

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's fall 2025 exhibitions redefine land art and address the climate crisis**

*Earthwork* re-frames a key movement in contemporary art history, while *Dwelling Under Distant Suns* confronts environmental precarity

**JULY 29, 2025 (TORONTO, CANADA) — The Art Museum at the University of Toronto** is thrilled to present two powerful new exhibitions from **Sept. 4–Dec. 20, 2025**. *Earthwork* reassesses the art historical framing of the “earthwork” popularized by the land art movement of the 1960s and '70s, reclaiming it from an Indigenous perspective. It is curated by **Mikinaak Migwans**, Curator of Indigenous Contemporary Art at the Art Museum and Assistant Professor in the Department of Art History at the University of Toronto. *Dwelling Under Distant Suns*, curated by Master of Visual Studies in Curatorial Studies graduate student **Yantong Li**, addresses environmental precarity by highlighting the struggle to make visible the increasingly unpredictable landscape.

“We are excited to present these two incredible exhibitions that mark the first major curatorial projects of both curators at the Art Museum,” says Barbara Fischer, Executive Director of the Art Museum.

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*“Earthwork emphasizes considerations of care for the land, while Dwelling Under Distant Suns represents the challenges in visualizing the climate crisis and other human-led impacts on the environment. Dwelling Under Distant Suns thereby underlines the urgencies of the redress that Earthwork aspires to undertake.”*

**Earthwork** redefines a term that until now has referred to a type of artistic practice associated within the larger conceptual framework of land art. In this exhibition, Migwans shifts our understanding of earthwork to refer to a way of working, rather than the making of singular objects — similar to the term “beadwork.” With a Canada-wide scope emphasizing the Great Lakes region, the exhibition takes as its starting point an understanding of ancestral earthworks less as monuments and more as sites of ongoing stewardship and care. It considers multiple layers of engagement with the land, including a history of land defense movements, medicine walks, and ancestral practices of prescribed burns, alongside contemporary artworks as creative acts of relational intervention.

“Redefining earthwork in this way helps us think about land as part of the cycles of life and death, rather than eternal monuments outside of time,” says Migwans. “It also helps us to see the huge labour investment that goes into maintaining relations on the land, getting away from this idea that the natural is something opposite to the human. Indigenous connections to land, especially, have been erased in colonial accounts that talk about a natural environment that is ‘virgin,’ ‘untouched,’ and in this way, unclaimed. But recent scholarship

is starting to show that North America’s ecosystems were carefully cultivated and maintained by Indigenous Peoples. They’ve quite literally shaped the landscape through generations.”

Central to the exhibition will be photo and video documentation by **Art Hunter** of land stewardship practices at the ancestral Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre, a national historic site and one of the most significant places of early habitation and ceremonial burial in Canada located in northwestern Ontario. Hunter’s description of the Anishinaabe community’s controlled burn and other processes to maintain the site’s special ecology served as the inspiration point for *Earthwork*. Internationally recognized artist **Michael Belmore** will create a new piece in his snow fence series, which will be on view from November 2025 through March 2026—following the seasonal cycle rather than the exhibition cycle. A new audio work by independent curator and artist **Lisa Myers** will help visitors think about land relations through walking and listening. Other featured artists are: **#BUSH Gallery** (Gabrielle L’Hirondelle Hill, Peter Morin, Tania Willard), **Alex Jacobs-Blum**, **Faye HeavyShield**, **Mike MacDonald**, **Edward Poitras**, and **Protect the Tract Collective**. The exhibition will offer visitors a printed Engagement Guide, to better connect with the works on view by sharing specific histories and information in an accessible way.

*Dwelling Under Distant Suns* grapples with the challenge of representing our planet’s growing climate crisis, especially environmental dangers that feel distant or out of sight. The artists in

the exhibition turn to speculative storytelling and myth-making to bring a sense of immediacy to these realities, while interrogating the way we currently consume media about environmental precarity with a focus solely on the spectacular and dramatic, with little patience for things that require more time and attention.

“On a recent trip back home to Yunnan, I was struck by the fact that I could no longer see snow and ice on the peaks of the Cangshan Mountain, which has maintained frozen terrain for decades,” says Li. “An unstable climate has made the mountainous environment precarious, with native vegetation in gradual decline and water cycles becoming unpredictable. This sight was a direct visualization of climate-induced catastrophe — sensed only in *longue durée* — and I wanted to locate methodologies to represent these disparate sites across time and space. I included film-based works in this exhibition because representations of catastrophe across digital media have wreaked havoc on our attention span, rendering viewers as passive voyeurs. All the film works in the exhibition require lengthy sit-ins, denying immediate consumption but also extending an invitation to viewers to engage in a dialogue, with the only prerequisite being the willingness to sit with it.”

The exhibition will feature a new commissioned film by **Alvin Luong**, *Cyanide Debt* (2025), which restages and reimagines a mass cyanide poisoning in Bangkok as the artist creates a weak solution of cyanide using cassava, Thailand’s primary agricultural export. **Solveig Qu Suess** also uses archival materials that complicate our understanding

of historical events by meditating on the downstream politics of hydroelectric development affecting the Mekong River. And in **Kent Chan's** work, the artist pushes observations of tropical expansion due to the climate crisis to extreme ends, arriving upon a fictional scenario of a future global tropic that blurs geographies, histories, and cultures.

For more information, visit

[artmuseum.utoronto.ca/exhibition/earthwork](https://artmuseum.utoronto.ca/exhibition/earthwork) and  
[artmuseum.utoronto.ca/exhibition/dwelling-under-distant-suns](https://artmuseum.utoronto.ca/exhibition/dwelling-under-distant-suns)

### **Public programs**

#### Opening reception

*Wednesday, Sept. 3 from 5–8pm*

Join the exhibitions' curators Mikinaak Migwans and Yantong Li, alongside featured artists, in celebrating the public opening of the Art Museum's fall 2025 exhibitions. *Earthwork* will open with a special Grass Dance performance by Miikaans Mobile Movement Lab.

#### Curatorial Tour with Mikinaak Migwans

*Saturday, Sept. 6 from 3–4pm*

Join Mikinaak Migwans for an in-depth curatorial tour of *Earthwork*, reclaiming the art historical framing of the "earthwork" popularized by the land art movement of the 1960s and '70s from an Indigenous perspective.

#### Art Bus Excursion with Lisa Myers

*Date TBC*

Artist, curator, and Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change at York University, Lisa Myers will lead an offsite excursion in conjunction with *Earthwork*.

Artist Tour with Alex Jacobs-Blum

*Wednesday, Oct. 22 from 6–7:30pm*

Gayogohónq' (Cayuga) and German visual artist and independent curator, Alex Jacobs-Blum introduces her work in the *Earthwork* exhibition and other artworks to explore her lived experiences and relationship to the land.

Curatorial Tour with Yantong Li

*Saturday, Nov. 8 from 2–3pm*

Join student curator Yantong Li for an exploration of the themes and artworks featured in his exhibition *Dwelling Under Distant Suns*.

Mounds & Memory Symposium

*Thursday, Nov. 13 to Saturday, Nov. 15*

In partnership with the [Mounds and Memory Project](#) and Hiawatha First Nation, the Art Museum hosts a three-day on and off-site symposium, with panels, talks, site visits and community gatherings at Hiawatha First Nation and Serpent Mounds Park near Rice Lake.

Michael Belmore Launch

*Thursday, Nov. 13 from 6pm*

Internationally recognized GTA-based Anishinaabe artist Michael Belmore, whose new work exploring the structure of snow fencing is included in *Earthwork*, will lead an introduction to his work and interests as an artist employing materials and processes that are concerned with land, water, and the environment.

*Earthwork is made possible with generous support from Partners in Art. Exhibition programming is supported by Toronto Arts Council Strategic Funding and the Mounds and Memory Project, University of Toronto, funded by SSHRC.*

*Dwelling Under Distant Suns is supported by the Jackman Humanities Program for the Arts as part of its 2025–26 Annual Theme, “Dystopia and Trust.”*

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

The Art Museum is one of the largest gallery spaces for visual art exhibitions and programming in Toronto. Comprised of the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (Hart House) and the University of Toronto Art Centre (University College), the 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.

### **Museum hours**

Tuesday      12–5pm

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Wednesday 12–8pm  
Thursday 12–5pm  
Friday 12–5pm  
Saturday 12–5pm

**Address**

*Earthwork*

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

*Dwelling Under Distant Suns*

Justina M. Barnicke Gallery  
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**Social media**

Facebook: [@artmuseumuoft](#)  
Instagram: [@artmuseumuoft](#)  
X: [@artmuseumuoft](#)

**Press kit and photos**

[bit.ly/ArtMuseum2025](https://bit.ly/ArtMuseum2025)

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