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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dayna Konopelny Awarded \$30,000 “REACH Mentorship/Residency for the Arts” Funding

Dayna Konopelny, a designer based in Toronto, ON, will receive the \$30,000 **REACH Mentorship/Residency for the Arts** for 2023, a project of the Shevchenko Foundation in partnership with the Ihnatowycz Family Foundation.

Now in its fifth year, the REACH program calls on emerging Canadian artists to reach for their career dreams by seeking opportunities for mentorship, residency, internship, training, workshop, and research.

Ms. Konopelny will receive REACH funding to participate in the Fashion Zone incubator program at Toronto Metropolitan University. She is the founder and owner of the fashion brand Emilka Kono, which focuses on sustainable fashion by utilizing second-hand clothing and upcycling Ukrainian textiles. With her acceptance into the Fashion Zone, she hopes to grow her creative practice through mentorship, training, and research into new product development.

“Words cannot begin to express my gratitude upon receiving the REACH award,” said Ms. Konopelny. “This funding will change my trajectory as a designer and remove financial barriers. It will give me the time to continue developing my ideas and creativity while receiving mentorship and resources from the Fashion Zone. I am excited to continue sharing my creations with the Ukrainian community and beyond.”

The REACH adjudication panel included **Carissa Klopoushak**, violinist, violist, chamber musician, orchestral player, singer, artistic director of Ottawa Chamberfest, and two-time laureate of the Canada Council for the Arts Musical Instrument Bank Competition; **Troy Ruptash**, actor in more than 50 network and cable television shows including *Mad Men*, *Law and Order*, *ER*, *The West Wing*, and *CSI*, and writer/director of the award-winning feature film, *They Who Surround Us*; and **Gordon Gordey**, internationally recognized professional arts stage director, producer, and librettist/writer of 25 original dance works for Shumka Dancers, recognized as one of the 100 most influential people in the development of theatre in Alberta in *Theatre 100*.

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Ms. Klopoushak complimented the winning application, saying, “Dayna Konopelny’s Emilka Kono brand elevates beloved Ukrainian cultural textiles, sustainably repurposing them into everyday streetwear. Her brand allows us all to express pride in our Ukrainian heritage in a creative and practical way. Her pieces act as conversation starters and connectors, reaching well beyond the Ukrainian-Canadian community.”

Mr. Ruptash was “deeply moved” by Ms. Konopelny’s vision and her mission to give “forgotten stories new life.” He found her work to be “in step” with the future of fashion. “She’s keenly aware of consumers becoming more concerned about textile waste and the need for small sustainable businesses to re-envision the fashion life cycle. With her REACH application, Ms. Konopelny has outlined a very clear path to success.”

Mr. Gordey noted that in its fifth year, “REACH continues to be a portal for artists, who may have previously felt left out through traditional funding models, to enable their professional growth in a rapidly changing arts landscape.” He praised each of the 2023 REACH applicants, describing them as “wildly imaginative and passionate to hone their craft to better share stories of inclusivity with fellow Canadians and the world. They are valued voices in shaping our national identity.”

The **REACH Mentorship/Residency for the Arts** was established for emerging artists who are 40 years of age or younger; have a connection to Ukrainian heritage through background, art, culture and/or language (with no requirement to be Ukrainian Canadian); and work actively within the Ukrainian arts community in Canada and/or worldwide. Applicants are required to have practised at a peer-recognized advanced career level for a minimum of two years in visual, literary, or performing arts, new media, or arts management. The 17 applications for 2023 REACH funding came from British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec.

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