



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 9, 2024

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Julie Barry, Senior Planner for Arts & Culture
City of Salem | Department of Planning & Community Development
98 Washington St., 2nd Floor | Salem, MA 01970
978-619-5685 ext. 42506 | jbarry@salem.com
OR
Julia Csekö, Artist | juliacseko@gmail.com

Salem Public Artist in Residence, Julia Csekö, presents Solo Exhibition Salem Old Town Hall

What: Julia Csekö's Public Artist in Residence Showcase & Solo Exhibition

When:

Exhibition Dates: January 13 - 31, 2025

Opening Reception: Saturday, January 25th 3:30-6:30 PM

Gallery Hours: Mon. & Wed. 1-4 PM, Fri. 9 AM-12 PM, Sat. & Sun. 1-5 PM (or by appointment)

Where: Salem Old Town Hall, 32 Derby Sq, Salem, MA 01970-3704

About the Project:

This exhibition, under the title *Social Fabric*, is the culmination of visual artist Julia Csekö's eight-month-long Salem Public Artist in Residency program in 2024. The solo presentation features newly-created monumental textile work that responds to and engages with dozens of migration stories collected from local residents through the participatory public art installation *Transcending Borders Immigrant Experiences and Dreams*. In addition, the exhibition showcases two video pieces created in collaboration with the Salem Access TV that will be premiered to the Salem Old Town Hall audiences. The first time-based project, consists of a series of interviews with members of local immigrant communities, and the second features three professional dancers invited by the artist to activate the *Welcome Dresses*, wearable pieces made of thousands of colorful satin ribbons printed with the phrase *YOU ARE WELCOME HERE* in fifteen languages commonly spoken by immigrants in greater Boston; these ribbons were distributed to the public during the residence period. *Social Fabric* runs from January 13 to January 30 at the Salem Old Town Hall, in Salem, Massachusetts. The exhibition celebration and reception takes place on Saturday, January 25, at 3:30 PM, and will feature performances involving local creatives and family-friendly activities that are free and open to the public.

The exhibition is curated in collaboration with art researcher Michaela Blanc.

Csekö is a Brazilian American artist based in Boston. Her work incorporates elements of Brazilian culture and aesthetics. The ribbons featured prominently in her recent work are inspired by Brazilian folklore, specifically a custom of tying ribbons representing wishes on the fence surrounding the historical Church of Senhor do Bonfim in Salvador, Bahia.

In the Artists words:

There is significant hesitation in sharing immigration stories, triggered by the fear of stigmatization fueled by misinformation and sensationalist narratives. This exhibition invites us to destigmatize immigration experiences and immigrant cultures by providing a positive perspective on these stories, thus creating a welcoming and safe environment.

As one of the participants keenly observed, “There’s just a big aversion to being an immigrant. It’s like a negative thing, even unconsciously, even if you’re not someone who thinks negative things about immigrants. We tend to hide it.”

Each story and the work generated through them is a small step towards normalizing the idea that most North Americans are immigrants in one way or another.

About the Artist:

Born in Colorado to Brazilian parents on self-exile during the Brazilian military dictatorship, Csekö grew up in Rio, Brazil. She holds an MFA from SMFA at Tufts and a BFA from the Federal University of Rio, UFRJ. In 24’ Csekö is an SMFA @ Tufts Travelling Fellow, an AiR at the Boston Center for the Arts, and the City of Salem Public Artist in Residency. In 23’ Csekö’s work was acquired by the Tufts Art Galleries Permanent Collection and she was a Collective Futures Tufts Art Galleries Warhol Foundation Grantee, JArts Be The Change Awardee, Randolph, and Newton LCC Grantee, and a Somerville LCC Ambassador. In 22’ Csekö was a Somerville LCC grantee, a CTV MassCreative Fellow, and a Somerville Museum Community Curator. She was also invited as an AIR at Sculpture Space, upstate NY. In addition, she has public murals on view commissioned by the Downtown Boston BID, and by the Stonybrook Neighborhood Association. In 2018 Csekö was invited as an AiR at the A4A MassMoCA. Her passion for organizing dates back to her BFA at the Federal University of Rio UFRJ, when Csekö participated in negotiations demanding an increase from 0.3 to 1% of Brazilian national funds be allocated to arts and culture. She was also a member of a committee in conversation with representatives of the Brazilian Ministry of Culture.

Contact: juliaceko@gmail.com

Website: www.juliaceko.com

About the Curator:

Blanc is the Wikimedian in Residence at the Pérez Art Museum Miami and a Leadership Advisor at Art+Feminism. She recently curated Adaptation – Local Notes at Tomayko Foundation and Adaptation Screening Program at Silver Eye Center for Photography, Pittsburgh. Previously, she was a Curatorial Fellow at the MassArt Art Museum (MAAM), a guest curator in the SMFA at Tufts University and MassArt Low Residence MFA programs, a Graduate Curatorial Fellow at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and a curatorial intern at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston. She holds an MA in Museum Studies/Museum Education from Tufts University and a BA in Art History from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

About City of Salem Arts & Culture Program

The City of Salem’s Arts & Culture Program is committed to enriching & enlivening the urban environment through showcasing innovative & transformative works of art in all media & modalities.

With a focus on working with local artists, especially those historically underrepresented, we seek to foster greater community awareness of & interaction with the arts and celebrate diversity in all its forms. Our goal is to nurture diversity & creativity; foster a sense of community pride & belonging; and enhance the quality of life for all. Learn more at www.salemma.gov/arts-culture

About the Salem Public Art Commission:

With a focus on local artists and a global perspective of the art scene, the Salem Public Art Commission (PAC) seeks to foster greater community awareness of and interaction with the arts, enhance the scope and profile of Salem’s public art collection, and celebrate diversity in all its forms among citizens and visitors of Salem’s alike. The PAC feels Public Art in Salem should contribute to the community’s identity as the cultural hub of the North Shore and a center for creativity; foster community pride & ‘ownership’; and enhance the quality of Salem’s built environment.

To learn more and view Calls for Art from the PAC please visit:

www.salemma.gov/public-art-commission/pages/calls-artists

About Artists’ Row & the PAiR Program:

Artists' Row is an incubator and public space for artists and the community to come together and celebrate public art and creativity. Featuring a restaurant and four revolving artists’ stalls, there is something for everyone to enjoy. The Artists’ Row Initiative is a seasonal program run by the City of Salem’s office of Arts & Culture that provides space for artists and artisans looking to build their audience and/or business through daily engagement with residents and visitors to Salem. The role of Public Artist in Residence on Artists’ Row is one of Community Engagement and Arts- Centered Programming through public art. This is an 8-month long paid residency opportunity for local artists that comes with access to a studio space on Artists’ Row with the goal of contributing to and enhancing the cultural vitality of Artists’ Row and the greater Salem community. www.salemma.gov/artists-row

###