



Office of the Mayor

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Media Release

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 21 - February 28, 2019

New Brunswick, N.J. January 10, 2019 - The New Brunswick Community Arts Council, Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University and the Highland Park Arts Commission announce the second 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 forty venues across New Brunswick and Highland Park will be activated as part of this social justice initiative in 2019, close to doubling the amount of original installations produced last year. Most installations will be on view along Church, George and French streets in New Brunswick, as well as along Raritan Avenue in Highland Park.

The project launches on January 21, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, as a way of paying homage to Dr. King’s legacy with a designated “Day of Understanding.”

Family-friendly guided art crawls throughout the day will complement a communal lunch hosted at Harvest Moon Brewery & Cafe by Elijah’s Promise. The run culminates on February 28 with a public closing exhibition reception at the American Hungarian Foundation in New Brunswick.

Participating artists from across the state are working to address a number of issues, including cultural identity, faith-based initiatives, gender and sexuality, environmental justice, homelessness, food insecurity and youth mentoring. This year’s exhibition reflects a concerted effort to give voice to art created by middle school and high school students across New Brunswick and Highland Park.

Danielle Fleming, facilitator of the New Brunswick Middle School Art Club, encouraged students to show an awareness of tolerance and make a statement that no one should be excluded or discriminated against. Using art as a medium to communicate that idea, sixth grade student Angela Villanueva echoed, "The LGBTQ+ community should be respected, not hated."

Organizers paired artists with local organizations such as the Brady Campaign, Muslim Feminists for the Arts, D.I.R.E., Interfaith Rise, The Pride Center of New Jersey, NAACP, New Brunswick Area Branch, New Labor, Women Aware, Elijah's Promise, The Civic League of Greater New Brunswick and the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership.

A diverse range of Cultural Centers at Rutgers University are also represented. Each team collaborated on a piece in response to the central prompt: "How do you see through hate?" to be displayed in windows for the public to actively engage with.

"We are proud to participate in this vital initiative," said George B. Stauffer, dean of the Mason Gross School of the Arts. "The Mason Gross School is not a cloistered arts conservatory. We're deeply invested in the cultural life of New Brunswick and Highland Park, and the Windows of Understanding project allows our artists to collaborate with the community to address issues of social justice in a creative and compassionate way."

In conjunction with the project, the Highland Park Arts Commission is populating a Digital Art Walk Tour, which will permit pedestrians in Highland Park, as well as those at home, to read and hear about the art in the windows of local businesses.

Mayor Gayle Brill Mittler notes, "Highland Park, as a culturally, racially and income-diverse community, truly attempts to 'see through hate' at every level of our civic engagement. Public art is critical to enriching the lives of ALL of our residents. Our downtown store windows are the perfect environment for sharing public art. We look forward to seeing the socially relevant art in the Windows of Understanding Project, and to breaking bread with others in meaningful, if sometimes difficult, conversation at the Tables of Understanding communal dining events in our local restaurants. My hope is that these conversations about the content, vision and challenges before us can aid us in serving our neighbors better in 2019."

The project's **January 21** kickoff features guided walking tours of the installations at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. departing from Kilmer Square and Kim's Bike Shop, respectively.

"Tables of Understanding" events at local restaurants, screenings, a diversity workshop, and performances will complement the public art in both New

Brunswick and Highland Park throughout the run, which is slated through **February 28**.

“The City of New Brunswick is proud to be home to a vibrant network of arts and cultural organizations dedicated to the use of creative expression to further unite our community,” said City of New Brunswick Mayor Jim Cahill. “We are pleased to be able to welcome this project back for another exhibition in tandem with our partners at Mason Gross School of the Arts and the Borough of Highland Park.”

Leadership support of the second annual Windows of Understanding Project is provided by a Community-University Research Partnership Grant for New Brunswick awarded by the Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation at Rutgers University. Additional support has been provided by AARP, Johnson & Johnson and the New Brunswick Cultural Center. Special Thanks to Middlesex County, New Brunswick Development Corporation, New Brunswick Cultural Center, New Brunswick City Center, Middlesex County Regional Chamber of Commerce, the New Brunswick Parking Authority, Stir-Fry Productions, Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers Division of Student Affairs New Brunswick and The Rutgers Office of Community Affairs for their support of this project.

For more information on Windows of Understanding, including a complete list of featured organizations, participating storefronts, and diverse schedule of free events, please visit www.windowsofunderstanding.org. On Instagram @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.

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 69,000 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 the Mason Gross Extension Division, Rutgers Arts Online, the Rutgers Filmmaking Center, and the Rutgers Printmaking Studio. The school has an enrollment of approximately 800 undergraduates and 350 graduate students across five disciplines, supported by approximately 260 faculty and 65 staff. Students at Mason Gross hail from 40 states and territories and 20 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.