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Narrating Place in Toronto

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“I recognize in graduate students a kind of hunger: a strong desire to participate in existing conversations, and a powerful need to have one’s research interests play a significant role in a broader discursive field.” —Luis Jacob

U of T students with an interest in local art can visit [Form Follows Fiction: Art and Artists in Toronto](#), an Art Museum exhibit focusing on the ways in

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better and enrol in a seminar taught by the curator behind t
[Jacob](#) himself.

Called Narrating Place in Toronto, the seminar considers the various ways in which the identity of place is constructed in Toronto. To do that, students look at the relationship between place and narratives, considering questions like how we use narratives in order to understand the places we live in, and how have these narratives of place been articulated here in Toronto, by artists, poets, filmmakers, and others.

“The Art Museum has staged intensive educational programs, in the form of a ‘para-semester’, in the past. This is the first year that we actually have a [seminar] mounted for grad students to work with and on the exhibition, *Form Follows Fiction*,” says Barbara Fisher, executive director/chief curator of the Art Museum, which includes both Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at Hart House and the University of Toronto Art Centre.

Luis Jacob calls it “an interesting moment, when I wear two hats at the same time: that of instructor and that of curator.” He adds that the interdisciplinary approach to the Visual Studies program at Daniels Faculty makes connecting the course to exhibition an “entirely logical thing to do.”

“The Art Museum at U of T offers an excellent opportunity for an exhibition like this to connect to students and researchers across campus—not only people interested in art, but also people interested in cultural studies, urban studies, cultural geography, Queer studies, art history, curatorial studies, etc.,” says Luis.

“One interesting thing about the grad seminar I am leading is that almost all of the students are not from Toronto. This means that, in some sense, we are all ‘outsiders’ in relation to the thing—Toronto—that we are talking about. Perhaps this sense of ‘coming from elsewhere’ is an important and constitutive aspect of life in Toronto,” says Luis. Born in Peru, he credits his immigrant’s perspective with helping create what he calls an “awareness of the constructedness of things” which he might otherwise have simply taken for granted.

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worked to foster the city's visual arts community in an array of publishing projects, writings, lectures and exhibitions.

Covering works produced by 86 artists in over 50 years, *Form Follows Function* is the most ambitious curatorial effort Luis has ever taken.

"Margaret Atwood once wrote that, 'Canada is an unknown territory for the people who live in it.' I venture to say that the same applies to Toronto, which presents itself to us enigmatically, as a kind of Sphinx," says Luis.

Form Follows Fiction: Art and Artists in Toronto is [on view at the Art Museum](#).

Photo courtesy of Luis Jacob.

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