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For Immediate Release

Arts Commons Presents: Experience RBC Emerging Visual Artist Program exhibitions in person at Arts Commons now through September 27

September 8, 2021 CALGARY – The **Arts Commons building and +15 walkways reopen today!** You can join us now **through to September 27, 2021** for these thought-provoking and moving works exhibited in the Lightbox Studio, Ledge and Window Galleries of Arts Commons. If visiting us in person doesn't work for you, we invite you to venture online for an immersive 3D gallery tour at artscommons.ca/3D.

Showcasing local emerging artists, the RBC Emerging Virtual Artist Program is proud to feature themes of immigration, diversity, mental wellness, and personal impact on the world through the diverse mediums of photography, paint, and multimedia in the galleries of Arts Commons. As an important bridge between formal education and professional artistry, The RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program provides key mentoring, exhibition, and networking opportunities for local artists looking to establish their careers in the Calgary arts community. Through the support of this program, artists given the opportunity to explore their creativity and further develop their skills in both the business and artistic sides of their careers.

In the Vessel of my Skin, featured in the Ledge Gallery, multidisciplinary artist and researcher Nurgül Rodriguez uses porcelain clay body, paper, text, and digital imaging to tell a complex story of displacement - whether it's as an immigrant, refugee, or traveler - and how the power of language can form and shape the human experience of these individuals.



Porcelain face and feet by Nurgül Rodriguez

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Inspired by his artistic community, Samuel Obadero brings *FÈSÒJAIYÉ* to the Lightbox Studio in which he photographs the many faces of Calgary's artists. Through this process, Samuel hopes to shine a light on artists from every possible background and practice who might not otherwise be recognized for their contribution to the creative mosaic of our city.

"These exhibitions celebrate humanity and the narratives of those who leave an everlasting impact on our human experience, each artist in their own way acknowledges their gratitude with their collaborative works and reveal the depth of their commitment to create compassion through the arts," says Sanja Lukac, Visual and Media Arts Curator.

Energizing the Window Galleries, artists Tamara Esker, Lovelia Vera, Gavin John, and Felipe Angel Jasso Perches present their exhibitions *7 Generations*, *Human Emotions*, *Eyewitness*, and *Ánimas*. Using traditional Indigenous beading, performance art, ceramics, paint on canvas, documentary photography and creative photography, these artists share their own individual experiences through the multifaceted lens of their artistic practice.

"My practice centres around understanding the complex and difficult world of unrest, conflict and humanity through visual story telling. I have been drawn to seek out global events that often are over simplified and sanitized so I can help people understand them beyond the headlines. I do not have answers for many of the world's problems, but I hope to provide people with a human face to conflict, unrest, and social issues from around the world," says Gavin John, whose exhibition *Eyewitness* is featured in the Window Galleries and has [shared his perspective on the Arts Commons blog](#).

Both the in-person and virtual exhibitions are free to the public. Visit artscommons.ca to learn more. Artist bios below.

For media inquiries, high resolution images, or more information contact:

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Nurgül Rodriguez is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary artist and researcher. She is a PhD student in Adult Education at University of Calgary/Werklund School of Education starting in Fall 2021. She holds an MFA from the University of Calgary and she recently completed a residency program at Medalta in Medicine Hat and another at AUArts in Calgary, Calgary Allied Alberta Foundation Residency, Esplanade Artists in Residency. Her work is seen in Remai Modern, borderLINE: 2020 Biennial of Contemporary Art, and Esplanade Arts and Heritage Museum, Landed. Her research interests focus on installation, participatory based, socially engagement and collaborative forms of art, the relationship between politics and art, and studio practice contributing to contemporary art. She currently lives in Calgary making, writing, teaching, collaborating and always learning.

Samuel Obadero is a Documentary and lifestyle photographer with a heart for social advocacy. He is the recipient of the new Canadian Artist Award 2019. He immigrated to Calgary, Canada in 2019. Currently a ROZSA Arts Management Program (RAMP) student where he is learning about "Transformational Leadership in Arts". He is a growing voice in the arts community in the city and he finds himself contributing through other platforms such as Calgary Arts Development, Immigrant Council for Arts Innovation (ICAI), Action Dignity and WOZZO Africa Music and Dance Theatre. In the time he's been an artist, Samuel has learned to appreciate the small things of life that make up the beautiful world we live in.

Tamara Eaker is an Indigenous visual artist, based out of Calgary, Alberta. She applies her training in Graphic Design and Art History to her work with acrylics, woods, beads, and fabrics. Her work exemplifies her to in two main

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passions: reclaiming her lost Ojibwe and Cree heritage, and advocating for improved mental wellness, battling barriers caused by Intergenerational trauma. Tamara began her journey in learning the intricacies of acrylics. She founded Oji-Cree Crafter, her entrepreneurial start-up, in which she turns beautiful photography into miniature, (3" x 3") paintings. Tamara donates 5% of each sale made through Oji-Cree Crafter to the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Lovelía Vera is an experienced and creative Canadian-Venezuelan Artist who specializes in original interpretations using various artistic mediums, oil, acrylic, pastel. She graduated from Venezuelan Technological University Institute. Maturín /Venezuela in Administration, but her passion always inclined her to the arts. Her formal training includes: Visual Art at School of Art Eloy Palacios. Maturín /Venezuela, Architectural Drawing at the Academy Don Sancho. Caracas /Venezuela, Photography at the Central University Caracas/Venezuela, two years course at the Museum Tezary Rizzo. Caracas/Venezuela and Stone Sculpture course at the University of Calgary.

Lovelía's artworks have been proudly displayed in various art exhibitions around the world and in private collections in addition her artwork has been included in various publications. She is a member of a team selected to create a Permanent Public Art project -a sculpture- with the City of Calgary on International Avenue.

Gavin John is a documentary photographer and photojournalist based in Calgary, Canada. Gavin studied Journalism at SAIT and International Relations at the University of Calgary. He has been a freelance photographer since 2013. Gavin's work focuses on documenting conflict, unrest, and social issues. His work has taken him to document events in Iraq, North Korea, the United States, the Philippines, and around Canada. Gavin is a proud member of Indigenous Photograph collective.

Felipe Jasso is a Mexican Canadian photographer graduated from The Alberta University of the Arts. His works are influenced by the magical realism found in Latin literature, surrealism and symbolism. He investigates the subconscious, memory and his inner desires. Using symbolism and complex tableaux, Jasso brings to the forefront fragments of his experiences as an immigrant, a queer artist, and his negotiations with the Canadian landscape. He expresses that he finds himself trapped in the images that he makes, between the colourful Mexican culture and the restrained and frigid Canadian scenes. His work shows his preoccupations with his experiences of displacement, isolation and his inner yearnings. However, for Jasso it is important to illustrate beauty and to show a positive outcome in his photographs, even when he touches on subjects that imply melancholy, nostalgia, or death. Jasso learned that in Mexican culture laughter is a reaction to tragedy, this can be seen in the Day of the Dead tradition. This juxtaposition is very unique from other cultures and Jasso expresses his enjoyment to his heritage, using the same logic in his work.

Arts Commons is the third-largest performing arts centre in Canada, located in the heart of Calgary's Cultural District in downtown Calgary, with a mandate that includes a commitment to foster, promote, and present the arts. Taking up a full city block, it is home to six gallery spaces, five theatres, the Jack Singer Concert Hall as well as rehearsal spaces, administrative offices and a set and costume shop. The resident companies of Arts Commons include Alberta Theatre Projects, Arts Commons Presents, the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Downstage, One Yellow Rabbit, and Theatre Calgary, and together, they host over 1,800 public performances and events every year. In 2021, Arts Commons achieved the fundraising goal for Phase 1 of Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) project to construct a new building in its home of Olympic Plaza.

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