

For Immediate Release

The Art Museum at the University of Toronto presents *Qaggiq: Gathering Place*, works by Isuma, in partnership with the Toronto Biennial of Art

(Toronto, September 4, 2019) This exhibition, presented in partnership with the **Toronto Biennial of Art**, brings together a selection of video works by the internationally renowned Isuma artists' collective. Officially founded in 1990 by Zacharias Kunuk, Paul Apak Angilirq, Pauloosie Qulitalik, and Norman Cohn in Igloolik, Nunavut, this first ever Inuit film production company produces video and television programs from an Inuit point of view, including language, storytelling, and ways of thinking. *Qaggiq: Gathering Place* comprises a focused sampling of works by Isuma—and shows the multi-faceted nuances of their media activism. The exhibition will be on view at the **Art Museum at the University of Toronto** from **September 18 – November 30, 2019**. Join the Art Museum and Hart House for the opening reception on **September 17 from 6-8pm**. Members of Isuma and the curators will be in attendance.

The exhibition at the Art Museum will include multiple, simultaneous film screenings of works from the mid 1990s to the present. A casual reading room invites viewers to peruse Isuma's books and related publications, as well as the online archive, over tea. The exhibition spans past and present, with stories of historical and contemporary transformations taking place in the north as told in *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, *Nunavut (Our Land)*, *Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change*, *My Father's Land*, and *Hunting with My Ancestors*.

In *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (2006) The great shaman, Avva, and his family are living on the land some distance from Igloolik, his home community that lately has taken up the teachings of Christian missionaries. The film explores Explorer Knud Rasmussen as he pays Avva a visit, accompanied by two fellow Danes: trader Peter Freuchen and anthropologist Therkel Mathiassen. Rasmussen hears and records Avva's life story and that of his wife Orulu. Their son, Natar, impulsively agrees to guide Freuchen and Mathiassen north to Igloolik. After a celebration, Rasmussen leaves to head west while Avva, facing strong headwinds, sets out with his family and guests en route for home. His beautiful daughter, Apak, has troubling dreams about the road ahead.

Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change (2010) is the world's first Inuktitut language documentary on the topic, and takes the viewer on the land with elders and hunters to explore the social and ecological impacts of a warming Arctic. Exploring centuries of Inuit knowledge, the film portrays Inuit as experts regarding their land and makes it clear that climate change is a human rights issue affecting ingenious Indigenous culture and ways of



life. This film is paired with the more recent documentary *My Father's Land* (2015) which looks at media transparency and human rights matters concerning consultations with Inuit on resource extraction developments such as the Baffinland Mary River Mine, the world's largest iron mine on Inuit land between Igloolik and Pond Inlet.

The 13-part *Nunavut (Our Land)* (1995) series tells the story of how Inuit in the Igloolik region of the Canadian Arctic lived on the land in the 40s. Based on true stories of present-day Elders, who still remember their early days growing up just before government and settlement life began, Nunavut recreates a nomadic lifestyle that no longer exists today.

Hunting with my Ancestors (2018) delivers a contemporary introduction into regional ecosystem and Inuit practices, centuries old, of hunting and sharing its bounty. This television series focuses on different animals, hunters and regions, and presents, through Director Zacharias Kunuk's unique perspective, both the vast beauty of the land and its wildlife, and the enormous skills and knowledge needed to capture the animals on which Inuit have depended for centuries, as well as the current issues confronted by human hunters.

Curators asinnajaq and Barbara Fischer have invited artist Couzyn Van Heuvelen into the exhibition of Isuma's work with his work *Qamutiik* (Sled). An Inuk sculptor and installation artist originally from Iqaluit, Nunavut, Couzyn has come to be known for works that draw on Inuit traditions and identity through distinctly contemporary materials and a conceptual perspective. His works consider ways of living with the land and the relation with animals, through the experience of displacement and the value of remembering and renewal.

Producing documentaries, docudramas, feature-films and live webcasts, Isuma has become Canada's most acute, contemporary voice in and from the North, whose project is extending globally to connect Indigenous voices through video, new media and innovative technologies that play a central role in the future of communications in the 21st century. In an ever expanding network of mentorships, partnered initiatives and media production, Isuma is fostering ever new video producers to tell stories from Indigenous perspectives, including the women's video collective, Arnait Video Productions, youth-centered initiatives such as Artcirq and Time Machine, NITV's Nunavut Independent TV Network of internet-connected local TV channels in low-bandwidth Nunavut communities and most recently, assisting the Haida Nation to produce its first Haida-language feature film which continues the tradition for producing independent indigenous-language films and TV.

Isuma's films are imbued with the voices of elders and young Inuit, with mythology, memories and nightmares, and above all with oral histories of times before contact and the trauma of encounter that includes Christian conversion and forced relocation. Above all, their activist works are part of an ongoing effort to sustain Inuit futures in the massive

transformation of the North through resource extraction projects and climate change. As the title *Qaggiq: Gathering Place* suggests, media is a new form of gathering space, one that can be activated collectively or individually, while transpiring across many borders, including language as well as physical and other distances.

The exhibition at the Art Museum focuses on the expansive media activist project of Isuma on the occasion and as extension of Isuma's participation at the 58th International Art Biennale in Venice.

Qaggiq: Gathering Place is presented by the Art Museum at the University of Toronto in partnership with the Toronto Biennial of Art (TBA). Isuma's related installation for TBA 2019, *One Day in the Life of Noah Piugattuk*, is on view at the Small Arms Inspection Building, Mississauga, from September 21 to December 1, 2019.

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Qaggiq: Gathering Place

September 18–November 30, 2019

Curated by asinnajaq and Barbara Fischer
Presented in partnership with the Toronto Biennial of Art
University of Toronto Art Centre

A Conversation with Isuma

Tuesday, September 17, 2019, 4-6pm. Registration required.

Opening Reception

Tuesday, September 17, 2019, 6-8pm

Workshop with asinnajaq

Wednesday, October 23, 2019, 12-2pm. Registration required.

Curatorial Tour with asinnajaq and Barbara Fischer

Wednesday, October 23, 2019, 6-8pm

Drop-In Tours

Tuesdays, 2pm

For more information, please visit:
<https://artmuseum.utoronto.ca/exhibition/qaggiq-gathering-place/>

With the North: Inuit Visions and Voices in Toronto

Inspired by the International Year of Indigenous Languages, art galleries and organizations across the Toronto region will present various exhibitions and public programs under the overall program, *With the North: Inuit Visions and Voices in Toronto*.

This joint programming initiative will be the idea of Indigenous Language in its broadest sense, as a means of survival and resilience, and of culture, music, images, traditional and contemporary cultural practices of people and the environment.

From September to December 2019, visit the following galleries and organizations:

Feheley Fine Arts
Harbourfront Centre
imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival
McMichael Canadian Art Collection
Onsite Gallery at OCAD University
The Power Plant and Wapatah Centre
Textile Museum of Canada
Toronto Biennial of Art

For the full press release visit: <http://artmuseum.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/with-the-north-2019-PR-final.pdf>

About Isuma:

In 1985, Zacharias Kunuk broke the race barrier at Canada Council for the Arts when his Inuktitut-language video, *From Inuk Point of View*, was the first work by an Inuit or Aboriginal artist deemed eligible to apply for a professional artist's grant. Kunuk was the video's director; Norman Cohn cameraman; Paul Apak editor; and elder Pauloosie Qulitalik told the story. By 1990, the four partners had formed Igloodik Isuma Productions Inc. to produce independent video art from an Inuit point of view. Early Isuma videos, featuring actors recreating Inuit life in the 1930s and 1940s, were shown to Inuit at home and in museums and galleries around the world. Over the next ten years, Isuma artists helped establish an Inuit media arts centre, NITV; a women's collective, Arnait Video Productions; and Artcirq, a youth media and circus group. In 2001, Isuma's first feature-

length drama, *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner*, won the *Caméra d'or* at the Cannes Film Festival; in 2002, both *Atanarjuat and Nunavut (Our Land)*, a 13-part TV series, were shown at Documenta 11 in Kassel, Germany. Isuma's second feature, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, opened the 2006 Toronto International Film Festival, and its third feature, *Before Tomorrow*, written and directed by Igloodik's Arnait women's collective, was screened in World Cinema Competition at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival. In 2008, Isuma launched IsumaTV, the world's first website for Indigenous media art, now showing over 7,850 films and videos in 71 languages. In 2012, Isuma produced *Digital Indigenous Democracy*, an internet network to inform and consult Inuit in low-bandwidth communities facing development of the Baffinland Iron Mine and other resource projects. Isuma then produced a non-fiction feature about what took place during this intervention, *My Father's Land* (2014). Further recent projects include the feature drama, *Maliglutit (Searchers)*, the TV series, *Hunting With My Ancestors*, and the first Haida-language feature film, *Edge of the Knife*. More on Isuma at isuma.tv.

About Couzyn van Heuvelen:

Couzyn van Heuvelen is a Canadian Inuk sculptor. Born in Iqaluit, Nunavut, but living in Southern Ontario for most of his life, his work explores Inuit culture and identity, new and old technologies, and personal narratives. While rooted in the history and traditions of Inuit art, the work strays from established Inuit art making methods and explores a range of fabrication processes. Couzyn holds a BFA from York University and an MFA from NSCAD University.

About the Curators:

asinnajaq is a visual artist, writer and curator, from Inukjuak, Nunavik, now based in Montreal. She studied film at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, after working for two summers on a cruise ship in the arctic. Asinnajaq is a co-creator of the Tillitarniit Inuit Film Festival in Montreal. She is the writer and director of *Three Thousand* (2017), a film featured in the Winnipeg Art Gallery's landmark show *INSURGENCE/RESURGENCE*, and has been nominated for a Canadian Screen Award. Asinnajaq has been working with Isuma on their retrospective titled *Channel 51 Igloodik*. She looks forward to the continued learning all her posts afford her.

Barbara Fischer is the Executive Director/Chief Curator of the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, where she also holds the position of Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, and Director the Master of Visual Studies Curatorial Studies in the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design. Previously, she has held curatorial positions at the Walter Phillips Gallery, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, as well as the directorship of the Blackwood Gallery. Her curatorial work focuses on art and its histories, in the context of issues of our time.

About the Art Museum at the University of Toronto:

The Art Museum is comprised of the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (Hart House) and the University of Toronto Art Centre (University College). Located just a few steps apart, the two galleries were federated in 2014 and began operating under a new visual identity as the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, one of the largest gallery spaces for visual art exhibitions and programming in Toronto. Building on the two galleries' distinguished histories, the Art Museum originates and organizes an intensive year-round program of exhibitions and events that foster—at a local, regional, and international level—innovative research, interdisciplinary scholarship, and knowledge of art and its histories befitting Canada's leading university and the country's largest city.

About the Toronto Biennial of Art:

Launching September 21, 2019, the 72-day Toronto Biennial of Art presents local, national, and international contemporary art in a citywide event as culturally layered and connected as Toronto itself. The event takes place every two years, offering accessible and transformative visual art exhibitions, installations, talks, learning opportunities, and happenings in new and unexpected spaces along the shores of Lake Ontario. The Biennial's goal is to galvanize Toronto and nearby cities, connecting communities around art and culture, and contributing to global conversations from a distinctly Canadian perspective. The event reflects the specific context of the region and its unique standard for inclusion and openness. In an effort to make contemporary art available to everyone, admission to curated venues and outdoor installations is free and open to the public. Visit torontobiennial.org for details.

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For high resolution images please visit:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/f4aic91lywb9h76/AAAy3Xz6BFbX_gfuCTUadFufa?dl=0

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Our Supporters

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