

# koffler gallery

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## Paris-based artist Esther Shalev-Gerz opens first exhibition in Toronto at the Koffler Gallery

**Toronto, ON, March 22, 2018** – The **Koffler Gallery** opens its Spring 2018 season with a major solo exhibition featuring the work of Paris-based multimedia artist, **Esther Shalev-Gerz**.

Running from **April 5 to June 3, 2018**, *Esther Shalev-Gerz* opens with a free public reception on **Thursday, April 5, 2018** from **6 to 9 PM**. The **Koffler Gallery** is located at **Artscape Youngplace**, 180 Shaw Street, Toronto.

*Esther Shalev-Gerz* is a Primary Exhibition of the **2018 Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival**.

Internationally recognized for her significant contributions in the field of public art, photography, and video installation, Esther Shalev-Gerz consistently investigates the construction of memory, history, nature, democracy, and cultural identity.

The Koffler Gallery presents Shalev-Gerz' first exhibition in Toronto, bringing together four video and photography installations that explore memory and migration. Developed through active dialogue with diverse communities, these projects foreground participants' individual and collective experiences.

In *The Gold Room* (2016), Shalev-Gerz proposes a reading of the cultural value of objects through ten stories of provenance. Five historians unfold the potential origin of five objects selected from the collection of the Swedish History Museum, Stockholm, whose histories have been forgotten. The other five featured participants are recent refugees to Sweden. The objects they discuss have been brought along on their difficult flights and hold deep significance, revealing both personal and global narratives of our time. The poignant video and series of photographs depicting these cultural objects from the past and present shed light on the personal journeys and encounters contained in their folds.

Comprising four chapters to date, the video series *The Portraits of Stories (Les Portraits des Histories)* was developed in France at Aubervilliers, Paris and in Belsunce, Marseilles in 1998, then in Skoghall, Sweden in 2000, and finally in Sandwell, UK in 2008. In each context, Shalev-Gerz asked "What story must be told today?" and invited participants to direct the artist's gaze, exercising control over their representation. Examining how voice and image relate to the construction of individual and collective histories, *The Portraits of Stories* profiles ways in which divergent histories co-exist and inform our readings of a place.

*First Generation* (2004) interrogates portraiture's pictorial traditions and its ability for identification. Thirty-four locals contributed to the project by responding to a set of questions about their coming to Botkyrka, Sweden: "What did you lose?," "What did you find?," "What did you get?," "What did you give?." Never fixed, the perception of oneself constantly evolves, particularly for people of diaspora who constantly adapt and recreate their identities in ways that may feel simultaneously enriching and destabilizing. Video and photographic close-ups pan over participants' faces as they listen to their own responses, which are transcribed as a sprawling text mural, offering the viewer a fragmented visual journey.

Finally, Shalev-Gerz's video installation *The Place of Art* (2006) explores diverse perceptions of art and its societal position—both physical and ideological. Working with cultural practitioners, art institutions, housing companies, and municipal departments, Shalev-Gerz interviewed 38 culturally diverse artists residing in Bergsjön, Sweden, asking: "How would you define art?" and "Where would you locate the place where it happens?" While considering their individual responses in relation to their personal histories, cultural traditions, and value perceptions, each participant attempts to articulate and locate the future place of art, suggesting a plurality of contexts to which art belongs and cultures to whom it is meaningful.

With thoughtful, nuanced approaches to collaboration, Shalev-Gerz's artworks confront the practice of portraiture, considering how it may address contemporary politics of representation. Examining the impact of time and space

on identity constructions, places, and (hi)stories, these works record, critique, and expand the understanding of the social role of artistic practice.

*Esther Shalev-Gerz* is generously supported by Institut français.

For more information and a full list of the Koffler's Winter 2018 programs, please visit [kofflerarts.org](http://kofflerarts.org)

**Regular exhibition hours:** Tuesday to Friday, 12 PM to 6 PM; Saturday and Sunday, 11 AM to 5 PM. Closed Mondays and statutory holidays. Admission is free.

### **ASSOCIATED PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

**KOFFLER GALLERY SPRING OPENING RECEPTION | Thursday, April 5, 2018, 6–9 PM | FREE**

**ARTIST TALK: Sunday, April 8, 2018 | 2 PM | FREE**

**CONTEMPORARY ART BUS TOUR | Sunday, May 17, 2018 | 12 – 5 PM | FREE**

Tour starts at the Koffler Gallery (Artscape Youngplace, 180 Shaw Street) and then departs for tours at the Art Gallery of Mississauga, Art Gallery of York University, and the Doris McCarthy Gallery, returning to Shaw Street around 5 PM. Space is limited, registration required; <https://may-art-bus.eventbrite.ca>

### **ABOUT ESTHER SHALEV-GERZ**

Esther Shalev-Gerz (born Gilinsky) was born in Vilnius, Lithuania. Her family moved to Jerusalem in 1957, where she graduated from Bezalel Academy of Art and Design. She briefly lived in New York in 1980-1981, and since 1984 she lives and works between Paris and Cortes Island, Canada. In 2010 and 2012 two major retrospective exhibitions respectively displayed ten and fifteen of her installations, first at Jeu de Paume, Paris then at the Musée des Beaux Arts de Lausanne. Space Between Time, her one-woman exhibition at Wasserman Projects, Detroit presented nine of her installations between April and July 2016. She has exhibited internationally in, amongst other places, San Francisco, Paris, Berlin, London, Stockholm, Vancouver, Finland, Geneva, Guangzhou and New York. She designed and realized permanent installations in public space in Hamburg, Israel, Stockholm, Wanas, Geneva, Glasgow and more. She is currently producing her latest permanent artwork, *The Shadow* in Vancouver. For more information: [www.shalev-gerz.net](http://www.shalev-gerz.net)

Shalev-Gerz is represented by WASSERMAN PROJECTS, Detroit, Jill Silverman van Coenegrachts, jsvcPROJECTS/London, SPROVIERI, London and GALLERI SUSANNE OTTESEN, Copenhagen.

### **ABOUT THE KOFFLER GALLERY**

The Koffler Gallery is a forum for the presentation and development of contemporary visual art that reflects diverse cultural, material and aesthetic perspectives, generating critical discussions around ideas of our time. Featuring a year-round program of exhibitions, publications, public programs and educational initiatives, the Koffler Gallery fosters new production while equally aiming to expand the visibility of existing work by Canadian and international artists. The program positions the contemporary Jewish experience in a context of comparative discussions of identity, memory and place.

The Koffler Gallery gratefully acknowledges the support of the Toronto Arts Council, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts.

### **ABOUT THE KOFFLER CENTRE OF THE ARTS**

The [Koffler Centre of the Arts](http://kofflerarts.org) is a cultural platform that explores critical ideas and concerns of our time through exhibitions, publications, performances, conversations and digital initiatives. We examine complex issues in respectful, constructive discussions that position our Jewish identity in conversation with diverse perspectives and global voices.

The Koffler and its administrative offices are located at Artscape Youngplace, in Toronto's vibrant downtown West Queen West art and design district.

The Koffler Centre of the Arts acknowledges the support of the Koffler Family Foundation, Cultural Season Sponsor CIBC Wood Gundy, the Ontario Arts Council through the Community and Multidisciplinary Arts Organizations Program, our patrons and donors.

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**For further information and high resolution images, contact:**

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