

Art Museum  
University of Toronto  
—  
Justina M. Barnicke Gallery  
University of Toronto Art Centre

7 Hart House Circle  
Toronto, Ontario M5S 3H3  
artmuseum.utoronto.ca

# Art Museum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The Art Museum at the University of Toronto presents a major exhibition from internationally acclaimed filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin titled *The Children Have to Hear Another Story***

*The groundbreaking retrospective exhibition features unprecedented access to the lifework of the iconic Abenaki filmmaker and activist*

ALANIS OBOMSAWIN: *The Children Have to Hear Another Story*  
September 7–November 25, 2023  
Art Museum at the University of Toronto  
Curated by Richard Hill and Hila Peleg

Toronto, ON (August 1, 2023)—[The Art Museum at the University of Toronto](#) presents *The Children Have to Hear Another Story*, a groundbreaking exhibition that celebrates the life work of one of the most acclaimed Indigenous directors in the world, [Alanis Obomsawin](#). Running from September 7 to November 25, the exhibition will feature unprecedented access not only to Obomsawin's films but also the archives related to their production. Presented decade by decade, it is a comprehensive overview of her films, artworks, prints, and music along with

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ephemera, documents and media coverage that provide new insight into her work.

“Supporting museums and exhibits that promote access to heritage for Canadians is essential to learning from our past and shaping our future. I am very proud that, through our government’s investment, the Art Museum at the University of Toronto will highlight the work of Indigenous artist and filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin and provide visitors with a unique opportunity to discover the impact of her filmmaking over the decades.”

—The Honourable Pascale St-Onge, Minister of Canadian Heritage

Obomsawin is best known for the documentary films she has created during her long tenure at the National Film Board (NFB). Throughout her remarkable documentary filmmaking career, Obomsawin has listened to the individual and collective voices of Indigenous peoples from across Canada, who have been silenced and ignored or were considered too young to be heard. Her work has amplified their cares and concerns, including struggles for rights and recognition, in the face of the generational effects of colonization, displacement, and state-mandated assimilation.

“We are thrilled to be able to celebrate Alanis Obomsawin’s life’s work by presenting her first major museum exhibition in Toronto,” says Barbara Fischer, Executive Director/Chief Curator of the Art Museum at the University of Toronto. “This is the first time a wide-ranging selection of her diverse work is presented in one

exhibition, illustrating her astounding journey as an artist and profound contributor to urgently needed social change from the ground up.”

Alanis Obomsawin's journey began amidst a time in Canadian history when opportunities for social and political agency were systematically denied to Indigenous peoples. Despite these challenges, she fearlessly raised her voice and used major public media platforms to champion Indigenous concerns and tell their stories. Her unwavering dedication and artistic integrity have made her a revered and beloved figure celebrated both in Canada and around the world.

"The exhibition is a survey of my life's work. I have often said a picture may say a thousand words, but a voice is specific; it says precisely what is intended, with little room for interpretation. I hope this exhibition will communicate my voice, and through my voice visitors will learn about our people," says Alanis Obomsawin. "Our people are so beautiful and I know that if you hear and see them, you will realize the knowledge they bring to the rest of the world."

Obomsawin has made 56 films focusing on the lives and concerns of First Nations peoples. Her body of work includes the groundbreaking *Incident at Restigouche* (1984), a behind-the-scenes view of the police raids on a Mi'kmaq reserve, and *Kanehsatake: 270 years of Resistance* (1993), filmed from the inside

of the Mohawk resistance to the expansion of a golf course on their sacred burial lands, which received international acclaim, including the Best Canadian Feature Film at the Toronto International Film Festival that year. Her films—which utilize interviews, drawings, songs, and music—are marked by their original research, critical attention to the history of colonial ways of thinking, compassion and advocacy for the rights and lives of Indigenous people. Her many awards and honours include the 2008 Governor General’s Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Achievement. More recently in 2023, she was the first female filmmaker to be awarded the prestigious [Edward MacDowell Medal](#).

In addition to the exhibition, a series of public programs will be offered, including guided visits, talks, and film screenings, offering a deeper appreciation of Alanis Obomsawin's storytelling and activism, and its profound impact on the history of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada.

### **Listing Information**

Art Museum at the University of Toronto presents:  
**The Children Have to Hear Another Story: Alanis Obomsawin**

#### **Dates:**

Artist reception for media: September 6, 6pm–8 pm

Exhibition: September 7–November 25, 2023

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**Location:**

Art Museum at the University of Toronto  
University of Toronto Art Centre (in University College)  
15 King's College Circle, Toronto, Ontario M5S 3H7

**Hours and Admission:**

Free admission  
Tuesday to Saturday from 12pm–5pm  
Wednesdays from 12pm–8pm

**Public Programs**

**Artist and Curator Tour**

*Saturday, September 9, 2pm–4 pm*

*Location: Art Museum at the University of Toronto*

A guided, public tour of the exhibition with Alanis Obomsawin and curator Richard William Hill (Smith Jarislowsky Senior Curator of Canadian Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery). RSVP required.

**Alanis Obomsawin: In Conversation with Cameron Bailey  
(R.K. Teetzel Lecture, University College)**

*Thursday, November 16, 4:30pm–6pm*

*Location: University College*

In conversation with Cameron Bailey, CEO of the Toronto International Film Festival, Alanis Obomsawin will speak about her lifework, Indigenous storytelling, and activism through her films,

drawings, and music. RSVP required.

This exhibition is complemented by a major monograph edited by Richard William Hill (Smith Jarislowsky Senior Curator of Canadian Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery) and Hila Peleg. This book includes scholarly essays, personal anecdotes, conversations, and an interview with the artist, providing an insightful glimpse into her life and work. Visitors can also explore her own writings, etchings, film stills, photographs, and archival materials.

*The Children Have to Hear Another Story: Alanis Obomsawin* is organized by Richard William Hill and Hila Peleg and made possible through a partnership between Haus der Kulturen der Welt, the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, and Vancouver Art Gallery in collaboration with the National Film Board of Canada, and by the generous support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Embassy of Canada, Berlin, and CBC/Radio Canada.

For more information, visit [artmuseum.utoronto.ca](http://artmuseum.utoronto.ca)  
Images from the exhibition are available [here](#).

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**Our Supporters:**

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gouvernement du Canada.

Additional support has been provided by ISO (Indigenous Screen Office).

The Art Museum at the University of Toronto gratefully acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council.

**About Alanis Obomsawin:**

A member of the Abenaki Nation and one of Canada's most respected artists, Alanis Obomsawin is an activist filmmaker and producer at the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). She was born in 1932 in Lebanon, New Hampshire, and spent her early years in Quebec, on the Odanak reserve, whose songs and stories she continues to tell. Obomsawin began her artistic life as a singer, writer and storyteller in 1960. Her performances, which include stories and songs in Abenaki, English and French, have been presented in universities, residential schools, prisons, museums, art centres and folk festivals across North America and Europe to aid humanitarian causes. In 1988, she released her singular musical album, *Bush Lady*, featuring traditional Abenaki songs as well as original compositions. First hired as a consultant for Indigenous filmmaking at the NFB in 1966, Obomsawin went on to prolifically write, direct and eventually produce her films, beginning with *Christmas at Moose Factory* (1971). Her body of work includes her groundbreaking *Incident at Restigouche* (1984), a behind-the-

scenes view of the Quebec police raids on a Mi'kmaq reserve, and the acclaimed film *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), a feature-length documentary on the 1990 Kanyen'kehà:ka (Mohawk) uprising in Kanehsatà:ke and Oka, which received eighteen international film awards and catalyzed her four-film cycle on the Oka Crisis. She recently concluded a cycle of films focusing on the rights of Indigenous children with *Jordan River Anderson, the Messenger* (2019).

Obomsawin has also been making engravings and prints for over four decades and exhibiting these works on paper in Canada and Europe. For her lifetime contribution to enriching the human condition through the arts, Obomsawin was awarded the Glenn Gould Prize in 2020. She was named a Companion of the Order of Canada in 2019 and has been a Grande Officière of the Ordre national du Québec since 2016. She is also the recipient of over fifteen honorary degrees from universities and colleges across Canada and the US. Recent awards include the Iris Homage, Gala Québec Cinéma in 2020; DGC Honorary Life Member Award, Directors Guild of Canada in 2018; and Commander of the Ordre de Montréal in 2017, for her exceptional contribution to the city's cultural life and commitment to the community. Obomsawin was also named Outstanding Canadian of the Year by Maclean's magazine in 1965 for spearheading the construction of the municipal pool in Odanak, which is still in operation today.



**About the Co-Curators:**

**Richard William Hill**, Smith Jarislowsky Senior Curator of Canadian Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery, has worked as a curator, critic and art historian for three decades. He was Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Studies at Emily Carr University of Art and Design from 2015 until December 2021. Prior to this, he was Associate Professor at York University, teaching courses in art history, curatorial practice and graduate research methods. Hill also worked at the Art Gallery of Ontario, where, with Dr. Anna Hudson, he oversaw the museum's first substantial efforts to collect historic Indigenous North American art and display it in the permanent collection galleries. Hill's essays on art have appeared internationally in numerous books, exhibition catalogues and periodicals.

**Hila Peleg** is a curator and editor based in Berlin and Tel Aviv. She curated interdisciplinary cultural events in public institutions internationally, including: HKW, Berlin, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Iniva, Institute of International Visual Art, London. Peleg was a curator of documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel (2017), of the 10th Shanghai Biennale (2014) and of Manifesta 7 in Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol (2008). In 2010 she founded the Berlin Documentary Forum, a biennial event devoted to the production and presentation of contemporary and historical documentary practices in an interdisciplinary context. Peleg is the co-editor of the books *Documentary Across Disciplines* (2016, MIT

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Press), *CP138: Gordon Matta-Clark* (2020, Walther König), *Alanis Obomsawin: Lifework* (2022, Prestel Verlag), *Feminist Worldmaking and the Moving Image* (2022, MIT Press) and *Ein jüdischer Garten* (2022, Hanser).

**About the Art Museum at the University of Toronto:**

The Art Museum is one of the largest gallery spaces for contemporary visual art exhibitions and programming in Toronto. The Art Museum organizes and presents 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.

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