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Veteran African American Designer to Receive Prestigious Industry Award for Career Dedicated to Youth and Diversity in Design

CHICAGO, IL — Vernon Lockhart, Executive Director of Project Osmosis, a nonprofit helping youth pursue careers in design, is being honored by AIGA Chicago on Thursday, June 14, 2018 for his commitment to diversifying the design industry.

The lack of diversity in industries where minorities are underrepresented has pushed companies like Uber, Google and AirBNB to demonstrate stronger commitments to diversity and inclusion. Like the tech industry, the design industry has historically had low numbers of minority representation. A 2016 study by Google and AIGA—the professional association for design—found that only 9% of designers were Hispanic, 8% were Asian, and 3% were African American.

As the Executive Director of Project Osmosis and founder of Art on the Loose (AOTL), Vernon Lockhart has dedicated his 30-year career to increasing those numbers. A native of St. Louis, Lockhart started his career as a designer at Northwestern University after graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He launched AOTL, his multidisciplinary design firm, in 1995. Key projects include designing and building the Bronzeville Children’s Museum and working with corporate giants like Exelon, as well as designing and constructing the Marcus Garvey Interactive Museum and Peter Tosh Museum in Jamaica.

Just as meaningful is the work he’s done with Project Osmosis, the nonprofit organization which emerged from the Chicago chapter of the Organization of Black Designers. For the past 21 years, Osmosis has engaged minority youth in activities that promote creativity and self-expression. The organization helps 700+ students each year to gain access and knowledge about career opportunities in design.

“We want to be able to say 10, 20, 50 years from now, that we were able to encourage thousands of youth to pursue careers in design they may never have otherwise considered. I believe every person has the human right to be creative, regardless of their economic background or race,” says Lockhart.

His accomplishments include helping to implement internship programs at the Harrington College of Design, Columbia College, SAIC, and Chicago State University. Lockhart helped UIC establish the Osmosis Charles Harrison Scholarship, and recently published *Design For Life*, a full-color coffee table book celebrating the life of Leroy Winbush—one of Chicago’s pioneering designers of color.

Because of his contributions to design, Lockhart has been selected to receive the 2018 Above & Beyond Award from the Chicago Chapter of AIGA. Former Executive Director of AIGA, Rick Grefé says, “We bestow our deepest appreciation to Vernon Lockhart for leading the profession in its efforts to become...inclusive...and encouraging young people to discover design as an expression of creativity...”

The 2018 AIGA Chicago Awards will be held on June 14, 2018 at Forth Level, 845 West Washington Boulevard, 4th floor, Chicago, IL 60607. For more information, visit bit.ly/aigachicagoawards18. For information on Project Osmosis visit www.projectosmosis.org