



# Office of the Mayor

City Hall

New Brunswick, New Jersey

## Media Release

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **“Windows of Understanding” Public Art Project returns to New Brunswick and Highland Park this MLK Day**

***On view January 20 - February 29, 2020***

**New Brunswick, N.J. January 14, 2020** - The New Brunswick Community Arts Council, Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, and the Highland Park Arts Commission announce the third annual “Windows of Understanding” public art project, an initiative that unites local artists, organizations, and businesses to promote compassion and awareness around social justice issues impacting local communities.

Nearly two dozen windows across New Brunswick and Highland Park will be activated as part of this social justice initiative in 2020. Organizers have curated this year’s art and supporting events around the selected issues of: **food insecurity; immigration; LGBTQIA issues; mass incarceration & human trafficking; mental health; and violence**. Installations will be on view along Church, George and French streets in New Brunswick, as well as the Rite Aid Windows on 4<sup>th</sup> Gallery in Highland Park. Free art workshops, screenings, and other events focused on these issues will provide the community with additional opportunities to talk about the topics and build connections with partnering organizations.

The project launches on Monday, January 20, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, as a way of paying homage to Dr. King's legacy with a designated "Day of Understanding." The public is invited to a prix-fixe kick-off lunch at Harvest Moon Brewery & Cafe organized by Elijah's Promise. The run culminates on Thursday, February 27, with a public closing exhibition reception at Rutgers University's Zimmerli Art Museum in New Brunswick. All events are free.

This year's roster of artists is exceptionally diverse and inter-generational, featuring a range from middle school student artists to older persons. Students at New Brunswick Middle School and High School have selected to delve into the issue of gun violence for their respective installations. Mental health is another issue that has moved to the forefront this season, with artists actively working to combat associated stigmas.

The project pairs artists with local organizations including new partners such as UndocuRutgers, Central Jersey Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, MCFOODS, Sisterwork, Still Waters Anti-Trafficking Program and the Traumatic Loss Coalition. Each pairing collaborates on a piece in response to the central tagline for this project: "We see through hate" to be displayed in windows for the public to encounter.

A Windows of Understanding Satellite Exhibition opens on January 22 at the American Hungarian Foundation featuring over 20 artists from across the state that further brings the project's central themes to life. The show is free and open to the public by appointment Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 10am - 3pm; and Saturday from 9am - 1pm. Visits may be scheduled by phone at (732) 846-5777.

"We are proud of our students and alumni artists who have stepped out of their studios to forge new relationships in the community and engage with social issues in such a direct way" says Gerry Beegan, Interim Dean of Mason Gross School of the Arts. "Mason Gross is situated in the heart of New Brunswick's arts district and this collaboration has helped expand the arts reach well beyond our own galleries and spaces."

"Highland Park has an active, thriving arts community and public art, which can be viewed and appreciated by all residents, is a staple of our art scene," said Gayle Brill Mittler, Mayor of Highland Park. "The annual Windows of Understanding public art project is a wonderful collaboration between Highland Park, New Brunswick, and the Mason Gross School of the Arts. And it is a much-celebrated fixture on the Borough's annual calendar. We value this initiative so much because it blends social justice concerns with creative artistic expression, prompting conversations among residents and visitors and illustrating some of the most noble functions of public art."

"Windows of Understanding continues to provoke thought and raise awareness of current societal concerns," says New Brunswick Mayor Jim Cahill. "When national issues are addressed by local artists, the impact is felt on a more personal and intimate level. I thank the New Brunswick and Highland Park establishments who have graciously offered their window space for this program, and I encourage others to get involved and help this important initiative grow."

A wide range of free events for all ages will complement the public art in both New Brunswick and Highland Park throughout the run, which is slated through Saturday, **February 29.**

Support for Windows of Understanding 2020 has been provided by Middlesex County, Rutgers Division of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement, Johnson & Johnson, the New Brunswick Cultural Center, Highland Park Arts Commission, and Investors Bank. Special thanks to the American Hungarian Foundation, New Brunswick Development Corporation, New Brunswick City Center, Middlesex County Regional Chamber of Commerce, Zimmerli Art Museum, and Rutgers Division of Student Affairs—New Brunswick, and to all of our programming partners for their support of this project.

For more information on Windows of Understanding, including a complete list of featured organizations, participating storefronts, and a full calendar of free events, please visit [www.windowsofunderstanding.org](http://www.windowsofunderstanding.org). On Instagram at @windowsofunderstanding, #weseethroughhate.

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#### **About the City of New Brunswick**

The City of New Brunswick is the county seat for Middlesex County and home of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, the world headquarters for Johnson & Johnson and two globally-renowned hospitals. New Brunswick is an educationally-focused city as well as “The Healthcare City.”

All of New Brunswick’s developments provide seamless access to major transportation lines and an extensive dining scene and an arts district, located in its bustling downtown. The City is focused not only on bringing in new residents and businesses, but also on improving the lives of every one of its residents.

For more information, please visit [www.cityofnewbrunswick.org](http://www.cityofnewbrunswick.org).

#### **About Mason Gross School of the Arts**

Established in 1976, Mason Gross School of the Arts is the flagship public arts conservatory of New Jersey and a division of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Founded in 1766, Rutgers is the nation’s eighth-oldest institution of higher learning, a leading Big Ten public research university with more than 70,000 students, and a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities. The Mason Gross School is home to the departments of Art & Design, Dance, Music, and Theater as well as Rutgers Community Arts, Rutgers Arts Online, the Rutgers Filmmaking Center, and the Rutgers Printmaking Studio. The school has an enrollment of approximately 861 undergraduates and 308 graduate students across five disciplines, supported by approximately 324 faculty and 69 staff. Students at Mason Gross hail from 31 states and territories and 23 countries. Mason Gross is one of the most selective schools at Rutgers—New Brunswick, ensuring that students have the opportunity to work closely with accomplished artists in their fields.

#### **About the Highland Park Arts Commission**

The purpose of the Arts Commission is to support and facilitate cultural programs in Highland Park for the benefit of its residents. Such programs may include, but are not limited to, dance, theatre, music, visual arts, poetry, spoken word, culinary arts, fashion design, paper arts, woodworking and interdisciplinary art forms. Of particular interest to the Arts Commission is both the inclusion of diverse cultural programming and the training of students (of any age) in these art forms.