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10 Years of Creation at Youngplace

Ruth Adler | Barbara Astman | Shabnam K. Ghazi
Gillian Iles | Vid Ingelevics | Carolyn Murphy
Midi Onodera | Matthew Schofield

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February 22 – May 12, 2024 | Koffler Arts, 180 Shaw St. | kofflerarts.org

DECADE shines a projector on eight artists presently or until recently working in Youngplace (180 Shaw St.), the still relatively new yet already iconic arts hub – and home of Koffler Arts – very recently unmoored by the bankruptcy of its originator and primary landlord, Artscape.

Almost inadvertently each of these artists, in her or his own way, is presenting work that examines, sometimes quite literally, sometimes more abstractly, layers of history, of the passage of time, the transformations and transmutations that occur as narratives are constructed, told, retold, as memories overlap, are blurred or erased, shredded or deprived of ink, as the Polaroids fade, the material rips, the edges curl or fray or dangle.

Put together, the work is an invitation to meander through time as it is shaped and sculpted, moulded and manoeuvred in videos, photographs, installations, drawings, paintings, collage, tapestries and quilts. There is a heartbeat which connects each work in this exhibition to its neighbour, then ricochets across the room, a delicate web of the human pulse which has animated our building since its inception as an arts hub.

Our intention is to celebrate the exceptional creative force of this very particular artistic community over the past ten years, a first decade which, let it be trumpeted far and wide, is but a foretaste of what this community will continue to be and to produce in an evermore vibrant and collective way in the decade and decades to come.

Matthew Jocelyn, General Director



kofflerarts

presents

DECADE

10 Years of Creation at Youngplace

**Ruth Adler | Barbara Astman | Shabnam K. Ghazi | Gillian Iles | Vid Ingelevics
Carolyn Murphy | Midi Onodera | Matthew Schofield**

In a building designed by architect C. H. Bishop, the Shaw Street Public School opened in 1914 and was closed by the Toronto District School Board in 2000. After a transformation of the interior by Teeple Architects, the building re-opened in 2014 as Artscape Youngplace, named in honour of a lead donation from The Michael Young Family Foundation. Over the past 10 years 180 Shaw St. has become a crucial community hub for artists, arts groups, and engaged audiences.

To acknowledge and celebrate the role the building and its tenants and owners have played within the cultural ecology of Toronto over these past 10 years, Koffler Arts is excited to present DECADE, a group exhibition by eight contemporary artists currently or recently working in the building.

While the building itself is significant to Toronto's architectural heritage, it is ultimately the human activity that is the heart and soul of a place. Over the past 10 years, 180 Shaw St. has been a place of work for nearly one hundred artists and cultural groups practicing a diverse range of media and forms, solidifying the building's purpose and value.

The exhibition also comes at a time of economic challenges in Toronto that demand consideration of how artists and cultural groups can inhabit the city, contribute to its vitality, and achieve greater security for the future of this and other cultural spaces across Toronto.

Conceived in the present, DECADE is a focal point to draw attention to the remarkably rich history of the past decade of activity at Youngplace, and to imagine potentials and possibilities for the next 10 years and beyond.

So there is no over-arching theme intended to make connections between the works in the show. Inevitably however, given that all eight artists featured are currently active and relevant, there are compelling resonances, thematic intersections, and overlapping issues and ideas that reflect the discourses and the times in which we live.

Vid Ingelevics is a Toronto-based artist, independent curator and writer, primarily working in photography, video and installation. His practice often focuses on representation of the past, the role of the photographic archive, as well as issues related to urbanism in Toronto. Vid is one of the first occupants of Youngplace, and he was included in, *We're in the Library*, the inaugural show at the Koffler Gallery.¹ Shortly after moving into the building he starting taking photographs of the same view from the window of his 3rd floor studio, an unfolding vista that foregrounds the intersection of Shaw and Lobb Avenue, and looks across the tree line of Trinity Bellwoods Park to a view of the urban skyline, against a backdrop of ever-changing skies. *Accumulation*, (2014 – ongoing), includes 135 of these shots scrolling past on a screen in no specifically sequenced order. The flow of images animates a poetic pictorial narrative that appears static yet is always in flux, shaped by the cycles of nature and conditions of the environment. The consistency of the scene over time becomes familiar; at once mundane and iconic, affirming a strong sense of place. As the images are not chronologically ordered and are presented as an infinite loop, time is collapsed into timelessness where the building and its occupants, implied but never seen, are in perpetual dialogue with the city.



Vid Ingelevics

Accumulation, 2014-present

Digital images shot on iPhones



Midi Onodera

2397, 2024

Digital video with sound by Christopher Dela Cruz, 3:00

Midi Onodera is a Governor General's Award recipient in Media Arts, practicing at the intersections of analog and digital technologies, and has been making films and videos for more than 35 years. Her most recent video, *2397*, (2024), created specifically for the exhibition, is an intense, almost disorienting, journey through the colourful corridors and stairwells of 180 Shaw St. that begins and ends on the sidewalk in front. Through fast-paced, digitally inter-woven imagery that alternates between vibrant colour and black and white to an industrial/experimental soundtrack. Phrases flash across the screen sporadically throughout, such as, 'flexible adaptation'; 'structural strain tension'; 'common areas shared desires'; a vocabulary that conflates characteristics of the built environment and human condition. The inhabited and heavily frequented building embodies a psychological state intrinsically connected to its concrete, architectural form. The title of the work refers to the Toronto Standard Condominium Corporation registration number for Youngplace.

Since 2017 Midi has been video recording her ongoing chat with Faux Midi, an artificially generated entity. *Soliloquy Soliloquy*, (2022), also included in DECADE, is the most recent adaptation of a series of documented exchanges over footage that includes views from her studio. Over time the relationship between human and machine evolve in ways that are at once comforting, disturbing, and fascinating, raising questions of timely importance during these early days of rapidly developing technological tools when potentials for better or for worse are not yet known.

Barbara Astman is an internationally acclaimed artist working at the forefront of developments in photo-based media, technologies, and representation since the 1970s. Usually working in deeply researched-based series, she often combines analogue and digital technologies in unusual and innovative ways. Even before Youngplace opened, Barbara was included in the very first exhibition held in the recent era, in 2010, *Art School (dismissed)*, a huge group show displayed throughout the entire building.²

DECADE includes a work from her most recent series, *Woven Stories*, (2023), fragmented images of gendered faces sourced from newspapers, and transformed through hand-crafted and digital processes into tapestries, a form traditionally associated with female craft. The time-consuming research and laborious processes involved, while not necessarily apparent, contrast with the fragmented images that clearly mimic the fast-paced and fragmented ways in which we receive, perceive and consume literally thousands of images daily in the media, in popular culture, and on our screens.

Also included in the exhibition is a selection of images from Barbara's *Daily Collage* series started in 2009 as a daily journal while travelling. Again, the process of research, identification and extraction of images is labour intensive. The photographic images are cut from printed newspapers, and include fragments of bodies, heads – some recognizable as politicians, globally recognized figures or famous people – articles of clothing, animals, consumer products. Images are reassembled and recombined in odd juxtapositions of scale and random association, in hand-held notebooks. These are then enlarged significantly, printed and framed. Removed from context, blown out of proportion, they recall Dada photomontages of the 1920s, rife with absurdity, humour, political satire and social critique.



Barbara Astman

Daily Collage, 2009-2011

Top (left to right): #16, #1, #3

Bottom (left to right): #30, #8, #53

Digital image on archival paper



Ruth Adler

(from right to left)

Red Heads, 2024

Fabric, textile, paint

There is Room in the Space, 2024

Fabric, textile, paint, digital print

Ruth Adler is a multidisciplinary artist who works with paint, fabric, assemblage and collage, and video, and has been exhibiting internationally since the 1980s. Although fabric and textile are the basis of her recent work, she refers to herself as a painter. Certainly, she applies paint to the surfaces of cut or torn fabric, and the images do initially read as paintings for their exuberant use of colour and bold, lyrical compositions, characteristics most closely associated with painting. Her process is also similar to many painters, as she prefers to work intuitively and allows painted areas and brushstrokes to be direct and evident, heightening the visceral and emotional impact. Fabrics and fragments often overlap creating collage-like surfaces and complex visual fields. Sometimes clashing patterns and motifs result in jarring visual effects that might harmonize and articulate certain shapes and forms, and contradict and disrupt others, resulting in powerful perceptual experience. Her work in DECADE features a series of single-panel textile paintings, and a fabric collage/assemblage created on site during the installation of the exhibition. Titles and sometimes the images themselves may refer to or be inspired by figures, landscapes, and potential narratives but the work is largely abstract emphasizing the focussed act of looking and seeing.

Carolyn Murphy is a textile artist inspired by contemporary and experimental quilting techniques, and influenced by geometric abstraction, minimalism, nature, architecture, and her surroundings. Her most recent work, the *Cities and Suburbs* series, is composed of forms that reflect her fascination with the idiosyncrasies, the beauty, and the strangeness of structures in and around Toronto and her Seaton Village neighbourhood. Her process often begins with references and inspirations from her sketchbooks which are filled with drawings, images, quotes, and notations. Though not meant to be plans or preparatory sketches, these illustrations inform her unique, improvisatory approach to quilting, rather than the conventional method of creating or following pre-existing patterns. But the openness to the creative process – the artist’s sensitivity and responsiveness – translates into a lively and alive lyrical vocabulary of colour, shape and form. Undoubtedly, her images reflect a playful spirit, but they also embody an uneasiness or precarious balance between abstracted compositions that simultaneously appear to be in a state of forming and on the verge of collapse. They do not always conform to expected definitions of harmonious aesthetic resolve, and are instead shaped by their own internal logic. After her compositions are finalized, she loads the pieced quilt top into a large long-arm quilting machine, which allows her to finish the piece with complex networks and patterns of intricately detailed free-motion stitching that is of equal visual interest, on both the front and the back of the quilt. Beyond the amusing quirks of urban evolution, her work is also intended to question and critique the seemingly unplanned, arbitrary cycles of demolition, construction, gentrification, dysfunction, and exclusionary behaviours that occur within civic life.



Carolyn Murphy
Late in the Evening, 2024
Cities and Suburbs series
Cotton, linen, silk



Shabnam K. Ghazi

(from right to left)

Encapsulated I, 2021

Screenprint on Japanese tissue

DO IT AGAIN AND AGAIN, 2018

THE SHEER OF THE THOUGHT, 2018

ONE BEAUTIFUL DAY, 2018

All screenprint on silk

Shabnam K. Ghazi was born and raised in Tehran, and through the 1990s participated in apprenticeships in painting, sculpture and ceramics with Iranian masters. She has exhibited internationally throughout Iran, Canada, the United States, and Cuba, and at the University of Toronto, the Art Gallery of York University, Harbourfront Centre, Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, and the Olga Korper Gallery. Her studio practice was based at Youngplace from 2013 to 2021.

In her recent work, Shabnam explores the intricate relationship between memory, time, and place, creating carefully processed objects from fragments of material, language, and personal history rooted in her Persian culture as a way of sharing her experience with others. Her process involves writing her earliest memories in 'Black Practice' or the 'Siyah Mashq' method of Persian calligraphy, where the surface of the page is completely covered with writing in every direction. The dense pages are then screen-printed onto paper and deconstructed by cutting each page into narrow ribbon-like shreds. These fragments of language are then recombined, refined, and transformed into yarn sculptures or delicate fabric weaves of diverse materials; charged objects, fragile and vulnerable, that embody fragments of memory, time and place. As artworks they evoke quiet power and resilience as they render visible the elusive quest for meaning, spirit, and identity that we all share.

Gillian Iles' practice consists of painting, sculpture and video. She has exhibited across North America, including in New York, Chicago, Miami, Montreal, and Toronto in public institutions, university galleries, artist-run centres and commercial galleries. Gillian is actively engaged with the arts community in Toronto and was a founding member of two artist-run galleries in the city - Propeller and Loop - and is currently a member of the Red Head Gallery.

Gillian creates complex, site-responsive installations using an ambitious range of media, including painting, sculpture and video, in imaginative combinations that transform galleries and other spaces into multi-faceted sensorial environments. She draws upon figurative, abstract and symbolic representation and juxtapositions between image, object, and environment, to create illusory and even disorienting spatial dynamics and complex narratives often related to the ephemerality of social orders, memory, time, and place. Working spontaneously in response to a given site, she embraces the sometimes contradictory and unintentional relationships that may activate an environment in unexpected ways, infusing the charged atmosphere with a sense of wonder and myth, dereliction and decay, renewal and possibility. The immersive nature of her installations implicates the viewer as an active component of the work as we consider ourselves and our position within the interstices of physical space and imaginative narrative.



Gillian Iles

All and Nothing, 2022-2024

Mixed media on Tyvek, glassine and drafting film, rope and found objects



Matthew Schofield

(from left to right)

Vera and Trixie, 2014

Lyle, 2014

Snapshot of Guests, 2014

All oil on Mylar on board

Matthew Schofield is an established painter who has been exhibiting nationally and internationally since the mid-1990s. He works primarily from photographic sources to explore relationships between painting and photography, specifically the dynamics at play between photographer and subject, image and viewer. His recent works are series' or groupings of paintings based on a generational archive of family photographs; pictures taken by relatives, grandparents, parents, and himself. By rendering the ready-made and sometimes quirky compositions of the photographs in paint he transforms the image from documented reality into elegiac yet ambiguous realms of fiction and narrative possibility. The one-to-one scale of the paintings mimics standard sizes of vernacular snapshots associated with family photos. When organized into groups or sequences they evoke familiar or long-forgotten places and times. Just as the artist does, the viewer attempts to make sense of or fabricate associations between the images, bringing them into the present as intimate and poignant echoes of memory and history.

Text by David Liss, exhibition curator

Photography by Toni Hafkenscheid

1. *We're in the Library*, took place at the Koffler Gallery, November 19, 2013 to January 19, 2014, and was curated by Mona Filip

2. *Art School (dismissed)*, took place throughout entire the building at 180 Shaw St., through the weekend of May 14 to 16, 2010, and was curated and produced by Heather Nichol

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