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The MAX Celebrates The Art of Storytelling Through New Exhibition *Jugline, by Ke Francis, opens July 27 at The MAX*

MERIDIAN, Miss. (June 20, 2021) – Narrative art is more than visual storytelling to Ke Francis. He uses it to connect people of all ages, races, and cultures. A special exhibition titled *Jugline* will feature Francis' story of "The Walking Catfish," as well as lithographs, large woodcuts, and block printing ephemera, while on display July 27-November 6 at the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience, or The MAX, in downtown Meridian.

Francis is an international narrative multimedia artist whose work comprises book arts, printmaking, painting, and sculpture. "It seems that whenever a visual artist exhibits work, the audience asks them to explain it," said Francis. "That quickly steals the magic because one of the great aspects of visual art is that it can mean different things to different people." Francis' twist on an old Southern folktale is the story of a boy who befriends a catfish that, amazingly, can walk. The catfish becomes a pet and friend, only to pass away, tragically, in the end.

"This exhibition covers fresh territory because it explores art forms many kids don't think about as careers, such as illustration and block printing," noted Stacey Wilson, Curator of Exhibitions at The MAX. "I also love what Francis has created through visual storytelling. *Jugline* creates an experience rooted in art that teaches us we are all connected and can relate to one another. After all, everyone has lost someone."

During a fifty-year career, Francis has worked with some of the most influential artists of his time, including abstract expressionists Sam Francis and Robert Rauschenberg, and furniture artist Wendell Castle. He has taught workshops and delivered lectures around the world, and has received fellowships, grants, and awards, including a Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Award.

The Memphis native graduated from Tupelo High School in Mississippi and received his BFA in sculpture from the Cleveland Institute of Art in Ohio. After teaching there for three years, he moved back to Tupelo and opened Hoopsnake Press. *Jugline* will be displayed in the Sonny & Karen Rush Education Showcase Gallery.

On August 7, from 1-3 p.m., Francis will present a wood carving demonstration and tell stories while joined by special guest Tom Kimmel, an award-winning singer, songwriter, and poet. Francis and Kimmel partnered on the book *The Last Time I Saw Cain*, which will be available for purchase.

Admission to the exhibit is free with regular museum admission. The MAX is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and on Sunday from 1-5 p.m. The museum is located at the corner of Sela Ward Parkway and Front Street, overlooking the railroad at the edge of Meridian's historic downtown. Street parking is available, with shops and restaurants within walking distance. For more information visit msarts.org or call 601.581.1550.

About The MAX

The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience explores the state's creative legacies in one immersive attraction. Come discover the Mississippi roots of some of the world's arts and entertainment icons – Elvis Presley, Oprah Winfrey, B.B. King, Faith Hill, Sela Ward, Margaret Walker, Eudora Welty and Jim Henson, to name just a few.

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