The Performance of Shadows

Curated by Lillian O’Brien Davis
September 7–November, 2023
Justina M. Barnicke Gallery

Works by Betye Saar, Tim Whiten, Erika DeFreitas
Our Supporters

Presented in partnership with the School of Art Gallery, University of Manitoba with the generous support of Michael F. B. Nesbitt.

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The Performance of Shadows

*The Performance of Shadows* explores intuition as a condition of consciousness. This exhibition considers three artists’ various approaches involving phenomenology, spirituality and political engagement presenting expansive understandings of existence.

Betye Saar’s assemblage work, which has been increasingly influenced by her rising political consciousness since the 1960s, consists of objects carrying their own history and meaning, selected for their “ancestral, ritual, autobiographical, nostalgic and historical” aura. In Saar’s work, time is cyclical, linking the artist and viewers of her work with generations of people who came before them. Saar uses assemblage and found materials to link history and experiences, emotion and knowledge, travelling across time and back again.

Tim Whiten bridges material and spiritual experiences that encourage “sensing” over “reading.” Whiten investigates consciousness and its role in the constitution of meaning. Informed by a deep generosity, his work seeks to connect to others through its experience.

Erika DeFreitas’s practice emphasizes process, the body and paranormal phenomena, using primarily lens-based media to reflect on feelings of love and loss. DeFreitas explores the miraculous as a way of considering that which is beyond our comprehension;
through simple gestures, she seeks to make perceptible the intangible and invisible. The divine feminine is a consistent presence in DeFreitas’s work, understood by the artist as a connective energy passing through space and time.

Process is key to the works in the exhibition. All three artists embrace various manifestations of intuitive intelligence, working to connect with what lies beyond our immediate experience of reality. Objects and materiality function as transmitters for memory, experience, and consciousness. Meaning and significance cannot be fully experienced through objectivity alone. The artists in The Performance of Shadows nurture intuitive practices that expand our perception of the world.
Artworks

Betye Saar
_THE MESSIAH_, 1993 mixed-media assemblage
Courtesy of the artist and Roberts Projects, Los Angeles, California.

Tim Whiten
_RESPITE_, 2019
crushed resourced glass, wood, gel medium, Aqua-Resin, and acrylic paint, 10” x 30” x 12”
Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.
Courtesy of the artist.

Tim Whiten
_Hallelujah I_, 2014
lilac branches, umbrella handle, 58”x72”x12”
Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.
Courtesy of the artist.

Tim Whiten
_BOOK OF LIGHT: CONTAINING POETRY FROM THE HEART OF GOD_, 2015-2019 handcrafted crystal clear glass, fragments of drawings, and oak, 46.5” x 28” x 15”
Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.
Courtesy of Olga Kolper Gallery.

Erika DeFreitas
_AS IT IS, OR EVEN, PERHAPS A RECITATION AND EMIGRATION_, 2020 single-channel video, colour, sound, 06:11 minutes
Courtesy of the artist.
Erika DeFreitas
she looms in the resemblance should it be so anxious, 2020 single-channel video, colour, no sound, 03:05 minutes
Courtesy of the artist.

Erika DeFreitas
scores on a colourless blue no. 24 (after Scotch Blue), 2021/2023 inkjet print on Hahnemühle, 24” x 36”
Courtesy of the artist.

Erika DeFreitas
scores on a colourless blue no. 25 (after Prussian Blue), 2021/2023 inkjet print on Hahnemühle, 24” x 36”
Courtesy of the artist.

Erika DeFreitas
scores on a colourless blue no. 26 (after Indigo Blue), 2021/2023 inkjet print on Hahnemühle, 24” x 36”
Courtesy of the artist.

Erika DeFreitas
scores on a colourless blue no. 27 (after China Blue), 2021/2023 inkjet print on Hahnemühle, 24” x 36”
Courtesy of the artist.

Erika DeFreitas
scores on a colourless blue no. 28 (after Azure Blue), 2021/2023 inkjet print on Hahnemühle, 24” x 36”
Courtesy of the artist.

Erika DeFreitas
scores on a colourless blue no. 29 (after Ultramarine Blue), 2021/2023 inkjet print on Hahnemühle, 24” x 36”
Courtesy of the artist.

Erika DeFreitas
scores on a colourless blue no. 32 (after Verditter Blue), 2021/2023 inkjet print on Hahnemühle, 24” x 36”
Courtesy of the artist.

Erika DeFreitas
scores on a colourless blue no. 34 (after Greyish Blue), 2021/2023 inkjet print on Hahnemühle, 24” x 36”
Courtesy of the artist.

Suzanne Bauman
Spirit Catcher: The Art of Betye Saar (still), 1977 film
Courtesy of Suzanne Bauman Films.
Public Programs

Opening Reception
*Wednesday, September 6, 6pm–8pm*
*University of Toronto Art Centre*

Curatorial Tour with Lillian O’Brien Davis
*Saturday, October 7, 2pm–3pm Justina M. Barnicke Gallery*

All programs are free and open to all. For more information, visit artmuseum.utoronto.ca/programs/

Exhibition Tours

The Art Museum offers in-person guided exhibition tours for classes and groups. For more information or to book a tour, email artmuseum@utoronto.ca.
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
416-978-8398

Hours
Tuesday 12 noon–5pm
Wednesday 12 noon–8pm
Thursday 12 noon–5pm
Friday 12 noon–5pm
Saturday 12 noon–5pm
Sunday Closed
Monday Closed

Closed on statutory holidays.
Admission is FREE.

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