

**THE CLAY STUDIO ANNOUNCES SPRING 2022 EXHIBITION, *MAKING PLACE MATTER*
HOSTED IN THEIR NEW SOUTH KENSINGTON FACILITY**

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

PHILADELPHIA, PA, January 10, 2022 – [Making Place Matter](#) is an ambitious and experimental exhibition, symposium, and publication that will accompany the opening of [The Clay Studio](#)'s newly built home located in Philadelphia's Kensington neighborhood at 1425 North American Street. In Spring 2022, The Clay Studio will enter into a new chapter of its nearly 50-year history, with the concept of 'place' taking on critical importance as the organization grows into its new home. Larger classrooms, state-of-the-art studios, an outdoor sculpture garden, a rooftop event space, and luminous new gallery spaces will meet the increased demand from students, artists, and visitors. Just as significant, building a resonant conversation between clay, artists, and audiences in the new gallery, *Making Place Matter* is organized around the complex meanings of place in our contemporary social conversation.

Using clay and cultural heritage as a source of inspiration, [Making Place Matter](#) will feature Philadelphia based Peruvian-born artist [Kukuli Velarde](#), American-born, Massachusetts-based artist [Molly Hatch](#), and Egyptian American artist [Ibrahim Said](#), now based in North Carolina. Each artist explores the idea of place with regard to personal history, cultural heritage, and social justice. Clay is the material embodiment of place. Made of the earth we stand on, clay has the capacity to articulate cultural perspectives, social engagement, and artistic intentions. By using clay as a means to investigate place, *Making Place Matter* will create powerful tools to share with the new and established community, creating a feeling of belonging within the gallery for The Clay Studio's various constituencies.

Kukuli Velarde's *A Mi Vida* project includes a sculptural installation, painting, performance, and off-site interventions. The series focuses on the artist's desire to prolong the sensation of holding her now elementary-age daughter Vida in her arms as a baby. It also embodies her anguish at the family separation at the U.S. - Mexico border. Like many of Velarde's works, these clay sculptures entangle reality and dreamscape, blending influences from contemporary life and ancient indigenous Peruvian imagery and patterning.

With skills passed down from his father's work in a centuries-old Egyptian pottery town, **Ibrahim Said's** 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 the awe-inspiring sculpture, *On the Bank of the Nile*.

Also drawing on her ancestral heritage, **Molly Hatch's** grand-scale "plate paintings" take historical patterns – often from porcelain plates – as their source. Hatch seamlessly merges the past into the present as she enlarges historical ornament, vaulting it into near-abstraction.

For the artists, the exhibition will allow them to connect with visitors on a personal level. Each *Making Place Matter* artist will hold weeks-long residencies at The Clay Studio building, offering audiences direct access to the artists in relation to their work.

As a forthcoming member of a culturally rich neighborhood experiencing the turmoil of rapid gentrification, The Clay Studio will work to demonstrate its commitment to be a positive force within this changing environment. *Making Place Matter* will thoughtfully advance The Clay Studio's founding principles: collaboration and creative expression.

Even before the new facility's doors open, "place" has played an essential role in how The Clay Studio has approached its move. The organization formed an Exhibition Council that includes 15 Kensington neighbors, including artist [Cesar Viveros](#), community organizer Iris Brown, current artists at The Clay Studio, and cultural partners, including [Norris Square Neighborhood Project](#) and [Taller Puertorriqueño](#). Together, the Exhibition Council is exploring ways to create a welcoming and meaningful space for every visitor.

The Clay Studio has partnered with Philadelphia organization [Tiny WPA](#) to design furniture for the gallery for visitors to contemplate the exhibition. The Community Studio offers space for audiences to reflect on the show by making their own art with clay. *Making Place Matter* marks the first time The Clay Studio's hands-on offerings and the curatorial programs are linked. The Clay Studio staff are working with Kensington publisher, [The Head and The Hand](#) on the *Making Place Matter* exhibition catalog. Lastly, a symposium will catalyze the connections between clay and place. Generous funding from the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage has made the many aspects of this project possible.

"*Making Place Matter* launches a new curatorial framework for The Clay Studio's exhibition program," says Curator and Director of Artistic Programs Jennifer Zwilling. Co-Curator Elizabeth Essner adds that "By linking these powerful works that weave together personal history, cultural legacy, and social justice with hands-on experiences with clay, we hope to inspire transformative experiences in the new building."

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About The Clay Studio's New Home

This spring, The Clay Studio's new 34,000-square-foot home at 1425 North American Street will open in the heart of Philadelphia's South Kensington neighborhood. Initially slated for winter 2021, nationwide supply chain shortages have delayed the completion of construction until April 2022. The new building, now nearing completion, will allow The Clay Studio to expand its services and spaces by 67 percent, paving the way for vast new possibilities for studio art, arts education, and community engagement. The facility, designed by [DIGSAU](#), will be the first-of-its-kind ceramic arts facility built from the ground up in the United States. A new architectural landmark, its brick facade was inspired by clay's creative possibilities.

"Place" has been an essential theme to The Clay Studio since its inception in 1974 in Old City, Philadelphia, as a space for shared creativity around clay. 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. Over the last 25 years, The Clay Studio has engaged and formed long-lasting relationships across Philadelphia through its children-focused [Claymobile program](#). In recent years, educational programming has expanded in South Kensington to

include artist-led workshops, classes, and discussions to better understand culture and place. The new facility will deepen relationships between The Clay Studio and the South Kensington community.

For photos of the new facility and the artists in *Making Place Matter*, please click [HERE](#).

Learn more by visiting www.theclaystudio.org.

Major funding for *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 every neighborhood in Philadelphia and all over the world can explore the vast world of clay. Visit theclaystudio.org for more information.

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