



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community Arts Ontario's 21st annual Gathering was co-presented with East Mississauga Community Health Centre (EMCHC) on June 10-11, 2011.

Friday, June 10th had an informative and interactive interview with Frida Kahlo from the Guerrilla Girls via Skype; a discussion panel titled "Is Diversity the New Black?" on authenticity in community-based arts projects, facilitated by Steve Khan (Community Arts Ontario), Erin McIntyre (Royal Ontario Museum) and Rebecca Noone (University of Toronto). The evening concluded with excellent performances by ILL NANA, a queer positive multiracial dance company.

Saturday, June 11th featured "Dreamcatching", a workshop on funding with Lisa Visser (SSHRC grant recipient) and Maggie Fischbuch (Ontario Trillium Foundation), followed by the Annual General Meeting, and "Make More Friends - an Introduction to Social Media" workshop facilitated by Karen Geier (Kobo Books), Rannie Turnigan (Tweetgasm) and Zoe Badley (Gladstone Hotel). Performances by Kumari Giles and Ramon Vitug were crowd favourites. CAO and EMCHC were also delighted to showcase new work by local artist, Breann Ritchie. Her installation piece 'ostracized' was an interesting inversion of the conference's theme of building connections.

KEYNOTE:

Frida Kahlo is a member of the Guerilla Girls(GGs); a feminist collective who use visual art to fight against patriarchy. They are anonymous females who take on the names of dead women artists as pseudonyms and appear in public wearing gorilla masks. The GGs have produced posters, stickers, books, printed projects, and actions that expose sexism and racism in politics, the art world, film and the culture at large. They use humour to convey information, provoke discussion, and show that feminists can be funny. Their work has been passed around the world by kindred spirits who they are proud to have as supporters. The GGs have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *Bitch* and *Bust*; on TV and radio, including NPR, the BBC and CBC; and in countless art and feminist texts. The mystery surrounding their identities has attracted attention. They could be anyone; they are everywhere.

IS DIVERSITY THE NEW BLACK? DISCUSSION PANEL:

Steve Khan is a visual artist and a poet. Although his diverse ethnic background allows him to 'belong' to many different boxes, he prefers to make his own new space. He believes art can be transformative and often uses humour to initiate a dialogue about taboo topics. His work questions stereotypes by subverting them. He wishes to unravel truths by revealing different perspectives on issues of sexuality, gender and identity. He is currently the Executive Director of Community Arts Ontario and an Events and Development Assistant at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery. He is a graduate with distinction from the Joint Art and Art History program at Sheridan College and the University of Toronto Mississauga.

Erin McIntyre is a recent grad of the Masters of Museum Studies program at the University of Toronto, specializing in museum education and interpretive planning. Erin has led and participated in multiple community arts and access initiatives. In particular, as Public Programs Coordinator at the Manitoba Children's Museum Erin coordinated and facilitated *Arts Club*, a specialized program designed to introduce underprivileged children to various artistic mediums. Through positions such as an Animateur at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery and Gallery Facilitator at the Royal Ontario Museum, Erin continues in her efforts to build bridges between people and art.

Rebecca Noone has a Masters in Museums Studies from the University of Toronto with a focus on education, community programming, and arts-based research. She has worked as a Programs Assistant at the University of Toronto Art Centre where she has also co-curated the contemporary Inuit art exhibition *Sanaugaq / Things Made by Hand* (April 2011) and recreated alternative university Rochdale College (October 2009). During the summer of 2010, Rebecca traveled across Canada facilitating video-making workshops for girls ages 12-17 with *Shout Out! Media Group*. Outside of the museum field, Rebecca has worked as an educator in Toronto and Dawson City, Yukon.

FEATURED VISUAL ARTIST:

Breann Ritchie is a recent graduate of the joint Art and Art History program at the University of Toronto Mississauga and Sheridan College. She has exhibited her work at the University of Toronto Art Centre in Toronto, Blackwood Gallery in Mississauga and The Whitehouse Gallery in Toronto. Ritchie also received a 2011 Honourable Mention for Excellence in Emerging Visual Arts at the Mississauga Arts Council Awards (the MARTYS). Her new sculptural pieces are entitled 'ostracized', and provide an interesting inversion to our theme of building connections.

PERFORMING ARTISTS:

ILL NANA DiverseCity Dance Company is a queer positive multiracial dance company who focus on embracing differences as strengths, and combat oppressive power structures by expressing their voices through a variety of dance techniques. They envision a world in regards to dance where people from marginalized groups; in particular LGBTTIQQ2SA people, people of colour, varying body types, class backgrounds, and abilities can be who they are, are accepted as equals, have access to dance based education, and see themselves represented in dance performance on stage and in media.

Kumari Giles identifies as a queer, mixed, performer, hailing from Toronto. She has been a leader in the LGBTTIQQ2SA community on the UTM campus, connecting and engaging queer and trans youth. With a passion for movement she has trained in R.A.D. Ballet, Traditional Irish Dance, Jazz, Modern and Contemporary. Dancing nearly all her life, Kumari believes in the power of art, learning, and supporting the voices of queer and trans people from all places.

Ramon Vitug is 22 years old, Filipino-Canadian, and a recent graduate of the Theatre and Drama Program at University of Toronto and Sheridan College. Vitug has performed at Mississauga Pride, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, and Drag Pub.

DREAMCATCHING FUNDING WORKSHOP

Maggie Fischbuch is the Program Manager for Halton-Peel region for the Ontario Trillium Foundation. An agency of the Government of Ontario, Trillium is one of Canada's leading grant-making foundations, receiving \$110 million annually from the government's charity casino initiative. Foundation grants are provided to eligible not-for-profit and charitable organizations in the areas of arts and culture, environment, sports and recreation and human and social services. The Foundation strengthens the capacity of the voluntary sector through investments in community-based initiatives

Lisa Visser is an emerging artist and curator, currently based in Toronto. She is developing an arts-based research practice that is both performative and autobiographical. Investigating dichotomies such as human-animal or good-bad, Visser provokes dialogue that questions notions of normativity and the everyday. She uses speculation as an artistic trope, but her art practice is rooted in self-reflection. Visser is interested in collaboration and collective experience, collective memory, and social repair. As a curator, Visser reflects upon sometimes confounded relationships, miscommunications and happy mistakes, creating an experience of wonder, understanding and healthy confusion. Visser's current research considers human-animal communication and the speculative or intuitive bonds that develop across the boundaries of species, while reflecting upon the development of these concepts in performance art. She is presently a Visiting Scholar at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

MAKE MORE FRIENDS SOCIAL MEDIA WORKSHOP

Zoe Badley is a soon-to-be Journalism graduate at Sheridan College and a previous Editorial Intern at Trend Hunter Magazine. At her internship she was responsible for writing, editing and was a part of their Brand Management team. By the end of her four months she had 800+ published trends and received over 2.5 million views to date. Zoe also runs a personal style blog named Queen of Hearts, which was launched in October 2009. She can either be found glued to a computer, phone or web-savvy device. Zoe adores art, fashion, design and killer beats. She's at her best and happiest when all of these things are combined.

Karen Geier has been providing digital solutions to clients since she was 16 years old. She taught herself HTML and flash, and began building websites in her parents' basement for clients all around the Kitchener-Waterloo area. Since then, a lot has changed. Basic HTML and Flash gave way to the semantic web, content management, and social media. Karen recently returned to the client side after providing digital solutions for 2 years to medium-sized businesses in the premium real estate, consumer packaged goods, and beauty sectors. Karen has also worked with multinational companies to help them achieve their digital goals. Karen currently heads up the social media channel for Kobo Inc, a global eReading company based out of Toronto. There, she engages with tens of thousands of fans, followers and blog readers. Karen has spoken previously at Podcamp and Third Tuesday Toronto.

Rannie Turingan is a freelance photographer working in Toronto. An early adopter to all things social media, he started his award winning blog in 2000, is a constant presence on twitter with almost 5000 followers and is connected with over 2600 "friends" on Facebook. The Grid recently referred to Turingan as a "Culture Documentarian", most refer to him as photojunkie.

Community Arts Ontario is a provincial service organization comprised of cultural centres, community arts groups, municipalities, artists and public supporters. CAO cultivates and connects the arts, artists and people across Ontario and provides network, exchange, and professional development opportunities for community arts practitioners.

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Media Contact:
Haley Stefan
Public Relations Coordinator
haley.stefan@communityartsontario.ca