

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 and Hart House transform Hart House Commons with the “Tree Protection Zone”, a public art installation showcasing Indigenous art



Toronto, August 23, 2021—As large-scale construction on U of T’s Landmark Initiative continues around the Hart House Commons, a number of large tree-protection hoardings have inspired a public art project entitled **Tree Protection Zone (TPZ)**. When completed at the end of summer 2021, the aptly

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named project will feature specially commissioned mural-sized works by eight artists and their collaborators considering the preservation of life, water, and kin and how each is inextricably linked to the protection of trees.

This temporary public art project provides an opportunity to engage students and the wider public in essential conversations about the land and its people and helps to set the stage for the permanent Indigenous Landscape Project—an offshoot of the Landmark Initiative—that will be constructed on the Commons in Spring/Summer 2022.

The artists participating in the TPZ are supported by Student Assistants and emerging artists who will benefit from the unique opportunity to closely engage with the artists' processes, vision, and knowledge. Working with the TPZ curatorial team, the Assistants will be applying a variety of creative processes as they help to bring the artists' designs to life. The initiative fosters collaborations involving artists, family, students, and community members of diverse backgrounds that foreground Indigenous perspectives and knowledge.

Tree Protection Zone (TPZ) is made possible by Presenting Partners including the Office of the Vice-President, Operations and Real Estate Partnerships, University of Toronto; the Art Museum at the University of Toronto (AMUT); Hart House; Indigenous Student Services; and the Office of Indigenous Initiatives at U of T. Additional project support is provided by the City of Toronto's Arts and Culture Grant, and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) and U of T's Postsecondary

Education Fund for Aboriginal Learners (PEFAL). The project is produced in conjunction with ArtworxTO, the City of Toronto's Year of Public Art, launching in September.

"This major art in public space project, organized by the Art Museum, introduces to the campus of the University of Toronto an as-of-yet rarely acknowledged, but urgent sense of long-lived place: amongst the ancient trees and cared-for landscapes, and amidst the short span of settler history as configured by the surrounding historic buildings, the curators and artists' works remind us of the intertwining of human and the planet's life, drawing out buried stories and standing both with and as protectors of the land," says Barbara Fischer, Executive Director/Chief Curator, Art Museum at the University of Toronto.

"The role of public visual art is such a powerful one," says John Monahan, Warden of Hart House, who first approached the other U of T partners about reimagining the tree hoardings in a way that would signal the future Indigenous Landscape Project to be undertaken on the same site. "The presence of the Tree Protection Zone (TPZ) installation in the city and on the U of T downtown campus is an important visual declaration about the past, present, and future of this land and the Indigenous peoples who have been stewarding it for generations. Hart House is proud to be part of this inspiring initiative."

Curated by Mik Migwans, Assistant Professor and Curator at AMUT, and Maria Hupfield, Assistant Professor Indigenous Digital Arts and Performance, the Tree Protection Zone (TPZ)

features eight invited artists, including Susan Blight, Carrie Hill, Que Rock, Taqralik Patridge and Nils Ailo Utsi, Christi Belcourt and Isaac Murdoch (of the Onaman Collective), and Shuvinai Ashoona. The artists will use the hoardings as a support structure for their work in diverse media, employing traditional street art techniques and a variety of other applications to turn Hart House Commons into a celebration of the garden and trees, the buried waterway (Taddle Creek) that remains there under the soil, and the community that is centered here.

"Cities constantly change at street level; hoardings inform the urban aesthetic and are part of our daily living. By drawing attention to the tree protection zones found on construction sites, this Indigenous-led public art project signals the University of Toronto's support of work by artists who prioritize critical accountability to place, land, and peoples as part of the vibrant energy of the city," says Maria Hupfield, co-curator, Tree Protection Zone (TPZ).

Tree Protection Zone (TPZ) will be completed and open for public viewing from September 7, 2021, until Spring/Summer 2022 when the Indigenous Landscape Project begins.

As access to Hart House Circle is limited during construction, we invite you to follow the progress of Tree Protection Zone (TPZ) on social media:

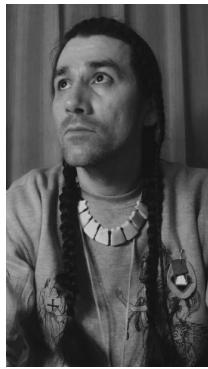
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**#TPZ #TreeProtectionZone #IndigenousArt #ArtMuseumUofT
#HartHouse #UofT**

Tree Protection Zone (TPZ) Featured Artists:



**Que Rock; Manitou Nemeen
(Quentin Commanda)**

Que is a Nipissing First Nation-born nomadic muralist. Through traditional Ojibway and Odawa ways, teachings, approaches, and ceremonies in visual healing art forms, he learned painting, dancing, leatherwork, and storytelling techniques. As a traditional Anishnawbe First Nations artist, Que interprets daily interactions, the city, and his culture, while depiction of nature and animals bring meaning and connection to life. He says, “working on murals allows [him] to engage in the community, bring people together, and inspire others.” (Artwork title: *Every Child Is Sacred*)



Susan Blight

Susan Blight (Anishinaabe, Couchiching First Nation) is an interdisciplinary artist working with public art, site-specific intervention, photography, film, and social practice. Susan is co-founder of Ogimaa Mikana, an artist collective working to reclaim and rename the roads and landmarks of Anishinaabeg territory through the revitalization of Anishinaabemowin. She is also a member of the Indigenous Routes artist collective which works to provide

free new media training for Indigenous youth.
(Artwork title: *6 kilometres and 8000 years long*)



Carrie Hill

Carrie Hill is a Haudenosaunee woman from Akwesasne Mohawk Territory and owner of Chill Baskets. The tradition of weaving Black Ash Splints and Sweetgrass goes back many generations in Carrie's family, her Aunt being her first

teacher. She finds honour and pleasure teaching Haudenosaunee Fancy Basketry and is proud to pass along this ancient tradition to her children, her community, and the next generations of artistic leaders. [Artwork Title: *Tewarontanonhna (We guard the tree)*]



Taqralik Partridge in collaboration with Nils Ailo Utsi

Taqralik Partridge and Nils Ailo Utsi are an International Indigenous wife and husband duo and collaborators. Taqralik is a writer, spoken word poet, and curator originally from Kuujuaq, Nunavut. Partridge's writing focuses on both life in the north and in southern urban centres,

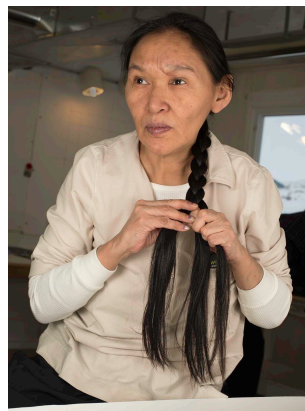
as well as the experiences of Inuit. Her writing has been reproduced in Swedish and French translations, and she has toured with multiple orchestras and productions. Nils Ailo Utsi is a Sámi artist, and respected animator and illustrator from Kautokeino, Norway. (Artwork title: *Meahcis / in the forest*)

Christi Belcourt and Isaac Murdoch (Onaman Collective)



Onaman Collective is formed by Indigenous artists and environmentalists Christi Belcourt and Isaac Murdoch, who love the land and believe in the spirits of the land. Isaac's Ojibway name is Manzinapkinegego'anaabe / Bombgiizhik and he is from the fish clan of Serpent River First Nation, Ontario. Christi is a Michif visual artist with a deep respect for the traditions and knowledge of her people; from Mânitow Sâkahikan, Albertaj, living in Anishinaabeg territory on the Northern Shore of Lake Huron, Ontario. Together, they believe in the resilience and beauty of their people and in their Elders

and young people. With everything they do, the underlying theme is always respect for the land and reclamation of the ways of their ancestors. (Artwork titles: *Protect the Sacred* and *Mother Earth Revolution*)



Shuvinai Ashoona

Born in Cape Dorset, North West Territories, Shuvinai (Inuk) is a graphic artist. Shuvinai works primarily in drawing which she began in 1996. She works with pen and ink, coloured pencils, and oil sticks and her imagination to draw the landscape around the community of Cape Dorset and contemporary Inuit life. Her work draws from her personal experiences, surroundings, and daily life in meticulously detail. Shuvinai's

exhibition, *Beyond the Visible*, is currently at the AGO. [Artwork title: *Composition (Octopus Transformation)*]

About the Art Museum at the University of Toronto

The Art Museum is comprised of the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at Hart House and the University of Toronto Art Centre (University College). Located just a few steps apart, the two galleries were federated in 2014 and began operating under a new visual identity as the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, one of the largest gallery spaces for visual art

exhibitions and programming in Toronto. Building on the two galleries' distinguished histories, the Art Museum originates and organizes 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.
(artmuseum.utoronto.ca)

About Hart House

Hart House is a dynamic and inclusive centre for experiential education outside the classroom; where students from all three University of Toronto campuses find welcoming and unique ways to connect with each other and the broader world through engagement with the [arts](#), [dialogue](#) and [wellness](#). From peer groups for study and [social justice-based community talks](#), to [art exhibitions](#), [theatre workshops](#) and [wellness classes](#) that strengthen both body and spirit, Hart House offers something for everyone. [Hart House is for you.](#) (harthouse.ca)

About Indigenous Student Services

Founded in 1992, First Nations House (FNH) is a culturally relevant hub for Indigenous students at the University of Toronto. FNH provides a space on the St. George campus to learn about Indigenous knowledges and traditional teachings, attend events, socialize, seek guidance from Elders and access financial and academic supports. Located at FNH, Indigenous Student Services ([Student Life](#)) provides culturally relevant services to Indigenous students to support academic success, personal growth and leadership development. We offer learning

opportunities for all students to engage with Indigenous communities at UofT and beyond. (#uoftstudentlife)

About the Office of Indigenous Initiatives at U of T

The **Office of Indigenous Initiatives** was established in response to the **report** by U of T's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Steering Committee. The Office's mandate is to support and guide the U of T community as it continues to work towards reconciliation. Efforts are directed towards listening, coordinating, advising, and collaborating with academic and non-academic communities in addressing the Calls to Action. The Office intersects with areas such as teaching and learning, student experience, Faculty and staff recruitment and engagement, and community-based research. The Office also conducts a regular environmental scan, produces a report to establish the impact and progress of Indigenous Initiatives on campus, and manages the activities of the Council of Indigenous Initiatives.

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