

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES PROJECTS FOR POP-UP WOW

**“Pop-Up” WOW Event to Take Place August 14 and 15
at Arts District Liberty Station**

**New Works from Blindspot Collective, Optika Moderna,
Jesca Prudencio and San Diego Black Artist Collective**

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse announces the projects for its outdoor **Pop-Up WOW** event featuring four Playhouse-commissioned Without Walls (WOW) works, taking place **Saturday, August 14** and **Sunday, August 15** at **ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station**, home of the Playhouse’s 2019 and 2022 WOW Festivals.

This free event will feature four Playhouse-commissioned projects from **Blindspot Collective** (Playhouse’s 2020/21 and 2021/22 Resident Theatre Company; 2019 WOW Festival’s *Hall Pass*); **Optika Moderna** (WOW Festival’s *Las Quinceañeras* in 2019 and *Waking La Llorona* in 2017); and **Jesca Prudencio** (2019 WOW Festival’s *PDA*); **San Diego Black Artist Collective** (*Say It Loud 2021 Juneteenth Festival*); plus a special moment from La Jolla Playhouse 2021/2022 Resident Artist, **Kenny Ramos**. All productions for the Pop-Up WOW event will be free and have multiple performance times throughout the weekend.

“For over a decade the WOW Series has brought artists and audiences together in experiences that interact directly with the people and places of San Diego. As we find ourselves now, over a year and a half living with the ever-evolving COVID-19 pandemic, it seemed natural to start our season with a series of dynamic local artists presenting WOW pieces in the open-air expanses of ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station. These stimulating new works are both a reflection of where we have been and a celebration of our coming together again,” said **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse.

From **Blindspot Collective** comes *when the bubble bursts*. Inspired by the words and reflections about this unique moment from local artists and community members, *when the bubble bursts* is a meditation on human connection and impermanence. Simultaneously a celebration of resilience and a reflection of adversity, this performance blends music, movement, and text to reignite the magic of live theater. Featuring a cast of 20 performers, some larger-than-life guests, and bubbles galore, this ‘happening’ explores some of the difficult questions posed by the past year while evoking the childlike wonder and curiosity conjured by life’s simplest joys.

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Presented in partnership with The New Children's Museum is **Optika Moderna's OPTIKA PIÑATA**. The mysterious OPTIKA opticians need your help! Four colorful pop-up offices have arrived at Liberty Station. The opticians invite kids and grownups alike to participate in a fantastical VISION exercise unlike any other. Through this, kids of all ages will see themselves through a new lens as they discover the legend of a mythic, interdimensional caravan theater known as *TEATRO PIÑATA*. Those who complete the assessment will receive a custom certificate and a mysterious parcel with further instructions. What you do with its contents may forever change the fate of *TEATRO PIÑATA* and yours as well.

Can We Now? is a celebratory dance theatre piece from UC San Diego MFA graduate **Jesca Prudencio** that takes a playful look at how we are cautiously, clumsily and joyfully coming out of isolation into community with one another. This happening celebrates the collective and features live music, lots of laughter, and a dance flash mob featuring you!

San Diego Black Artist Collective's Get on Board is a journey through the evolution of Black music. Through that journey, Black Artist Collective will explore the cultural traditions that Black folks carry through music and how these traditions educate and encourage future generations through their own tribulations. For Pop-Up WOW, everyone is invited to the cookout, creating a unique immersive experience for the audience with a few surprises.

The shows *when the bubble bursts*, *Can We Now?* and **Get on Board** will all play outdoors on the North Promenade lawn in ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station, as an integrated experience Saturday at 1:00 pm and 5:00 pm and Sunday at 12:00 pm and 3:00 pm. **OPTIKA PIÑATA** is an individual experience for groups of 1-4 that runs approximately 7 minutes each, located between Barracks 4 and 5.

Since its inception in 2009, the Playhouse's signature **Without Walls (WOW)** series has become one of San Diego's most popular and acclaimed performance programs. Over the last ten years, the Playhouse has been commissioning and presenting this series of immersive and site-inspired productions throughout the San Diego community, including *Susurrus* (2011), *The Car Plays: San Diego* (2012), *Sam Bendrix at the Bon Soir* (2012), *Accomplice: San Diego* (2013), *El Henry* (2014), *The Grift at the Lafayette Hotel* (2015), *The Bitter Game* (2016) and *What Happens Next* (2018), as well as WOW Festivals in 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019.

For more information on Pop-Up WOW, please visit LaJollaPlayhouse.org.

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Artist Biographies

In February, 2020, at the invitation of The Old Globe, a group of Black artists gathered to break bread and discuss common interests. In June of that same year, the group formally became **The San Diego Black Artist Collective**. Although the collective was integral in the formation of local EDI and Anti-Racist policies, the mission of the SDBAC is to act as a resource for the accomplishment of local Black Works. The San Diego Black Artist Collective is a multidisciplinary collective of Artists advocating for Black stories to be seen and heard.

Blindspot Collective develops radically inclusive programming that cultivates new work, emerging artists, and diverse audiences. Since its founding in 2017, Blindspot Collective has collaborated with La Jolla Playhouse; The Old Globe; California Center for the Arts, Escondido; Diversionary Theatre; ARTS (A Reason to Survive); UC San Diego and other community partners to develop projects that meaningfully engage audiences and artists in the blindspot of society. Most recently, Blindspot Collective was the first theatre company to be awarded a performing arts residency at the San Diego International Airport, where they presented site-specific performances in 2019. The company has received acclaim for its original work, including *Hall Pass*, an immersive musical featured in the 2019 Without Walls Festival; *Qulili*, a documentary play based on the stories of local refugees developed with support from the Critical Refugee Studies Collective; *The Magic in this Soul*, a verbatim play about discrimination and resilience that won the Audience Favorite Award at the 2018 San Diego International Fringe Festival; and *Untold*, another verbatim play about mental illness that won the Dunn-Rankin Award for New Work at the 2017 San Diego Fringe.

Jesca Prudencio is a director, choreographer and community-based artist. She is dedicated to developing new theatrical works that humanize issues and explore the tension between cultures. Jesca has developed new work at The Kennedy Center, La Jolla Playhouse, East West Players, The Lark, NAMT, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Space on Ryder Farm, La MaMa, Clubbed Thumb, Joe's Pub and The Movement Theatre Company. She is the recipient of the TS Eliot US/UK Exchange at the Old Vic, The Drama League Fall Fellowship, and the 2018 Artist-In-Residency at the Performance Project at University Settlement in Manhattan. She was recently named a 2021 Woman To Watch on Broadway by the Broadway Women's Fund. She founded her company [People Of Interest](#) in 2014 to focus on new theatrical events that address community specific issues. Most recently, they presented PDA as part of the 2019 La Jolla Playhouse WOW Festival. She was the former Education Director at [Ping Chong + Company](#), where she worked as a writer, director, and associate on a dozen interdisciplinary and documentary theater projects across the U.S. Currently the Head of Directing at San Diego State University, she holds a BFA in Drama from NYU Tisch, and an MFA in Directing from UC San Diego.

Kenny Ramos is a theatre artist from the Barona Band of Mission Indians/ Kumeyaay Nation. He grew up on the Barona Indian Reservation and started his theater career locally at the Starlight Bowl and Moonlight Amphitheatre before moving to Los Angeles to attend UCLA, where he earned a degree in American Indian Studies. Kenny is an ensemble member at Cornerstone Theater Company and is a recipient of First Peoples Fund's Cultural Capital Fellowship, TCG's Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowship, and Yale Center for the Study of Race, Indigeneity & Transnational Migration's 2021 Mellon Arts Practitioner Fellowship. Kenny's favorite acting credits include the world-premiere productions of Larissa FastHorse's *Urban Rez* and *Native Nation* (Cornerstone), Mary Kathryn Nagle's *Return to Niobrara* (Rose Theater Omaha), Vera Starbard's *Devilfish* (Perseverance Theatre) and Dillon Chitto's *Bingo Hall* (Native Voices at the Autry). He has also performed at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Denver Center and The Kennedy Center. Kenny is passionate about creating theater that centers Native perspectives, asserts tribal sovereignty, and challenges settler colonial realities of American society.

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David Israel Reynoso for Optika Moderna is a scenic/costume designer and the creator, with Optika Moderna, of La Jolla Playhouse's acclaimed Without Walls Festival productions of *Las Quinceañeras* (2019) and *Waking La Llorona* (2017), as well as the 2020 Digital WOW production of *Portoleza*. Other Playhouse designs include: *Queens*, *At the Old Place*, *Tiger Style!*, *Healing Wars*, *The Darrell Hammond Project* and *Kingdom City*. He is also recognized locally for his designs of The Old Globe's *Ebenezer Scrooge's Big San Diego Christmas Show*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *The Wanderers*, *tokyo fish story*, *Twelfth Night*, *Arms and the Man*, *Water by the Spoonful* and *Time and the Conways*, among others. The Obie Award-winning costume designer of *Sleep No More* (New York and Shanghai), Mr. Reynoso's other selected work includes: *Hamlet* at ACT and *Futurity*, *Cabaret*, *The Snow Queen*, *Alice vs. Wonderland* at ART. He is the recipient of the Creative Catalyst Grant of The San Diego Foundation, an Elliot Norton Award, a Craig Noel Award nomination and multiple IRNE and BroadwayWorld Award nominations.

ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station is San Diego's largest Arts & Cultural District, located in historic buildings at the former Naval Training Center in the Liberty Station neighborhood, near Downtown on San Diego Bay. With 100 park-like acres, the ARTS DISTRICT is home to nearly 145 museums and galleries, artist studios, dance companies, fine dining, creative retail and other organizations that showcase San Diego's creative community and provide innovative experiences for the public.

La Jolla Playhouse is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what's new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, the Playhouse is currently led by Tony Award winner Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, and Managing Director Debby Buchholz. The Playhouse is internationally renowned for the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 105 world premieres, commissioning 60 new works, and sending 33 productions to Broadway – including the hit musical *Come From Away* – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

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