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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Center for Visual Art Presents Two Exhibitions
Banana Craze & Cultivate
August 26 – October 22, 2022



DENVER, COLORADO – CVA brings two extraordinary exhibitions to view with the opening of *Banana Craze*, a look at how one fruit has shaped the culture and environment of a continent, and *Cultivate*, an exploration of food access in Colorado. These two exhibitions examine the food industry through distinct lenses with one focusing on the devastating effects of the banana monoculture and the other focusing on the daily practices of food production and consumption locally. Combined, the exhibitions fuel a necessary dialogue about the way our world centers on

the mass production and consumption of food at the expense of culture, environment, and human health.

Banana Craze unites nine contemporary artists whose work examines the banana production of Caribbean and Latin American countries. As the fourth most important food crop in the world, the banana dominates food production in Latin America where they are grown on large mono-crop plantations mostly run by three multi-national corporations. These works range from investigations of human-rights violations, recordings of lost biodiversity, and highlights of the effects of pesticides on health and environment, to a satirical reenactment of the origins of the banana monoculture. The works in this exhibition bear evidence in a stinging indictment against those who have acted in the interest of profit over humanity, resulting in profound inequities between producers and consumers.

The artists in *Banana Craze* reflect on the dramatic footprint that the banana industry has left in both the natural and social ecosystems of banana producing nations since the beginning of the 20th Century until today. Exhibiting artists include María José Argenzio, Julián Chams, Claudia Claremi, Milko Delgado, Óscar Figueroa Chávez, Leonardo González, Rachelle Mozman Solano, Daniela Serruya Kohn, and the research agency Forensic Architecture. *Banana Craze* is curated by Dr. Juanita Solano and Dr. Blanca Serrano.

Showing concurrently, *Cultivate* features the work of seven Colorado-based artists exploring food insecurity and access in Colorado. The exhibition was inspired by Sammy Lee's paper-skin mural titled *Bolt Down: our narrative of food insecurity* and its representation of data collected by the Colorado Health Institute. Using her signature technique of felting and casting paper, Lee illustrates the shocking lack of food security faced by Colorado residents, especially young adults.

Eileen Roscina uses her installation titled *Uneaten* to address the inefficiency and wastefulness of the United States' food system. Roscina highlights the struggle of millions of Americans to afford adequate food while the equivalent of 130 billion meals of food ends up in the garbage yearly. In addition, Cherish Marquez's work points to the struggle to find healthy food in her animation of a food desert, a situation found in many communities in Colorado with low access to grocery stores.

As a counterpoint to food insecurity and unjust access, artists Tsehai Johnson and Heather Link-Bergman question our food choices. Through an installation of handmade tableware, Johnson encourages viewers to discover and use the edible "weed" plants that commonly grow unassisted in our neighborhoods. While Heather Link-Bergman uses collaged food advertisements to explore the impact of food trends and to question the gains and losses of these obsessions.

Artists Viviane Le Courtois and DesertArtLAB (artist duo April Bojorquez and Matt Garcia) approach their work with an eye toward creative solutions. Using handmade porcelain planters, Viviane Le Courtois grows edible plants in her installation, demonstrating the ease of cultivating food at home. DesertArtLab inspires with their ongoing Land Art work "The Desert Cookbook". Using an urban desert field site in Pueblo, CO, DesertArtLab teaches ancient food practices used by indigenous communities living in arid regions.

Cultivate celebrates these local artists who examine our food systems with a critical eye and rally around a thoughtful approach to food production. Artists include DesertArtLAB (April Bojorquez and Matt Garcia), Tsehai Johnson, Viviane Le Courtois, Sammy Lee, Heather Link-Bergman, Cherish Marquez, and Eileen Roscina. *Cultivate* was curated by CVA Director and Curator Cecily Cullen.

Both exhibitions will be on view **August 26 – October 22, 2022.**

Exhibition Events

Friday, August 26, 2022

6 – 8 pm: Opening Reception featuring the Roadrunner Food Pantry snack cart and live music by MSU Denver student musicians

Friday, September 2, 2022

6 – 8 pm: Food Justice Farmer's Market
Join us for a pop-up market in the CVA parking lot.

Thursday, September 15, 2022

6 pm: DesertArtLAB Artist Talk – The Desertification Cookbook: Revitalizing Desert Wasteland through Land Art

Thursday, October 13, 2022

6 pm: Cultivate Artist Talk with Tsehai Johnson, Viviane Le Courtois, Sammy Lee, Heather Link-Bergman, Cherish Marquez

Thursday, October 19,

11 am: Banana Craze Artist and Curator Online Talk with Blanca Serrano and Juanita Solano

Thursday, October 20,

4 pm: Food Waste Workshop with Rylee McCone, Auraria Sustainable Campus Program

Friday, October 21, 2022

6 pm: Collaborative Dance Performance with MSU Denver Department of Theatre and Dance

A complete listing of events with registration and connection links will be announced on CVA's website and through CVA's e-newsletter, www.msudenver.edu/cva

Exhibition Partners

Throughout the run of the *Cultivate & Banana Craze* exhibitions, CVA is partnering with the [Roadrunner Food Pantry](#), a vital resource for MSU Denver students experiencing food insecurity, to increase donations and awareness of the resources available to students and the local community.

CVA has partnered with **Art to Acres** to develop Climate Impact Reports for both exhibitions. These reports will kick off CVA's Sustainability Plan and will be made public on CVA's website.

The **Auraria Sustainable Campus Program** will support CVA's sustainability efforts, including hosting Zero-Waste events.

CVA is grateful to the **Denver Botanic Gardens** for its support as a promotional partner.

Thank you to **Colorado Creative Industries** and the **National Endowment for the Arts** for providing exhibition funding.

About CVA

Center for Visual Art is the off-campus contemporary art center for Metropolitan State University of Denver. CVA provides a year-round schedule of bold, contemporary exhibitions of both local significance and international reach, educational programming open to the community and immersive workforce development for students in creative fields. CVA's mission is to provide access to diverse, high-quality art experiences that advance the global urban dialogue. CVA is free and open to all.

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