

For Immediate Release

Arts Commons: Media and +15 Galleries Exhibitions Showcase New Canadians in their Artistic Practice and Emerging Local Artists from TD Incubator Program

March 16, 2022 – CALGARY – Arts Commons media galleries, Broadcast Lab and +15 Soundscape, as well as the community collaborative +15 Galleries, unveil new exhibitions this month. Launching a new curation process, Broadcast Lab and +15 Soundscape provide a digital platform for artist experimentation and forays into new mediums by Arts Commons TD Incubator mentorship program participants. The TD Incubator program is designed to accelerate the careers of emerging interdisciplinary artists, and the media galleries play a key role in sharing their work. The +15 Galleries, including eight individual gallery spaces, begins a new partnership with Immigrant Council for the Arts (ICA) to share the work of new Canadian artists who bring their perspectives from all over the world. [Exhibitions are live now at Arts Commons](#), free and open to the public.



Jon McCaslin and Lisa La Touche. Photography by Samuel Obadero.

The media labs of Arts Commons, the micro-cinema Broadcast Lab and the multi-channel audio exhibition of the +15 Soundscape, have been supporting media artists in Canada for over 10 years. These eye-and ear-catching exhibition spaces engage thousands of Calgarians who pass through the building on a yearly basis. This season, that work continues as Jae Sterling and Contra, TD Incubator Fellows and artistic leads of the program, have embarked on a new curatorial vision for these spaces starting this March. Starting with on-stage performance through the TD Amplify Cabaret series, participants in the TD Incubator program are now expanding to share their interdisciplinary work through video and audio exhibitions.

Broadcast Lab features three new short films from writer and playwright Hebert Poll Gutiérrez, tap dancer Lisa La Touche and drummer Jon McCaslin, and visual artist Harvey Nichol. Herbert Poll Gutiérrez's [Cuba Que Linda es Cuba? Confessions of a fearless Cuban](#) distills 16 years' experience as a playwright, storyteller, and writer into an experimental animation piece exploring his immigration to Canada from Cuba. This 2.5-minute piece is condensed from the original 27-minute piece which [can be viewed online](#).

**RBC EMERGING VISUAL
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In their collaborative piece [SWING FORWARD!](#), Jon McCaslin and Lisa La Touche barrel through contrasting rhythms in a duet of drumming and tap, reinforcing the historical connection between the two performance art forms. Through percussive sound and movement, their beats call and contrast, gradually building in intensity and urgency as a reflection on our current social and political climate. *SWING FORWARD!* was produced, filmed, and edited by TD Incubator Fellow, Contra.

The final piece in the Broadcast Lab is Harvey Nichol's [Tyrants of Tomorrow](#), a documentary-style short film that uses news clips, interviews, and footage of Nichol's artistic process to express how his art has been impacted by the socio-political state of the world and in his home country of the Philippines. Painting a nine-foot canvas with broad strokes of black paint and delicate, paleolithic style icons, Harvey expresses the brutal and primitive nature of war. About his piece, Harvey Nichol says, "*War never changes, only the people change.*"

The +15 Soundscape, made up of 15 multichannel speakers in the hallway overlooking the scene shop of Arts Commons, features TD Incubator participant Oseremen Irete. Blending journalism and art, Irete's work includes documentary video, photography, music, poetry, and essays. His soundscape piece, [Thoughts on the bus to Nowhere](#), weaves together recordings of bus rides with journal entries, poems, and voice recordings in examination of his pandemic experience.

Working with the Immigrant Council for the Arts (ICAI), Arts Commons is proud to share [I Speak Art](#) in the eight gallery spaces of the +15 Galleries. This exhibition is the culmination of a year-long mentorship program between experienced artists and new Canadian immigrants to bridge barriers into the field. These artists, chosen by a jury of experts and immigrant artists, share their perspectives as newcomers and artists in this powerful exhibition. *I Speak Art* also includes additional works from immigrant artists who have recently completed their dedicated mentorship, lead both independently by ICAI and collaboratively through Arts Commons.

"Mentorship has always been a great way of sharing one's life experiences with someone else who might need it for growth and education. In the arts, being mentored creates a continuous opportunity for growth, new networks, and experience. I hope that IAMP has given the mentees this opportunity and I can't wait to see how they all evolve," says Toyin Oladele, Artist and founder of ICAI.

"This is our first season of seeing the TD Incubator artists featured in our media galleries, and it's a game changer. Along with our fantastic media artists, it's amazing to see the fruits of Immigrant Council for the Arts's mentorship program after a year of collaboration," says Sanja Lukac, Visual and Media Arts Curator. *"It's also wonderful to see how these artforms are being used to shift narratives and share perspectives in creative and innovative ways."*

To see all the exhibitions online, visit artscommons.ca/learn-engage/visual-and-media-arts. The current visual arts exhibitions will be available for viewing until June 2, 2022.

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Arts Commons is the largest performing arts centre in Western Canada located in the heart of downtown Calgary. For over 35 years, it has been a key contributor to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and well-being of Calgarians. It is home to six resident companies, including Alberta Theatre Projects, Arts Commons Presents, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Downstage, One Yellow Rabbit, and Theatre Calgary. It houses six gallery spaces, five theatres, and the Jack Singer Concert Hall, and promotes local, national, international, emerging and established artists with a focus on inclusion, diversity, accessibility, and equity.

The **TD Incubator program** is designed to support this idea and the artists who are increasingly choosing to move between and blend artistic forms – musicians who make their own films, dancers who are blending movement with visual art, actors who are expanding into spoken word poetry. Prioritizing artists from communities who reflect the diversity and vibrancy of Treaty 7 territory, the mission of TD Incubator is to accelerate these artists' careers. As the largest arts centre in Western Canada and a gathering space for all artistic disciplines, Arts Commons is uniquely positioned to grow, celebrate, elevate, and learn from these artists.

The Immigrant Council for Arts Innovation (ICAI) is an arts council based in Calgary, Alberta. The council was founded in January 2019 with the expressed purpose of connecting newcomer and immigrant artists, arts administrators and culture workers to the existing arts community in Calgary. ICAI actively encourages diversity of expression and culture through the creation of a safe and welcoming community where newcomer and immigrant art workers feel confident to share their work and distinct cultural identities.

In Chile, **Claudia Benavente's** artworks were recognized with awards many times during her school days. This stimulus inspired Claudia to create several pieces in her life using different media as oil painting, clay and wool as a self-taught artist. Claudia started mosaic in 2006 through serendipity and was fascinated with the ancient artworks. As a result, she created few religious pieces which found home in different families with devotion to the Virgin Mary and Dios de la Misericordia. She emigrated to Canada in 2007. As a veterinarian, her artworks reveal her passion for horses and their spirits. Her love of nature is evident in her colourful compositions.

Ligaya Domingo is a Filipino artist based in Calgary. Her work focuses on women's experiences, social justice, and feminism through photography, painting, drawing, installation, video, and performance. Ligaya has a BFA from the College of the Holy Spirit Manila and a MA in Art History from the University of the Philippines. She was part of the Mowel Fund Film Institute's Cinematography Program where she explored video production.

Ligaya has exhibited her work at The Cultural Center of the Philippines, The Singapore Film Festival, Galeria Dela Raza San Francisco, among others. She is a member of the collectives Kasibulan Women's Artists Group and Sinekalye.

Zahra Entezarmahdi was born in Shiraz, Iran and moved to Calgary, Canada in 2018. Zahra is a painter, photographer, and art instructor with 35 years of experience of working with various painting media: oil, pencils, ink, chalk, and watercolor, however, her favorite medium is pastel. In Iran, she has participated in many provincial and national painting exhibitions like The First and Third Biennial Painting Exhibition of Iran.

Gooda is an Egyptian visual artist who lives and works in Mohkinstsis/Calgary. Self-taught, he began painting as a way to examine light and colour and how they influence and affect human perception. He has since completed multiple art courses at the University of Calgary and Emily Carr University of Art + Design. For the past year he has been apprenticing with artist and educator Mark Vasquez-Mackay. Gooda has exhibited both in Egypt and Calgary. His work has received the support of Calgary Arts Development, and is held in private collections in Egypt, throughout Asia, Europe, and the United States.

Sahar Hakimi is a visual artist with remarkable proficiency and powerful intuitive approach to creativity utilizing female form and routine life. She originates from Tehran, Iran and currently resides in Calgary, Alberta. Her masterful fusion of realism with abstraction comes to fruition through an innate and harnessed use of color and composition combined with deft use of oil and acrylic paint. She achieves a myriad of palpable textures and moods with every confident brush stroke. Her remarkable versatility is a tribute to her sensitivity to her subjects and keen observation skills. Sahar obtained Bachelor degree specializing in art composition and painting from Azad University and Master of Art in painting from Alzahra University in Tehran.

Joey Qi is an illustrator who was born in China and now lives in Calgary. She is a digital artist. About twenty years ago, a magazine asked her to illustrate for them and from there, she began her career as an illustrator. During this time, she illustrated publications, some picture books, and comics as well as provided illustrations to companies for their brand for advertising, social media and websites. She always tries to tell a good story with illustrations, whether in publication or in commercial illustration.

Macarena Rudiaz emigrated to Canada from Chile in 2007. Moving to this country proved challenging with learning a new language while attending high school, but also it allowed her to participate in groups with special needs, discovering people with an enormous human compassion.

She restarted working with oil paintings through the mentorship of a Chilean Canadian artist, inspired by the observation of the amazing Canadian scenery. Macarena has significantly improved her painting skills under the mentorship of Rocio Graham who has deepened her connection with the natural world. Macarena has exhibited with SPARK Disability Art Festival twice, and Arts Commons window galleries in 2016, 2018, and 2019 respectively.

Anil Yadav is an urbanist and an urban sketch artist living and working in Canmore, Alberta. I am originally from northern India where I spent most of my life. I have been in love with sketching for as long as I can remember. I enjoy capturing vibrant urban spaces and natural landscapes to reflect beauty in our daily lives.