

THE STUDIOS OF KEY WEST / FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: JANUARY 27, 2022

**Artists Helen and Ben Harrison Presented with 2022 Golden Mango Award**

[Key West, FL.]—The Studios of Key West is pleased to announce Helen and Ben Harrison as the recipients of this year’s Golden Mango Award. The award was established in 2015 “to recognize persons who make aesthetic, social, intellectual, and philanthropic contributions to our island arts community and its reputation as a center for the arts.” The Harrisons were recognized during The Studios’ Annual Patron Brunch on January 16, and were presented with a striking mango sculpture designed by artist Adam Russell.

“Helen and Ben’s story is as Key West as it gets; it's almost like a fairytale,” says Executive Director Jed Dodds. “They came here on a boat, put down roots like a tree and just started gifting us with the fruits of their creativity. Now, a generation or so later, they’re still providing shade for us to relax in, and a reminder why we love it here."

The Harrisons first arrived in Key West in 1979 in a 38’ sailboat they built by hand, docking at one of the submarine finger piers of the yet-undeveloped Truman Annex. Ben quickly got a job playing guitar and singing at Two Friends Patio Bar, and has entertained the island with his music ever since. In 1986, the Harrisons purchased the cinder block 1950’s era shop at 825 White Street, turning it into Harrison Gallery, which over the past 35 years has presented 172 artists and is widely recognized for the eclectic contemporary works exhibited inside its walls.

Helen is a well-known activist and artist whose work is impactful and widely collected. A longtime board member of The Studios, she now serves as an Artistic Advisor. She spearheaded the conservation group Save our Pines to help protect the Australian Pines at Fort Zach. As a curator of art, she counts among her proudest accomplishments the 2019 Tom Majors “With the Grain: Tribute to Wood Art” exhibition at The Studios.

Ben is an author, musician and playwright with a distinctive voice and a delightful sense of humor. His gift for storytelling truly captures the unique history and character of Key West. He’s written many original songs, penned several books, and his most recent musical, “Undying Love”, played for ten sold out evenings in 2018 at The Studios.

Together, Helen and Ben have raised two sons.They’ve served as advocates and mentors to countless artists, writers, and musicians, and helped to grow and preserve Key West’s reputation as an Island of the Arts.

The Studios of Key West has presented a Golden Mango Award to an individual or couple for the past six years. Prior recipients include Judy and Stanley Zabar (2015), Ann and Bill Lorraine (2016), Anne McKee (2017), John Martini (2018), Judy Blume and George Cooper (2019), Christopher Peterson (2020), and Lynn Kaufelt (2021).

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Contact: Elena Devers

[elena@tskw.org](mailto:elena@tskw.org) / 305-296-0458