

DIANA OHIOZEBAU



"Resilience" (side view)



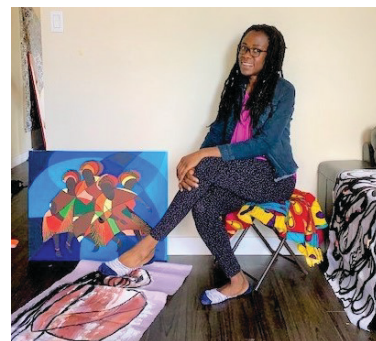
"Leaves and Vines"



"In a Place of Ease"

Diana Ohiozebau

My art bears a deep connection to my African identity and culture. Through a combination of multiple material elements, including Nigerian woven and print fabrics (Aso-oke and Aso-ebi fabrics) yarns, and acrylics, I express deeply rooted social concerns and my personal experiences. Gestures, femininity, textures, patterns, shapes and lines – straight, curving, swerving and wavy – are recurring elements in my works.



My creative method is essentially intuitive, and process led. I find fulfillment working this way as every painting becomes a somewhat unknown journey, however leads to a cohesive, meaningful, and beautiful piece. The current works in this exhibition focus on themes of self, Identity, community, reiterate the resilience of women faced with severe natural disaster, and celebration of the traditional practice of body decorations.

Each work is characterized with intuitive and free flowing lines created with acrylic paint, collaged Aso-ebi fabrics and yarn on white Aso-oke fabric. I welcome viewers to engage with the visual language and materiality of each work and find meaningful connection through the texture, patterns, colours and motifs.

Diana Ohiozebau is a British-born artist raised in Nigeria and currently lives in Edmonton. Ohiozebau received an MFA from the University of Calgary and is completing a Bachelor of Education degree at the University of Alberta. She has exhibited in Alberta and Saskatchewan, including Saskatoon Ex, Alberta Society of Artists, The Works Gallery, and the Art Gallery of St. Albert.

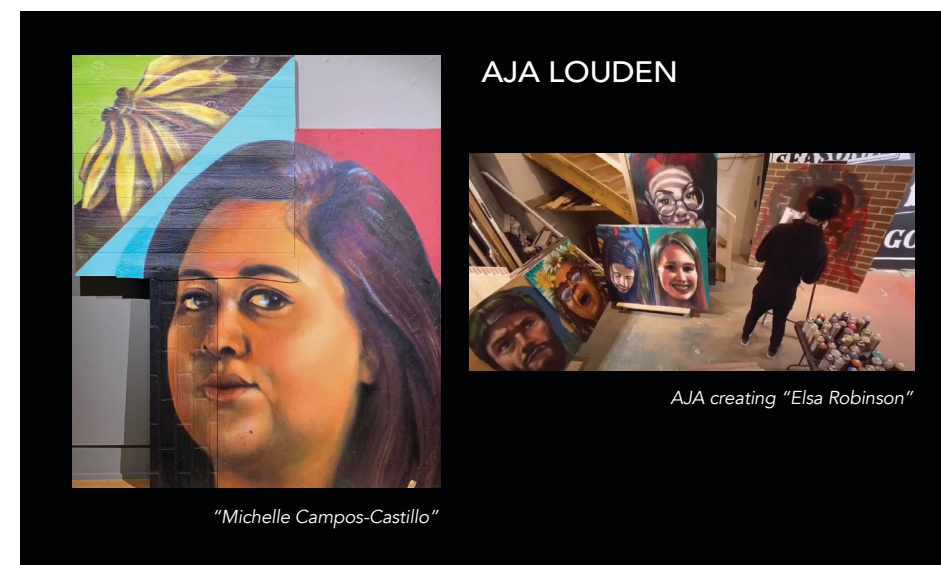
AJA Louden

The work I'm sharing for this exhibition is a celebration of two local artists who I admire and whose work and stories I believe deserve amplification - Elsa Robinson and Michelle Campos-Castillo. This is part of a body of work called 'Like Me' where I've painted portraits of well over a dozen local artists, based on low-resolution photos taken from their social media accounts with the intent of celebrating and uplifting the potent, skilled minds and hands working in and around us every day.



AJA Louden (AJA sounds like 'Ajay', short for Adrian Joseph Alexander) is an artist based in amiskwaciwâskahikan (Treaty 6, Edmonton, Alberta). Born to a family tree with roots split between Jamaica and Canada, Louden is a child of contrast. Bold and arresting freehand spray-painted portraits of pop culture figures from Jimi Hendrix and Richard Nixon to local heroes like Rollie Miles often alternate with hand-lettered designs and vibrant patterns borne of a background in graffiti. Louden looks to bring a multifaceted, collaborative, and multi-narrative approach to contemporary urban muralism.

A background in the sciences, including biology, chemistry, psychology and sociology is a major influence on the concepts and processes behind his work. A few years designing custom metal signage and a childhood full of building wooden skateboard ramps intensified AJA's interest in industrial design and the built environment. His work can be found around the province of Alberta where he lives and works. A travel lover, Louden has also created work in several other countries, including Berlin, Barcelona, Florence, Prague, and the UK.



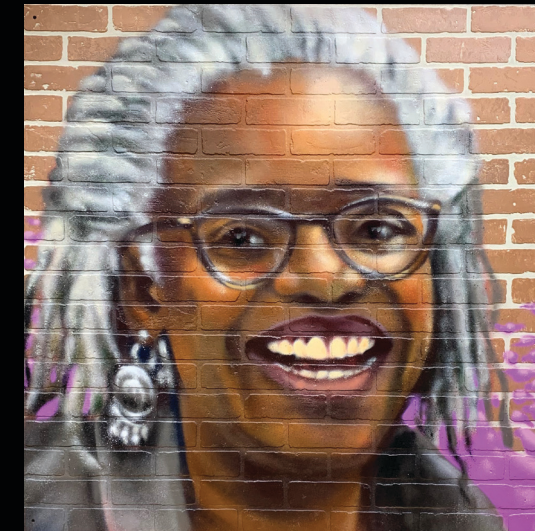
Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada



AMPLIFY

September 10 - October 30, 2021



RANEECE BUDDAN

AJA LOUDEN

DIANA OHIOZEBAU

ELSA ROBINSON

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Front Cover Image Credits (left to right):
"Elsa Robinson" by AJA Louden, "Nurture II" by Diana Ohiozebau, "Sisters" by Elsa Robinson,
and "My Skin. My Culture." by Raneece Buddan

AMPLIFY strathcona.ca/amplify

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AMPLIFY

“AMPLIFY” is an exhibit created to celebrate and amplify the voices of contemporary Alberta artists with a focus on notions of identity in their work. Four local artists who express their perspectives through portraiture and figurative artwork were chosen for this exhibition – Elsa Robinson, AJA Loudon, Diana Ohiozebau and Raneece Buddan.

Identity is a broad, complex and loaded topic. Despite global and social interconnectedness, a lack of understanding and respect for marginalized communities remain a barrier to acceptance, inclusion and equality. Identity is the way we perceive and express ourselves as individuals; it’s a complex and unique puzzle made up of our life experiences, beliefs, cultural practices, values, heritage and so much more. When we share and appreciate personal stories, we can discover commonalities that connect us and differences that inspire a deeper more nuanced understanding of the world around us.

“AMPLIFY” features a variety of portraits - of self, family, community members and general figures. The four chosen artists have used unique materials and artistic processes to create works that express personal stories, cultural influences, social concerns, celebrations of soul, struggles of human experience, expressions of family, and a search for belonging.

In conversation with these artists, one of the main underlying foundations that inspires their work is a desire to express a notion of “shared humanity”. “Shared or common humanity is the belief that we are all essentially one and the same.” (Haslam and Loughnan 2014) If we create more opportunities for everyone’s voices to be heard, we build on the conversation of humanity, connection and understanding.

Engaging with a diverse spectrum of cultural, social and political identities is what makes us grow, develop, learn, and expand within ourselves and our communities. A shared humanity is a foundation that reminds us of our fundamental wants, needs and desires; a connection that can hopefully continue to inspire the call to amplify the voices of those who need it.

Kris Miller, Gallery Curator and Lisa Rayner, Gallery Assistant



ELSA ROBINSON



Elsa Robinson

Artist Bio

Elsa Robinson is a Jamaican – Canadian Edmonton-based mixed media artist, sculptor and painter whose decades-long devotion to artistic practice has imbued her work with vibrancy, versatility and an intuitive spiritual poignancy.



She began her art career as a self-taught artist, and she now holds the degrees of Bachelor of Arts in Art and Design from the University of Alberta, and Master of Fine Arts from the Vermont College of Fine Art.

Through her years of study, Elsa has honed the ability to transmit, through a range of visual modes, her deep love and care for humanity. With careful attention to colour, shape, texture, intuition and the power of cultural symbols, Elsa is able to express the notions of love, friendship, inner strength, equality and ancestral connection that most powerfully guide her own life.

For her ability to distil, in the space of a single image, the wisdoms and experiences that are most important to the human condition, Elsa Robinson has become a celebrated and award-winning artist. Most notably, she was the recipient of the 2012 Fill Fraser Award for Outstanding Work in Visual Arts, as awarded by the National Black Coalition of Canada as well as a recipient of the Cultural Diversity in the Arts Grant from the Edmonton Arts Council in 2008, 2016, 2018 and the Individual Artist Grant in 2020. Elsa Robinson is also a passionate and experienced arts educator who facilitates workshops for artists of all ages and experience levels. Her devotion, skill, craft and spiritual fortitude has allowed her to forge a much-respected and versatile place within the artistic communities of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. She is a community builder who uses her remarkable artistry to create conversation, reflection and moments of undeniable emotional connection, wherein the humanity of the viewer, and the artist herself, is held in mutual integrity and esteem.

Artist Statement

I am a multi-media artist using acrylic paintings, mixed media collage, sculpture and installations. Using a multi-media toolkit allows for a more spontaneous expression of topics and themes. My art is informed by personal experience and the histories of my people. My work is also informed by Black Feminism, Afrofuturism and Afro-Surrealism all of which are movements for the liberation of all people from all forms of oppression.

What I offer is the gift from my heart that aims to remind you of what you already know is true, and to offer building blocks that we can use to create a better world for us now and for those to come.

As we walk this road of life, we cherish family ties and remember how these relationships strengthen us in realizing our own ‘truths’. We focus on the similarities between us and those we see as ‘other’ so that together we can solve the societal problems that impact all our lives. Let the art invite you to move beyond the illusion of separateness to realize that we are so much more the same than we are different.

If when you meet the art, you see a small part of yourself, you find a space for contemplation and self-reflection, you feel strength, peace, joy, or beauty, then the art work has accomplished its role. If each of us receives even one gem of feeling or thought from this art, then that tells us that we are a part of the common cord of humanity that we celebrate and honour.



“Inside...out”



“Black Indian”

RANEECE BUDDAN



“Study III (self portrait)”

Raneece Buddan

Born and raised in Jamaica Raneece Buddan moved to Alberta in 2015. She completed a BFA in Art and Design at the University of Alberta in 2020. In her work she focuses on her cultural identity as a Jamaican woman of African and Indo-Caribbean descent. She depicts the merging of both cultures with the use of fabric from each. The fabric is used as an additional identifier for who she is, rather than her skin tone.



Buddan works to obscure the concept that we need to look a certain way, with specific features and shade of skin tone in order to be a part of a group/race. In Jamaica as a child being mixed with another race was glorified. The silkier the hair, the “nicer” and “prettier” it is and you too in turn. This is relayed through the use of synthetic hair to signify her struggle from a young age with her attachment to her hair, intertwining it with her beauty. However, it was still not silky enough and her skin tone not light enough in order to be seen as a “real” Indian.

Buddan's process is based on material exploration and finding the figures within the grains of the wood and the clumps of clay. She sees them as being stuck between a phase of abstraction and realism; state of uncertainty. The goal of each piece she creates is to learn more about herself and celebrate the beauty and complexity of her race and culture throughout the process.