



# Press Release

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LALAContemporary & Dundas West Open Air Museum  
launch new mural “*Zion*” by Emmanuel Jarus

*Created in collaboration with The Little Portugal on Dundas BIA, Creativo Arts and the City of Toronto*

## Overview

*The organizations partnering on this public art initiative acknowledge their location on “Dish With One Spoon” Haudenosaunee Confederacy territory, which today encompasses the city of Toronto. The city has witnessed the arrival of many cultures, several of which have made the Dundas West neighbourhood their home.*

In celebration of the City of Toronto declaring 2021 the Year Public Art, LALAContemporary and The Dundas West Open Air Museum have partnered, with support from the Little Portugal on Dundas BIA, Creativo Arts, the City of Toronto and mural artist Jarus in order to create a new public art piece at the north west corner of Lansdowne Avenue.

The 30 foot high mural is part of the ongoing *When We Return* initiative, spearheaded by Claudia Lala, founder of LALAContemporary, in order to highlight the works of diverse artists from both the northern and southern hemispheres as they face the challenges of the prolonged pandemic.

This latest addition to the Public Museum is located at the LALAContemporary gallery at 1756 Dundas Street West, at the corner of Lansdowne Avenue, near the gateway to the culturally rich Little Portugal on Dundas BIA. The project marks a creative community alliance to commemorate, through visual art, the historical moment that we find ourselves in, while celebrating the persistence of artists and cultural workers as they endure these difficult times.

## Jarus

Jarus is a Toronto-based Canadian-born artist and muralist inspired by the visual human experience. Internationally-celebrated as both a contemporary muralist and figurative painter, his work reimagines how art can exist in public spaces. For the past decade, Jarus has been working with communities across Canada and around the globe to produce large-scale portraits and figures among other images on wall surfaces. His works can be found within major cities as well as across rural settings.

*“After looking at this wall for years, I am finally able to paint my work there. I chose to paint my depiction of the artist and visionary known as Zion.*

*Zion created a one-stop shop in Toronto known as The Bomb Shelter for graffiti artists and muralists to come together and connect. When the City of Toronto went on a mission to cover up our city's character and take down its graffiti, Zion fought to legitimize the art that decorates our alleys, buildings, and walls.*

*Zion visited my studio a couple months ago and reinvigorated my energy for painting and it is an honour to paint him as many members of the community have a deep love and respect for this man.” -- Emmanuel Jarus*

## When We Return - a project by LALAContemporary

"When We Return" is a multi-faceted online art and cultural project spearheaded by LALAContemporary, an independent art space based in Toronto, Canada. Claudia Lala envisions the *When We Return* initiative as a platform to support emerging artists internationally.

*"With support from the Cultural Attaché for the Canadian Embassy in Argentina "When We Return", invites artists to share their experiences of the current Covid19 situation, as well as their visions for the future. -- Claudia Lala"*

The "When We Return" initiative has become a bridge between geographically distant regions and diverse artistic communities, with an aim to encourage the exchange of ideas. Striving to create solidarity between artists, curators and communities, the ongoing initiative will foster new opportunities for these artists and communities to evolve, share and build what we hope will be a new and exciting future together.

See more info at: <https://lalacontemporary.com/when-we-return>

## A Contribution of the Dundas West Open Air Museum to the Year of Public Art

Rodrigo Ardiles, Artistic Director of the Dundas West Open Air Museum proposed to work on this mural with LALAContemporary in order to contribute to the city's Year of Public Art activities and celebrations, a follow up of the collaboration of international exchanges.

*"Zion" strengthens the "art route" established by our Museum and builds on our previous work to promote local artists and curators. The realization of a public mural by Jarus, contributes to international efforts to promote community and mental health across hemispheres in response to the emergency caused by the pandemic. It's also a beautiful artwork depicting a community leader, an example for many -- Rodrigo Ardiles.*

Culture is an important component of Toronto's economic vitality, social cohesion and livability. In view of this, the City of Toronto has a solid track record of support for the arts, including a significant collection of public art. Through sustained investment in culture, the City has reached an investment level of \$25 per capita annually since 2017. This includes a 75 per cent increase in the funding to the Toronto Arts Council since 2012.

The City delivers three public art programs: the Public Art and Monuments Collection, the Percent for Public Art Program. The programs have had a transformative effect on

Toronto's urban fabric, assembling a collection of public art that, in its scale and diversity, is of international significance.

**Ana Bailao, Deputy-Mayor, City Councillor Ward9, City of Toronto**

*"Throughout history, art is shining light in dark and challenging times. Facing very difficult times, artists across our City and around the world have still found ways to express their vision and enrich our lives. This collaborative effort is a wonderful addition to our City and in particular for our community in this the Year of Public Art in Toronto. Thank you on behalf of our community and our City for your enriching creativity as we indeed, return."*

## Community Partners

### I. Little Portugal on Dundas West BIA

The recent fusion of the DW BIA and Little Portugal BIA has established a mandate of support towards the Creative Industries development in the community. It co-articulates the Open Air Museum and prior to the pandemic, the DW Music and Arts Street Festival .

### II. Creativo Arts

An arts collective dedicated to the creation and promotion of Public Art. Established by a generation of First Nations, Refugees and Immigrants that arrived to Toronto, working in community as Artists, Curators, Producers and Cultural Agents. Co founders of the "Dundas West Open Air Public Museum", inspired by the visions, dialogue and art creation on the streets..

#WHENWERETURN #STAYHOME #STAYS SAFE #TOGETHERAPART #CANADAARGENTINA  
#QUEDATEENCASA

*Special thanks to the Landsdowne Asian Community that supported the Artist during the realization of the project. Also thanks to "One Day Creative" Agency for the audio visual registration and production assistance @onedaycreates*





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