

surrey
art gallery

TEACHERS GUIDE

I see; I breathe; I am!

Concealed Cultures: Visualizing the Black Vernacular

Curated by Arshi Chadha, Olumoroti (Moroti) Soji-George, and Vanessa Fajemisin

IDENTITY | CULTURE | COMMUNITY



WITH BIG IDEAS & CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Olúwásolá Kéhindé Olówó-Aké, *Ahọn Dudu*, 2021, photograph. Photo by Ariella Ilona.

Dear Teachers,

This guide is a classroom resource designed to support teachers and students attending the exhibitions *I see; I breathe; I am!* and *Concealed Cultures: Visualizing the Black Vernacular* on display at Surrey Art Gallery from September 17 to December 11, 2022.

Teachers Guide contains exhibit information, as well as an activity that will help prepare your students for their Gallery visit and engage them in classroom discussion afterwards.

The Art Encounter Workshop offered at the Gallery considered the theme of individual's identity and culture. The focused activity highlights how individual's identity interconnects with culture and community through storytelling.

Terms & concepts, discussion points, a resource section, and connections to the BC Education Curriculum in the area of Arts Education, from grades K–12 are also provided in this guide.

We hope that you enjoy using this guide to engage with the exhibition and create art with students in your classroom.

Sincerely,
Jinsil Haveliwalla, School Programmer

This Teachers Guide was created with contributions from Surrey Art Gallery staff including: Community Programs Coordinator Cecily Nicholson, School Programmer Jinsil Haveliwalla, Artist-Educator Claire Cilliers, Volunteer Program Coordinator Chris Dawson-Murphy, Visual Arts Programmer Lindsay McArthur, Communications Coordinator Charlene Back, Curator of Exhibitions and Collections Jordan Strom, and Director Alison Rajah.

ABOUT SURREY ART GALLERY

Surrey Art Gallery showcases diverse contemporary art practices including digital and sound art exhibits renowned local, national, and international artists.

Surrey Art Gallery's mission is to engage the public in an ongoing dialogue about issues and ideas that affect our numerous communities as expressed through contemporary art, and to provide opportunities for the public to interact with artists and the artistic process.

To receive announcements about exhibitions and related events at the Gallery, sign up for our e-newsletters at www.surrey.ca/arts-signup. The City of Surrey also has an e-newsletter specifically for teachers called Teachers in the Know: www.surrey.ca/arts-news.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The Gallery's school programs develop an appreciation, understanding, and excitement about contemporary art. Visit the Gallery's website to learn about our school programs and the resources that we offer for teachers: www.surrey.ca/galleryeducation.



Odera Igbokwe, *The Spirit Child*, 2020,
oils and acrylic on board.

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ABOUT THE EXHIBITIONS

I see; I breath; I am!

September 17 – December 11, 2022

This exhibition, curated by the Black Arts Centre, features artists Nancy Ainomugisha and Olúwásolá Kéhindé Olówó-Aké. It builds on the theme of plurality of Blackness presented in *Concealed Cultures: Visualizing the Black Vernacular*. Going beyond the theme of representation, Ainomugisha and Kéhindé use storytelling, photography, and film to expand the conversation on how society interprets Blackness. A thought-provoking dialogue emerges from the personal narratives of these two artists that highlights the multifaceted nature of the Black female and femme experience.

Concealed Cultures: Visualizing the Black Vernacular

September 17 – December 11, 2022

This exhibition connects seven artists (Oluseye Ogunlesi, Karice Mitchell, Fegor Obuwoma, Clancy Ngolah, Odera Igbokwe, Michèle Bygodt, and Nura Ali) through a desire to make visible the specificities of language that emerge as a result of lived experiences in the diasporic world. The representation of Blackness is understood in this exhibition as a means of communication interpreted through storytelling and portraiture. These stories unfold and interweave with one another through film, photography, and printmaking amongst other media, deepening a consideration of how community is visualized with agency. Bringing together themes of community, language, racial violence, voyeurism, spirituality, Black agency, erasure, and cultural reconnection, *Concealed Cultures* is meant to be expansive.

The Black Arts Centre is a Black youth-owned and operated Gallery and community site. The space is located at Surrey Central Station and is scheduled to open in 2023. Arshi Chadha, Olumoroti (Moroti) Soji-George, and Vanessa Fajemisi are curated the group exhibition *Concealed Cultures: Visualizing the Black Vernacular*.

Read more about the exhibitions online: surrey.ca/artgallery



Olúwásolá Kéhindé Olówó-Aké, *Ahọn Dudu*, 2021, photograph. Photo by Ariella Ilona.

FOCUSED ACTIVITY: STORYTELLING THROUGH ART

WHAT STORY DO YOU WANT TO TELL?

THEME: IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY

OBJECTIVES

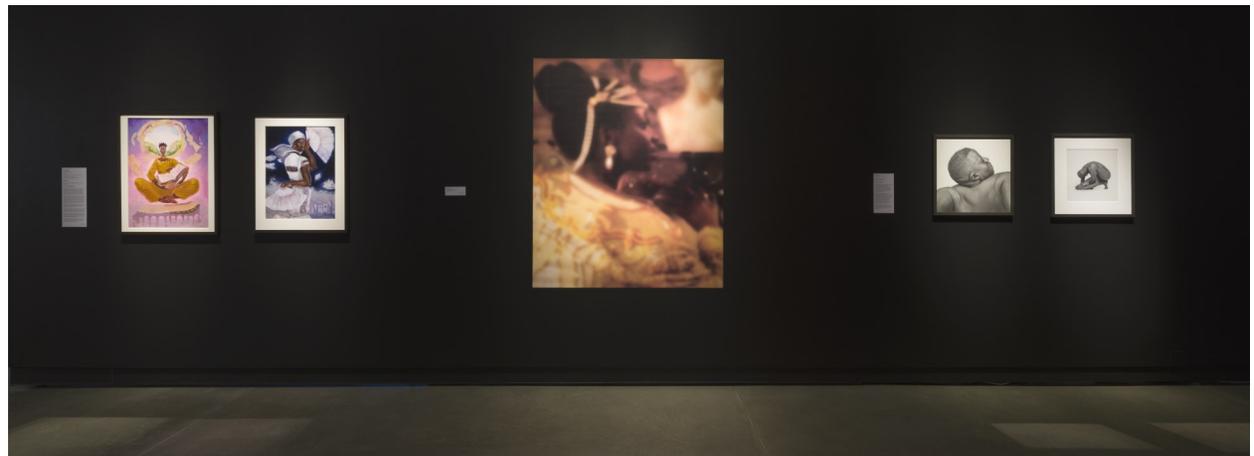
This activity examines key ideas—identity, culture, and community—addressed in the exhibitions *I see; I breathe; I am!* and *Concealed Cultures: Visualizing the Black Vernacular*. Students will develop a deeper understanding of identity, culture, and community while empowering each other to learn about themselves and others. Through storytelling, students will practice how to tell their own stories and also listen to others' about the communities they live in together.

ACTIVITY

- Students will create a story cube using visual art and literacy strategies to practice flexible and original thinking.

BIG IDEAS FROM BC CURRICULUM

- People connect to others and share ideas through the arts (Art Education, Grade 1)
- Exploring works of art exposes us to diverse values, knowledge, and perspectives (Arts Education, Grade 4)
- Works of art influence and are influenced by the world around us (Art Education, Grade 5)



Concealed Cultures: Visualizing the Black Vernacular, 2022 at Surrey Art Gallery. Photo by Dennis Ha.

FOCUSED ACTIVITY: STORYTELLING THROUGH ART

WHAT STORY DO YOU WANT TO TELL? CONTINUED...

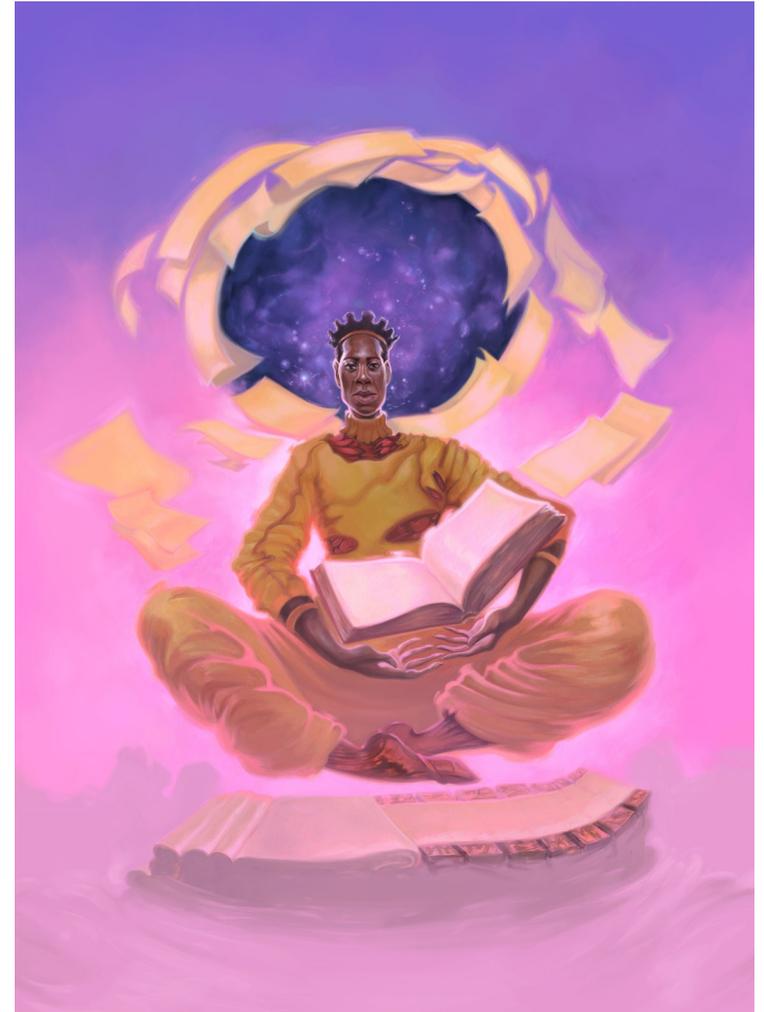
THEME: IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY

DISCUSSION

Invite students to reflect on and share their experiences visiting Surrey Art Gallery and the art exhibitions *I see; I breathe; I am!* and *Concealed Cultures: Visualizing the Black Vernacular*. Discuss what stood out to them about the exhibitions.

Through expanding the conversation on awareness and understanding of the diversity (diverse identity) that exists within our society; differences that are sometimes visible (e.g., race, ethnicity, sex, age, physical ability) and differences that are less visible (e.g., culture, ancestry, language, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic background, mental ability), introduce students to the concepts of identity, culture, and community.

Discuss further with students that culture is the shared characteristics of a group of people, which encompasses, place of birth, religion, language, cuisine, social behaviors, art, literature, and music. Some cultures are widespread, and have a large number of people who associate themselves with those particular values, beliefs, and origins. Others are relatively small, with only a small number of people who associate themselves with that culture. However, the value of culture cannot be defined by its size. No matter if a culture is widespread or kept within a small region, is young or old, or has changed over time or stayed the same, every culture can teach us about ourselves, others, and the global community.



Odera Igbokwe, *The Griot*, 2020, oils and acrylic on board.

FOCUSED ACTIVITY: STORYTELLING THROUGH ART

WHAT STORY DO YOU WANT TO TELL? CONTINUED...

THEME: IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY



DISCUSSION CONTINUED...

Artists tell stories through their work. Stories are not only entertaining, they help us learn. Olúwásolá Kéhìndé Olówó-Aké's *Ahọn Dudu* tells the story of her experience navigating her identity in the diasporic world as a Nigerian woman and recounts her experience with the lack of Black communal culture in a community she was part of in Vancouver. Borrowing from the framework of Yorùbá storytelling and Nigerian folktales, the story takes with added elements of oral storytelling, poetry, song, dance, performance, and garments.

The following storytelling activity will encourage students to understand others' identities, cultures, and communities and help to build an environment with empathy and respect.

INTRODUCTION

- Introduce the class to Olúwásolá Kéhìndé Olówó-Aké's *Ahọn Dudu* performance video clips (links are in the Online Resource, page 12) and the concept of storytelling.
- Ask students to collect the fables, folktales, or traditional stories from their culture with support from family, relatives, or community elders (allow students 2-3 days to bring their stories they would like to share).
- In small group, students can share their stories in any form they feel comfortable with including written, oral, visual, or performative.

Nancy Ainomugisha, *An Ode to my Mother*, 2021/2022, digitally manipulated photograph on aluminum.

STORYTELLING

The Five Ws and One H

- Who is it about?
- What happened?
- When did it take place?
- Where did it take place?
- Why did it happen?
- How did it happen?

FOCUSED ACTIVITY: STORYTELLING THROUGH ART

WHAT STORY DO YOU WANT TO TELL? CONTINUED...

THEME: IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY

INSTRUCTIONS

- Tell the students that they are going to play a game and work together to tell a story.
- Talk to students about their stories and ask them—What makes an engaging story? What does every good story need?
- Discuss with students that story has characters (people or animals who are in the story), settings (places where the story happens), and action (things that characters do).
- Have students brainstorm ideas for their stories: who will be in the story, what will they do, and where they will be?
- Have students to create a story using the five Ws and one H (who, what, where, when, why, and how).
- Ask students to report back on their ideas. You might want to record their ideas on the white board so that they can reference them later.
- Distribute the story cubes worksheets.
- Have students draw the pictures from their stories on each side of the story cubes and colour them using colour pencils.
- Have students cut out the template and fold and paste into cubes.
- Students to work in small groups of 2–3.
- Explain that the story cubes they created are going to help them to create a story together.
- Have students roll all the cubes in the centre of the table and then working in a circle one at a time, have them use the pictures to tell a story.
- Give the students a few minutes to tell their stories. Encourage them to use 5 Ws and one H that they brainstormed earlier to make the stories flow.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- * Story cube worksheets
- * Pencils
- * Coloured pencils
- * Erasers
- * Scissors
- * Glue stick

FOCUSED ACTIVITY: STORYTELLING THROUGH ART

WHAT STORY DO YOU WANT TO TELL?

THEME: IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY

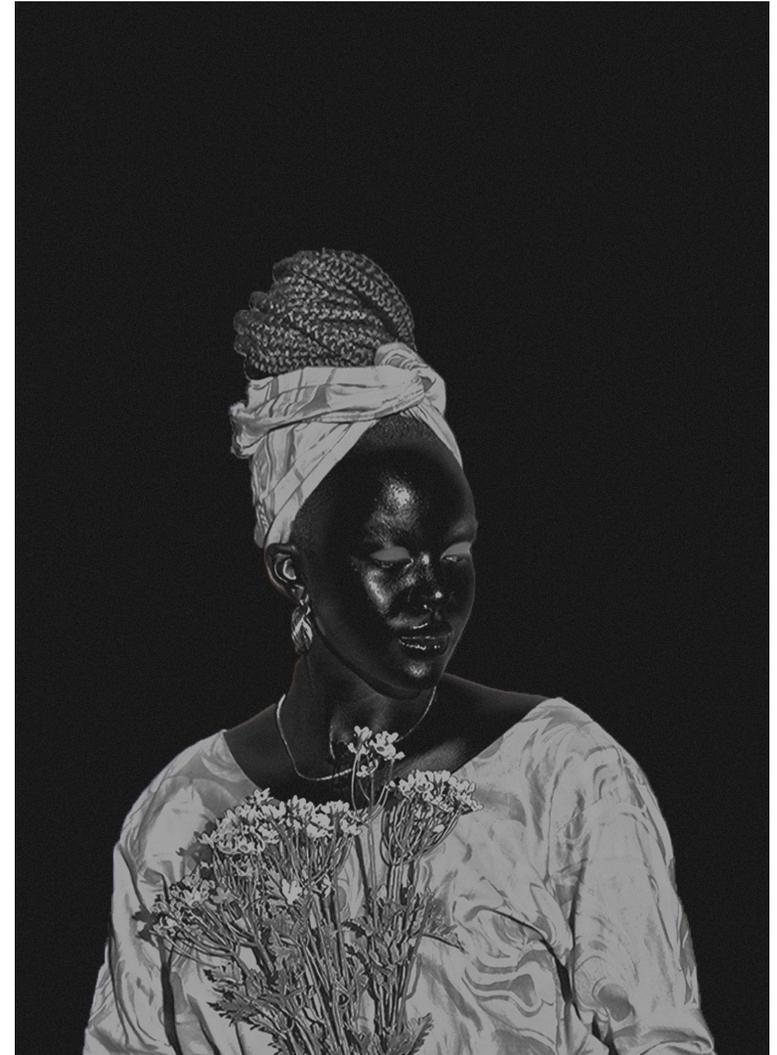
REFLECTION

Upon completion of their storytelling through creating a story cube, students can write a brief artist statement responding to the following questions.

- What is the title of your artwork?
- What story do you want to tell?

EXTENSION

Have students write a short description of their stories focusing on shared cultures. After listening and discussing each group's work, exhibit the students' artwork in the classroom.



Nancy Ainomugisha, *An Ode to my Mother*, 2021/2022, digitally manipulated photograph on aluminum.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS FOR SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Participating in a guided tour, studio workshop, or self-guided tour in conjunction with the exhibitions supports Big Ideas and Learning Standards in the British Columbia Arts Education Curriculum for grades K–12. The exhibitions can be used as a touchstone for discussion relating to themes and concepts addressed in a variety of curricular areas.

K–12 ARTS EDUCATION CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

Students will be able to use creative processes to create and respond to the arts:

KINDERGARTEN–GRADE 2

- Explore elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, and techniques of the arts
- Explore artistic expressions of themselves and community through creative processes
- Reflect on creative processes and make connections to other experiences
- Interpret how symbols are used through the arts
- Express feelings, ideas, stories, observations, and experiences through the arts
- Experience, document, and share creative works in a variety of ways
- People create art to express who they are as individuals and community

GRADES 3–4

- The arts connect our experiences to the experiences of others
- Reflect on creative processes and make connections to personal experiences
- Explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through arts experiences
- Explore relationships among cultures, societies, and the arts

GRADES 5–7

- Works of art influence and are influenced by the world around us
- Engaging in creative expression and experiences expands people’s sense of identity and belonging
- Explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through arts experiences

GRADES 8–9

- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts
- Develop, refine ideas, and critically appraise ideas, processes, and technical skills in a variety of art forms to improve the quality of artistic creation

GRADES 10–12

- Create artistic works that demonstrate personal, cultural, and historical contexts
- Purposeful artistic choices enhance the depth and impact of an artistic work
- Express meaning, intent, and emotion through visual art
- Intentionally select and combine materials, processes, and technologies to convey ideas and justify choices

TERMS & CONCEPTS

Concealed: kept out of sight or hidden from view.

Culture: the arts, beliefs, religion, language, institutions, and other products of human work and thought of a particular period, class, community, or population.

Cultural Diversity: the quality of diverse or different cultures, as opposed to a monoculture.

Diaspora: the group of people who have moved away from an established or ancestral homeland.

Folktale: a traditional story that people of a particular region or group repeat among themselves.

Form (object): the visible shape or configuration of something.

Installation: a 3-dimensional artwork—sometimes consisting of various elements—that alters the way a space is experienced.

Language: a system of communication used by people living in particular

Identity: the way we perceive ourselves. Factors and conditions that an individual is born with, such as ethnic heritage, gender, or one's body, often play a role in defining one's identity.

Medium: the physical material or method used to convey ideas to audiences through the senses.

Narrative: a story or account of events or experiences, true or fictional. A narrative artwork represents stories or events pictorially or sculpturally.

Performance: the action of engaging other people by dancing, singing, acting, or playing music.

Photography: the art or process of capturing images by recording light or other electromagnetic radiation using electric (i.e. image sensor in a digital camera) or chemical means (i.e. light-sensitive film).

Portrait: a work of art that represents a person's physical appearance and/or aspects of an individual's personality.

Representational: an artwork is representational when it shows a recognizable object such as a human figure, a place, or an object that exists in the real world.

Storytelling: the activity of writing, telling, or reading stories.

Symbol: a sign, shape, image, or object that is used to express or represent a particular idea or quality.

Text: written words in a poem, book, magazine, etc.

Vernacular: the language or dialect that is most widely spoken by people in a region or country.

Video: the recording, reproducing, or display of moving visual images using a video camera.

Yorùbá: a language spoken by the Yorùbá people of West Africa, especially in south-west Nigeria.

MEDIA COVERAGE & THE EXHIBITION

Emily Carr University of Art & Design

- <https://www.ecuad.ca/news/2022/black-arts-centre-shows-surrey-art-gallery>

Stir Arts & culture

- <https://www.createastir.ca/articles/black-arts-centre-surrey-art-gallery>

West Coast Curated

- <https://westcoastcurated.com/visualizing-the-black-vernacular-at-surrey-art-gallery/>

Canada Today

- <https://canadatoday.news/bc/the-black-arts-center-group-is-showing-concealed-cultures-at-the-surrey-art-gallery-this-autumn-peace-arch-news-48407/>

Radio Canada

- <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/tele/le-telejournal-colombie-britannique/site/segments/reportage/416873/surrey-art-communaute-africaine-noire-afro> <https://www.surrey.ca/news-events/events/film-screening-and-art-performance> <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-43-north-by-northwest/clip/15937949-saturday-september-17-2022>

ABOUT Olúwásolá Kéhìndé Olówó-Aké

Ahọn Dudu's Story (1): DnayaI

- <https://ecuad.arcabc.ca/islandora/object/ecuad%3A17307>

Ahọn Dudu's Story (2): Fasad Dafasiti

- <https://ecuad.arcabc.ca/islandora/object/ecuad%3A17308>

Ahọn Dudu's Story (3): bọs glas

- <https://ecuad.arcabc.ca/islandora/object/ecuad%3A17309>

Egba Mi (Ahọn Dudu's song)- dnayaI

- <https://ecuad.arcabc.ca/islandora/object/ecuad%3A17282>

Run and Leave Us (the people's song) - fasad dafasiti

- <https://ecuad.arcabc.ca/islandora/object/ecuad%3A17291>

Oya o [Ahọn Dudu pleads with the King]- bọs glas

- <https://ecuad.arcabc.ca/islandora/object/ecuad%3A17296>

Retelling Ahọn Dudu I Oluwasola Kehinde Olowo-Ake

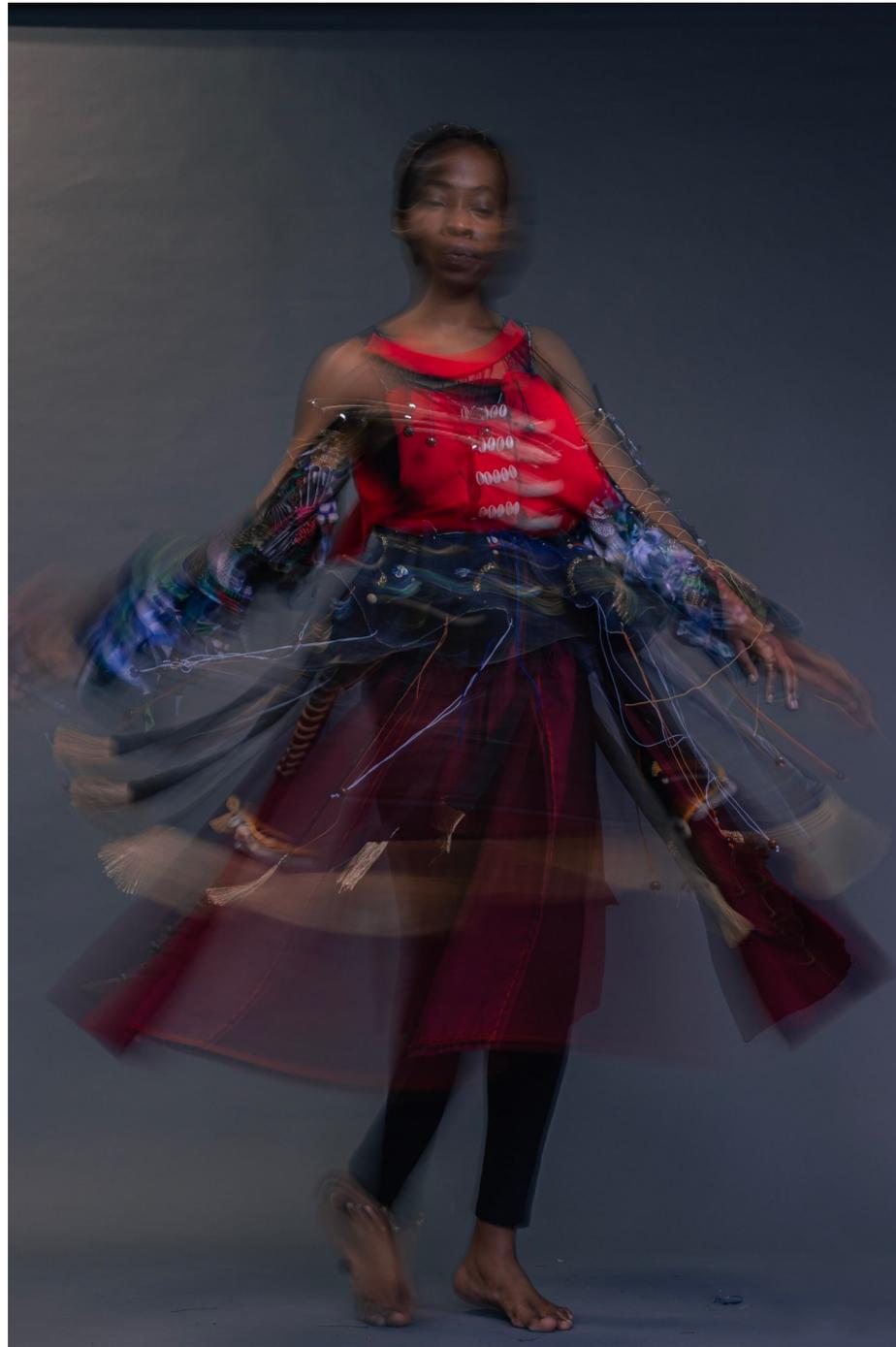
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Agu5qUtx0G4>

IMAGE GALLERY



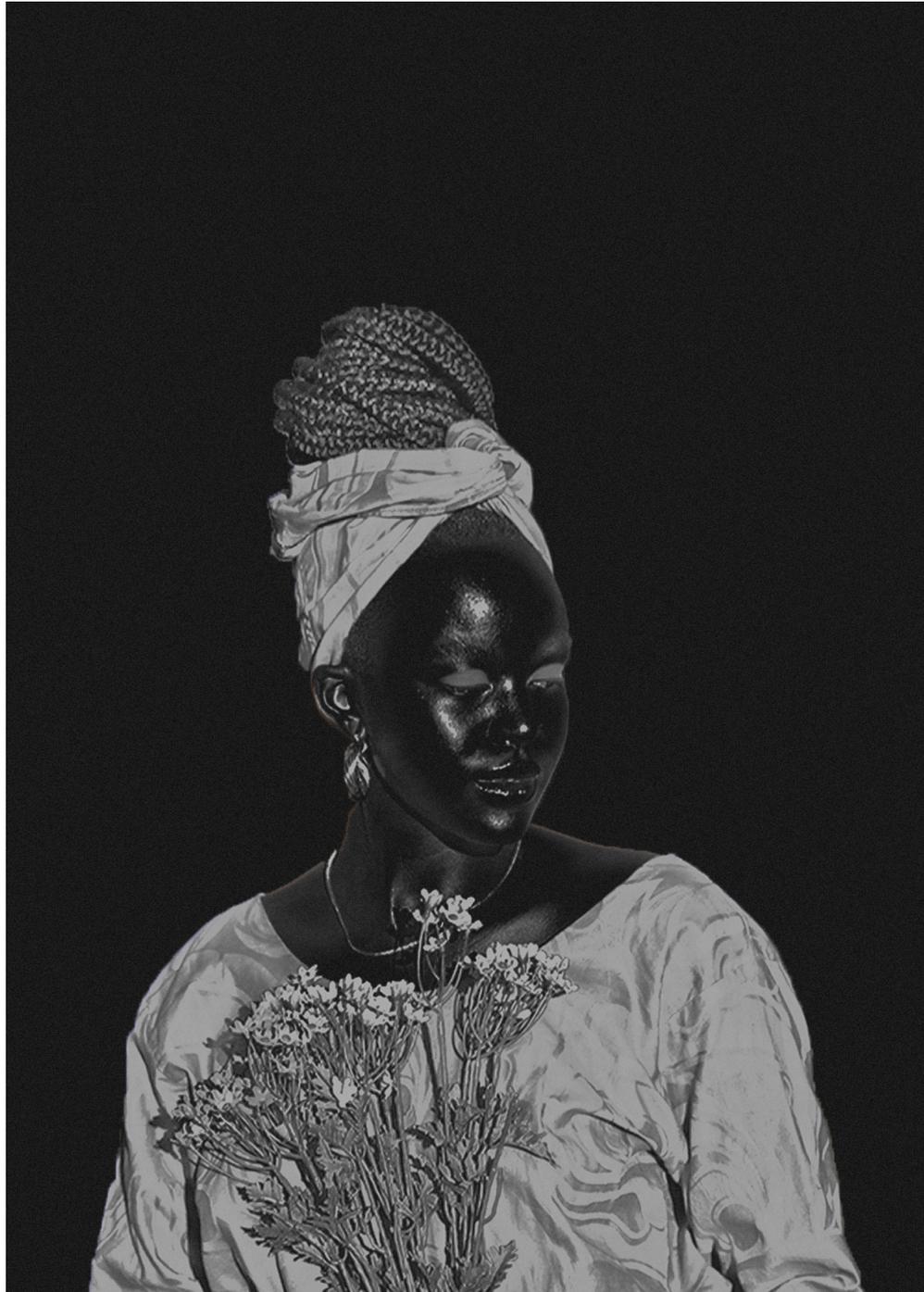
Olúwásolá Kéhindé Olówó-Aké, *Aḡon Dudu*, photograph, 2021. Photo by Ariella Ilona.

IMAGE GALLERY



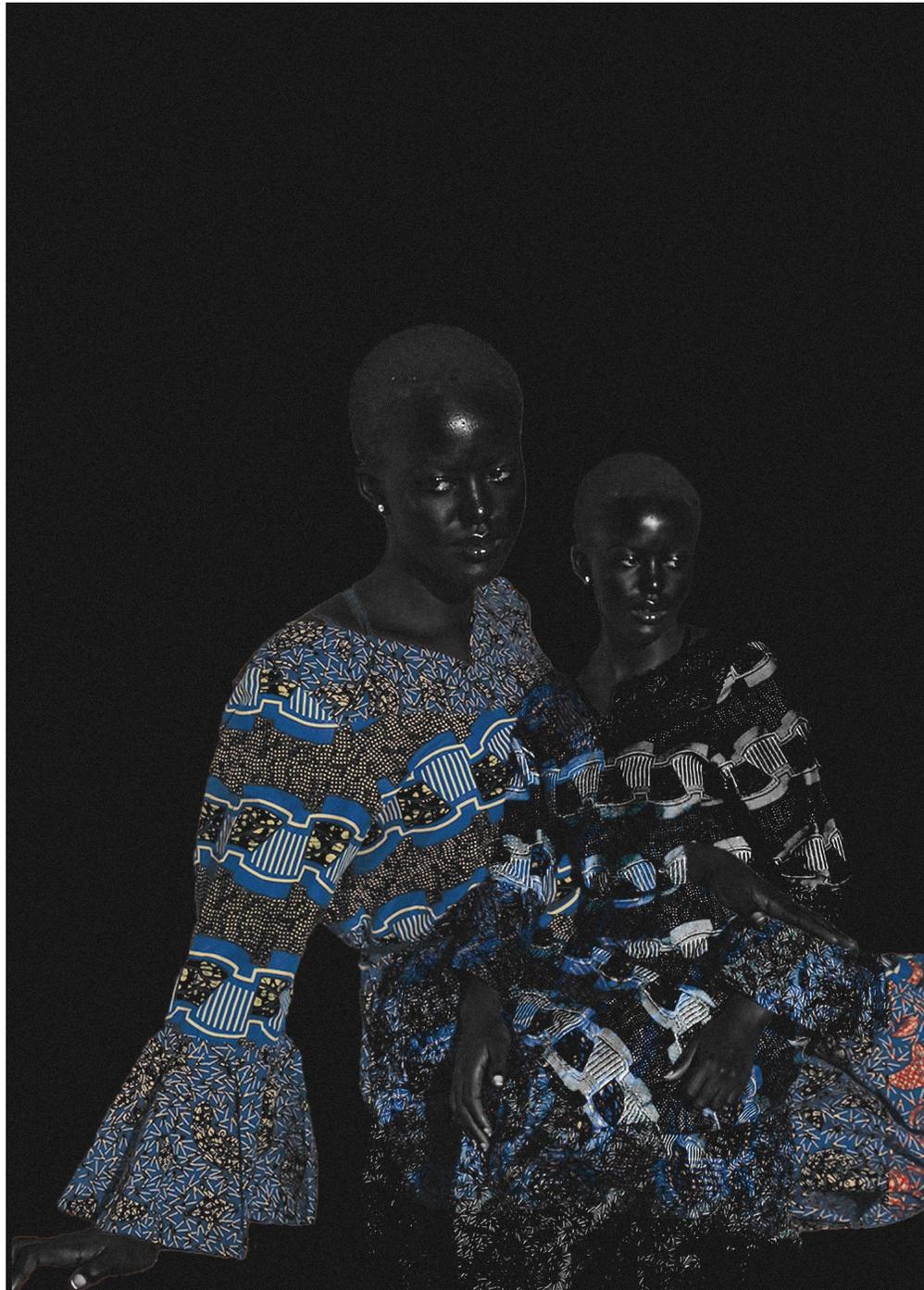
Olúwásolá Kéhìndé Olówó-Aké, *Ahọn Dudu*, photograph, 2021. Photo by Ariella Ilona.

IMAGE GALLERY



Nancy Ainomugisha, *An Ode to my Mother*, 2021/2022, photography.

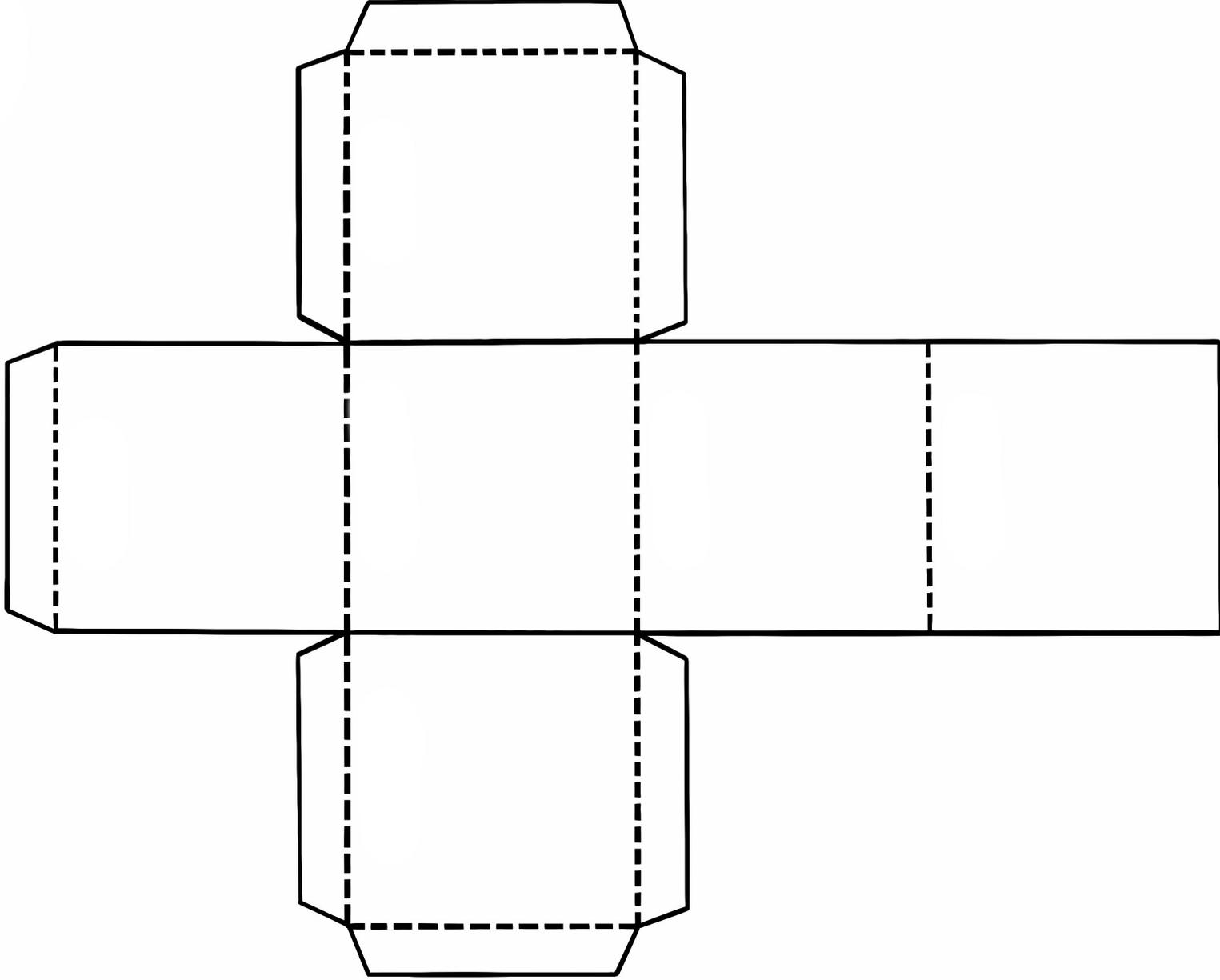
IMAGE GALLERY



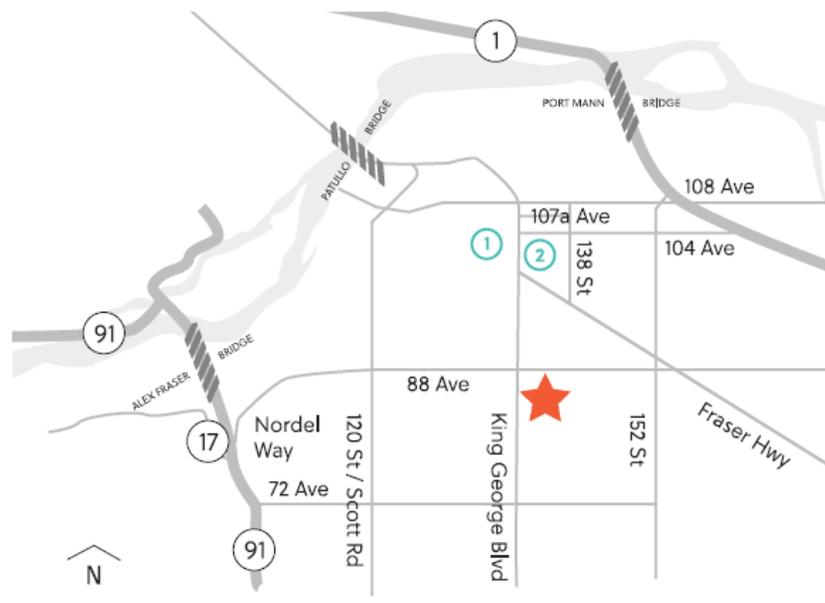
Nancy Ainomugisha, *An Ode to my Mother*, 2021/2022, photography.

Story Cube

Cut on solid lines – Fold on dotted lines



INFORMATION / MAP



 **SURREY ART GALLERY / SURREY ARTS CENTRE**
13750 88 AVE IN BEAR CREEK PARK

SKYTRAIN STATIONS
1 SURREY CENTRAL (FOR CITY HALL, LIBRARY, & 96 B-LINE OR 321 BUS TO SURREY ARTS CENTRE)
2 KING GEORGE (TO CATCH 96 B-LINE OR 321 BUS TO SURREY ARTS CENTRE)

- 40 minute drive from downtown Vancouver
- 2 km walk from King George Station
- Catch the R1 Newton Exchange or 321 bus at Surrey Central Station and get off on King George Hwy at 88 Ave.

SURREY ART GALLERY

13750 88 Avenue
Surrey, BC V3W 3L1

604-501-5566
artgallery@surrey.ca
surrey.ca/artgallery

GALLERY HOURS

Tues, Wed, Thurs: 9am–9pm
Fri: 9am–5pm
Sat: 10am–5pm
Sun: Noon–5pm

Closed on Mondays & holidays

Admission by donation

SIGN UP FOR OUR E-NEWSLETTERS

Visit surrey.ca/arts-signup to receive Gallery exhibition and program updates.