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**THE CLAY STUDIO ANNOUNCES FALL 2021 EXHIBITION, *MAKING PLACE MATTER*, AT NEW FACILITY**

*Clay defines place and can define each of our places in the world.*

**PHILADELPHIA, PA MARCH 11, 2021** - This fall, [The Clay Studio's](#) new 34,000-square-foot home at 1425 North American Street, in the heart of Philadelphia's South Kensington neighborhood, will open its doors. Designed by [DIGSAU](#), it will be the first-of-its-kind ceramic arts facility built from the ground up in the United States. The inaugural exhibition at the new building, [Making Place Matter](#) (*Formar Tierra y Lugar* in Spanish, *للمكان أثر* in Arabic), will feature works by South Kensington-based artist [Kukuli Velarde](#) and artists [Ibrahim Said](#) and [Molly Hatch](#). The show encourages visitors to explore the meaning of place.

Even before the doors open, "place" plays an essential role in how The Clay Studio has approached their move. The Clay Studio formed an Exhibition Council that includes Kensington neighbors, artist [Cesar Viveros](#), community organizer Iris Brown, and cultural partners, including Norris Square Neighborhood Partners. Together, the Exhibition Council is building a new community-centered curatorial model for The Clay Studio.

In addition, The Clay Studio has partnered with [Tiny WPA](#) to design the Community Studio, a space in the new building for exhibition visitors to engage in hands-on art-making. The Community Studio offers space for audiences to process their exhibition experience by making art with clay. *Making Place Matter* marks the first time that The Clay Studio's hands-on offerings and the curatorial programs will be linked. The Clay Studio staff are also working with Kensington publisher, [The Head and The Hand](#) to release a *Making Place Matter* catalog. Lastly, a symposium will be held in early 2022, allowing for further discussion about the connections between clay and place.

"Place" has always been an essential theme to The Clay Studio since its inception in 1974 in Old City, Philadelphia. Over the years, The Clay Studio has grown from a collective of five artists to a thriving, diverse, and collaborative fellowship of artists, teachers, and professional staff serving 35,000 people a year. The new facility will continue to deepen relationships between The Clay Studio and the South Kensington community. Over the last 25 years, The Clay Studio has engaged and formed long-lasting relationships within South Kensington through its children-focused [Claymobile program](#). In recent years, educational programming has expanded in the neighborhood to include artist-led workshops, classes, and discussions to better understand culture and place.

Recognizing that South Kensington is a culturally rich community experiencing the turmoil of rapid gentrification, the idea of "place" has taken on critical importance as The Clay Studio seeks to envision its future in its new home. The Clay Studio will expand its services and spaces by 67 percent in the new facility, paving the way for unlimited new possibilities for studio art, arts education, and community

engagement. Larger classrooms, state-of-the-art studios, an outdoor sculpture garden, a rooftop garden, and luminous new gallery spaces will meet the increased demand by students, artists, and visitors.

For Kukuli Velarde, Ibrahim Said, and Molly Hatch, this new space will offer the chance to connect with visitors on a personal level. Each *Making Place Matter* artist – Velarde, Said, and Hatch – will hold two-week residencies at The Clay Studio, offering audiences direct access to the artists in relation to their work.

"*Making Place Matter* launches a new era for The Clay Studio," says Executive Director Jennifer Martin. "By linking these powerful works that weave together personal history, cultural legacy, and social justice with hands-on experiences with clay, we can inspire transformative experiences in our new space."

The exhibition draws on stories from three continents; issues of colonization, a generations-long family ritual of making, and an ancestral immigration story.

Peruvian-born Kukuli Velarde is a longtime resident of the South Kensington neighborhood where The Clay Studio is making their home. Her Incan-inspired sculptures take the form of babies that channel fragility, power, and tenderness all at once.

With skills passed down from his father's work in a centuries-old Egyptian pottery town, Ibrahim Said's intricate lattice-like geometry is inspired by the traditional Islamic *mashrabiya*, an architectural screen that merges decoration and function. In Said's hands, these slender pierced ceramic panels twist and bend into awe-inspiring sculpture.

Also drawing on her ancestral heritage, Molly Hatch's grand-scale "plate paintings" take historical patterns – often from porcelain plates – as their source. Seamlessly merging the past with the present, Hatch enlarges traditional ornament, mixing her sources until they are vaulted into near- abstraction.

For photos of the new facility and the artists in *Making Place Matter*, please click [HERE](#). Learn more by visiting [theclaystudio.org](http://theclaystudio.org).

*Making Place Matter* has been supported by [The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage](#).

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### ***About The Clay Studio***

*The Clay Studio is a nonprofit arts organization with internationally renowned artist residency programs, classes and events, exhibitions, community engagement programs, a shop, and more. They serve as a place where established, and emerging artists come to shape their careers, a vital resource for arts education at local schools and community organizations, and a destination where people from all walks of life can explore the vast world of clay. Visit [theclaystudio.org](http://theclaystudio.org) for more information.*