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Qaggiq:

Gathering Place

September 18–

November 30, 2019

Art  
Museum

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Works by



ISUMA

Curated by asinnajaq and Barbara Fischer

Presented with the support of the Jackman  
Humanities Institute, University of  
Toronto

Presented in partnership with  
Toronto Biennial of Art

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Cover: Isuma, *Hunting with my Ancestors Episode 1: Bowhead Whale Hunt*, 2018. Courtesy of Isuma and Vtape.

Right: Isuma, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, 2006. Courtesy of Isuma and Vtape.

## Isuma: film and video from an Inuit point of view

Our name *Isuma* means “to think,” as in Thinking Productions. Our building in the centre of Igloodik has a big sign on the front that says Isuma. Think. Young and old work together to keep our ancestors' knowledge alive. We create traditional artifacts, digital multimedia, and desperately needed jobs in the same activity. Our productions give an artist's view for all to see where we came from: what Inuit were able to do then and what we are able to do now.

—Zacharias Kunuk



Above and below right: Isuma, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, 2006. Courtesy of Isuma and Vtape.

Middle: Isuma, *Hunting with my Ancestors Episode 1: Bowhead Whale Hunt*, 2018. Courtesy of Isuma and Vtape.

Above right: Isuma, *Qpirangajuq: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change*, 2010. Courtesy of Isuma and Vtape.

## Qagqiq: Gathering Place

In 1990, Zacharias Kunuk, Paul Apak Angilirq, Pauloosie Qulitalik, and Norman Cohn founded Igloodik Isuma Productions Inc. to create film and video from an Inuit point of view. They set out to counter the mainstream media world, where the news is produced in English and French and stories remain focused on urban centers of power, by making a space where the choice of subject and content is in Inuit hands. Isuma has maintained their integrity by never forfeiting creative authority and autonomy. Keeping this power, like the final cut on a film, has been critical for staying true to what is most important to them.

Over the past three decades, one of Isuma's projects has been to encourage community and pass on inter-generational knowledge. They are continuing oral traditions in today's technologies, working with elders who share their expansive knowledge and their life experience on Isuma TV.

Beyond testimonials, Isuma has produced vast cycles of programming for video, film, and television in which the entire cast and crew employ and/or relearn traditional knowledge, language, and cultural practices. Included in this exhibition is their epic, 1995 series *Nunavut: Our Land*, each of its 13 dramatic chapters invoking Inuit ways of life and survival in the 1940s. Projects such as these build resilience, and their impact is felt both by those involved and their audiences.

Isuma's 2001 film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* brought them to international attention: an Inuit legend, telling the story of love, crime,

and a warrior's epic endurance. It was not only the first feature film produced entirely in Inuktitut, it also premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, where it was awarded the prestigious Camera D'Or.

Isuma's films often focus on significant turning points in the history of northern communities, from the forced introduction of Christianity, to the fateful day in 1958 when the Canadian government compelled communities to relocate to permanent settlements—the story at the heart of *One Day in the Life of Noah Piugattuk*, which debuted at the Venice Biennale this past May, and is on view at the Toronto Biennial of Art.

Isuma is an expansive mobilizing force. In addition to producing their own work, they recognize the necessity for perspectives beyond their own. Their alliances include Arnait Video Productions (originally the Women's Video Workshop of Igloodik), which has its own rich history of video productions and feature films launched at festivals worldwide. In 1998, to support youth creativity and combat youth suicide, Isuma fostered the creation of Artcirq, an artistic collective also based in Igloodik that has evolved into a thriving circus in which Inuit youth reconnect with traditional cultural practices including gamesmanship.

Integral to this work, in 2008, Isuma launched Isuma TV, the world's first website for Indigenous media art. Today it features an archive of over 7,850 films and videos in 71 languages. Making a place for Indigenous media democracy, Isuma continues to radically

expand access for and to Inuit and Indigenous productions, using low-bandwidth internet to inform and consult on, and to make transparent such recent contested developments as the Baffinland Iron Mine at Mary River.

The team that collaborates to bring us Isuma uses as many tools as possible to cultivate communication—from video art to television programs, feature films, webcomic templates, study guides, and classroom curriculums. Their work empowers those who wish to think about and partake in the shaping of Indigenous and common futures. Isuma's gift starts with their creative force and extends to that of their widening circle of participants and viewers.

The exhibition at the Art Museum, presented in collaboration with the Toronto Biennial of Art, seeks to stay true to these values. The goal of *Gathering Place*—composed of a reading and meeting space as well as several screening rooms—is to create a place where people may be able to become active through Isuma's work. Their work says what needs to be said. Isuma brings people together; through this exhibition, we hope the gallery space will do the same.

—asinnajaq and Barbara Fischer

asinnajaq is an independent filmmaker, curator and writer living in Montreal.

Barbara Fischer is director of the Art Museum at the University of Toronto.



Isuma, *Hunting with my Ancestors Episode 1: Bowhead Whale Hunt*, 2018. Courtesy of Isuma and Vtape.

The curators have invited guest artist Couzynn van Heuvelen into the exhibition of Isuma's work with his work *Qamutiik* (Sled). An Inuk sculptor and installation artist originally from Iqaluit, Nunavut, van Heuvelen 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. Based in Bowmanville, Ontario, van Heuvelen received his BA from York University and his MFA from NSCAD.

Isuma was officially founded in 1990 by Zacharias Kunuk, Paul Apak Angilirq, Pauloosie Qulitalik, and Norman Cohn in Igloodik, Nunavut. This first ever Inuit production company produces video from an Inuit point of view, which includes language, story telling, and ways of thinking. Their 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 the ongoing, ever present struggle to sustain Inuit futures in the massive transformation of the North through resource extraction projects and climate change.



## Opening Event

### Reception

Tuesday, September 17, 2019, 6-8pm  
University of Toronto Art Centre

## Public Programs

### A Conversation with Isuma

With Norman Cohn, Zacharias Kunuk, Apayata Kotierk, Samuel Cohn-Cousineau, Jonathan Frantz and asinnajaq  
Tuesday, September 17, 2019, 4-6pm  
Room 140, University College  
Registration required.

### Workshop with asinnajaq

Wednesday, October 23, 12pm  
University of Toronto Art Centre  
Registration required.

### Curatorial tour with asinnajaq and Barbara Fischer

Wednesday, October 23, 6pm  
University of Toronto Art Centre

### Drop-In Tours

Fall Exhibitions Tour  
Every Tuesday, 2pm  
Meet at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery

### Malcove Collection Tour

Last Wednesday of each month, 12 noon  
University of Toronto Art Centre

### Hart House Collection Tour

Last Wednesday of each month, 2pm  
Meet at the Hart House information desk

Group tours may be booked by contacting us at [artmuseum@utoronto.ca](mailto:artmuseum@utoronto.ca)

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

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. More on Isuma at [isuma.tv](http://isuma.tv).

## Toronto Biennial of Art

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. Visit [torontobiennial.org](http://torontobiennial.org) for details.

## Collateral Programs

### 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. Participating organizations include: Fehleley 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 and the Toronto Biennial of Art.

## Staff

Barbara Fischer, Executive Director/  
Chief Curator  
Sarah Robayo Sheridan, Curator  
John G. Hampton, Adjunct Curator  
Seika Boye, Adjunct Curator  
Rebecca Gimmi, Program Coordinator  
Maureen Smith, Business Coordinator  
Heather Darling Pigat, Collections Manager  
Esther Simmonds-MacAdam, Exhibition Coordinator  
Chiara Cavaliere, Gallery Attendant  
Sam Mogelonsky, Communications Assistant  
Robert Anthony O'Halloran, Alexandra Chacinski, Alex Durlak, Dax Morrison, Exhibition Technicians

Brand Design: Underline Studio  
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Copy Editor: Ruth Jones

## Visiting the Art Museum

**Justina M. Barnicke Gallery**   
7 Hart House Circle  
Toronto, Ontario M5S 3H3  
416.978.8398

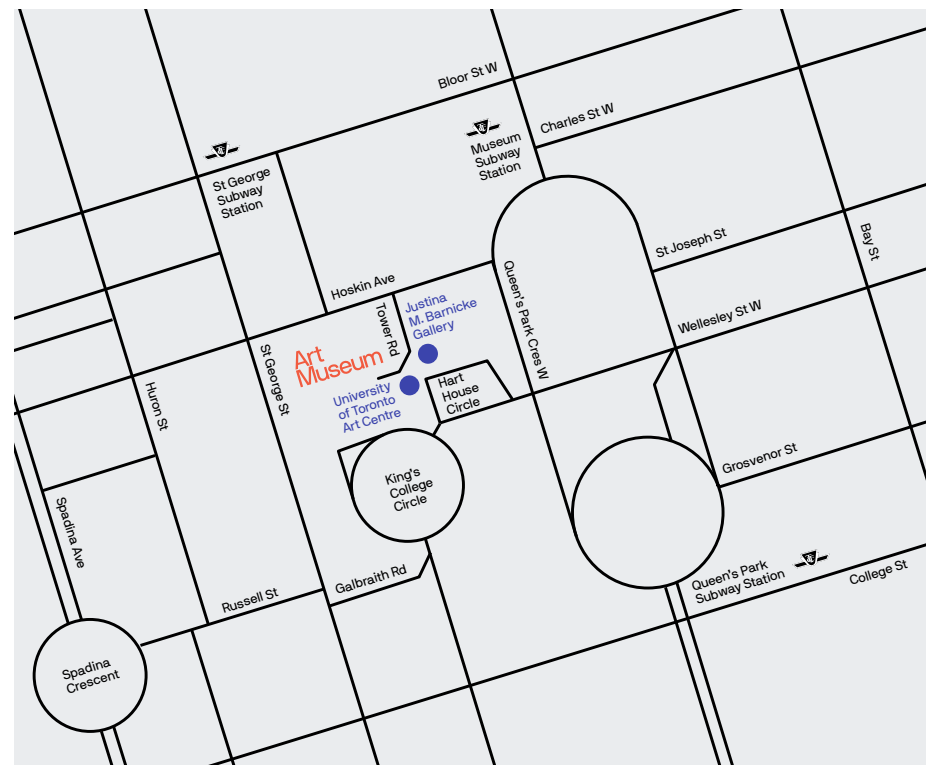
**University of Toronto Art Centre**  
15 King's College Circle  
Toronto, Ontario M5S 3H7  
416.978.1838

Wheelchair access to University College, and the Art Museum's University of Toronto Art Centre location, will be closed due to University College building revitalization. Accommodations for accessibility are available upon request by contacting [artmuseum@utoronto.ca](mailto:artmuseum@utoronto.ca).

Tuesday	Noon-5pm
Wednesday	Noon-8pm
Thursday	Noon-5pm
Friday	Noon-5pm
Saturday	Noon-5pm
Sunday	Closed
Monday	Closed

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

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