



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 6, 2025

One Columbia Introduces the “Cultural Layers” Public Art Project to Honor Community Stories

Columbia, SC – One Columbia is proud to announce the launch of the Cultural Layers public art project, an initiative designed to preserve, honor, and celebrate the stories and histories of our community through visual art. This unique project, funded by the Knight Foundation through Central Carolina Community Foundation, will incorporate layered narratives and artistic expressions to reflect the identity and cultural memory of historically significant neighborhoods in Columbia.

At the heart of the Cultural Layers project is a dynamic team of artists renowned for their ability to engage communities and bring powerful stories to life. The featured artists include muralist Daniel Esquivia-Zapata, photographer Nora Williams, and videographer Malcolm Vanhannegeyn. Together, their diverse talents and shared commitment to storytelling will ensure the project becomes a powerful testament to the spirit of Columbia.

The Neighborhood - Former Ward One

The Cultural Layers project is deeply connected to the neighborhoods it seeks to honor, including the historically significant Ward One area in Columbia, SC. Once a vibrant, predominantly Black community, Ward One was bound by Huger, Heyward, Main, and

Gervais streets and thrived as a close-knit neighborhood where “everybody knew everybody.” By the 1930s, it was home to families who worked in mills, railroads, and warehouses, creating a unique and rich cultural legacy.

Although Ward One was displaced in 1968 to make way for the University of South Carolina’s development, its spirit continues to resonate in the memories of former residents and the historic markers that now commemorate its impact. Through the Cultural Layers project, One Columbia aims to honor and preserve these stories, ensuring the legacy of such neighborhoods lives on through art and shared history. This initiative celebrates the cultural contributions of Ward One and other communities, transforming their narratives into a lasting visual heritage for Columbia.

Meet the Artists

- **Daniel Esquivia-Zapata, Muralist**
Originally from San Jacinto, Bolivar, Colombia, Daniel is an alumnus of Columbia’s Benedict College, where he earned his B.A. in Studio Art under the mentorship of renowned artist Tyrone Geter. With an MFA from the New York Academy of Art, Daniel’s work blends layered imagery, historical references, and text to explore themes of identity and cultural memory. A former Artist-in-Residence at the 701 Center for Contemporary Art, Daniel’s work reflects his deep ties to Columbia and embodies the essence of the Cultural Layers project by preserving community stories through visually striking murals.
- **Nora Williams, Photographer**
A South Carolina native, Nora Williams is a documentary photographer whose work examines identity, resilience, and social change within underrepresented communities. Her photographs have been featured in prominent publications like *The New York Times* and *Rolling Stone* and exhibited in notable galleries. Nora is co-founder of The Carolina Creatives and pursues her MFA in Studio Art at the University of South Carolina. Her lens will capture the intricate connections between history, place, and people for the Cultural Layers project.
- **Malcolm Vanhannegyn, Videographer**
Hailing from Swansea, SC, Malcolm is a cinematographer and storyteller with a passion for crafting compelling visual narratives. A graduate of the University of South Carolina Upstate, Malcolm’s dedication to capturing moments and perspectives brings an innovative dimension to the Cultural Layers project. His

work will allow the stories behind the art to live on through film, connecting the community with the creative process.

About the Cultural Layers Project

The Cultural Layers public art project is a celebration of Columbia's rich cultural landscape, made possible by the collaboration and creativity of its neighborhoods and artists. This initiative seeks to transform spaces into meaningful works of art, ensuring that the stories and heritage of the community are beautifully preserved for future generations.

"For us, public art is more than just what you see; it's about creating connections," said Maya Smith, Project Director with One Columbia. "Through Cultural Layers and the incredible talents of Daniel, Nora, and Malcolm, we hope to create a lasting impact that honors the lives, spaces, and histories that shape our city."

Get Involved

To learn more about the Cultural Layers project and how you can support public art in Columbia, visit www.onecolumbiasc.com or follow us on social media at @OneColumbia.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Xavier Blake

Executive Director

One Columbia

803-254-5008

info@onecolumbiasc.com