

New Performance Series by Toronto Artist and Microbiologist Radha Chaddah Illuminates Pandemic's Impact on Life and Creativity

***Dance of the Molecules*, the first act of *IAM*, premieres on March 5, 2021 as a virtual exhibition on the Aga Khan Museum's website.**

TORONTO, CANADA — February 26, 2021 — Toronto-based visual artist Radha Chaddah taps into her training as a microbiologist in a soon-to-be-unveiled work aimed at giving new perspective on the transformative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

An immersive outdoor multimedia performance currently manifested as an experimental dance film, *IAM* is a collection of COVID-19 stories told through dance and light. Each of its four acts is set in a sequentially larger scale of material reality, starting with the molecular, then moving into the human, the global, and finally the universal. The first instalment, *IAM: Dance of the Molecules*, premieres on March 5 as a digital exhibition on [the Aga Khan Museum's website](#).

Known for making art about invisible realities like the cellular world and electromagnetic energy, using light as her primary medium, Chaddah is uniquely suited to interpret this moment of global significance. “The intention of *IAM: Dance of the Molecules* is to bring us out of the realm of fearfulness and into the realm of curiosity,” says Chaddah, who has lectured on cell biology for artists, art students, and the public at OCADU, the University of Toronto, and the Textile Museum of Canada. “*IAM* symbolizes the interconnectedness of nature, and the fallacy that humans can live outside of it, or control it. The pandemic reminds us that we are but a thread in the interwoven fabric of nature, a small part of a much larger evolutionary narrative.”

IAM, whose title is derived from the Latin word for “now,” gathers the four material realms presented across the series — molecular, human, planetary, universal — into the same temporal space. By encouraging audiences to consider their connection to invisible material realities, this project shines light on how humanity has been co-evolving with viruses for millenia.

IAM: Dance of the Molecules is a radiant representation of what happens on the microscopic level when the novel coronavirus is transmitted from one person to another. Filmed in late-September 2020 at Chaddah's Toronto outdoor studio, the five-minute video was shaped by the pandemic both in its content and in how it was produced. Though the limitations posed by the pandemic presented challenges, they also spawned ideas and opportunities that Chaddah's team might not have otherwise encountered.

“We were able to create *IAM: Dance of the Molecules* both because of and despite pandemic limitations. Sometimes too much choice stalls the creative process, and under these current circumstances, systems are less adaptable than individuals,” says Chaddah, reflecting on her collaborative experience with choreographer Allie Blumas, executive producer Jaclyn Blumas, composer Dan Bédard, and director of photography Henry Sansom. “We had to use outdoor space and work masked in groups under five to sustain the process through an uncertain future. It had to be produced as a film so that it could reach people.”

IAM's themes of adaptation and resilience speak to the Museum's mission of connecting diverse people and cultures through the arts, says Amirali Alibhai, the Museum's Head of Performing Arts. “With *IAM: Dance of*

the Molecules, Radha and her team have found exciting new ways of presenting artistic stories about humanity's relationship with its environment. Though their approach to understanding COVID-19 is refreshing and unique, it is a comforting reminder of how people, throughout history and across cultures, have responded to crisis with remarkable creativity and resilience, opening up new windows of possibility along the way."

For eight weeks starting on March 5, 2021, *IAM: Dance of the Molecules* will be viewable as a digital exhibition at www.agakhanmuseum.com/IAM. The next three instalments of *IAM* will be posted to the Museum's website as they become available, with the final act, *Cosmos*, expected by December 2022. When pandemic restrictions have eased, all four acts of *IAM* will be presented together as a 50-minute live outdoor performance.

Support

IAM: Dance of the Molecules is presented by the Aga Khan Museum and Under 5 Studio, with support from the Government of Ontario.

About Radha Chaddah

Radha Chaddah is a Toronto-based visual artist and scientist. Born in Owen Sound, Ontario, she studied Film and Art History at Queen's University (BAH) and Human Biology at the University of Toronto, where she received a Master of Science degree in cell and molecular neurobiology.

Chaddah makes art about invisible realities like the cellular world and electromagnetic energy, using light as her primary medium. Her work examines the interconnected themes of knowledge, illusion, and material reality. In her studio, she designs projected light installations for public exhibition. In the laboratory, she uses the tools of research science to grow and photograph cells using embedded fluorescent light-emitting molecules. Her photographs and light installations have been exhibited across Canada, and her photographs have appeared in numerous publications. You can view Chaddah's work on Instagram ([@radha.chaddah](https://www.instagram.com/radha.chaddah)) and on her website at www.radhachaddah.com.

About the Aga Khan Museum

The Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada, has been established and developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), which is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). The Museum's mission is to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the contribution that Muslim civilizations have made to world heritage while often reflecting, through both its permanent and temporary exhibitions, how cultures connect with one another. Designed by architect Fumihiko Maki, the Museum shares a 6.8-hectare site with Toronto's Ismaili Centre, which was designed by architect Charles Correa. The surrounding landscaped park was designed by landscape architect Vladimir Djurovic.

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