

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

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artmuseum.utoronto.ca

Art Museum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Indigenous and diasporic Canadian artists explore the radical potential of the alter-ego in subverting dominant narratives in *THE COUNTER/SELF*

Toronto, Ontario (December 16, 2022)—The Art Museum at the University of Toronto is pleased to present *THE COUNTER/SELF*, an exhibition that brings together a diverse group of Indigenous and diasporic Canadian artists who create imaginative alter-egos to examine, perform, and subvert identity constructs. The exhibition will be on view at the Art Museum from **January 11 to March 25, 2023**, with a public opening reception on **Wednesday, January 11**.

Curated by Mona Filip, *THE COUNTER/SELF* features new and existing works by artists **2Fik, Helio Eudoro, Julius Poncelet Manapul, Meryl McMaster, Sasha Shevchenko, Adrian Stimson, Stacey Tyrell, and Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory and Jamie Griffiths**. Navigating the complexities of selfhood, agency, and representation, the artists transform their appearance and stage complex images, videos, and installations that expose and disrupt prejudices with regards to gender, race, ethnicity, and nationhood. Informed by personal and cultural histories entwined within the artists' life experiences, their counter/selves advance divergent perspectives that upend deceitful national legacies and social expectations.

1 of 5



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Grounded in their ancestry, Adrian Stimson, Stacey Tyrell, Julius Poncelet Manapul and 2Fik employ related strategies of subverting colonial fallacies about conquest, race and the whitewashing gaze. Unsettling colonial records through fierce irreverence and counter-memory, Stimson's performance work as Buffalo Boy and The Shaman Exterminator foregrounds absented narratives and creates space to shape a new reality. Tyrell creates images that address opposing sides of her dual Caribbean and European ancestry, laying bare socially constructed racial concepts and challenging the pervasive fiction of whiteness. Inhabiting both colonized and colonizer personas that confront Spanish dominion over the Philippines, Manapul examines displacement inflicted by colonialism, sexual identity, and Eurocentric hegemony. 2Fik examines identity and its socio-political ramifications in a Québécois context through his main alter-ego, Ludmilla-Mary—a stylish, gender-bending character sporting a hijab and an abundant beard—confronting apprehensions and biases.

Informed by her nêhiyaw (Plains Cree), British and Dutch ancestry, Meryl McMaster's work explores the self in relation to land, lineage, history, culture and the more-than-human world. Equally focused on ancestral histories, Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory (Inuk) and Jamie Griffiths (Canada-UK) expose the inequity for Inuit in their own homelands through the enduring impact of European incursions on Nunavut, adopting the personas of Sir Martin Frobisher and Queen Elizabeth I. Brazilian-Canadian artist Helio Eudoro investigates the layers that envelop and reveal aspects of the self related to gender, sexuality, body image, diasporic experience and social

exclusion through sculpture, performance and installation featuring ceremonial robes that restore and release the body. Sasha Shevchenko's work stems from her experience of displacement as a Ukrainian immigrant, centering on a fragile alter-ego who gradually emerges among displayed objects, articulating new origin stories and spaces of healing.

Audacious or enigmatic, probing power structures, asserting belonging, or obscuring presence, the counter/selves reclaim space, protect the vulnerable, and reveal the deceptions of dominant discourses, counteracting their harmful sways. In all their incarnations, they epitomize resilience, resistance, and renewal.

Public Programs

Opening Reception: Winter 2023 Exhibitions
THE COUNTER/SELF* and *Conceptions of White
Wednesday, January 11, 6pm–8pm

Celebrate the opening reception of *THE COUNTER/SELF* at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (in Hart House) and *Conceptions of White* at the University of Toronto Art Centre (in University College). Opening remarks will take place at 6:30pm at the JMB and at 7pm at UTAC.

Curatorial Tour with Mona Filip
Saturday, January 28, 2pm–4pm
Justina M. Barnicke Gallery

Join Mona Filip for an in-depth curatorial tour examining the themes and artistic strategies in the new exhibition, *THE COUNTER/SELF*.

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

About the Curator

Mona Filip is Curator at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto. Originally from Bucharest, Romania, Filip received her BFA from the Corcoran School of Art, Washington DC, and her MFA from SUNY at Buffalo. Previously Director/Curator of the Koffler Gallery, she led the organization's visual art program for fifteen years, producing over forty exhibitions and off-site projects. She developed first public gallery shows in Toronto of prominent Canadian artists such as Ghazaleh Avarzamani, Sameer Farooq, Karen Tam, and José Luis Torres, and first Canadian exhibitions of acclaimed international artists Raphaël Zarka (France) and Christian Hidaka (UK), Sigalit Landau (Israel), Esther Shalev-Gerz (France), Isabel Rocamora (UK/Spain), Iara Freiberg (Brazil/Argentina) Adi Nes (Israel), and Joshua Neustein (USA).

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

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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.

Our Supporters

The Art Museum gratefully acknowledges operating support from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Council.

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