

**SFMOMA ANNOUNCES PUBLIC UNVEILING OF MAJOR INSTALLATION
BY ARTIST JR ON MAY 23**

**Artist’s Large-Scale Digital Mural Capturing a Portrait of San Francisco
Presented in the Museum’s Free Public Space**



***JR: The Chronicles of San Francisco*
Open May 23, 2019**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (March 21, 2019)—TED Prize winner, Oscar nominee and one of *Time*’s 100 most influential people of 2018, French artist JR began tagging buildings in Paris as a teenager. Eventually shifting from graffiti to photo-based work after finding a camera in the Paris Metro, JR is known for creating large-scale portraits that he pastes on buildings, streets, rooftops, trains and trucks, in projects that have taken him around the world. The artist’s first major digital installation in California, an animated mural entitled *The Chronicles of San Francisco* will open at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) on May 23, 2019 in the museum’s free-to-visit Roberts Family Gallery.

“For several years I have been contemplating how the work of a contemporary artist who started in the streets might be brought into our galleries,” said Neal Benezra, Helen and Charles Schwab Director of SFMOMA. “From 1930, when our founding director, Grace McCann Morley, persuaded Diego Rivera to come to San Francisco to complete a series of mural commissions, our city has been home to a rich and expressly democratic tradition of paintings made for the public. JR’s project, which

captures a unique portrait of our extraordinary and idiosyncratic city, is the perfect opportunity to bring art from the street into our museum’s free art-filled ground floor.”

Inspired by the murals of Diego Rivera—who completed four murals in San Francisco beginning in 1931—JR began to imagine how a whole city and its diverse range of citizens could be represented through his art. After his first mural portrait of the Paris suburb Les Bosquets, a neighborhood where he lived and worked for many years, JR chose San Francisco as the subject for his next urban mural portrait. With its vibrant muralist tradition and its remarkable innovation and technological advances alongside its growing homelessness, this city proved to be a complex and multifaceted location for the artist to explore.

“The mural aims to be a picture of society, not depicting good and bad, but rather showing that both sides are present in everyone,” said JR. “Every person is presented at the same size, captured with the same light. No one is more important than another.”

In January and February 2018, JR and his team transformed a 53-foot trailer truck into a photographic studio, and parked it in 22 pre-determined locations across the length and breadth of San Francisco, welcoming anyone who wished to participate. As a result, over 1,200 people—including well known public figures such as California Governor Gavin Newsom and Golden State Warriors basketball star Draymond Green, as well as members of the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus, doctors, swimmers, homeless men and women, shop vendors, drag queens, protesters, children, and many other San Franciscans—have been filmed, photographed and interviewed.

The completed work, *The Chronicles of San Francisco*, will be displayed as a digital photo-collage scrolling across a seamless span of screens stretching over 100 feet in SFMOMA’s Roberts Family Gallery. Adjacent to the mural will be iPad kiosks, on which visitors will be able to further explore the mural by listening to the audio interviews of each of its subjects. Following *The Chronicles of San Francisco*, in the fall of 2020, the museum will present Diego Rivera’s mural *Pan American Unity* in the same space in conjunction with a major exhibition of Rivera’s work.

PUBLIC OPENING

Marking the opening of *The Chronicles of San Francisco*, JR will give a free, informal public talk on Thursday, May 23, 2019 at 7 p.m. in SFMOMA’s Roberts Family Gallery. In addition to discussing the process of creating this work, the artist will activate his mobile photo studio in the outdoor Howard Street corridor. All 1,206 subjects of the mural will be invited to this opening celebration.

ABOUT JR

Born in Paris in 1983, JR began his career as a teenage graffiti artist making his mark on public space in precarious locations such as rooftops and subway trains. After finding a camera in the Paris Metro in 2001, the artist began to document his peers in the act of graffiti painting and soon started pasting these photographs on outdoor walls throughout the city.

In a few short years, JR’s practice attracted international attention, and he launched projects throughout France and in countries around the world. In 2006, he created *Portrait of a Generation*—enormous-scale portraits of young people from the neighborhoods where the 2005 French riots took place—that he pasted throughout bourgeois districts of Paris. This illegal project was eventually supported by the city, and the portrait series was wrapped around Paris City Hall. Ten years later, *Portrait of a Generation* was the inspiration for *Les Bosquets*, JR’s collaboration with the New York City

Ballet. Together with his friend Marco, JR embarked on *Face 2 Face* in 2007. Through this project, JR posted huge portraits of Israelis and Palestinians face to face in eight Palestinian and Israeli cities. In 2008, the artist initiated a long international trip across Africa, Asia and South America, beginning in Rio de Janeiro for *Women Are Heroes*, in which he paid tribute to women in areas of conflict by photographing close-up portraits of their eyes and faces and pasting large-scale reproductions on homes and buildings throughout their cities. From this project, JR directed his first feature documentary, *Women Are Heroes*, which was presented at Cannes in 2010.

JR was awarded the TED Prize in 2011, which inspired the project *Inside Out: The People's Art Project*—an international participatory art project that encourages people worldwide to have their picture taken and posted in public spaces in an effort to share stories, experiences and beliefs. In 2013, his film based on *Inside Out* premiered at Tribeca Film Festival. This project also inspired JR's installation covering the dome, cupola and floor of the Pantheon in Paris in 2014. *Inside Out* has continued to grow with mobile photo studios operating in the streets of New York, Amsterdam, London and Paris. As of September 2018, over 350,000 people from more than 140 countries participated.

JR received his first museum retrospectives in 2013 at the Watari Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, and the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, followed by presentations at Museum Frieder Burda in Baden-Baden in 2014 and the Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation in Hong Kong in 2015.

Commissioned by the Louvre in 2016, JR created a photo-installation that camouflaged the museum's famous I.M. Pei-designed pyramid with a precise scan of the Pavilion Sully located behind it. Also in 2016, the artist worked with the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro to cover the streets with large-scale photo-installations of athletes in motion; the Centre Pompidou to create an exhibition and workshop to help children discover photography; and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris where he collaborated with Brazilian artist twins Os Gemeos on the Lasco Project, a permanent installation on display in the underground chambers of the museum. In 2018, JR received his first Oscar nomination after partnering with pioneering filmmaker Agnès Varda to create the documentary *Faces Places*. JR's first major museum exhibition, *MOMENTUM, la mécanique de l'épreuve*, also took place in 2018 at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie.

SUPPORT

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BOOK CREATED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CHRONICLE BOOKS

The Chronicles of San Francisco installation at SFMOMA is accompanied by a 160-page book featuring individual portraits included in the mural and selected stories from participants, alongside behind-the-scenes photos. Published by Chronicle Books, it includes a foreword by JR and contributions from Neal Benezra, Anne-Marie Litak and Eyal Levy, as well as a removable poster that showcases the entire mural. Visit chroniclebooks.com for more information.

SUMMER HOURS

May 19 through September 2: Open Sunday–Tuesday and Friday 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Thursday and Saturday 10 a.m.–9 p.m. Closed Wednesday.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

151 Third Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

SFMOMA is dedicated to making the art for our time a vital and meaningful part of public life. Founded in 1935 as the first West Coast museum devoted to modern and contemporary art, a thoroughly transformed SFMOMA, with triple the gallery space, an enhanced education center and new free public galleries, opened to the public on May 14, 2016. Since its inaugural year, the expanded museum has welcomed more than 1 million visitors annually.

Visit sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

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Image credit:
JR, *The Chronicles of San Francisco*, 2018 (detail); photo: courtesy JR-art.net