

Blind Spot

May 7–August 1, 2026

Art
Museum

Works by

Shadi Habib Allah, Shu Lea Cheang,
Jeremy Laing, Lou Sheppard, and
Iris Touliatou

Curated by

Gia Liapi

Location

Justina M. Barnicke Gallery

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

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**2026 MVS Curatorial Studies
Graduating Exhibitions**

Little and Often

Curated by Chloe Gordon-Chow

May 7–August 1, 2026

Justina M. Barnicke Gallery

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Blind Spot

Blind Spot gathers the practices of Shadi Habib Allah (b. 1977, Palestine), Shu Lea Cheang (b. 1954, Taiwan), Jeremy Laing (b. 1979, Canada), Lou Sheppard (b. 1982, Canada), and Iris Touliatou (b. 1981, Greece). Working across installation, performance, video, and digital interfaces, these five artists destabilize various sanctioned structures—the “default settings” of technological, medical, linguistic, and archival systems—to reorient perception toward what operates beneath the visible.

They seek out blind spots in common infrastructures, from software to cellular signals, through which subjectivities are experienced and normalized, exposing systematic gaps and suggesting ways to repurpose their functions toward more complex realities and new possibilities. The artworks emphasize processes requiring bodily engagement, prompting closer attention to what is considered a given, and to who and what generate the systems and technologies we encounter every day.

Topics typically approached through the binary lens of oppression and refusal are here carried beyond this mere antagonism. The artists insist on a more nuanced terrain in which these seeming regimes of legibility and control can be negotiated and rerouted within the very conditions that sustain them. Their works complicate and destabilize sanctioned structures—the ‘default settings’ of technological, medical, linguistic, and archival systems—to examine their presumed neutrality and to open conversations about alternative architectures to learn from and with.

This way, the exhibition centres around types of intimate resistances that are located within the cracks and the fissures of otherwise dominant systems—from artificial intelligence and surveillance infrastructures to software interfaces and optical technologies, posing

questions such as: What are the epistemological conditions upon which taken-for-granted realities are constituted, measured, and rendered legible? How are bodies and materials measured against normative standards? And what possibilities open when the logics of colonial and heteropatriarchal infrastructures are used otherwise—outside the purposes for which they were sanctioned?

Jeremy Laing’s *STOCKROOM v2.0* (2026) poses the museum’s infrastructures as sites of domination, exposing museum storage itself as a spatial ‘blind spot.’ The installation complicates spectatorship, revealing quiet hierarchies embedded in institutional routines and curatorial practices. This spatial choreography transforms spectatorship into a tactile and ethical gesture, acknowledging that all vision occurs from a specific position and that, perhaps, a perspectival shift might offer ways to reconstruct our own reality settings layer by layer.

Shadi Habib Allah’s video *Did You See Me This Time With Your Own Eyes?* (2018) documents Palestinian engineers commissioned by the artist to replicate and decipher a covert network—built on unmonitored 2G cellular devices—used by Sinai Bedouin communities. The work reflects how power structures decide what counts as innovation and what counts as danger, revealing how marginalized communities’ survival technologies are reclassified depending on the point of view of the observer or narrator.

Lou Sheppard’s *A Strong Desire* (2019, 2026) is an installation accompanied by a dance performance produced from the blank spaces between the words of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*—the structural access-point for transition-related medical care. Sheppard’s performance and audio score manipulate the structures and

Cover: Jeremy Laing, *Learning how not to know the other*, 2020–23. Glazed wheel-thrown and altered ceramic vessel, macramé cord, sandblasted mirror. Courtesy of the artist and Susan Hobbs Gallery. Photo by Toni Hafkenschheid.

Right: Shu Lea Cheang, *UTTER*, 2023. Still from 36-minute video loop. Image courtesy of the artist.



grammars that sustain a presumed natural order, exposing the illogics of regulatory systems that disregard lived experience.

Shu Lea Cheang’s *UTTER* (2023) serves as a self-portrait of an AI in the form of an endlessly mutating body, accompanied by the coded parameters that determine its mutations. The work attends to the growing concerns around AI alignment techniques—the tuning of AI systems toward prescribed norms and acceptable outputs—as a contemporary technology of normativity that perpetuates patriarchal, racist, and often ableist biases. Cheang’s intervention into AI representation shifts our perspective towards what is programmed as ethical content in AI alignment, asking who gets to decide what is safe and beneficial and how human values are evaluated.

Iris Touliatou’s *SCORE FOR TONE CHANGE* (2023/26) is a software intervention that replaces the Oxford Dictionary—the default English dictionary installed on the museum’s computers—with Cynthia Whissell’s *Dictionary of Affect in Language* (1989),

which statistically analyzes words by how they “feel” rather than what they mean. The work has no physical presence inside the gallery. Instead, it appears as a disclaimer across emails, memos, and everyday correspondence. The software replaces spellcheck and definition-led synonyms with suggestions measuring a word’s affective charge; if a museum employee chooses to accept the suggestions, their text will eventually mirror their emotional register. Less an affirmation than a daily practice of attention, the work reveals how an institutional ‘tone of voice’ can suppress emotional engagement, even in a period of heightened global tensions and uncertainty.

Taken together, these works reorient perception toward what operates beneath the visible, mobilizing the body as a site through which conditions of dispossession might be interrupted and reconfigured. The artworks dwell in the frictions produced when meaning slips, prompting closer attention to what is seen, named, and assigned value while gesturing toward other ways of knowing and relating.

About the Curator

Gia Liapi is a curator and researcher specializing in gender and sexuality studies. Their curatorial practice often responds to specific geographies and conditions related to exhibition sites. She has worked internationally with ELEUSIS 2023—European Capital of Culture, the Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver), the DESTE Foundation, and the B&M Theocharakis Foundation. Awards and fellowships include the NEON Curatorial Exchange (2020) with the NEON Foundation and Whitechapel Gallery, a Curatorial Fellowship with the Schwarz Foundation (2019, 2022), and a Concept to Realization grant from the Canada Council for the Arts (2023). They served as curator of Zoumboulakis Galleries in 2019–23 and are currently completing an MVS in Curatorial Studies at the University of Toronto.

Curator's Acknowledgments

Deep gratitude to the artists, whose work makes everything here possible. To my comrade Chloe, and to all MVS colleagues across both cohorts, for your support, shared thinking, and care. To all the professors I've had the privilege to learn alongside over the past two years. To my community of friends, near and far, whose presence sustains me. To my supervisors and committee, Jennifer Papararo, Luis Jacob, Wanda Nanibush, Barbara Fischer, and Gareth Long for your guidance. And to all the staff at the Art Museum, for the attentiveness and care with which you have carried me and this project forward.

Public Programs

Opening Reception

Wednesday, May 6, 6pm–8pm

Justina M. Barnicke Gallery

Featuring a performance by artist Lou Sheppard. Free and open to the public.

For more information and to register, visit artmuseum.utoronto.ca/programs.

Exhibition Tours

The Art Museum offers in-person guided exhibition tours for classes and groups. For more information or to book a tour, email artmuseum@utoronto.ca.

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Visiting the Art Museum

Justina M. Barnicke Gallery

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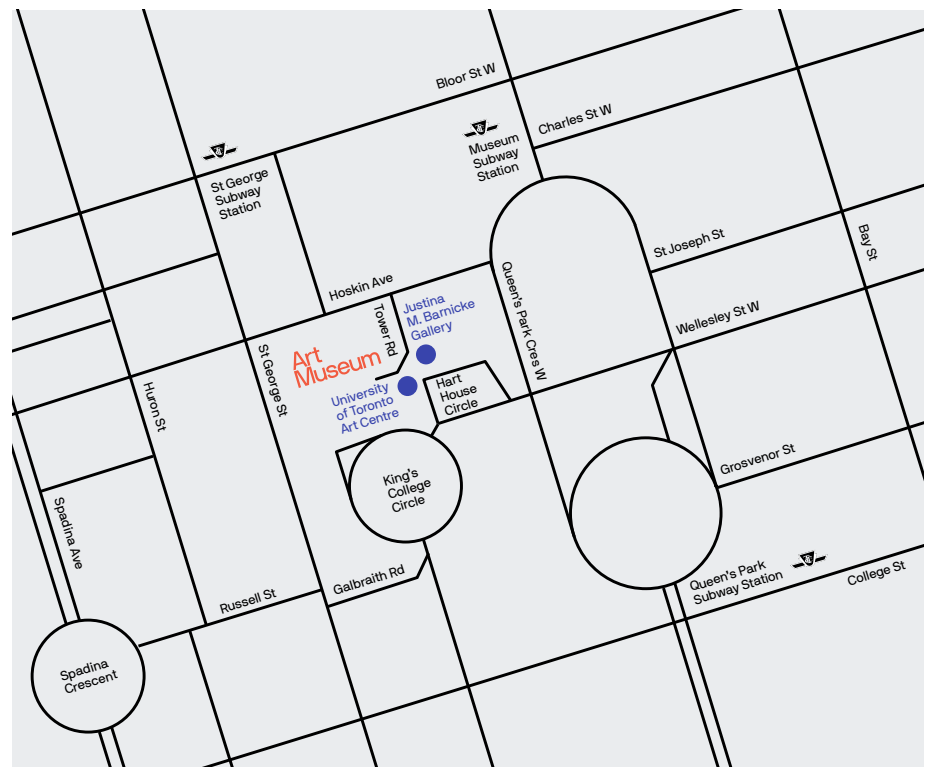
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Tuesday	12 noon–5pm
Wednesday	12 noon–8pm
Thursday	12 noon–5pm
Friday	12 noon–5pm
Saturday	12 noon–5pm
Sunday	Closed
Monday	Closed

Closed on statutory holidays.
Admission is FREE.



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