

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

***Conceptions of White*, an exhibition that examines the invention of Whiteness and its impact on the modern world, opens at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto**

Toronto, Ontario (December 16, 2022)—The Art Museum at the University of Toronto is pleased to announce the presentation of *Conceptions of White*, an exhibition that examines the myths and meanings behind the relatively recent idea of a monolithic “White race,” its influence on contemporary discourse, and its impact on the modern world. 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 John G. Hampton and Lillian O’Brien Davis, the exhibition examines the origins, travel, and present reality of “Whiteness” as a concept and a racial invention that classifies degrees of civility/humanity. The exhibition features reproductions of important historical objects alongside contemporary artworks that illustrate White origin myths, revealing Whiteness as a North American, settler-colonial invention of the seventeenth century created alongside “Blackness” and “Aboriginality.” Twelve contemporary artists from across North America complicate this historical foundation by offering nuanced perspectives on concepts such as White guilt, supremacy, benevolence, fragility, and power.

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Organized by the MacKenzie Art Gallery in partnership with the Art Museum at U of T, the diverse narratives, images, and ideas presented in *Conceptions of White* aim to highlight the complexity of our historical foundation, while drawing on links between the aesthetic, social, and philosophical meanings ascribed to the colour white.

“A project that has been over four years in the making, this exhibition presents a provocative series of points and counterpoints on a subject about which, in so many respects, so little is known,” says Barbara Fischer, Executive Director/Chief Curator at the Art Museum. *For those of us who grew up white in a white majority context, the contours of whiteness and the effects of its dominance may be, understandably, obscure. The curators, together with the artists in the exhibition, bring whiteness out of the continuing, detrimental slumber of such obscurity and sharply delineate its presence, its biases, privileges, and violent effects. Conjoining the work that needs to be done, I am proud that we are able to present this acutely timely project at the Art Museum, and to see it forward on its travel across the country.”*

Conceptions of White includes works by Arthur Jafa, Barbara Meneley, Deanna Bowen, Fred Wilson, Hiram Powers, Howardena Pindell, Jennifer Chan, Jeremy Bailey, Ken Gonzales-Day, Michèle Lalonde, Nell Painter, Nicholas Galanin, Robert Morris, Ryan Kuo, and Artist once known, after Leochares.

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Public Programs

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

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

Curatorial Tour with John G. Hampton and Lillian O’Brien Davis
Saturday, January 14, 2pm–4pm
University of Toronto Art Centre

John G. Hampton and Lillian O’Brien Davis will speak about the origins, travel, and present reality of “Whiteness” as a concept and a racial invention that classifies degrees of civility/humanity as presented in *Conceptions of White*.

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

About the Curators

John G. Hampton (they/them) is a curator, artist, administrator, and the current Executive Director and CEO of the MacKenzie Art Gallery. They hold a Master of Visual Studies in Curatorial Studies from the University of Toronto, and a BA in Visual Arts from the University of Regina. John is a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation, the United States, and Canada, and grew up in Regina. They have previously held positions as Executive Director of the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, Artistic Director of Trinity Square Video, Curator-in-Residency at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, and Curator at Neutral Ground Artist-Run Centre.

Lillian O'Brien Davis is the Curator of Exhibitions and Public Programs at Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography, Toronto. She has curated independent projects at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, Susan Hobbs Gallery, School of Art Gallery at the University of Manitoba, SUPPORT Gallery and the MacKenzie Art Gallery. Her writing has appeared in BlackFlash Magazine, Canadian Art online, C Magazine, The Brooklyn Rail and RACAR Art History Journal.

[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,

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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.

Media Contact

Marianne Rellin, Communications Assistant
marianne.rellin@utoronto.ca

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