University of Toronto MVS Studio Program Graduating Exhibition May 1–July 27, 2024



Works by

a. portia ehrhardt, Adrienne Scott, Cason Sharpe, Rachel Ormshaw, Sandy Callander

This graduate exhibition is funded and produced as part of the requirements for the MVS degree in Studio at the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, University of Toronto.

This exhibition is generously supported by The Valerie Jean Griffiths Student Exhibitions Fund in Memory of William, Elva, and Elizabeth.





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Cover: Cason Sharpe, North Wishcourt After Relocation, 2024. Wheatpaste on Homasote board, 96" x 144". Photo: Luke Albert.

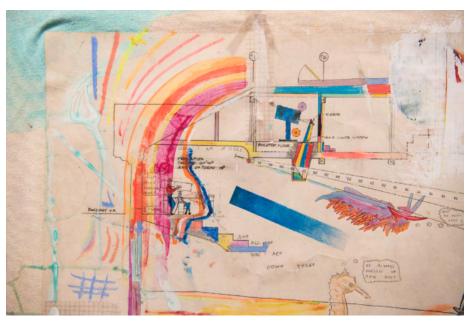
Right: Sandy Callander, Workstation: Promethéia (Forethought) (detail), 2023. Plywood, chalk, galvanized steel, nails, OSB, paint, screws, SPF lumber, wood glue, 72.5" x 48" x 34.5". Photo courtesy of the artist.



Works by a. portia ehrhardt Adrienne Scott Cason Sharpe Rachel Ormshaw Sandy Callander









This exhibition is produced as part of the requirements for the MVS Studio degree in Visual Studies at the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, University of Toronto.





Top Left: Sandy Callander, actors in a continuous reciprocal temporality (Factory Rendition), 2023. Acrylic, electrical hardware, mild steel, paint, plywood, rust, screws, threaded rod, wire, UV emitters. 43.75" x 10.75" x 30.5". Photo courtesy of the artist.

Bottom Left: Rachel Ormshaw, Justice and Temperance, 2023. Beeswax, metal leaf, metal box, tarot cards.

Middle: a. portia ehrhardt, Dream Cast ii (detail), 2024. Oil and soft pastel, gouache, and pencil crayon on found technical drawing and canvas, 33" x 47". Photo: Krystle Merrow. Top Right: Adrienne Scott, Finding another entrance, trying the same door, 2023– 24. Still from animation, variable dimensions. Image courtesy of artist.

Bottom Right: Cason Sharpe, North Wishcourt After Relocation, 2024. Wheatpaste on Homasote board, 96" x 144". Photo: Luke Albert.

Foreword

To read what was never written.

This is how Walter Benjamin described the birth of a kind of reading that precedes the development of language. ¹ The ancient form of reading "before all languages" originally stemmed from acts of looking upwards, at the stars above—or inwards, at the entrails of living creatures. Things could paradoxically be read as sources of meaning without first having been written. That is because a constellation in the sky or a liver on the table was an orientational sign that was directly linked to what it signified.

From such divinatory acts of reading there eventually developed runes and hieroglyphs—"the mediating link of a new kind of reading." These new signs introduced human agency—the act of writing—that also transformed the act of reading. Pictograms are pictures that visually resemble what they signify; ideograms are pictures that conventionally represent abstract ideas. Convention injects a degree of arbitrariness that disrupts the original link connecting things to what they signified. The shift is from immediate to more mediated—socialized—sources of meaning.

"It seems fair to suppose," writes Benjamin, "that these were the stages by which the mimetic gift, which was once the foundation of occult practices, gained admittance to writing and language." With language, meaning becomes fully mediated by text—and the act of reading becomes socialized as a matter of history rather than nature.

This admittedly provisional sketch attempts to describe an array of tensions; between written and unwritten texts; between the acts of looking upwards or inwards for meaning; between presence and re-presentation; fusion and rupture; natural and historical signs. This nexus of tensions offers various ways to approach the artistic work of a. portia ehrhardt, Adrienne Scott, Cason Sharpe, Rachel Ormshaw, and Sandy Callander.

Cason Sharpe's project takes place inside and outside the art gallery. Inside, he installs drywall panels bearing collaged images and assorted documents. At one level, the panels constitute a representation: an image of construction hoarding. At another level, they enact a gesture: an active effort to construct memory in the face of collective displacement

in a context of gentrification. The images and documents—childhood photographs, urban planning documents, community newsletters, handwritten letters—attest to the demolition and redevelopment of the Alexandra Park neighbourhood in Toronto.

Writing-printed as a broadsheet and intended to migrate outdoors—accompanies the drywall panels. Sharpe's text fictionalizes Alexandra Park in the guise of North Wishcourt, translating the realpolitik of gentrification into the languages of allegory and auto-fiction. Documentary evidence and allegorical fiction intertwine in the service of memory as it faces erasure and loss. The world of children is described from the perspective of the adult in a glance that is as much prospective as it is retrospective. Viewers witness this indoors, taking it with them outside, into a city transformed as much by steamrollers and wrecking-balls as by the invisible hand of the market.

Adrienne Scott presents an animation displayed as a video projection. Its visual language is abstract, allusive, poetic. "I've been looking around," she says, "with a searching line. This is to say I've been hesitant, unwilling to draw a conclusion or be too definitive." Meandering strings interact with bits of paper. Painted forms resembling water droplets engage with cut-outs reminiscent of leaves. Everything is in motion. Everything is in flux.

"You can," the voiceover tells us, "illustrate any theory of the world with dollar store materials." A pas de deux between poetic abstraction and self-reflective description thus emerges. The animation is theory enacted through cheap matter. This hints at a kind of ethics—a relation to the audience in the mode of accessibility rather than pretentiousness. This ethics of intimacy reappears in the animation as an ideal fusion between form and content: "The word 'whisper' is like this-the verb is locked onto its action. It would be weird to say it loudly. Speaking 'whisper' like a command would be a paradox. Whispering is one way of making a word dissolve into phonetics." At stake is a desire for synthesis, the union of opposites a heaven of unfettered expression.

a. portia ehrhardt's series, *Dream Cast I-IV*, consists of paintings on unstretched canvas that incorporate technical drawings and other materials. Drawings representing well-known figures—a "cast" of characters—from the canon of Western dance convene with abstract shapes

that function as pictograms of dance-scores. Personal notes meander around instructional words and numerical figures printed on the technical drawings. The idiosyncratic butts heads with and caresses the regimented, and it is cosseted and impacted in turn.

Another meaning of "cast" gradually emerges—casting now understood as a process of making by pouring a liquid into a mold and finally extracting its solidified form. ehrhardt describes the paintings as imagining "complete dances in their totality placed in a flower press and removed after centuries." A large sheet of Tyvek accompanies the works on canvas. The sheet had its first use as drop-cloth for Michael Trent's choreography, loveloss, performed at Dancemakers more than a decade ago. Having been used by various other dancers in various other performances, this material is now "suffused with dance"—containing on its surface the histories of its prior lives as traces like flowers pressed in the leaves of a book. Tyvek holds these traces, but not too firmly. It registers the paint, pastel, and pencil with which it has been marked-but it does so loosely, preventing solidification.

Rachel Ormshaw's work takes the form of sculptures that riff on the notion of a "loom"—understood as both a machine for interlacing thread (a weaving loom) and an inherited object (a family heirloom). The sculptures modify a heavy mahogany armoire handed down to the artist from her maternal grandfather, who was an Anglican priest, and a warping board reconfigured as a hinged door. Impending over (looming over) these modified found objects are the ways in which morality, religious piety and women's work intersect to give rise to disciplinary expectations about the division of labour.

Underlying these objects is the sound of a singing voice. Ormshaw's song alludes to "The Seven Swans," a fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen first published in 1838. In this story, seven brothers are transformed by a witch into swans, and their sister endeavours to release them from the curse. After enduring a vow of silence, wrongful condemnation and the painful labour of weaving, the girl eventually succeeds in liberating her brothers. Giving voice to a story centred on silence, the song performs an act of reconfiguration—an absent-minded act, like humming to oneself while hard at work.

Sandy Callander's project, titled *Light*Factory, consists of sculptural objects that allude
to places of work and building sites. The objects

themselves look something like work-stations with benches, demonstrating the ad hoc carpentry of their own construction. Allusions to Fordism, Taylorism, and post-Fordism abound. An accompanying text—a story set in cataclysmic times after the sky fell and the sun had vanished—discursively frames these objects.

One chapter in this narrative—which describes the establishment of the first work-stations—makes reference to *Promētheia* (forethought) and *Epimētheia* (afterthought). This citation of ancient Greek mythology suggests a search for origins. It also carries an element of hermeticism that may hint at the desire to preserve something against anticipated loss—the loss of ancient knowledge in mass-corporate culture, for instance. Hermeticism may also hint at something else—a loss of faith in a community capable of sustaining such knowledge. If this can be discerned in Callander's project, I suspect that such loss would be conveyed by cryptic allusions, stunted assemblages, and pursed lips.

The MVS graduate exhibition presents a variety of encounters.

As viewers, we confront forethoughts and afterthoughts that are activated in the face of cataclysmic change; a play with inherited notions that serves to reconfigure them; casts of characters that inform the molds that we may seek to absorb or resist; forms of ethics to negotiate the desire for fusion and the need for autonomy; and what occurs within the art gallery in relation to what lies outside it, in the gentrifying city. When such confrontations happen, the act of reading—our own resonant attentiveness in the gallery—can effervesce, rendering a proliferation of possible orientational signs.

Effervescent reading. John Irwin puts it this way: "As the hieroglyphical problem of the relationship between outer shape and inner meaning becomes the question of the origin of man [sic] and language, the image of 'writing' expands until all physical shapes become obscurely meaningful forms of script, forms of hieroglyphic writing each of which has its own science of decipherment—signature analysis, physiognomy, phrenology, fingerprint analysis, zoology, botany, geology..."²

—Luis Jacob

^{1.} On the Mimetic Faculty was written in 1933 but remained unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime.

^{2.} John Irwin, American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 61.

a. portia ehrhardt

"infinity is duality the outside and the inside of everything and nothing" -Sun Ra, "the alternative to limitation"

Imagine a three-circle Venn diagram. The circle are labelled Animals, Dance, and Science Fiction. Between Animals and Dance we have the words Hard to See. Between Dance and Science Fiction is World Building. Between Science Fiction and Animals is Transformation. In the centre is what this project is chasing: an articulation of the inarticulable, of opacity, of unintelligibility. "The World-Building of Dance-Making" uses the notion of dance notation as a grounding point to attempt a visualization of thought. A question I consider regularly, how does one think without words?, is both the start and the finish of each of these works, a series of mixed media assemblages that spiral out and back in on themselves to encompass an entire cosmology in twodimensional fixed-point works.

This project imagines complete dances placed in a flower press and removed after centuries. Brightly coloured and using flattened perspectives, each work has a specific cast of dancers—artists from the historical western dance canon, animals kind enough to join, and local inspirations—engaging with a choreographic score accompanying them on the page. Fanny Cerrito and Vaslav Nijinsky improvise alongside several nudibranch in a work about somatic breathwork; Missy Elliott and Tamara Karsavina turn into slugs onstage; humpback whales wear 120-year-old costumes to perform a circle dance. A series of intuitive gestures describe the quality and affect of the work, the energy of the audience, and the sensations of the dancers. Another word for this might be vibes. These works attempt the impossible: capturing an entire performance in a single visible moment. Peggy Phelan wrote that "Live performance ... disappears

into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control." These works seek not to evade this condition of disappearance but rather to attempt a restoration of performance from memory, an archeological dig at creating a work of dance backwards. They attempt a poetics of understanding and a flattened stage on which I, and others, can dance.

This project is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Dancer Transition Resource Centre, and the Graduate Architecture, Landscape, and Design Student Union.

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About the Artist

a. portia ehrhardt (b. 1986) is a dancer, astrologer, and multidisciplinary artist from/ in/around Toronto. Their work has been supported across Canada and internationally, including OFFTA (Montréal), SEAD (Austria), Mile Zero Dance (Edmonton), and HATCH/ Harbourfront Centre. A dancer with two decades of performance experience, they have appeared in works by Susie Burpee, Willi Dorner, Menaka Thakkar and Suzy Lake and trained extensively with renowned Ballet for Contemporary Dancers teacher Janet Panetta. ehrhardt was the Curator of Dancemakers Centre for Creation from 2015 to 2019, received a 2017 danceWEB scholarship, and was a 2016 TAC/Banff Centre Leadership Lab fellow. (ameliaehrhardt.net)



Dream Cast i, oil and soft pastel, gouache, and pencil crayon on found technical drawing and canvas, 39" x 61". Photo: Krystle Merrow.

^{1.} Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 148.





Adrienne Scott

In my practice I work between a range of media, including photography, drawing, and animation. My work often responds to ecology, with attention to natural and artificial hybridity, but the visuals in my work also come from a long personal preoccupation with pattern, abstraction, texture, and worldbuilding.

The animation in this exhibition, *Finding another entrance, trying the same door*, puts forward a personal cosmology that considers perception, drawing, and agnosticism. The images are created with a combination of drawn and stop motion methods and are accompanied by a text written in a personal voice. This text, which functions as its own kind of artist statement, wrestles with the feeling of uncertainty and hesitation, while recognizing the limited possibility of leaving these states.

This project is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

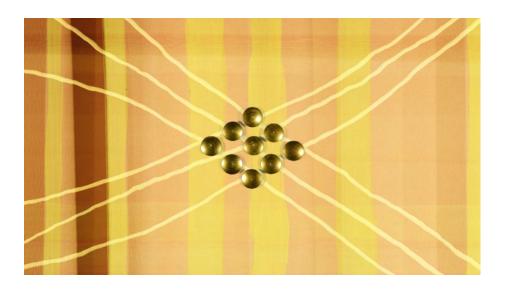
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About the Artist

Adrienne Scott is an artist and occasional writer based in Toronto, Ontario. A current MVS candidate at the University of Toronto, she holds a BFA from the University of Ottawa (2016), where she was a recipient of the Edmund and Isobel Ryan Scholarship in photography. She has shown work at Karsh-Masson Gallery (Ottawa, Ontario), Idea Exchange (Cambridge, Ontario), and Gallery 44 (Toronto, Ontario). Her writing has appeared in online publications including off centre, and she most recently curated a screening of Vera Frenkel's work, The Last Screening Room: A Valentine, at Trinity Square Video. (adriennemscott.com, @adrienne.m.scott)



Finding another entrance, trying the same door, 2023– 24. Still from animation, variable dimensions. Image courtesy of artist.





Cason Sharpe

"Or the beginning might be with my English teacher Mr. Robert, the one who wears rectangular wireframe glasses and ties his long grey hair into a ponytail. Every Monday morning Mr. Robert leads the class in a round of True Stewie, a game wherein each student has one minute to tell a story about something that happened to them over the weekend. The story can be about anything, as long as it's true. While the students tell their stories, Mr. Robert transcribes select words and phrases onto a yellow legal pad and then scrambles them into complete nonsense. I watch Mr. Robert as he writes, taking stock of what makes him scribble furiously and what makes him pause his pen. After everyone has had a chance to share, Mr. Robert reads what he's written out loud to the class. True Stewie is as ridiculous as MadLibs, but more special because you get to decide the story you want to tell and not just fill in the blanks where you're told. I relish hearing my story jumbled up with all the others, its characters swapped for new players, its meanings completely reversed. It's like a magic trick; Mr. Robert, a sorcerer; his pen, a trusty wand.

These are only a handful of possible beginnings, any of which could be used, in full or in part, to explain the genesis of my preoccupations as a writer, chief among them the city, the self, and the slippage between fact and fiction."

From North Wishcourt After Relocation (2024) by Cason Sharpe

About the Artist

Cason Sharpe is a writer and artist currently based in Toronto. He has presented work in collaboration with various friends and institutions across the country, and his fiction and criticism have appeared in various places in print and online.



North Wishcourt After Relocation, 2024. Wheatpaste on Homasote board, 96" x 144". Photo: Luke Albert.





Rachel Ormshaw

I've been thinking about cardinal virtues and door hinges, how things hang and move on a fixed point. C. S. Lewis explains that the word cardinal comes from the Latin for hinge of a door. The Cardinal virtues are Prudence, Temperance, Justice, and Fortitude.

The tarot deck has two cards within the major Arcana called Temperance and Justice. In tarot, Temperance means balance, moderation, patience, purpose. Justice means fairness, truth, cause and effect. Sometimes in a reading cards appear reversed, and their meanings change. The deck has something to tell you that is specific to reversal.

Lately, I've been trying to be more like The Fool.

I have two door hinges called Prudence and Fortitude. Those hinges come from the doors of a heavy mahogany armoire, a family heirloom passed to me from my maternal grandfather, an Anglican priest who loved C. S. Lewis. Lewis says Prudence is practical common sense. He says the proper motto is not "be good, sweet maid, and let who can be clever," but "be good, sweet maid, and don't forget that this involves being as clever as you can." God is no fonder of intellectual slackers than of any other slackers. He says Fortitude includes two kinds of courage: the kind that faces danger as well as the kind that sticks it under pain.

The crowning piece of this armoire has been used as a warping board, a tool for winding threads in preparation for working on the loom. I have been preparing yarn to be woven and making mistakes. I want to make things holy but I can't figure out how.

There is so much to be silent about, but I think I'll sing anyway.

About the Artist

Rachel Ormshaw is a multi-disciplinary artist originally from the Prairies. Her work considers histories of objects using careful gestures to create intimate relationships between works, audience members, and herself. Her work is deeply rooted in material practice, and she works extensively with natural fibres, sound works, and the specificity of found objects. Rachel is a graduate of OCADU in Material Art and Design with a specialization in Textiles, and has been a resident at the Contemporary Textile Studio Co-Op. Rachel is a musician and her band Scout's Honour recently released their self-titled debut EP through all streaming platforms.



Prudence and Fortitude, 2023. Beeswax, metal leaf, wood.





Sandy Callander

We felt the Work begin to take on a type of reciprocity—a different one to that which we previously felt—which was further exacerbated by our missing sun. The lights were always the same in the work rooms. The windows were always dark. The same glow escaping through them would illuminate the same grounds, trees, stones, and gardens we would always see looking out through them.

Light Factory is a fragmented story about a group of people who came together for a common goal: attempting to build a new sun after the sky fell. The world is cast into a darkness which can only be resisted through the use of artificial light. In this world, a group of people get together to attempt the impossible: to synthesize a new sun to wake up the sky, and thereby avert the calamity which has befallen them.

The narrative is both the underlying structure of the work and a distinct part of the work itself—a device used to consider methods of working, modes of production, the ethics of work and necessity, and the management and experience of time. The allegory of the *Light Factory* could be determined to be a faerie story, or a fictitious text, or the fragments of a record lost to the ravages of time. The works presented here parallel this indeterminacy, employing a wide range of materials and various haphazard construction methods. They sit between sculpture and artifact, resolving easily into neither.

About the Artist

Sandy Callander is an artist based in Toronto. Spanning print, sculpture, image, and text, Callander's practice examines connections between labour and capitalism, often through historical fact and industrial development. His recent work is focused on the interrelations between work, time, and meaning.



how are we to keep our measure?, 2024. Chrysotype print, 8" x 10". Photo courtesy of the artist.





Workstation: Epimethéia (Afterthought), 2023. Plywood, chalk, galvanized steel, nails, OSB, paint, screws, SPF lumber, wood glue, 72.5" x 48" x 34.5". Photo courtesy of the artist.

a haphazard inventory of materials II, 2024. Galvanized steel, hardware, paint, plywood, SPF lumber, 22.25" x 11.25" x 48". Photo courtesy of the artist.

From the Artists

a.portia: Right away: all of you, my brilliant cohort, who have shaped my every thought; The faculty at MVS;

My advisory panel: Seika Boye, Patrick Cruz, Ame Henderson, and Jean-Paul Kelly; With huge and special thanks to my advisor Zach Blas, for being so very real and using your powers for good;

Paloma and Pierrot;

Syrus Marcus Ware;

Harry at the GSU pub;

The Three Speed;

Mum, Dad, Hannah, Andrew, Hunter, and Elliott;

Jonathan;

Brave Binch Bimbo Summit:

And a hundred thousand thanks to you, Krystle, for caring for me and challenging me and taking photos for me and always being up for anything.

Adrienne: With thanks to Julie McGuinness (mom) for the support, Buster (cat) for insisting I wake up early, and to this brilliant cohort (Rachel, Cason, Amelia, Sandy, Dallas, Ingrid, Sam) for so many expanding conversations over the last two years. Special thanks also to Harry at the GSU, without whom this degree would not have been possible.

Cason: Thank you to the MVS faculty, my fairy godmothers, for your support, generosity, insight, and patience. Thank you to my wonderful cohort—I love you all, see you at the GSU. Thank you to every friend, acquaintance, and family member who gracefully endured my stint as an insufferable grad student. Thank you to Zoe and Yaniya, for pushing me. The biggest, most fabulous thank you to Luke, for everything everything everything. Thank you AP, once and always home.

Rachel: I would like to extend my deepest thanks to my panel of advisors for their wisdom and encouragement, with particular thanks to Karen Kraven. Thank you to my parents, Peter Ormshaw and Marina Endicott, for their humour and love during the past two years, for reminding me I could do anything I wanted even if they'd rather I was writing a book. Thank you to Brett Munro for moving armoires with me and telling me the truth. Thank you to my class, Amelia, Adrienne, Cason, and Sandy for being the best best best best.

Sandy: Thank you to Gareth Long for his extended support throughout the program, and especially as my principal advisor. This project wouldn't be what it is without our many conversations and the advice I received through its many different iterations. Thank you as well to my panellists Jean-Paul Kelly, Marla Hlady, and Charles Stankievech, for their thoughtful comments and suggestions which opened up new facets of what the work could be. A special thanks to Leigh for our many conversations and for nurturing Light Factory from its infancy, and finally thank you to Anté Kurilić for continued transportation assistance throughout.

From the Faculty

Thanks to the MVS graduate faculty and our peer U of T colleagues who served on MVS Thesis panels this year, including professors Zach Blas, Seika Boye, Patrick Cruz, Marla Hlady, Luis Jacob, Jean-Paul Kelly, Karen Kraven, Will Kwan, Gareth Long, Morris Lum, Katie Lyle, Emmanuel Osahor, Sarah Robayo Sheridan, and Charles Stankievech. Thank you to professors Mitchell Akiyama, Cassils, Sanaz Mazinani, and Sue Lloyd and all the exceptional Visual Studies CUPE Sessional faculty who met and engaged with the artists in our program. Gratitude to the incredible Daniels staff that support our students and our collective work, especially Digital Media Technician Renée Lear and her fantastic team of undergraduate student workstudy participants.

The 2024 MVS Exhibitions would not be possible without the championing and commitment of Daniels Interim Dean Robert Levit and Associate Dean, Academic, Jeannie Kim. We extend our thanks to both Robert and Jeannie, along with all in the offices who foster the creativity and research of our community of students, faculty, and staff at Daniels.

Our continued collaboration with the Art Museum to realize the MVS Studio and MVS Curatorial graduating exhibitions is unparalleled in what it offers graduates in these fields of study—and is at the heart the leading research in art and exhibition that emerges from this program. We are incredibly grateful to Art Museum Director and Daniels Associate Professor Barbara Fischer as well as the museum's curatorial and technical staff, workstudy participants, and volunteers. Thank you!

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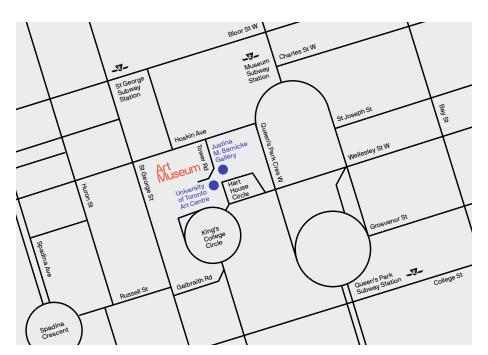
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