact, hope and transformation that happens on this campus, and all the COD campuses, to mark not only the history of the past 60 years, but also to look forward to the next 60," Smith said during COD's State of the College on Jan. 24.

"I look forward to working with COD to craft this icon that I hope will be able to represent College of the Desert in the community."

College of the Desert is celebrating its 60th anniversary throughout 2018, with several upcoming events being planned to mark the occasion. The first was Dr. Kinnaman's third annual State of the College held on Jan. 24.

About College of the Desert:

Established in 1958, College of the Desert (COD), located in Palm Desert, is an accredited community college serving eastern Riverside County, California. The College leads the region in providing quality, higher education, technical training and lifelong learning opportunities, in response to the dynamic needs of our diverse community. The College serves more than 15,000 students each year and is the number one source of transfer students to California State University, San Bernardino Palm Desert Campus. For more information, visit www.collegeofthedesert.edu.

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