

Four new curators appointed at the Art Gallery of Ontario

New curators for Canadian and Indigenous Art, European Art, Photography, and Prints & Drawings are part of the AGO's investment in exhibition and scholarship

Toronto, Canada—June 27, 2017—The **Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)** announced today the appointment of four new curators, adding to its ranks of internationally recognized scholars. The new curators are: **Julie Crooks**, Assistant Curator of Photography; **Alexa Greist**, Assistant Curator of Prints and Drawings; **Wanda Nanibush**, Assistant Curator of Canadian and Indigenous Art; and **Caroline Shields**, Assistant Curator of European Art. Their hiring is part of the museum's strategy to strengthen its role as a leader in art scholarship across a range of areas, while also generating a greater number of collection-based exhibitions and programs for audiences both in Toronto and internationally.

"The four areas in which Alexa, Caroline, Julie, and Wanda will work are all central to the vision for the future of the AGO," said **Stephan Jost**, the Michael and Sonja Koerner Director and CEO of the Art Gallery of Ontario. "Whether they are cornerstone collections, such as European or Canadian art, or growing areas of focus such as Indigenous art or photography, each of them brings an exceptional and diverse range of experiences to their work here."

Current and upcoming exhibitions and projects for these curators include the exhibition *Rita Letendre: Fire & Light*, a major retrospective for this Canadian Indigenous abstract painter opening June 29, 2017; the renovation and reinstallation of the museum's European galleries; and *Free Black North*, an installation of rare photographs depicting Black Ontarians in the 19th century. The AGO is also currently undergoing a comprehensive reinstallation of its collection, bringing 70,000 sq. ft. of new installations across more than 50 galleries, including public spaces that were previously without art. Entitled *Look:Forward*, the project is engaging all of the museum's departments and curators, to bring new art and ideas in front of visitors.

Brief bios for these new curators are as follows:

Julie Crooks, Assistant Curator, Photography, received her PhD in the Department of History of Art and Archaeology at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, where her research focused on historical photography in Sierra Leone, West Africa and the diaspora. Prior to joining the AGO, she curated and co-curated a number of exhibitions in Toronto, including *No Justice, No Peace: From Ferguson to Toronto* in February 2017, co-curated with Reese de Guzman (co-organized by the Ryerson Image Centre and BAND). Julie is also the co-curator for the *Of Africa* project at Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum, where she was awarded the Rebanks Postdoctoral Fellowship to research the royal engagements of Black and African audiences with the ROM's African Gallery, and the photographic history of Blacks in Canada. Prior to her appointment with the AGO, Crooks participated on advisory groups for the Gallery's Frum Collection of African Art, and its major 2015 exhibition, *Jean-Michel Basquiat: Now's the Time*.

Alexa Greist, Assistant Curator, Prints and Drawings, is a specialist in Renaissance and Baroque prints, and comes to the AGO from the Yale University Art Gallery, where she contributed to several notable exhibitions including *Francesco Vanni: Art in Late Renaissance Siena* and *Meant to Be Shared: The Arthur Ross Collection of European Prints*. Greist received her Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania with a dissertation focused on Italian printed drawing books. This topic reflects her wider interest in the use and role of prints to spread knowledge and ideas of all kinds, beginning with the development of printmaking techniques in the 15th century and continuing through its use as a medium today. Prior to her appointment at Yale, Greist held positions at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Wanda Nanibush, Assistant Curator, Canadian and Indigenous Art, is an Anishinaabe-kwe curator, image and word warrior, and community organizer from Beausoleil First Nation, located in Southern

Ontario. Nanibush has a Master's degree in visual studies from the University of Toronto. Over the past two decades, Nanibush has served in a wide range of capacities from programmer and festival coordinator to Aboriginal arts officer and executive director. During that time, she worked with organizations such as ImagineNATIVE, LIFT, Optic Nerve Film Festival, Reframe Film Festival, the Ontario Arts Council, Aboriginal Curatorial Collective, and the Association for Native Development in the Performing & Visual Arts (ANDPVA). Her curatorial credits include the exhibitions *Toronto: Tributes + Tributaries, 1971-1989* (AGO), *Sovereign Acts II* (Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery), and the award winning *KWE: The work of Rebecca Belmore* (Justina M. Barnicke Gallery). Nanibush has published widely on the subject of Indigenous art as well as women's issues, and is currently at work on her first book, titled *Violence No More: The Rise of Indigenous Women*. She is also working on an AGO exhibition of works by Gershon Iskowitz Prize-winning artist Rebecca Belmore, set to open in 2018.

Caroline Shields, Assistant Curator, European Art, comes to the AGO after working in curatorial departments at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. At the National Gallery of Art in Washington, Shields worked on the 2015 exhibition *Gustave Caillebotte: The Painter's Eye*, while in her role at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, she investigated paintings with disputed or uncertain attributions. A specialist in nineteenth-century European art, Shields received her Ph.D. in art history from the University of Maryland this spring with a dissertation on Paul Gauguin. In addition to her curatorial roles, from 2008 to 2010 Shields worked as the Museum Educator and Manager of Outreach Education at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Connecticut, where she honed an approach to curating that is deeply engaged with the goals of museum education.

ABOUT THE AGO

With a collection of close to 95,000 works of art, the Art Gallery of Ontario is among the most distinguished art museums in North America. From the vast body of Group of Seven and signature Canadian works to the African art gallery, from the cutting-edge contemporary art to Peter Paul Rubens's masterpiece *The Massacre of The Innocents*, the AGO offers an incredible art experience with each visit. In 2002, Ken Thomson's generous gift of 2,000 remarkable works of Canadian and European art inspired Transformation AGO, an innovative architectural expansion by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry that in 2008 resulted in one of the most critically acclaimed architectural achievements in North America. Highlights include Galleria Italia, a gleaming showcase of wood and glass running the length of an entire city block, and the often-photographed spiral staircase, beckoning visitors to explore. The AGO has an active membership program offering great value, and the AGO's Weston Family Learning Centre offers engaging art and creative programs for children, families, youth and adults. Visit ago.net to learn more.

April 22 – July 30, 2017: **Georgia O'Keeffe**

Sept. 30, 2017 – Jan. 7, 2018: **Guillermo del Toro: At Home With Monsters**

March 2018 – May 2018: **Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors**

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