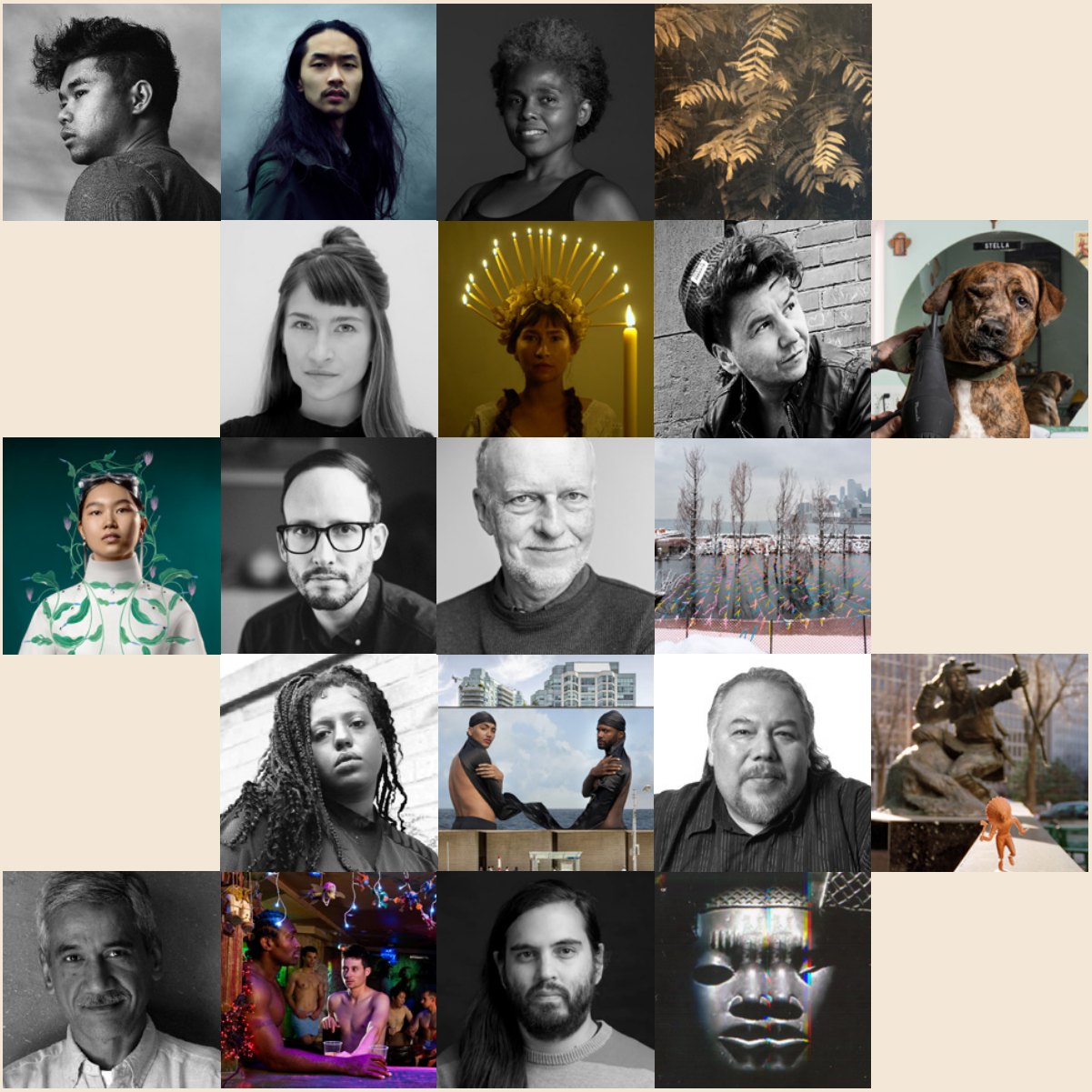
ART CANADA INSTITUTE | INSTITUT DE L'ART CANADIEN

MAY 20, 2022

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

CANADIAN PHOTOGRAPHY AT CONTACT

The Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival is currently on through the month of May. We're sharing some of our favourite highlights from the world's largest event dedicated to the medium.



Every May, the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival transforms the Greater Toronto Area with a citywide celebration of lens-based work. This year's 26th edition of the fair features more than 140 exhibitions and outdoor installations by Canadian and international artists that address major global issues and themes related to Black culture and identity; climate change; systemic racism and the impact of colonialism; and land as a repository of intergenerational knowledge and histories. Here is a selection of the many must-see works by Canadian creators, including Sandra Brewster's evocative installation at Evergreen Brick Works, the futuristic portraits of the Memory Work Collective at the Bentway, and images from the recently launched BIPOC Photo Mentorship Program at Nathan Phillips Square.

In related news, Jin-me Yoon was announced as the winner of the 2022 Scotiabank Photography Award earlier this week. The Art Canada Institute congratulates the Korean-born, Vancouver-based artist, whose distinguished career will be explored in our fall release, *Jin-me Yoon: Life & Work* by Ming Tiampo. Whether you are in the GTA or visiting CONTACT online, we hope this long weekend gives you the opportunity to enjoy the array of exceptional photographic pieces.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

SHINE ON: PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE BIPOC PHOTO MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

at Nathan Phillips Square

Craig Bagol, *slowdown*, 2019, Courtesy of the artist.

This arresting portrait of a pensive, long-haired figure enveloped in fog is the work of Toronto-based Filipino photographer Craig Bagol and is part of an exhibition at Nathan Phillips Square showcasing images by participants of the BIPOC Photo Mentorship Program. Drawing on his own mental health challenges, Bagol creates portraits representing specific internal feelings intended to resonate emotionally with the viewer and inspire introspection. Launched in September 2020 by Sheridan College professor Heather Morton, the mentorship program helps emerging BIPOC photographers overcome systematic barriers and fosters diversity in the industry. On until May 31, the initiative's inaugural exhibition is curated by artist Michèle Pearson Clarke, Toronto's Photo Laureate for 2019–22.

Learn more about this exhibition

ROOTS

at Evergreen Brick Works

Sandra Brewster, *Roots 1*, 2021–22, Courtesy of the artist.

Golden leaves emerge out of darkness in this image from Toronto artist Sandra Brewster's outdoor photographic installation *Roots*, 2021–22, at Evergreen Brick Works, where she spent a year as Koerner Artist in Residence. Presented along the Beltline Trail, the pieces in the installation document the abundant flora growing in the area. Their faded appearance is the result of Brewster's signature gel-transfer technique, in which pictures are shifted from one surface to another. Informed by the artist's walks with Jacqueline L. Scott, the founder of Black Outdoors, *Roots* is intended to guide visitors, bring attention to the history of Black presence in the Canadian wilderness, and encourage reflection upon our place within unceded Indigenous traditional territories.

Learn more about this exhibition

VYSHYVANI KAZKY, EMBROIDERED STORIES

at Zalucky Contemporary

Ayla Dmyterko, *Solastalgic Soliloquy* (still), 2020, Courtesy of the artist and Zalucky Contemporary, Toronto.

In Saskatchewan-born Ayla Dmyterko's (b.1988) film *Solastalgic Soliloquy*, 2020, the Ukrainian Canadian artist explores identity and history. In this still, she wears a wax wreath with lit candles on her head, similar to ones that brides traditionally created as votive objects for their new homes. Dmyterko's work addresses decolonization and environmental change in the present day, often incorporating fire into scenes, she explains, "as a symbol of regeneration yet also destruction." The film is part of Glasgow-based Dmyterko's exhibition at Zalucky Contemporary, *Vyshyvani Kazky, Embroidered Stories*, which reflects on her relationship to Treaty 4 territory in Saskatchewan and its complex history.

Learn more about this exhibition

THE DON'T YOU WANT ME PROJECT

at Pet Valu Leslieville

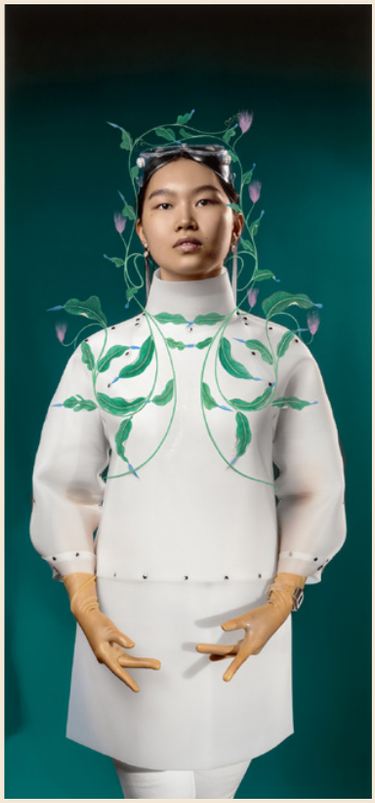
Jack Jackson, *Stella and Jada*, 2020, Courtesy of the artist.

The unconditional love between queer and trans people and their rescue dogs is celebrated in the Don't You Want Me Project, which features such heartwarming portraits from around the world as *Stella and Jada*, 2020. "Half the people in the project say their rescue dog saved their life," says Toronto-based Jack Jackson, who co-founded the project along with Brighton, UK-based Deb Klein. It's a sentiment that rings true for Jackson himself, who went through a difficult period in 2012 when he suddenly relocated to Toronto from overseas while transitioning and struggled with isolation and unstable employment. Adopting a boxer instilled in Jackson a sense of purpose and strength, enabling him to overcome adversity and inspiring him to capture through his photographic project "what happens when the marginalized receive unconditional love and support from each other."

Learn more about this exhibition

MEMORY WORK

at the Bentway



Memory Work Collective, *Portrait of Sam, Serial Surrogate; Entrepreneur*, 2022, Courtesy of the artists.

Memory Work Collective, *Portrait of Bao, Creative Biologist*, 2022, Courtesy of the artists.

Memory Work Collective, *Portrait of Timesha, Cosmetic Healer*, 2022, Courtesy of the artists.

Installed at the Strachan Gate entrance to the Bentway until April 2023 is a series of twelve monumental portraits of revolutionary figures existing in a future Toronto, collectively known as the Mothers of Invention. Initiated by From Later studio with artist Rajni Perera (b.1985) and Memory Work Collective, the images feature scientists, healers, creators, entrepreneurs, engineers, and organizers who are currently enacting positive change in their communities. Each individual wears a unique apron, designed by Memory Work Collective members Tala Kamea and Naomi Skwarna, that functions both as protective armour and as a sartorial statement that embodies their work, values, and personal aesthetics. Perera has embellished the portraits with mythical landscapes and organisms, transforming the photographs into powerful commemorative images of the revolutionary leaders' future selves.

Learn more about this exhibition

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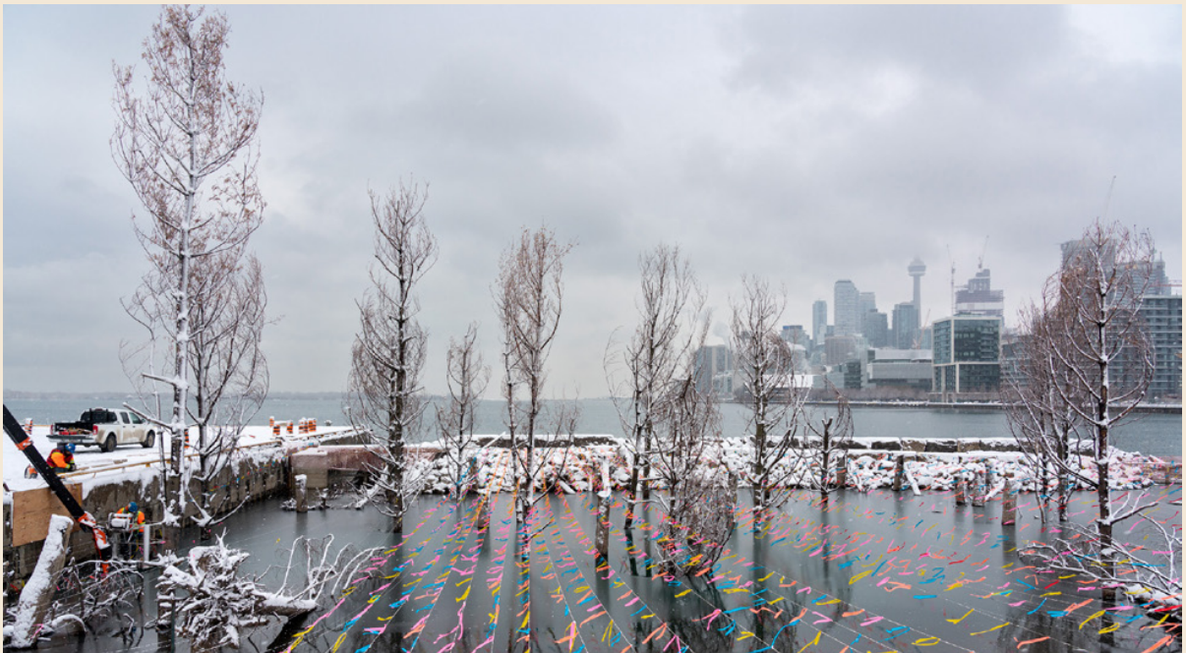
HOW TO BUILD A RIVER

at Port Lands



Vid Ingelevics and Ryan Walker, *Fish Habitat*, 2019, Courtesy of the artists.

The exhibition *How to Build a River* at Port Lands features Toronto artists Vid Ingelevics (b.1952) and Ryan Walker's third series of photographs documenting the progress of the Port Lands Flood Protection Project, one of North America's most ambitious civil works enterprises. The series offers fascinating insight into the conversion of a large industrial brownfield into a new mouth for the Don River. The creation of new habitats for fish, as shown in this photograph, is an important aspect of the project. The rows of colourful flags hovering above the surface of the water are intended to prevent geese from landing and consuming the plants that will serve as food for the fish. Through their documentary images, Ingelevics and Walker capture the innovative bioengineering methods being used to naturalize the brownfield and restore ecological habitats.

Learn more about this exhibition

THE BROTHERHOOD FUBU (FOR US, BY US)

at Westin Harbour Castle Conference Centre

Esmaa Mohamoud, *The Brotherhood FUBU (For Us, By Us)*, installation at Westin Harbour Castle Conference Centre, Toronto, 2021, photograph by Toni Hafkenscheid.

Challenging stereotypical portrayals of Black men, Toronto- and Markham-based African Canadian artist Esmaa Mohamoud's (b.1992) massive photographic mural on the exterior of Westin Harbour Castle Conference Centre emphasizes the physical connection between two Black men, represented by their du-rags formed from the same cloth. Gazing directly at the viewer, the monumental figures, Toronto artists Noah Brown and Timothy Yanick Hunter, stand against a vast background of sky and water. The imposing installation is about "seeing Black people represented how we want to be represented, rather than how we've been represented by others," says Mohamoud. She shot the pair standing in Lake Ontario because of the lack of images of Black people in the Canadian landscape. Adds the artist, "Water holds stories of triumph and despair for Black people from the Transatlantic Slave Trade to our arrival in Canada."

Learn more about this installation

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

at Stephen Bulger Gallery

Jeff Thomas, *Ottawa, Ontario, War Dancer, Indian Hunter Statue, Queen Street, November 26, 2000*, 2000, Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto.

This work from Iroquois artist Jeff Thomas's (b.1956) series Indians on Tour, 2000–18, juxtaposes a miniature plastic war dancer with a statue of an Indian hunter installed in Ottawa. The series, reflecting on popular Indigenous stereotypes and the artist's own experiences as a self-described "urban Iroquois," is part of Thomas's third solo exhibition, *Where Are You From?*, at Stephen Bulger Gallery. Presenting works from the 1980s to the present day, the show explores the trajectory of his life and career, including how Thomas's years spent in Toronto, from 1983 to 1986, prompted him to shift from using his camera to merely document what he observed on the streets to intervening in the urban spaces he captured. Also included are recent multi-panel works that employ the format of a wampum belt to convey the artist's own story.

Learn more about this exhibition

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY. SUNIL GUPTA, A RETROSPECTIVE

at the Ryerson Image Centre

Sunil Gupta, *#7*, from the series Sun City, 2010, Courtesy of the artist and Hales Gallery, London and New York; Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto; and Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi.

"In the mid-1980s I became very conscious that there were hardly any gay men of colour in visual media…[which] motivated me to portray queer people of colour in my work," says Indian Canadian photographer Sunil Gupta (b.1953), whose forty-year career is the subject of his retrospective at the Ryerson Image Centre. This image is from the artist's photographic series Sun City, 2010, which tells the fictional story of a gay Indian man named Orly, seen on the right, who searches for love in Paris during the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The series is installed in a circular formation so that the narrative begins and ends with Orly's death. Based between London and Delhi, Gupta documents the lives of gay men through the lens of queer identity, race, and migration, giving visibility to a marginalized community through images that have inspired generations of artists and LGBTQ+ activists alike.

Learn more about this exhibition

FROM AGE TO AGE, AS ITS SHAPE SLOWLY UNRAVELLED…

at the Art Gallery of Ontario

Raymond Boisjoly, *from age to age, as its shape slowly unravelled...* (detail), 2015, Courtesy of the artist and Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver.

In his haunting installation *from age to age, as its shape slowly unravelled...*, 2015, at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Vancouver-based Raymond Boisjoly (b.1981), who is of Haida and Quebecois descent, questions the collection and presentation of ethnographic objects in museums. His work incorporates imagery from the anti-colonial French film *Statues Also Die* (1953), which features footage of African sculptures, masks, and artifacts on display in a French museum while the narrator describes the impact of colonization on their production, dissemination, and interpretation. To create the images in his installation, Boisjoly played the film on his iPhone and then placed it on a flatbed scanner. The distorted scans expose the failure of the machine to accurately capture moving images. Boisjoly's work invites us to reconsider how information about ethnographic objects is transmitted, processed, and received within museums.

Learn more about this exhibition

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