

MEDIA RELEASE

September 28, 2021

***Greater Toronto Art 2021***  
**MOCA Toronto's inaugural triennial survey exhibition**  
**featuring new work by local contemporary artists opens**  
**September 29, 2021**



***Toronto, ON.*** ... On September 29, 2021, [the Museum of Contemporary Art Toronto \(MOCA\)](#) will launch *Greater Toronto Art 2021 (GTA21)*, a triennial survey. The first edition brings together 21 energizing artists and art collectives who work in the Greater Toronto Area or have direct connections with the city. Spanning all three floors of the Museum, the exhibition is a new triennial survey defined by MOCA's pledge to support the work of Toronto artists and the commissioning of new projects that add to local and global discourse. The exhibition title plays on Greater Toronto Area, the name of the city's broad metropolitan area, addressing the ever-expanding notion of what Toronto might be and where it extends by exploring the practices and perspectives of a diversity of artists. *GTA21* is on view through January 9, 2022.

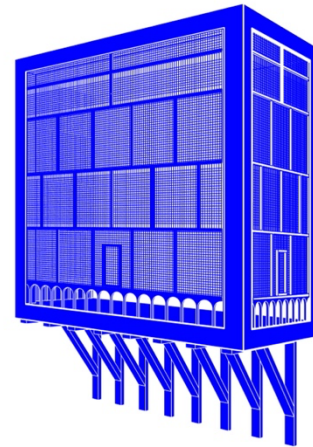
Organized by guest curator Daisy Desrosiers, Adjunct Curator Rui Mateus Amaral, and MOCA Artistic Director November Paynter, the exhibition includes new works by:

Ashoona Ashoona and Alexa Hatanaka, Ghazaleh Avarzamani, Nour Bishouty, Jesse Chun, Tom Chung, Common Accounts - Igor Bragado and Miles Gertler, Julia Dault, Azza El Siddique, Kareem-Anthony Ferreira, Aaron Jones, Pamila Matharu, Native Art Department International - Maria Hupfield and Jason Lujan, Oluseye, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, Jagdeep Raina, Tony Romano, Jennifer Rose Sciarrino, Walter Scott, Kara Springer, Sahar Te, and the collective of Parastoo Anoushahpour, Faraz Anoushahpour, and Ryan Ferko.

Visitors will encounter specially commissioned or never-before-seen artworks in a range of media including drawing, installation, paintings, sculpture, and video.

Beyond the Museum walls, the exhibition features several public artworks, a set of responsive digital components, a variety of public programmes and learning initiatives, a dedicated website, and an accompanying publication. *GTA21* has been generated by the curators with leadership and support from MOCA Executive Director and CEO Kathleen Bartels.

"We are thrilled to launch *Greater Toronto Art 2021*," said Bartels. "*GTA21* marks a renewed focus by MOCA on the local art scene and offers significant support for the featured artists to realize new and/or expanded work. For the inaugural iteration, we asked each contributor to consider: What feels most urgent to you today? Taken together, their responses offer different imaginings of the city, society, and the world. Uniting them, however, is a profound belief in remembering, storytelling, questioning, resisting, celebrating, making, and speculating.



This exhibition and accompanying catalogue highlight some of the most compelling and dynamic contemporary artists in Toronto today. We are so grateful for the generous support of the BMO Financial Group (Bank of Montreal), The Jack Weinbaum Family Foundation, The Lindy Green Family Charitable Foundation, and many other supporters who have come together to realize this ambitious project."

BMO is being recognized as the Presenting Sponsor for *Greater Toronto Art 2021* as the result of a generous gift of \$1 million to the Museum. This gift is especially meaningful to MOCA as it is made in honour of Gilles Ouellette who has had an impressive career with BMO for more than 40 years and, along with his wife Julia Ouellette (Chair Emeritus of MOCA), has been a donor and crucial champion of the Museum. With this new commitment, BMO will be the Presenting Sponsor on a major exhibition each year at MOCA for the next five years, supporting programming that aligns with BMO's mission to foster an inclusive society, sustainable future, and thriving economy.

### **GTA21 Exhibition**

Developed remotely over the past year, the curators' approach to selecting artists and creating *GTA21* was the result of building a network of relationships. "Rather than bringing these artists together under a particular theme, each participant was given space, resources, freedom, and

curatorial support to explore what feels most urgent to them today," said Paynter. "As ideas emerged, we composed a structure for each Museum floor, an open plan that positions shared concerns and attitudes as well as contrasting artistic processes and practices."

The exhibition is presented in three groupings: *Ambivalence*, *Inheritance*, and *Mutation*. "The idea of Ambivalence, a push-and-pull state, revealed itself to be an apt place to begin. The



exhibition's planning has not been without paradoxes, hesitations, delays, and faulty internet connections, so why not lean into this truth? It is made in its time for its time," said Amaral.

Desrosiers goes on to cite *Inheritance* as a vast framework to engage art, stating that, "Many of the artists in *GTA21* examine enduring legacies and acknowledge others, like colonialism, to be undone. These artists are about making meaning of the world by combining history with material traces, imagination, and hope."

The exhibition concludes using the idea of *Mutation* to explore how perceptions alter—for good or for bad—to provide the spark that unleashes creativity and subtle changes that help society evolve. Read together, the artworks provide a set of projections and calls for more productive ways to coexist.

### **GTA21 Key Partnerships**

To further enhance opportunities for artists and support the reach of the exhibition, MOCA developed several key partnerships. These include the realization of two sculptural works by artist Ghazaleh Avarzamani, one of which will feature on the outdoor facade of the Museum, produced in partnership with ArtworxTO: Toronto's Year of Public Art 2021-2022. The exterior intervention is titled *Mashrabiya* and is inspired by an architectural element characteristic of

traditional architecture in the Islamic world that encloses windows with wooden latticework. This artwork is both a space to look out from and a space to reflect inwardly.

The digital work *Charity* (2021) by collective Parastoo Anoushahpour, Faraz Anoushahpour, and Ryan Ferko was made possible through a partnership established by MOCA with the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). The film explores the controversy and bureaucracy of an oversized chrome cow sculpture placed in a Toronto suburban neighborhood as public art, raising questions about the identity of a place and who determines it.

The NFB/MOCA partnership offered an individual artist or collective the opportunity to develop an accessible, free public artwork in the form of a digital media experience. The partnership was designed to explore how our cities and social reality have changed, and will continue to adapt, in the midst of social transformation and post-pandemic re-opening.



Public programmes will expand the *GTA21* voices by including talks by the artists and curators and workshops on TD Sundays; as well as a deeper dive into Native Art Department International's related sculptures in Markham and at MOCA in partnership with Markham's Public Art Program.

### ***GTA360* Digital Platform**

A subdomain *GTA21* web platform designed and developed by Andy Bako and Niko McGlashan consists of individual web pages for all 21 of the *GTA21* artists/collectives; as well as a *GTA360* platform. This digital realm functions within the platform Mozilla Hubs and will host a series of specially conceived virtual projects by *GTA21* artists: Common Accounts, Ghazaleh Avarzamani, Jesse Chun, Jennifer Rose Sciarrino, Native Art Department International, Nour Bishouty, Sahar Te and the collective of Parastoo Anoushahpour, Faraz Anoushahpour and Ryan Ferko that links to their NFB commission.

*GTA360* is conceptualized as an immersive online environment and a digital deconstruction of MOCA. As a counterpart to the physical *GTA21* exhibition, *GTA360* serves as a forum for digital experimentation, allowing artists and the public to engage with new forms of digital media and spark new conversations surrounding the role of digital tools within the larger community of contemporary artists.





### **GTA21 Catalogue**

MOCA is proud to present its first publication since moving to its space on Sterling Road in 2018. The *GTA21* catalogue, designed by Toronto studio Blok Design, includes interviews with the artists, images of existing works and those in process, and contributions by the curators as well as Dionne Brand, Sheila Heti, and John Paul Ricco. The collection of interviews at the heart of the publication is not just a record of these new artworks and artistic approaches, but also about how art persevered through extraordinary circumstances.



Bartels noted, “The triennial survey is envisioned as a long-term commitment to Toronto’s artistic future, a framework that will continue to support the city’s creative community. The next *Greater Toronto Art* exhibition will take place in 2024, with a different team of curators and a continued focus on how an expanded view of Toronto can further encapsulate the spirit of this invigorating, evolving, and hyper-diverse city.”

### **GTA21 Supporters**

**Presenting Sponsor** - BMO Financial Group

**Lead Supporters** - The Jack Weinbaum Family Foundation; The Lindy Green Family Charitable Foundation

**Foundational Supporter** - The Schulich Foundation

**Major Supporter** - Karen Green

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**Publication Supporters** - Karen Green; Bill Morneau & Nancy McCain Foundation; Dara and Marvin Singer; Liza Mauer and Andrew Sheiner

Visionary support for MOCA in 2021 has been provided by four anonymous donors.

Operating funding for MOCA is provided by the City of Toronto, the Government of Ontario, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts.

### About MOCA Toronto

MOCA Toronto is motivated by the principle that museums and their programmes are culturally and socially beneficial to the diversity of the communities they serve. MOCA supports and promotes forward-thinking artistic experimentation and provides a community space for enrichment, discourse, collaboration, and creativity. Working across all contemporary art forms,

MOCA's programmes empower local artists and engage the Toronto art scene while contributing to the international art community and scholarship. MOCA is a not-for-profit charitable organization. The evolution of the Museum is made possible through a unique alliance with Castlepoint Numa, public sector funders, private donors, members, sponsors, and a network of cross-sectoral partners.

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### Image captions from top left to bottom right:

**Aaron Jones** - *Conscious Energy on the Sea*, 2021, collage, lightbox.

Courtesy of the artist and Zalucky Contemporary, Toronto. Photo Toni Hafkenscheid

**Ghazaleh Avarzamani** - *Mashrabiya*, (rendering), 2021. Courtesy of the artist.

**Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum** – *Dynasty*, (detail), 2021

Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, Cape Town, London.

**The collective Parastoo Anoushahpour, Faraz Anoushahpour, and Ryan Ferko** - *Charity* (film still), 2021. Courtesy of the artists and National Film Board of Canada.

**GTA360** renderings. Courtesy of Andy Bako and Niko McGlashan.

**GTA21** Publication (pages featuring works by Azza El Siddique). Courtesy of Blok Design.