



AGO acquires world class collection of historical Caribbean photographs with help from the community

More than \$300,000 raised by members of Toronto's Black and Caribbean communities to bring The Montgomery Collection of Caribbean Photographs to the AGO

Toronto, Canada—June 5, 2019—The **Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)** announces today that it has acquired ***The Montgomery Collection of Caribbean Photographs***, a singular collection of more than 3,500 historical images from 34 countries including Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad. One of the largest collections of such images, this incredible visual record contains studio portraits, landscapes and tourist views.

Bringing to life the changing economies, environments and communities that emerged following the abolishment of slavery, the Collection includes nearly every photographic format available during the years 1840 to 1940, including prints, postcards, daguerreotypes, lantern slides, albums, and stereographs. Prior to this, the AGO held no Caribbean photographs in its collection.

The acquisition was made possible in part by the generous contributions of a group of 27 donors, the majority of whom are from Toronto's Black and Caribbean communities. Collectively the donors raised over \$300,000, with a lead gift from Dr. Liza & Dr. Frederick Murrell. Many of the donors have never before contributed to the AGO. The largest known collection outside the Caribbean, ***The Montgomery Collection of Caribbean Photographs*** now positions the AGO as a leader in Caribbean photographic research, and will make its debut in an exhibition in 2021.

"We are excited to have been part of bringing this important collection of Caribbean photographs to the AGO. Displaying and preserving these works in our diverse city is an exceptional opportunity for us and future generations. So many people, school groups and communities will be positively impacted by seeing and studying these works, and the personal and collective histories they contain, time and time again," said Dr. Liza and Dr. Frederick Murrell. "Supporting this acquisition has allowed us to be active participants in shaping our cultural identity."

Assembled by New York based filmmaker and photography collector Patrick Montgomery, a part of this Collection has also been generously gifted by him to the AGO. A member of the Board of Trustees of George Eastman Museum, Montgomery has been building this collection for over a decade.

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“There has been a significant Caribbean presence in Canada—specifically Toronto—since the early 20th Century. These works offer rich personal connections for audiences from these communities and meaningful opportunities for scholars worldwide,” said **Stephan Jost**, the Michael and Sonja Koerner Director, and CEO, of the Art Gallery of Ontario. “We are incredibly grateful to our community for coming together in support of this acquisition.”

With over 60,000 objects, the AGO photography collection is deep in its holdings of portraiture, press photography, pop photographica, photographic albums, and social documentary photography. Under the careful stewardship of **Sophie Hackett**, AGO Curator of Photography, and **Julie Crooks**, Assistant Curator of Photography, the AGO continues to acquire a diverse range of photographic works from around the world.

“This ambitious group of donors raised an impressive sum in less than a year, on the strength of these works and their ties to Toronto,” said Julie Crooks, Assistant Curator of Photography, AGO. “It’s an exciting moment for the AGO Collection and for the Black and Caribbean communities here.”

In 2018, thanks to a generous gift by Martha LA McCain, the AGO acquired ***Fade Resistance***, a collection chiefly of found Polaroids documenting African American family life from the 1970s to the early 2000s. Assembled by Toronto artist **Zun Lee**, this Collection began with Lee’s discovery of a box of Polaroids on the streets of Detroit in 2012. These vivid images chronicle milestones such as weddings, birthdays and graduations as well as personal slice-of-life moments, offering contemporary views long ignored or erased by mainstream culture.

“I’m grateful that this collection has found a committed custodian in the AGO, preserving images that offer a testament to Black visual self-representation,” says Lee. “For years, these images have served as conversation starters for people to come together and share their personal stories. I look forward to working with the AGO to engage old and new audiences in offering their own take on what it means to be seen.”

These works, like the Casa Susanna photographs and the World War I albums acquired by the AGO before them, further strengthen the AGO’s commitment to exploring the artistic, historical, and social impact of photography in its broadest sense. Works from the ***Fade Resistance*** Collection will go on view at the AGO in 2021.

ABOUT THE MONTGOMERY COLLECTION OF CARIBBEAN PHOTOGRAPHS

A comprehensive collection of over 3500 historic photographs from the period 1840 to 1950, the Montgomery Collection highlights the work of a range of different regional and international photographers and studios who documented the lands, people, and cultures of 34 countries. Islands depicted include Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, and many others. As one of the world’s most significant collections of such material, this Collection preserves for posterity the visual histories of this region and sheds light on the monumental changes that occurred in the area during the latter part of the 19th century. ***The Montgomery Collection of Caribbean photographs*** was purchased by the AGO with funds from Dr. Liza

& Dr. Frederick Murrell, Bruce Croxon & Debra Thier, Wes Hall & Kingsdale Advisors, Cindy & Shon Barnett, Donette Chin-Loy Chang, Kamala-Jean Gopie, Phil Lind & Ellen Roland, Martin Doc McKinney, Francilla Charles, Ray & Georgina Williams, Thaine & Bianca Carter, Charmaine Crooks, Nathaniel Crooks, Andrew Garrett & Dr. Belinda Longe, Neil L. Le Grand, Michael Lewis, Dr. Kenneth Montague & Sarah Aranha, Lenny & Julia Mortimore, and Ferrottype Collective, 2019.

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, launching May 25, 2019, offers all visitors 25 and under free, unlimited admission; a \$35 Annual Pass includes entry for an entire year. Visit AGO.ca to learn more.

The AGO is funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Additional operating support is received from the City of Toronto, the Canada Council for the Arts and generous contributions from AGO members, donors and private-sector partners.

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For more information on the AGO's photography collection, hi-res images and other press inquiries, please contact:

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