The Performance of Shadows
September 6—November 25, 2023
Works by

Betye Saar, Tim Whiten, Erika DeFreitas

Curated by Lillian O'Brien Davis

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

Cover: 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.

Right: Betye Saar,
The Messiah, 1993,
mixed media assemblage.
Courtesy of the artist
and Roberts Projects,
Los Angeles, California.
In *The Performance of Shadows*, artists embrace intuitive intelligence, working to connect with what lies beyond our immediate experience of reality and expanding our perception of the world.

*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.

**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.

Erika DeFreitas
*scores on a colourless blue no. 30 (after Azure 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
Justina M. Barnicke Gallery

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

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.

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Visiting the Art Museum

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