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AGO announces acquisitions of works by Tacita Dean, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Silke Otto-Knapp, Hito Steyerl and more

New acquisitions continue the AGO's multi-year focus on presenting and collecting work by women artists

TORONTO — The **Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)** announced today it has acquired major works by internationally renowned artists **Tacita Dean, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Silke Otto-Knapp, Hito Steyerl**, and a collaboration by **Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory** and **Jamie Griffiths**.

Dean's ***Antigone*** (2018) is an hour-long 35mm film collage that draws on the character of Sophocles' ancient play and presents a parallel narrative built around Dean's sister. ***OPERA (QM.15)*** (2016) by Gonzalez-Foerster is a holographic projection—what the artist calls an “apparition”—in which she takes on the appearance and voice of the opera singer Maria Callas. ***Monotones (Seascape)***(2016), Silke Otto-Knapp's four-panel watercolour of the Newfoundland coast, is part of the artist's distinctive series done in shades of black, grey and silver. First seen at the Bienale de Sao Paola in 2016, Steyerl's ***Hell Yeah We Fuck Die*** is a video installation and architectural environment, currently on view as part of the AGO exhibition *Hito Steyerl: This is the future*. Layering sound, images, and dance into a unique doubled-sided video projection, ***Silaup Putunga*** (2018), by Williamson Bathory and Griffiths, is the first moving image installation by an Inuk artist to enter the AGO's Collection.

These acquisitions build on the AGO's concerted effort to focus on both collection-building and exhibitions of works by women artists. Over the last five years, 79 of the museum's 189 purchased artworks—or **41% of purchased acquisitions**—were by women artists. And in the last three years, **46% of the AGO's 54** distinct exhibitions or special installations have been focused on women artists. This includes shows and acquisitions of works by artists such as Rebecca Belmore, Vija Celmins, June Clark, Yayoi Kusama, Rita Letendre, and Mickalene Thomas, among others.

Additionally, the AGO has been gifted a set of six preparatory works made by **Judy Chicago** for her work ***The Dinner Party*** (1974-1979). This includes four ceramic test plates and two drawings, honouring the contributions of Eleanor of Aquitaine, Sacajawea, Caroline Herschel and Elizabeth Blackwell.

“These artists are among the most exciting creators working today,” says **Stephan Jost**, the AGO's Michael and Sonja Koerner Director, and CEO. “Toronto is a global leader in conversations around gender, representation, and art, and the acquisition of these works underscores our ongoing commitment to developing the AGO Collection in meaningful, relevant ways.”

Antigone, 2018 – Tacita Dean (b. 1965)

With a reputation for being among United Kingdom's most celebrated artists working today, **Tacita Dean** is best known for her lyrical and subtle photographs and films made using analogue technology. Dean's most ambitious film project to date, *Antigone* is a homage to two Antigone

characters: Dean's own sister and the hero of Sophocles's Greek tragedy. Told through the medium of collage, their stories run side-by-side on two screens in 35mm. With a run time of one hour, the film features British actor Stephane Dillane and Canadian poet Anne Carson, speaking both in and out character, and concludes with a campfire conversation between Dillane, Carson and Dean, on the banks of the Mississippi River in a very different city named Thebes. Moving back and forth through the centuries, time is represented in the film by the progression of a social eclipse that looms over multiple geographies and seasons.

This is the second work by Dean to enter the AGO Collection. *Darmstädter Werkblock* (2009) is a set of photogravures made by Dean of the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt, site of the famous seven-room installation *Block Beuys, 1970-86* by Joseph Beuys.

Antigone was purchased with funds from the AGO Modern and Contemporary Curatorial Committee, the David Yuile and Mary Elizabeth Hodgson Fund, the Elcy Wallace Fund, the Richard Ivey Foundation Contemporary Art Fund, the Janet and Michael Scott Fund, the Jay Smith and Laura Rapp Fund, and the Molly Gilmour Fund.

OPERA (QM.15), 2016 – Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster (b. 1965)

One of France's most preeminent contemporary artists, **Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster** has spent her 30-year artistic career focusing on the relationship between past and present, using multiple mediums and figures to look at the connections between time, space and memory. *Opera (QM.15)* is one in a series of works staged by and starring the artist in disguise. Gonzalez-Foerster refers to these works as "apparitions", and her goal she says is to create "viewer-traps", works that combine two or more moments in time in one 3D figure. Assuming here the appearance and voice of the famous opera singer Maria Callas, the artist appears cloaked in a red dress similar to the one worn by Callas during one of her final performances. Lip-syncing various arias from Callas's early career, visitors encounter this 3D embodiment of the singer at the end of a dark corridor. A figure of public scrutiny, Callas was alternately praised and chastised for her body shape, and criticisms of the negative impact her weight loss on her voice were continuous throughout her career, a fact that Gonzalez-Foerster intentionally calls attention to here by contrasting the younger voice with Callas's older, thinner, body.

Works by Gonzalez-Foerster have appeared in five editions of the Venice Biennale and are represented in the collections of several world-renowned museums, including The Museum of Modern Art (MET) in New York City, the Tate Modern in London, and M+ Museum in Hong Kong. Despite Gonzales-Foerster's extensive international exhibition history, the AGO will be the only museum in Canada to hold one of her works in its permanent collection.

OPERA (QM.15) was purchased with funds from the AGO Modern and Contemporary Curatorial Committee and the David Yuile and Mary Elizabeth Hodgson Fund (2018).

Monotones (Seascape), 2016 – Silke Otto-Knapp (b. 1970)

For more than 10 years, **Silke Otto-Knapp** has been experimenting with watercolour, bringing a unique sensibility and vision to the medium. Working mostly in shades of black, grey and silver, her images have a distinctive and intriguing combination of both flatness and luminosity, which comes from her unique process of layering and washing away paint on canvas and linen. Across four panels, in fluid shadowy greys, *Monotones (Seascape)* describes a section of Newfoundland's rugged seacoast. Inspired by the choreography of Fredrick Ashton, the works in Otto-Knapp's *Monotones* series, approach painting as a kind of endless repetition, with landscapes and white-clad figures delineated in controlled, unbroken lines. This is Silke Otto-Knapp's second work to enter the AGO collection. *Seascape (trail)* (2015) was acquired in 2016.

Monotones (Seascape) was purchased with assistance from an anonymous donor.

Hell Yeah We Fuck Die, 2016 – Hito Steyerl (b. 1966)

Hito Steyerl is an artist, theorist and acute observer of our contemporary world. Her work blends narration, computer generated images, documentary film footage and pop culture references, and presents us with a vision of the world that is at once entertaining and frightening. The title of this work comes from the five most used words in song titles from English-language music charts between 2010 and 2016. The architectural environment composed of metal walls, pipes and light box seating resembles a module for parkour a sport that originated in military training and involves moving as quickly as possible through a series of obstacles. The two videos embedded in the environment reveal very different moments in the development of robotics This is the first artwork by Steyerl to join the AGO Collection and is featured in the ongoing solo exhibition *This is the future*.

Hell Yeah We Fuck Die was purchased with funds by exchange from Morey and Jennifer Chaplick and Women's Art Initiative, 2020.

Silaup Putunga, 2018 – Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory (b. 1979) & Jamie Griffiths (b. 1965)

Commissioned in 2018 by the AGO and Mobilizing Inuit Cultural Heritage, York University, this double-sided video installation was inspired by the artists desire to create a 'living print', one that connected printmaking with the fundamental Inuit concepts *nuna* – the land, and *sila* – the life forces of the land (knowledge of the land, water, ice and environment). Featuring Williamson Bathory as she performs *uaajeerneq*, a Greenlandic mask dance, the video slowly leads viewers through the Arctic landscape, as she chops ice, drives a Skidoo, aims a gun and walks. Using algorithms designed by Jamie Griffiths, the artworks striking images and sounds are projected in an ever changing sequence to produce an evolving narrative. The soundscape was performed by Williamson Bathory and Celina Kalluk.

Silaup Putunga was purchased with funds from the Joan Chalmers Inuit Art Fund, 2019.

Six preparatory works for *The Dinner Party (1974-1979)* – Judy Chicago (b. 1939)

Eleanor of Aquitaine Test Plate #6, 1975-1978

Sacajawea Test Plate, 1975-1978

Elizabeth Blackwell test plate, 1975-1978

Caroline Herschel test plate (late), 1975-1978

Eleanor of Aquitaine Gridded Runner Drawing, 1979

Study for Sacajawea Plate, 1977

A pioneering feminist American artist, **Judy Chicago** is internationally renowned for her iconic collaborative installation *The Dinner Party (1974–1979)*. Incorporating needlework, porcelain, ceramics, and china painting, *The Dinner Party* features a triangular table, at which 39 place settings are set, each one dedicated to a different woman in history. More than 400 men and women, mostly volunteers, helped create *The Dinner Party* over a four-year period. *The Dinner Party* was exhibited at the AGO in 1982, bringing more than 50,000 visitors to the Gallery over six weeks. Celebrating that moment and the vital role *The Dinner Party* plays in feminist art history, the AGO has acquired six preparatory works made by Chicago for the original installation, including four ceramic test plates and two drawings, honouring the contributions of Eleanor of Aquitaine, Sacajawea, Caroline Herschel and Elizabeth Blackwell. When seen together, these works provide new insights into the evolution of Chicago's most famous work. They will go on view at the AGO in early December, 2019.

The Six Preparatory works for *The Dinner Party* were a gift of ARTdivas Inc., a Calgary women's collective, with support from patron Judy Chicago, 2018.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Judy Chicago

Judy Chicago was born in 1939 in Chicago. She is an artist, author, feminist, educator, and intellectual whose career now spans four decades. Chicago's influence both within and beyond the art community is attested to by her inclusion in hundreds of publications throughout the world. Her art has been frequently exhibited in the United States as well as in Canada, Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. In addition, a number of the books she has authored have been published in foreign editions, bringing her art and philosophy to thousands of readers worldwide.

Tacita Dean was born in 1965 in Canterbury, England. She attended the Falmouth School of Art (1985–88), Supreme School of Fine Art in Athens, Greece (1989–90), and the Slade School of Fine Art in London, England (1990–92). Since the early 1990s, Dean's impressive body of work has navigated the forgotten corners of history and experience through a range of films, photographs, drawings, and installations. Solo exhibitions of Dean's work have been organized by the Tate Gallery in London (1996), Tate Britain in London (1998 and 2001), Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Basel (2000), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. (2001), Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris (2003), Schaulager in Basel (2006), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York (2007), Dia: Beacon in New York (2008), and Sprengel Museum in Hannover (2009). Her work has also been included in major group exhibitions such as *Media City Seoul 2000*, Venice Biennale (2003 and 2005), Berlin Biennial (2006), São Paulo Biennial (2006), Sydney Biennial (2006), and Performa, New York (2009). Dean was nominated for the Turner Prize from the Tate Gallery in London in 1998 and has since been awarded the Aachen Art Prize (2002), Hugo Boss Prize (2006), and Kurt Schwitters Prize (2009), among others. Dean lives and works in Berlin.

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster is a French artist, born in 1965 in Strasbourg. Her practice is restlessly cross-disciplinary, taking cues from film, literature, architecture, philosophy and critical theory. Through immersive installations that include film or are suggestive of filmic tropes, Gonzalez-Foerster uses the medium of experience as a way to question the essences of objects and the meaning of context. Trafficking in a unique type of psychological collage within works and between them, her varied oeuvre has taken myriad forms, including collected fragments of modernist buildings in Brazil, an autobiographical hanging of 40 years of her own wardrobe, and an immersive light and sound environment meant to evoke the chaos, dread, and wonderment of future lives. In her latest works, the Apparitions, Gonzalez-Foerster uses live performance and holographic projections that conflate characters from history, literature and film with their sociological sources and ramifications. Often relying on elliptical texts that place equal weight on fiction, fact, and the pluralism of memory, Gonzalez-Foerster creates heterogeneous worlds that thrive on the tension between finite and infinite, the empirical and the dramaturgical. Gonzalez-Foerster is the recipient of the 2002 Marcel Duchamp Award.

Silke Otto-Knapp

Silke Otto-Knapp was born in 1970 in Osnabrück, Germany, and holds a degree in cultural studies from the University of Hildesheim and a master of arts from Chelsea College of Art and Design, London. Recent solo exhibitions of Otto-Knapp's work include *Monday or Tuesday*, Camden Arts Centre, London (2014); *Questions of Travel*, Kunsthalle Vienna and Fogo Island Arts (2014); *Cold Climate*, Museum Marino Marini, Florence (2014); *A light in the moon*, UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (2011); *Many many women*, Kunstverein München, Munich (2010); as well as exhibitions at Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff (2009); and Tate Britain, London (2005).

Hito Steyerl

Hito Steyerl (b. 1966, Munich, Germany) is an internationally acclaimed German artist, prolific writer and cultural critic. She is currently a professor of Art and Multimedia at the University of the Arts, Berlin and holds a PhD in Philosophy from the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. Recent

exhibitions include solo presentations at the Serpentine Gallery, London, UK, Park Avenue Armory, New York and her first Canadian solo exhibition *This is the future* at the AGO. Her work was featured in the international group exhibition *May You Live in Interesting Times* at the 58th Venice Biennial, also in 2019. Hito Steyerl lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory & Jamie Griffiths

ᑭᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory and ᑭᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ Jamie Griffiths live in Iqaluit, Nunavut, performing and exhibiting work across Canada and internationally. They have collaborated since 2016. Laakkuluk is a multi-disciplinary, Inuk artist whose practice is rooted in *uaajeerneq* mask dance from Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland). Jamie is a digital media artist, photographer and filmmaker, originally from the UK, working with experimental interactive technologies since 2001. *Timiga Nunalu Sikulu (My Body, the Land and the Ice)*, 2016, performed and conceived by Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory and filmed and edited by Jamie Griffiths (sung by Celina Kalluk with music by Chris Coleman) is currently exhibiting in *Among All These Tundras*, a touring exhibit organized by the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University. In 2019, in association with their artistic collective *Ikumagialiit (Things That Need Fire)*, they debuted a new work at the National Gallery Of Canada, at *Ábadakone/Continuous Fire/Feu continuel* exhibition.

ABOUT THE AGO

Located in Toronto, Canada's largest city of 5.9 million, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) is one of the largest art museums in North America. The AGO Collection of close to 95,000 works ranges from cutting-edge contemporary art to significant works by Indigenous and Canadian artists and European masterpieces. The AGO presents wide-ranging exhibitions and programs, taking special care to showcase diverse and underrepresented artists. Its 585,000 square foot building was most recently expanded in 2008 by Frank Gehry, and attracts approximately one million visits per year. A new pricing model, launched in May 2019, offers all visitors 25 and under free, unlimited admission; a \$35 Annual Pass includes entry for an entire year. Visit [AGO.ca](https://www.ago.ca) to learn more.

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