

Exhibit helps melt away the Yukon winter

The Llama project is going south for the winter,

By [Justine Davidson](#) on December 18, 2009 at 4:57 pm



Photo by Vince Fedoroff

EXHIBIT WINDING DOWN – Joyce Majiski is seen with her interactive art at the Yukon Arts Centre that is part of the Llama project show Voz/Voice.

The Llama project is going south for the winter, and this weekend is the last chance to see the group exhibition created by a co-operative of Canadian and Mexican artists who came to the Yukon earlier this year to work, collaborate and teach.

Walking into the main gallery of the Yukon Arts Centre, the greys, blues and whites of the Yukon winter are immediately melted away by a bold, rust-coloured wall hung with shining tin hearts.

Corazones salvajes or Wild Hearts is a piece by Mexican artist Lorena Silva.

The hearts are large, handmade replicas of icons given as offerings to the Virgin Mary in many Catholic churches in Latin America.

The penny-sized pieces are typically sold at the entrances to cathedrals and come in the form of hearts, hands, houses, cattle and cars.

The devoted buy a silver icon in whatever form is most appropriate to their prayers and pin it to the veil of the virgin or leave it at the altar to bolster their pleas.

In Silva's piece, each large metal heart is painted with the silhouette of an endangered animal, with mirrors scattered throughout to remind the reflected humans that they are animals too.

Like Mexico herself, these exquisitely made hearts straddle the line between brightness and severity, and their religious murmur is echoed throughout the gallery.

Joyce Majiski, one of the Llama project's founders and the person who brought it to Whitehorse, also heard the call to prayer and responded with the creation of a series of prayer wheels.

Also done in metal, these copper-wrapped prayer wheels are for touching. The cylinders are decorated with raised patterns of jaguar spots, leaves and fish scales.

Visitors are invited to take rubbings of the patterns and slip bits of paper with their own prayers inside the wheels.

Across from Majiski's instalment, an enormous golden jaguar stretches across the wall, with spots flowing out behind him and his head encircled by a fiery halo.

This arresting and magical piece by Adan Paredes, Corazon del Monteor Heart of the Mountain, is an homage to both traditional mythology which sees elders transformed into the majestic jungle cats at the end of their lives, and to the animals' fast-disappearing habitat.

Both are stories of transformation, the human spirit into the animal, and the once diverse landscape into cash crops and grazing land.

The entire Llama project examines movement and migration – sometimes willing as in the case of the migrant workers captured by photographer Cesar Damian's camera lens, sometimes not, as the jaguar who pads toward extinction.

Majiski, Damian, Silva and Paredes are joined by a half a dozen other artists in this richly textured exhibit.

Many of the pieces call out to be touched, and as in the case of Majiski's work, are not complete without the visitor's input.

The artists will meet again in Pachuca, Mexico in the spring where they start afresh.

The show continues until Tuesday, Dec. 22, before it is taken down to make room for the New Year.