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FOR RELEASE:
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**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
Announces Exhibition of
Steven and William Ladd’s National Scrollathon®
*Memorial Day to Labor Day, 2026***



***Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the founding of our nation,
communal art sculpture brings people together from across the U.S.
to tell their stories***

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts has selected artists Steven and William Ladd to create an encompassing visual art installation, the National Scrollathon®, on view Memorial Day to Labor Day, 2026 (May 26–September 7, 2026). Presented throughout the Kennedy Center public spaces, the Scrollathon project will be part of the Center’s yearlong celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The Center’s programming for this major milestone will be announced later this year.

The National Scrollathon brings together the collaborative creative expressions of more than 250,000 participants from all over the United States, representing all 50 states and territories, to reveal the American story in all its beautiful complexity, and involving Americans from all social, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. It is about documenting where we are as Americans right now.

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The National Scrollathon is a collaborative art-making effort with communities across America. When complete, over 56 large scale textile artworks will be displayed across the Kennedy Center campus along with the photographic portraits of the thousands that helped to create them.

In 2017, the Ladds began discussions with Kennedy Center for a large-scale community Scrollathon, which led to a highly successful project completed in 2019 during the opening of the Center's expansion, The REACH. This collaboration proved to be the impetus for the National Scrollathon. With the encouragement of Deborah F. Rutter, President of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the artists have been working for the past four years to conceive of an ambitious program to fully celebrate the country's semi-quincentennial.

In speaking about the Scrollathon concept for 2026, Kennedy Center President Deborah F. Rutter said, "Art can be very personal and participatory...and lasting. What makes this collaboration and our previous work with Steven and William Ladd so special is that the act of creating the scroll—one person's perspective and truth linking with that of thousands of others—results in a profoundly original collage and message. Much like our great country, we come together, in all our diversity, to grow, learn, and ultimately form something quite powerful. We are thrilled to have the National Scrollathon as part of the Center's semi-quincentennial programming."

Over the course of the next two years the artists will engage communities under the auspices of partnerships with museums, art centers, and service organizations in all 50 states, five territories, Washington, D.C., and Native Community Regional Centers, in what is envisioned to be a spectacular, multidimensional manifestation of American national unity, bringing the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of our country together in the nation's capital.

The Scrollathon's goal is to bring people together, with the firm belief that art has the power to change lives. Spanning indoor and outdoor spaces throughout the Kennedy Center campus, the resulting collaboratively created artworks, along with photographic portraits of all participants, and an array of interactive, virtual initiatives, will provide audiences with access to background information, expanded individual stories, and additional methods to encourage on-going community participation.

Scrollathons feeding into the Kennedy Center installation are planned at the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art at Auburn University in Alabama for March 2024, Joslyn Art Museum in Nebraska, Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts, Museum of Art and Archaeology at the University of Missouri, and Phoenix Art Museum in Arizona, and have been completed at The Invisible Dog Art Center in New York, Dallas Museum of Art in Texas, High Museum of Art in Georgia, Sarasota Art Museum in Florida, with Senator Jeff Merkley in Oregon and at the Kennedy Center. Steven and William Ladd explained, "The calendar of events is growing exponentially and fast. We're raising money for more Scrollathons everywhere. Knowing that these efforts will culminate at the Kennedy Center in our capital is a thrilling finish."

ABOUT THE SCROLLS:

Scrolls are made from two strips of fabric that are tightly rolled and secured with a pin. Participants make a scroll to keep that is imbued with a personal story or statement, using the meditative nature of working with their hands as an incentive for verbal and visual communication with others. Then they create a second scroll to be part of a larger artwork. The scrolls from the whole community are brought together into a wooden frame and affixed into place. Participants' photographic portraits are later incorporated into a photo mural and a souvenir brochure.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Anyone can participate meaningfully in the Kennedy Center installation, at no cost and from anywhere in the country, via the [project website](#), through a system that Steven and William Ladd call “National Word Ask.” Everyone is invited to share one word that expresses their hopes and dreams for America at its semi-quincentennial. Those words will be brought together into a text-based artwork that will be exhibited outdoors on the Kennedy Center campus.

Institutions can fund Scrollathons anywhere with Steven and William Ladd.
Contact: Steven@StevenAndWilliam.com or get involved by clicking this [link](#).

SCROLLATHON BACKGROUND

The Ladd Brothers invented the concept and title of Scrollathon in 2006 to describe collaborative projects working with found and upcycled materials that are intended to engage participants in the creative process, sharing and making both as individuals and as a group. Taking cues from the traditions of quilting bees and story circles, the Scrollathon, guided by the artists, provides participants with pressure-free opportunities to play, talk, and think—riffing on everyone’s improvisation to make art objects that are imbued with personal and universal meaning. During a Scrollathon each participant makes a scroll for themselves, and contributes one or more to a large, communal sculpture that captures the essential nature of the workshop.

What began in the artists’ hometown of St. Louis quickly grew to include special education students in Brooklyn, individuals in the custody of the NYC Department of Corrections at Rikers Island (the results became part of an installation in Brooklyn later that year that was featured in *Architectural Digest*), and diverse communities across the United States. A 2014 Scrollathon at the Parrish Art Museum, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, involved over 1,100 participants in a single community for the first time, sparking the movement that has reached thousands more and created monumental artworks celebrated by the communities where they are installed.

Ensuing Scrollathons have included a large-scale permanent installation in Downtown Brooklyn in 2015 and a 35-foot painted bead installation for the Atlanta Mercedes Benz Stadium completed in 2016. Projects such as these challenged the artists to explore the possibilities of using small, intricately crafted objects to build massive installations, and expanding the interactive dialogue to increasingly large numbers of community participants. In 2019, the Ladd’s engaged with Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students, veterans, and others affected by gun violence in Parkland, Florida, promoting community healing. During a two-week festival celebrating The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts’ REACH expansion, 750 D.C. residents made scrolls for a 20-foot artwork permanently installed in the new River Pavilion.

Using humble materials, fostering an environment of love and encouragement, Scrollathon continues to reach people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds, promoting reflection, healing, joy, and accomplishment, and giving each participant the pride of being part of something greater than themselves.

The May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation and the Acronym Fund are both generous donors to the National Scrollathon.

ABOUT STEVEN AND WILLIAM LADD

Steven and William Ladd are New York-based brothers and artists “known for vibrant, highly textural artwork that evokes childhood memories,” working at the intersection of design, applied, and fine art. William discovered beading at 15 and Steven began making clothes while studying at Rockhurst University in Kansas City. After moving to Brooklyn to collaborate, their formal artistic partnership began in 2000 while creating accessories that attracted interest from the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, which included their work in a major exhibition. Selected for the Smithsonian Cooper Hewitt’s Design Triennial in 2006, the Ladd’s artworks began representing people, places, and memories of their shared childhood, an evolving theme throughout their practice.

Skilled in the traditions of “handwork” of sewing and beading, the artists are always seeking materials to incorporate into their work and are especially attuned to the notion of adaptive reuse. The discovery of a warehouse full of cotton webbing and belt findings in what is now The Invisible Dog Art Center provided them with the impetus to not only delve deeply into the physical aspect of these materials, but also as a pathway toward a broader artmaking process. Working face to face across a table, the brothers wound webbing into scrolls.

Throughout their careers, Steven and William Ladd have developed an interactive and hands-on approach to artmaking that melds fine art, design, and craft with their dedication to interactive collaboration, education, and community engagement. In all their work, the importance of meaningful content couched in a visual language of beauty has guided them from small scale, intimate sculptural objects to what has now become an ongoing, inclusive, and embracing project under the umbrella of what they call Scrollathon. The content of their individual artworks is often drawn from their own shared memories and experiences, and it is through this lens that they have developed a way to encourage others to do the same, based on the idea of a scroll as an ancient form of communication.

ABOUT THE KENNEDY CENTER

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is America’s living memorial to President John F. Kennedy, attracting millions of visitors each year to more than 2,000 performances, events, and exhibits. With its artistic affiliates, the National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera, the Center is one of the nation’s busiest performing arts centers dedicated to providing world-class art, powerful education, and outstanding memorial experiences to the broadest possible constituency. Across all its offerings, the Kennedy Center is committed to increasing accessible, inclusive opportunities for all people to participate in, and learn through the arts, including more than 400 free performances each year and a variety of Specially Priced Ticket programs for students, seniors, persons with disabilities, and others. On September 7, 2019, the Kennedy Center inaugurated the REACH, its first-ever major expansion. Designed by Steven Holl Associates, the REACH provides visitors with new opportunities to interact and engage with the Center as the nation’s premier nexus of arts, learning, and culture. On September 8, 2022, the Kennedy Center unveiled Art and Ideals: President John F. Kennedy, a new 7,500-square foot permanent exhibit exploring Kennedy’s presidency and his commitment to the arts. To learn more about the Kennedy Center, please visit www.kennedy-center.org.

TO VIEW THE WEBSITE, VISIT [HTTPS://WWW.SCROLLATHON.COM](https://www.scrollathon.com)

For more information about the Kennedy Center, please visit our [website](#).

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