

I continue to shape  
Sept 5—Dec 8, 2018

Art  
Museum

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## Works by

Maria Thereza Alves, Cathy Busby,  
Justine A. Chambers with Deanna Bowen  
+ Ame Henderson + Jessica Karuhanga,  
Nicholas Galanin, Lisa Myers,  
Mickalene Thomas, Joseph Tisiga, and  
Charlene Vickers with an additional  
collaboration with Maria Hupfield

Curated by cheyanne turions



um

I continue to shape

Cover: Nicholas Galanin  
*Things Are Looking Native,*  
*Native's Looking Whiter*  
2012. Giclée. Courtesy of  
the artist.

Right: Charlene Vickers,  
*Diviners*, 2010. Cedar.  
Courtesy of the artist.



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History, like all stories, is told slant, subject to distortion by those with the power to represent it. In the telling, certain characters are foregrounded and certain power dynamics are obscured, leaving certain other characters—their perspectives and experiences—cast out of this immortal glow.

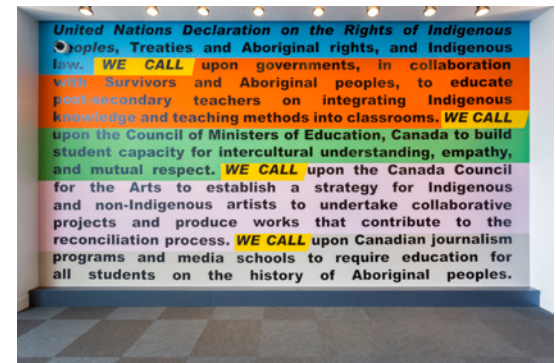
And yet, it seems that aesthetic practices bear a specific capacity to transform the sediment of history into something moving once again, to puncture what seems solid, to redirect the light.

The capacity for artworks to provoke this kind of shift is often tied to their ability to conjure visceral and intuitive responses that percolate through the viewer, from a change in mood or disposition, to an evolving understanding of the relation between actors, objects and society. Philosopher and artist David Garneau has coined the term “extra-rational aesthetic action” to describe the possibilities that reside in encounter with works of this sort. Drawing upon Garneau’s study, *I continue to shape* considers how the extra-rational capacities of art can support interruptions of history such that new kinds of stories become possible to tell.

Sometimes these interruptions are worn on the surface, such as when iconic images from art history and popular culture are radically reconfigured. When Nicholas Galanin juxtaposes a headshot of Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia with an Edward Curtis portrait of an unnamed Hopi-Tewa woman in the photo collage *Things Are Looking Native, Native’s Looking Whiter* (2012), he displays how an ongoing colonial project in North America takes Indigenous cultures as raw material to appropriate. Joseph Tisiga’s *Props for Reconciliation* series (2017) sets characters from the *Archie* universe in

Left: Maria Thereza Alves  
*Diothio Dhep*, 2004. Video,  
2m. Courtesy of the artist.

Right: Cathy Busby,  
*WE CALL*, 2017-18. Second  
of two wall-text paintings.  
Teck Gallery, Simon Fraser  
University, Vancouver,  
British Columbia.



dialogue with representational tropes from Indigenous cultures. If the comic-book characters appear too much at home, the Indigenous characters and cultural forms fade from the surface, displaying the destructive effects of what Archie and his friends, no doubt, imagine as only good-natured skill sharing and curiosity. Mickalene Thomas’s *Origin of the Universe I* (2012) reconfigures Gustav Courbet’s *L’Origine du monde* (1866) with the image of a Black woman and expands the scope of the image’s originary claim from the world to the universe. Adorned with rhinestones and produced as a self-portrait, the work detourns a classic example of female objectification into a powerful act of self-determination, claiming representational agency as the artist’s own. With these works, the extra-rational takes root in the quick recognition of disrupted forms; resisting colonial containment, they trade instead in a deep investment in the effects of cultures in collision.

Against the maxim that history repeats itself as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, it is possible to approach inheritance as a means of activating the present anew. Maria Thereza Alves’s *Nowhere* (1991) charts the force of European ideas of utopia, and their destructive effects on Indigenous life and lands across the globe. Photographic images depicting places of colonial plunder (such as Amazonas, Brazil) are disrupted by overpainting and two-by-fours, disturbing the idealizations of site that colonization

depends upon. Within this interruption is contained an argument for engagement with the social and political contexts that actually already exist instead. In this place—Canada—there is an urgency for this kind of attention to the gruesome legacy of settler colonialism in general, and residential schooling in particular. Cathy Busby’s *WE CALL* (2017) functions as a mnemonic device. Editing and reproducing calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s final report that address academic and cultural institutions, as well as their governing and funding bodies, this pair of wall-text panels<sup>1</sup> loudly reminds us of our living duties to this ongoing history. Across Alves’s and Busby’s propositions for belonging, which counter narratives of nation building, there is critical investment in the extra-rational as a means of acknowledging “the perpetual struggle to make both Indigenous and settler people aware of the complexity of our shared colonial condition, and how this legacy informs every person and institution in these territories.”<sup>2</sup>

The survival tactics of those who are subject to systemic violence are varied. Charlene Vickers goes for armatures that lack subtlety: *Diviners* (2012) are a set of 10-foot long sharpened cedar spears, reminiscent of porcupine quills. By invoking a quill’s power of deterrence, the *Diviners* function as medicine, extending the body through an outsized identification with our animal kin and their modes of protection, healing



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and sustenance. In a quieter way, Lisa Myers employs processes of straining and absorbing as metaphors for social interaction and personal endurance. What needs to be left behind, and what must be taken forward? In the creation of her blueprints—silkscreened images created with the anthocyanin pigment of blueberries—the pulp of a wild fruit is passed through a sieve to become an unstable ink, mapping its own forms of life. Continually changing colour, the pigment responds to the material composition of the paper and exposure to light, just as any being is transformed by the conditions of their environment.

If the extra-rational potential of artworks can change minds and behaviours, it is important to tend to the affective labour involved in this. Justine Chambers offers a place of rest through a malleable scenography that invites gallery visitors to reconfigure it as they see fit, and allow their bodies to unfurl. It recognizes flesh as a way of understanding being in relation with bodies past, present and future. Over the course of the exhibition, Chambers has invited artists Deanna Bowen, Ame Henderson and Jessica Karuhanga to activate her work, so as to relay the nature of the work as, in Garneau's words, a place of "sensual and intuitive study ... where people can find refuge from the ideas that otherwise rule them."<sup>3</sup>

The title of the exhibition references Galanin's observation that contemporary Indigenous cultures, like all other cultures, exist on a continuum of change based on engagements with others and in dialogue with land.<sup>4</sup> The "I" of *I continue to shape* is both the artist's subjectivity bearing upon the world, as much as it is the "I" of the viewer, coming to terms with how else to understand their role in upholding or dismantling the structures we have inherited, and to shape new personal and cultural relationships. By challenging colonial habits and tending to the labour that such re-orientation implies, *I continue to shape* looks to the breadth of that "I" for a shared agency in shaping a world more tender, more just and more unsettled than the world we have now.

<sup>1</sup> These fabric works were made as a portable iteration to accompany related gatherings, while the pair of wall-text paintings were displayed at the Teck Gallery at Simon Fraser University during their year-long display (2017–18).

<sup>2</sup> David Garneau, "Extra-Rational Aesthetic Action and Cultural Decolonization," *FUSE Magazine*, vol. 36 no. 4 (2013): 15.

<sup>3</sup> Garneau, 15–16.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Galanin, "Out of Line: Nicholas Galanin Rejects the Traditional/Contemporary Binary," *Walker Reader*, March 26, 2018, <https://walkerart.org/magazine/nicholas-galanin-indigenous-art-contemporary-traditional>.

Joseph Tisiga, *A Prop for Reconciliation (Jughead)* 2017. Oil on canvas mounted on artificial grass and wood panel. 66 X 66. London.



Opening Event

**Reception**  
*Wednesday, September 5, 2018, 6-8pm*  
With performance by Charlene Vickers, 7pm  
Hart House Quad

Public Programs

**Activation: Furniture and Objects**  
*Saturday, September 8, 2018, 2pm*  
A choreographic score with furniture/objects  
by Justine Chambers  
University of Toronto Art Centre

**Conversation**  
*Saturday, September 8, 2018, 3pm*  
Featuring Justine Chambers, cheyanne turions  
and Charlene Vickers  
University of Toronto Art Centre

**Activation: Furniture and Objects**  
*Wednesday, October 3, 2018, 6pm*  
Featuring Jessica Karuhanga  
University of Toronto Art Centre

**Curatorial Tour**  
*Saturday, October 20, 2018, 2pm*  
Featuring cheyanne turions  
University of Toronto Art Centre

**Activation: Furniture and Objects**  
*Friday, October 26, 2018, 2pm*  
Featuring Deanna Bowen  
University of Toronto Art Centre

**Activation: Furniture and Objects**  
*Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 6pm*  
Featuring Ame Henderson  
University of Toronto Art Centre

**Drop-In Tours**  
*Every Friday, 2pm*  
University of Toronto Art Centre

For program details visit  
[artmuseum.utoronto.ca](http://artmuseum.utoronto.ca)


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Visiting the Art Museum

**Justina M. Barnicke Gallery**   
7 Hart House Circle  
Toronto, Ontario M5S 3H3  
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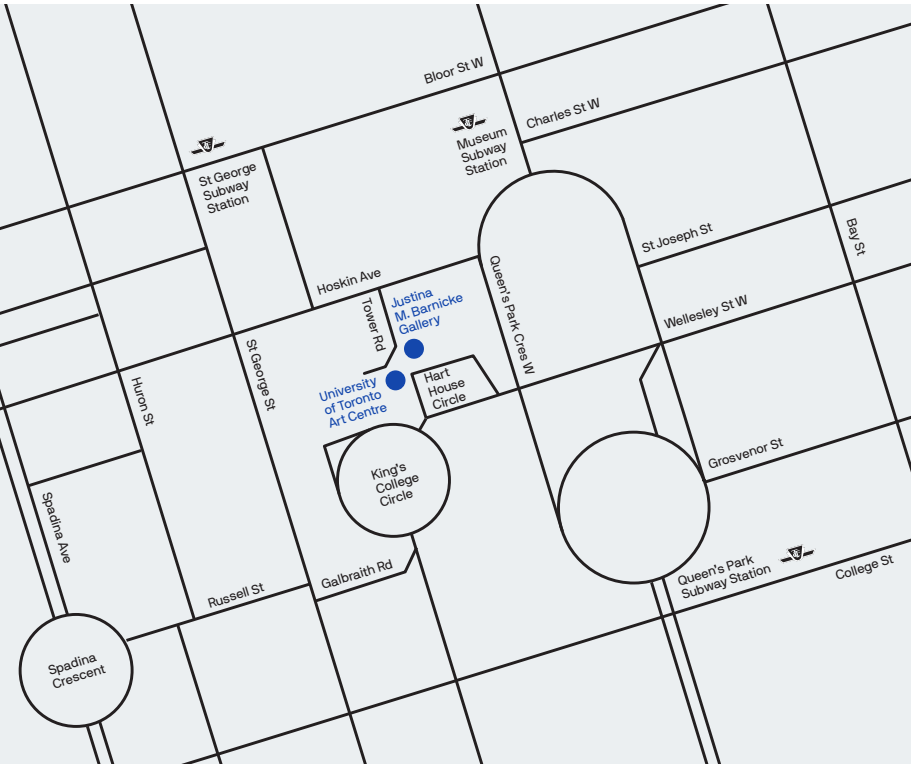
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Wheelchair-accessible access to University  
College, and therefore the Art Museum's  
University of Toronto Art Centre location will  
be closed due to University College building  
revitalization.

Tuesday	Noon–5:00 PM
Wednesday	Noon–8:00 PM
Thursday	Noon–5:00 PM
Friday	Noon–5:00 PM
Saturday	Noon–5:00 PM
Sunday	Closed
Monday	Closed

Closed on statutory holidays. Class tours and  
group bookings by appointment.  
Admission is FREE.

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