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The Power Plant and CAMH deliver over 50 art workshops for patients throughout the pandemic

The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery and The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health have worked together to deliver more than 50 art workshops for patients in Toronto since 2020. Funded by Ontario Trillium Foundation as part of its Expanding Access grant, the in-person workshops and gallery tours were conducted by Toronto-based artist and The Power Plant Teaching Artist, Niloufar Salimi and The Power Plant team, and have continued online throughout the pandemic.

The activities were initially inspired by contemporary artists exhibiting at The Power Plant such as by Miriam Cahn, Nathan E. Carson, Manuel Mathieu and Howie Tsui. They have since included teaching wider creative skills in watercolour, drawing, clay and other mediums.

The Power Plant is a free contemporary art gallery on Toronto’s harbourfront, but it recognises that there are still many barriers to accessing contemporary art in the city, especially during the pandemic. These workshops aim to build confidence in the
participants’ creative skills, encourage conversation about visual art and combat feelings of isolation.

The Power Plant Director & Artistic Director Gaëtane Verna said, “This collaboration with CAMH is a crucial part of our outreach program to our communities at The Power Plant, especially during the pandemic when there have been heightened concerns about addiction and mental health.”

“The workshop came at a crucial time when many felt disconnected, lonely, and had little to do. Clients craved an outlet for creative expressions. This group not only allowed participants to develop and improve their art skills but also provided an opportunity to socialize and connect with others. Weekly sessions permitted clients to engage in enjoyable and meaningful activity and establish a feeling of belonging. Many clients spoke to me about the positive outcomes that this group brought to them and everyone involved agreed that Nilou is an amazing artist and teacher,” said Regina Wasalinska, Recreation Therapist, Mood & Anxiety Services, CAMH.

“Nilou and the special program arranged through CAMH headed by Regina Wasalinska have been a life saver for me. At one of the lowest points in my life, the program has helped lift my spirits. The ability to spend time with others in a similar situation helped tremendously with the loneliness I was battling. The art class itself is beautifully facilitated and gave me something to look forward to in my week. I am extremely grateful for the support this program offers,” said a workshop participant that chose to remain anonymous.

The Power Plant will be opening its Winter 2022 season on 5 February 2022 with three solo exhibitions by Sasha Huber, Shona Illingworth and Toronto-based Sandra Brewster.
The works of these three women artists will serve as the inspiration for new creative workshops with CAMH.

The two organizations are currently seeking funding to continue the workshops beyond February 2022.

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About The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is Canada's largest mental health teaching hospital and one of the world's leading research centres in its field. CAMH is fully affiliated with the University of Toronto and is a Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization Collaborating Centre. With a dedicated staff of more than 3,000 physicians, clinicians, researchers, educators and support staff, CAMH offers outstanding clinical care to more than 34,000 patients each year. The organization conducts groundbreaking research, provides expert training to health care professionals and scientists, develops innovative health promotion and prevention strategies, and advocates on public policy issues at all levels of government.

About The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery
The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery is Canada's leading public gallery devoted exclusively to contemporary visual art. It is a vital forum for the advanced artistic culture of our time that offers an exceptional facility and professional support to diverse living artists, while engaging equally diverse audiences in their work. The Power Plant pursues its activities through exhibitions, publications, and public programming that incorporate other areas of culture when they intersect with visual art. For more information, please visit thepowerplant.org.

About Niloufar Salimi
Niloufar Salimi (Shiraz, Iran, 1982) is a visual artist based in Toronto, specializing in drawing and mixed media. Salimi completed her MFA at Western University and received a BFA from OCAD University. She is a recipient of multiple Ontario Arts Council grants and works as a Teaching Artist at the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery in addition to her studio practice.

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