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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

New Quilt Exhibition at Dalhousie Art Gallery Highlights African Nova Scotian Heritage

HALIFAX, NS – April 28, 2023 --- Dalhousie Art Gallery is pleased to announce its newest exhibition, ***The Secret Codes: African Nova Scotian Quilts*** which will be on view from May 11 to August 6. Curated by David Woods, *The Secret Codes* is a collaboration between the Black Artists Network of Nova Scotia (BANNs), and the Vale Quilters Association, a group comprised of mostly Black women from the Vale Road area of New Glasgow, and Nova Scotia's only incorporated guild of Black quilters. The exhibition will open with a special reception at the Dalhousie Art Centre in the Sculpture Court on **Saturday, May 13, from 2:00 – 5:00 pm** with many of the artists and curator in attendance, as well as performances by Voices Theatre and others.



The Secret Codes explores the unique tradition and evolution of quilting in Nova Scotia's Black communities over the past century. Presenting works by more than twenty-five quiltmakers and painters, the exhibition highlights the ways that quilts have functioned as decorated blankets, as coded communication for people escaping slavery, as documentary records of community and family history, as a celebration of Black women and Black culture, and as a foundation for other art forms.

The exhibition features quilts based on traditional motifs, as well as designs inspired by the women's contemporary interpretations of Underground Railroad "secret code" patterns. Quilts with these patterns were said to have been hung on porches and clotheslines to convey messages to help Black people escape slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Image: Myla Borden, *A Visit from Mamay*, appliqued, machine stitched and machine quilted, 93.5" x 85", 2012.

Expanding on quilting's narrative potential, and evoking the tradition of the itinerant storyteller, Curator David Woods travelled throughout the province to collect stories that reflect the experience of life in African Nova Scotian communities. He created a collection of drawings inspired by his journeys and has encouraged local quiltmakers to interpret these images in their own way. Each quilt conveys the maker's individual sense of design and detail, collectively imbuing the scenes with the many voices of community. There is also a section of poems by Woods, and contemporary paintings by artists inspired by the stories of African Nova Scotians and the bold designs of the communities' quilts.

Admission to the gallery is always free. Public Hours are Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. For additional information, please visit www.artgallery.dal.ca. Media contact: Director/Curator Pamela Edmonds, pamela.edmonds@dal.ca

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