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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nika Feldman

Spirits in the Material World

January 25 - March 23, 2019

Opening Reception: Friday, January 25, 5-7 pm

Artist Talk: Saturday, January 26, 2-3 pm

Tees & Tabs Workshop: Saturday, March 16, 1-5 pm

What/ Who: Nika Feldman unveils a series of seven garment-like works along with accompanying objects of adornment, made from recycled t-shirt parts and salvaged aluminum can pull-tabs. Representing over 2,000 hours of handwork by the Nova Scotia artist, the intricate pieces are inspired by the coded language of clothing. "It's an attempt to create a new dialect," Feldman says. "In today's world what does contemporary clothing say about North American culture?" The artist's ubiquitous materials communicate concepts of status, currency, convenience, and disposability.

When: *Nika Feldman: Spirits in the Material World* debuts Friday, January 25 from 5 to 7 pm and runs through March 23, 2019. The opening reception coincides with the Last Friday Art Walk in the Santa Fe Railyard Arts District. Feldman will appear at an artist talk on Saturday, January 26 from 2 to 3 pm, and conduct a workshop on Saturday, March 16 from 1 to 5 pm.

Where: form & concept, 435 South Guadalupe Street, Santa Fe, NM 87501

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OVER THREE YEARS AND THOUSANDS OF HOURS, ARTIST BRINGS CLOTHING-INSPIRED ARTWORKS TO LIFE

Santa Fe, NM— "It's been three years," says Nika Feldman. "But that wasn't the original idea." She's talking about the process of creating her solo exhibition *Spirits in the Material World*, which comprises eight garment-related works made from intricately embroidered t-shirt parts and aluminum can pull-tabs. The Nova Scotia artist was awarded a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts to make the series in 2015, and planned to spend a year on it. "The first piece took two months straight with 40-hour work weeks," she says. "My body was in so much

pain after such intensive work that I realized I had to take time off in between each piece.” The finished body of work is imbued with Feldman’s blood and sweat—as well as potent cultural ideas. By presenting quotidian materials in a dazzling new context and giving them a human shape on the wall, Feldman brings viewers face-to-face with the cultural value systems that they embody. *Spirits in the Material World* opens Friday, January 25 from 5 to 7 pm and runs through March 23, 2019.

“To me, clothing is very alive, even when it’s removed from its active role,” says Feldman. Though the works in her exhibition look like garments, they are not made to be worn. That’s true of most artworks that Feldman creates, despite the fact that she’s often sourcing from wearable materials. She studied fashion design at Pratt Institute in New York City before attending art school in Nova Scotia with a focus on textiles. “At that point, I wanted nothing to do with clothing at all,” she explains. “Then I realized that everything I did related back to clothing. Undeniably, I was connected to clothing, just not in its relation to commodity or fashion. Instead I was digging and pulling towards a deeper level of meaning.”

Feldman’s epiphany lead her to study the garments of different cultures, often while embedded within them. As a recipient of the prestigious Monbukagakusho scholarship, she attended the Kyoto City University of Arts in Japan for two years as a textile research student under their MFA program. She spent the next few years in Asia, travelling and working on projects in Mongolia, Nepal and India. However, Feldman’s first experience studying cultural identity through the medium of clothing was many years earlier and much closer to home when she traveled to the Mexican states of Oaxaca and Chiapas on a grant awarded to her by the Ontario Craft Council. “Clothing has always been what I consider my first language. I perceive the world, I read the world, through clothing, and then use my art as a form of communication to talk back, and if successful, to engage in a dialogue,” Feldman says.

Spirits in the Material World is an exploration of the coded language of garments, albeit within Feldman’s native cultural context. The show’s title holds multiple references, one being as Feldman explains, “The belief that the spirits of both the maker and the wearer are held within a garment.” Another reference is to a song with the same name by The Police from the 1981 album *Ghost in the Machine*, which one could argue describes the unfortunate state of realities today. The underlying message within the song that resonates for Feldman is the description of a material culture which is void of sacredness.

Along this vein, Feldman employs materials that are woven into the vernacular of North American material culture, but she presents them in a surprising format. “I’m interested in using juxtaposition and contrast in my work in order to awaken a person’s sensibilities and intellect.” Equally as important to the artist is the idea, “of changing the context of something that is familiar to the viewer. For example, I’m deconstructing a t-shirt, so you’re not seeing it directly as a t-shirt,” she says. “When the context changes one must look at it differently. What is it representing, what is it symbolizing? I’m hoping that it will inspire people to question the value systems behind that which makes up their material identity.”

Concepts of cultural identity versus consumer identity permeate the artist's work. An accompanying series of photographic self-portraits shows Feldman redefining ideas of ethnographic costume. Posing in her textile work, Feldman photoshops herself into anonymous backgrounds depicting the rag industry or landfill sites thus creating an impression of post-apocalyptic landscapes. Through her hand-hewn body of work, Feldman directly confronts the reality that our late-stage capitalist world is made from materials that will outlast us. When we are gone, they will tell stories of who we were.