

MINNESOTA STATE FAIR

NEWS RELEASE

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Minneapolis Fine Art Photographer and Artist R. J. Kern to Create 2019 Minnesota State Fair Commemorative Art

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St. Paul, Minn. – Minneapolis fine art photographer and artist R. J. Kern has been selected to create the Official 2019 Minnesota State Fair Commemorative Art. His original interpretation of the Great Minnesota Get-Together will be unveiled at the State Fairgrounds in June.

Kern is an artist whose work explores ideas of home, ancestry and a sense of place through the interaction of people, animals and cultural landscapes. “I love seeing the spirit of competition alive and well today, as demonstrated through the hard work, pride and passion of the exhibitors at the Minnesota State Fair,” Kern said. “Some of the earliest animal contests coincide with the first major exhibition of photography at the 1851 World’s Fair in London. Central to the Minnesota State Fair are livestock competitions. As the first commissioned photographer, I wish to pay homage to this legacy by documenting decisive moments in time and place focused on ‘the best of the best’ in animal contests.”

His work has been exhibited in a number of notable exhibitions, including the National Portrait Gallery (London, UK), the Museum of Modern Art (Tbilisi, Georgia), the Yixian International Photography Festival (Anhui, China), and a solo exhibition at the Griffin Museum of Photography (Boston, USA). Awards and accolades include CENTER 2017 Choice Award Winner, Curator’s Choice (First Place), *PDN’s* 30 2018, Photolucida Critical Mass 2018 Top 50, the 2017 Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize (Finalist), and two Artist Initiative Grants from the Minnesota State Arts Board (2016, 2018). Kern’s work has been presented in a number of publications, including a feature in *National Geographic* (November 2017) with his series *The Unchosen Ones* and *Out To Pasture*. Kern published his first monograph with Kehrer Verlag, titled *The Sheep and the Goats*, awarded one of “The Most Beautiful German Books 2018” and awarded Bronze by the prestigious Deutscher Fotobuchpreis 2018-19. Collections holding his work include the Center for Creative Photography; the General Mills Corporate Collection; the Griffin Museum of Photography; the Plains Art Museum; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg. He is represented by Klompching Gallery in New York and Burnet Fine Art & Advisory in Minnesota. He lives in Minneapolis with his wife, Krista, and two children. Visit rjkern.com for more information.

The commemorative poster, a limited number of signed prints and other merchandise featuring the art will be available for purchase after the June unveiling. Proceeds will support the Minnesota State Fair Foundation 501(c)(3) mission to preserve and improve State Fair buildings, fairgrounds and educational programs. The original art will be on display in the Fine Arts Center during the 12-day run of the 2019 State Fair. For more information about the fair’s commemorative art, visit mnstatefair.org/art.

The 2019 Minnesota State Fair Commemorative Art will be the 16th in a series of artwork created annually by Minnesota artists for the Great Minnesota Get-Together. In past years, artists have included: Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher (2004), Mary GrandPré (2005), Nancy Carlson (2006), Michael Birawer (2007), Edie Abnet (2008), Leo Stans (2009), Deborah Voyda Rogers (2010), Steve Thomas (2011), Joe Heffron (2012), Marie Olofsdotter (2013), Emily L. Taylor (2014), Adam Turman (2015), Michael Sweere (2016), Ta-coumba Aiken (2017) and Kristi Abbott (2018).

The Minnesota State Fair is one of the largest and best-attended expositions in the world, attracting more than 2 million visitors annually. Showcasing Minnesota’s finest agriculture, art and industry, the Great Minnesota Get-Together is always 12 Days of Fun Ending Labor Day. Visit mnstatefair.org for more information. The 2019 Minnesota State Fair runs Aug. 22 - Labor Day, Sept. 2.