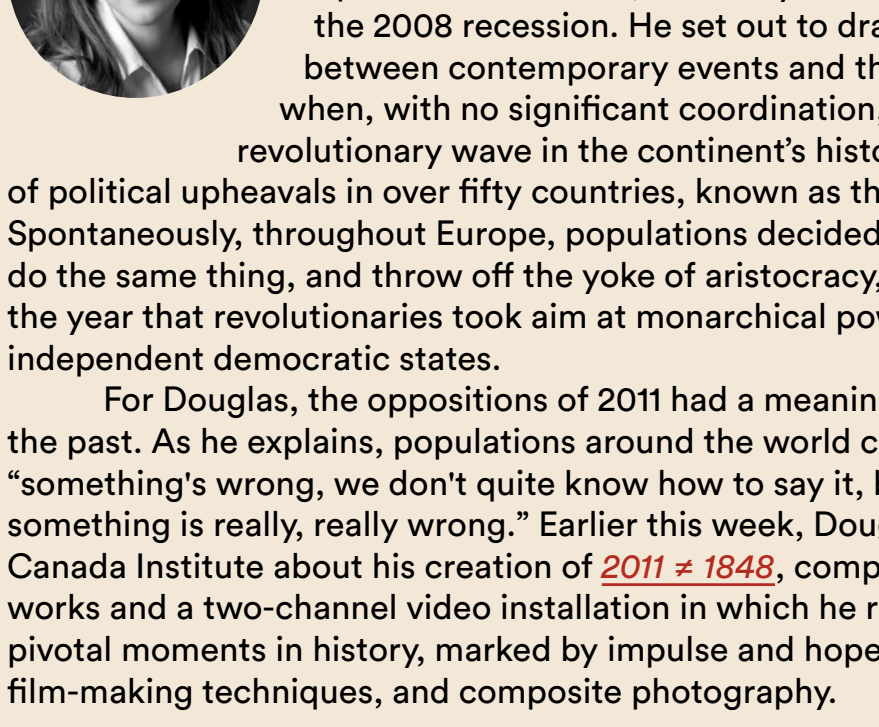


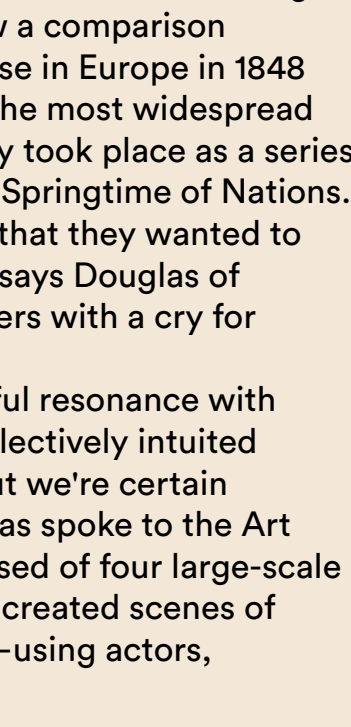
APRIL 22, 2022

ON ART'S INTERNATIONAL STAGE STAN DOUGLAS: 2011 ≠ 1848 AT THE VENICE BIENNALE

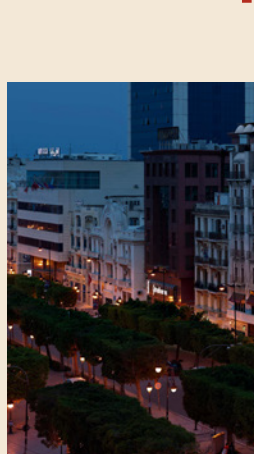
This week the 59th Venice Biennale opened—also known as the Olympics of the art world. Canada is represented by Vancouver's multidisciplinary, internationally revered talent Stan Douglas, whose art questions historic reactions to political and economic inequality and the interconnected potency of global calls for change.



Stan Douglas, *Vancouver, 15 June 2011*, from the series *2011 ≠ 1848*, 2021. Courtesy the artist, Victoria Miro, London and Venice, and David Zwirner, New York, London, Paris and Hong Kong.



Stan Douglas, 2016, photograph by Sofia Sabel.



When Stan Douglas (b.1960) was asked to represent Canada at the world's oldest and most prestigious international art exhibition, his thoughts turned to 2011, when protests sprung up around the world, fueled by social media and following the 2008 recession. He set out to draw a comparison between contemporary events and those in Europe in 1848 when, with no significant coordination, the most widespread revolutionary wave in the continent's history took place as a series of political upheavals in over fifty countries, known as the Springtime of Nations. Spontaneously, throughout Europe, populations decided "that they wanted to do the same thing, and throw off the yoke of aristocracy," says Douglas of the year that revolutionaries took aim at monarchical powers with a cry for independent democratic states.

For Douglas, the oppositions of 2011 had a meaningful resonance with the past. As he explains, populations around the world collectively intuited "something's wrong, we don't quite know how to say it, but we're certain something's really, really wrong." Earlier this week, Douglas spoke to the Art Canada Institute about his creation of *2011 ≠ 1848*, comprised of four large-scale works and a two-channel video installation in which he re-created scenes of pivotal moments in history, marked by impulse and hope—using actors, film-making techniques, and composite photography.

Sara Angel

Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

At the Venice Biennale

TUNIS, 23 JANUARY 2011



Stan Douglas, *Tunis, 23 January 2011*, from the series *2011 ≠ 1848*, 2021. Courtesy the artist, Victoria Miro, London and Venice, and David Zwirner, New York, London, Paris and Hong Kong.

On December 17, 2010, the self-immolation of the street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi in Ben Arous, Tunisia, sparked a twenty-eight-day campaign of civil resistance in the North African country. It included a series of street demonstrations which constituted the most dramatic wave of social and political unrest in three decades of Tunisian history. The protests—which inspired similar actions throughout the Arab world in a chain reaction and became known as the Arab Spring—were against unemployment, inflation, corruption, poor living conditions, and lack of political freedoms. They led to the ousting of long-time Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and resulted in democratic elections. To create *Tunis, 23 January 2011*, 2021, Douglas had a researcher scout locations, a process that he explains "took a few months to find the right spot, to find the right context, to find the right scene." When he identified a place where in the early part of the revolution people disobeyed curfews and talked about politics on the street, it became the basis of this work where "you see what's going to happen in time over the space where basically the police get overwhelmed, crowds re-group and then take back the streets."

At the Venice Biennale

LONDON, 9 AUGUST 2011 (PEMBURY ESTATE)

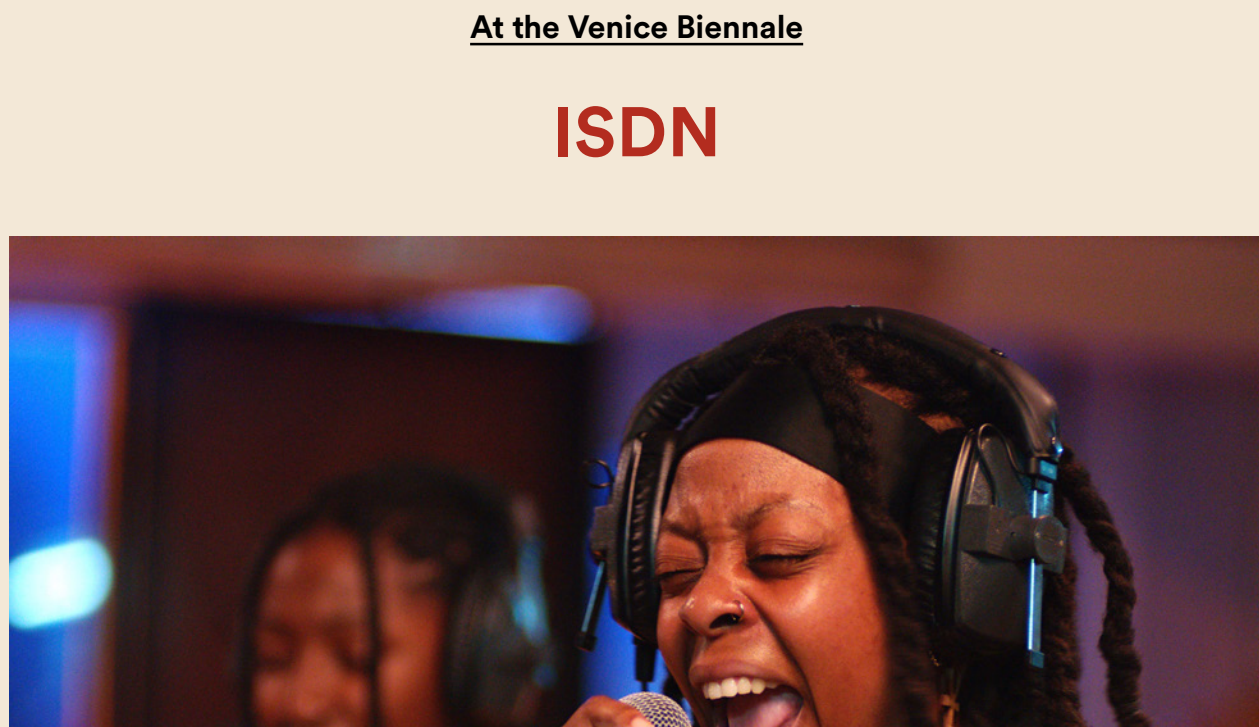


Stan Douglas, *London, 9 August 2011 (Pembury Estate)*, from the series *2011 ≠ 1848*, 2017. Courtesy the artist, Victoria Miro, London and Venice, and David Zwirner, New York, London, Paris and Hong Kong.

On August 4, 2011, Mark Duggan, a twenty-nine-year-old Black British man, died from a gunshot wound to the chest, killed by police in Tottenham, North London. The event escalated into a series of riots that saw thousands of people in cities and towns across England protesting. The insurrection saw the destruction of police vehicles, a double-decker bus, homes and businesses, mass deployment of police, and the deaths of five people. From watching *Sky News* aerial footage, Douglas studied the events and figured out what was going on. "People were turning upside down the positions of power. The police were suddenly powerless."

At the Venice Biennale

NEW YORK CITY, 10 OCTOBER 2011



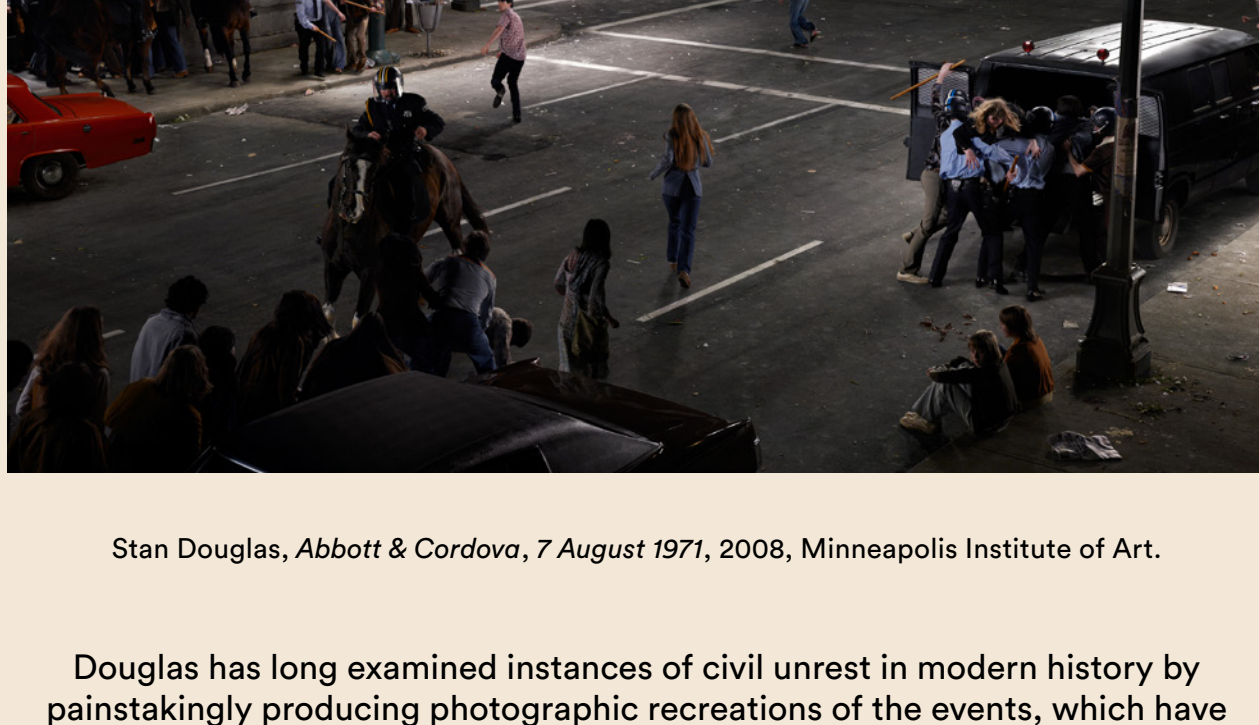
Stan Douglas, *New York City, 10 October 2011*, from the series *2011 ≠ 1848*, 2021. Courtesy the artist, Victoria Miro, London and Venice, and David Zwirner, New York, London, Paris and Hong Kong.

"Quite clearly, Occupy Wall Street was a copycat of the Arab Spring,"

Douglas says of the September 2011 protest in Manhattan's Zuccotti Park, where the movement began against greed, corruption, and the undue influence of corporations on government. Its slogan "We are the 99%" referred to income and wealth inequality in the U.S. between the wealthiest 1% and the rest of the population. In this work, Douglas recreates the moment when a large group of protesters set out to walk across the Brooklyn Bridge, resulting in 768 arrests. "They walked over the rise of the bridge. Police cars there and paddy wagons there arrested them," comments Douglas on the protestors, who were saying, "Let's make the 1% pay their fair share," without having a clear answer to the question: "How are you going to do that?"

At the Venice Biennale

VANCOUVER, 15 JUNE 2011



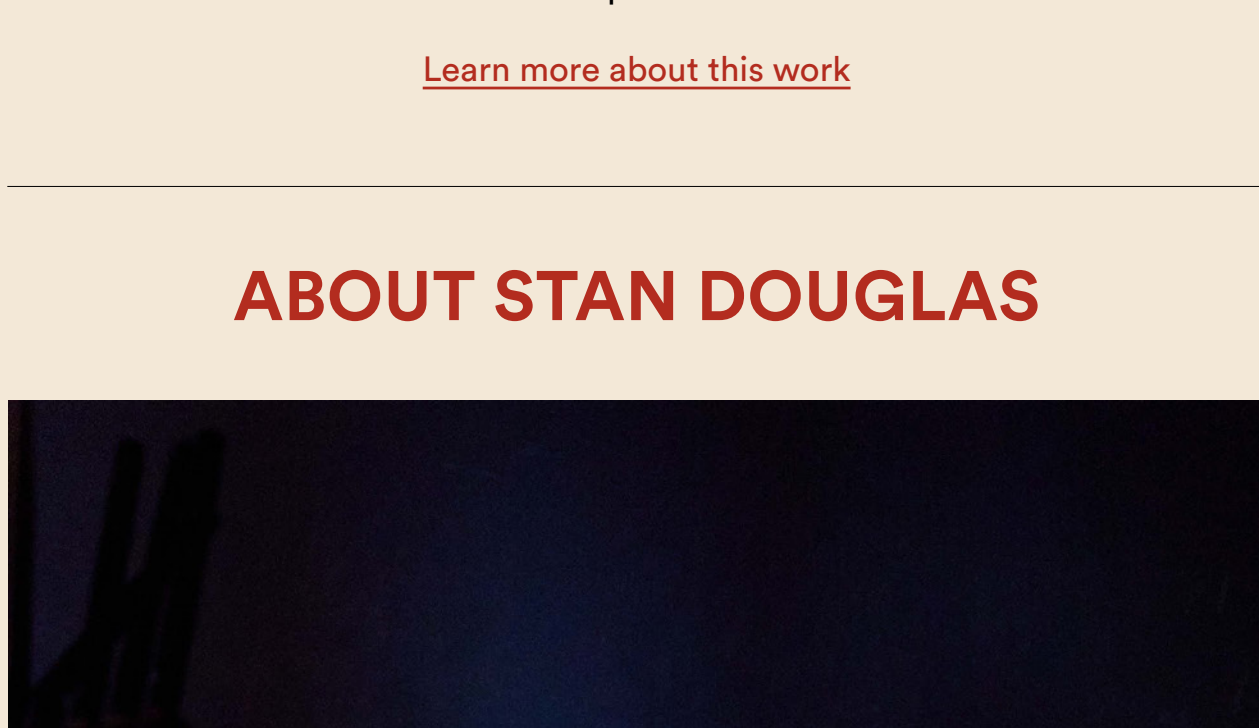
Stan Douglas, *Vancouver, 15 June 2011*, from the series *2011 ≠ 1848*, 2021. Courtesy the artist, Victoria Miro, London and Venice, and David Zwirner, New York, London, Paris and Hong Kong.

On June 15, 2011, in game seven of the Stanley Cup Finals, a riot broke out following the Boston Bruins's win over the Vancouver Canucks. At least 140 people were injured, four people were stabbed, 101 people were arrested, and 301 were charged. Seventeen cars were burned and windows were smashed along the city's West Georgia corridor. Reflecting on the event in his hometown compared to international protests, Douglas says, "I think the same feeling was there—a sense of exclusion, a sense of disenfranchisement that people are experiencing, vented against the city, which is always going to be too expensive for those people to live in." As in the UK, Vancouver's protesters were called hoodlums, but, Douglas notes, "I think there was a political dimension to that or political intuition to the protest—that something is wrong, something must be done."

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At the Venice Biennale

ISDN

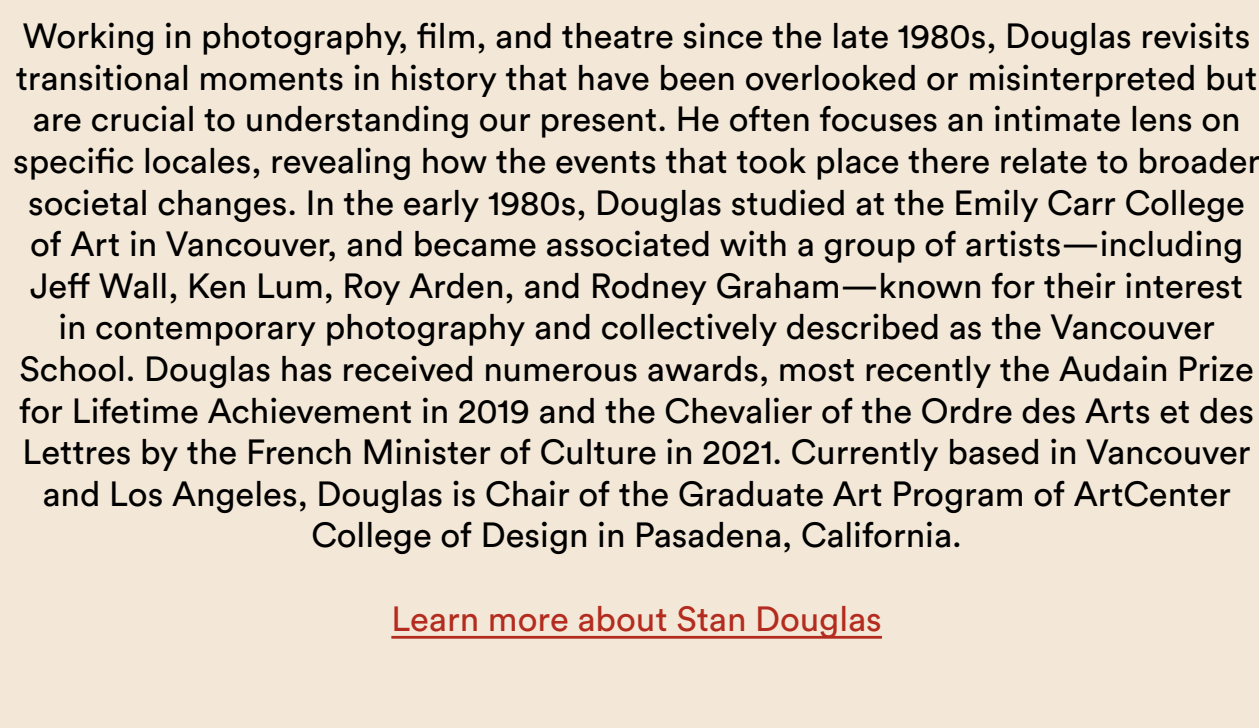


Stan Douglas, *ISDN*, 2022, still from two-channel video installation, London: TrueMendous, Courtesy the artist, Victoria Miro, London and Venice, and David Zwirner, New York, London, Paris and Hong Kong.

A major new two-channel video installation is being presented as part of Douglas's work for the Biennale. The title of the piece, *ISDN*, is a reference to an obsolete technology used to send high quality audio over phone lines. In the 1980s and 1990s, it played a role in the development of music genres known as grime in the UK and *maghaganat* in Egypt. Douglas's installation features two collectives in London and Cairo at an impromptu studio session, representing the transmission of music and cross-cultural collaboration between the two underground music scenes. The artist explains of the work, "We shot it in London and in Cairo and the backing tracks...are all modules.... It takes three and a half days to hear all the permutations...."

On the Process of Stan Douglas

ABBOTT & CORDOVA, 7 AUGUST 1971



Stan Douglas, *Abbott & Cordova, 7 August 1971*, 2008, Minneapolis Institute of Art.

Douglas has long examined instances of civil unrest in modern history by painstakingly producing photographic recreations of the events, which have been likened to history paintings. To create this earlier major work about the 1971 Gastown Riot in Vancouver, he fabricated a life-size stage set and hired over one hundred actors to restage the violent encounter between peaceful protestors—who were upset about marijuana laws and the gentrification of the neighbourhood—and riot police, mounted police, and undercover cops. The resulting large-scale photograph, a composite of fifty images informed by extensive archival research and interviews with witnesses and participants, is a reminder of how the event "was critical in changing the Downtown Eastside from what it was to what it is today," says Douglas.

[Learn more about this work](#)

On the Process of Stan Douglas

PENN STATION'S HALF CENTURY



Stan Douglas, *2 March 1914*, from *Penn Station's Half Century*, 2020, commissioned by Empire State Development in partnership with Public Art Fund for Moynihan Train Hall, New York City.

2011 ≠ 1848 was informed by Douglas's recent commission *Penn Station's Half Century*, 2020, a site-specific art installation displayed in New York City's Moynihan Train Hall that depicts nine significant but forgotten events in the fifty-three year history of the original Pennsylvania Station (1910–1963). This photograph from the series offers a captivating glimpse of the station on March 2, 1914, when a massive snowstorm left vaudeville performers from the Eastern Seaboard and other travellers stranded. Notably present was the famous African American actor, director, and singer Bert Williams, who, to pass the time, put together an impromptu vaudeville show, turning the staircase into a stage for musical numbers and a fire show. Each work in the series was created by inserting numerous separate photographs of live performers into digitally rendered interior spaces of Penn Station.

[Learn more about this work](#)

ABOUT STAN DOUGLAS

Stan Douglas on set in Cairo, 2021. Courtesy the artist, Victoria Miro, London and Venice, and David Zwirner, New York, London, Paris and Hong Kong.

Working in photography, film, and theatre since the late 1980s, Douglas revisits transitional moments in history that have been overlooked or misinterpreted but are crucial to understanding our present. He often focuses an intimate lens on specific locales, revealing how the events that took place there relate to broader societal changes. In the early 1980s, Douglas studied at the Emily Carr College of Art in Vancouver, and became associated with a group of artists—including Jeff Wall, Ken Lum, Roy Arden, and Rodney Graham—known for their interest in contemporary photography and collectively described as the Audain School. Douglas has received numerous awards, most recently the Vancouver Prize for Lifetime Achievement in 2019 and the Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture in 2021. Currently based in Vancouver and Los Angeles, Douglas is Chair of the Graduate Art Program of ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, California.

[Learn more about Stan Douglas](#)

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