

## Seven art galleries to visit across Ontario

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In the before times, the end of October always spelled Art Toronto, where Canada's art cognoscenti would converge to connect, collect and clink glasses. This year, the vast halls of the Metro Toronto Convention Centre stand eerily hushed and vacant as the event – rebranded for the moment as Canada's Art Fair – moves online from October 28 to November 8, with special in-person events and exhibitions also taking place in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal. If you are in Toronto, make an appointment to stop by Stephen Bulger Gallery's pop-up mini fair for some in-person time with dealers and artworks from Vancouver's Wil Aballe Art Projects, Calgary's TrépanierBaer, Montreal's Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain and London's Michael Gibson Gallery.

Another group of visitors has gathered over at Cooper Cole in Toronto, though this consortium is decidedly more otherworldly. For Tau Lewis's debut solo at the gallery, on view to November 28, the artist has installed three imposing sculptures of genderless mother figures, each surrounded by cascades of fabric blossoms, and one with a lolling tongue the size of a settee. The plush beings are stitched together using a patchwork of upcycled household items such as towels, blankets, bed sheets and curtains, all hand-dyed in warm, fleshy tones "meant to resemble a light-filled womb."

As if basking in the sunset glow of Lewis's heavenly figures is Azadeh Elmizadeh's series *Subtle Bodies*, on view to November 14 at Franz Kaka, just a 13-minute walk down Dupont Street. The nine dreamy paintings by the Iranian Canadian artist, an MFA candidate at the University of Guelph, are built up slowly with layers of translucent glazes of oil paint on linen. They stand in conversation with Persian miniature paintings and are likely under the influence of Helen Frankenthaler and the Color Field school too. The result is mystical and meditative, like watching dappled shapes cast by light, shadow and smoke.

Cut from the same cloth by Nathan E. Carson, on view to January 3 at the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, makes three for this roundup's count of debut solo exhibitions by young artists. Much of the painter's burgeoning oeuvre is concerned with Black identity and imagery relating to protest and resistance within oppressive societal systems. Fervently composed portraits are scratched and rubbed until made suitably raw and unsettling, with a nod to forebears Jean-Michel Basquiat and Francis Bacon.

The question of BIPOC artistic survival under the threat of erasure in institutional archives is central to Pamila Matharu's exhibition at Durham Art Gallery, which runs to December 5. It builds on her award-winning 2019 installation *One of These Things Is Not Like the Other* at A Space Gallery in Toronto, which presented discarded footage from the Art Gallery of Ontario's "diversity programming" in the 1990s. The artist explores why entire populations are ejected from the archive of Canadian art, including the Panjabi-Sikh community, which has a 117-year history in the country but is mostly represented in stereotypical tropes in the public consciousness.

At Carleton University Art Gallery in Ottawa until December 12, Paris-based artist Benny Nemerofsky Ramsay is also engaged in devising an archive that flouts institutional mores. In an unconventional sort of audio guide, he visits the libraries of elder gay scholars, with the recordings forming "chapters." Each week he responds to one of these chapters by creating an arrangement using objects and flowers, and invites members of Ottawa-Gatineau's LGBTQI2-S community to create a parallel arrangement in collaboration with local florist Kat Kosk. The Japanese ikebana-like creations live on the gallery website and visualize a network of queer kinship that reaches across time and space.

Traditional Métis floral designs figure prominently in the work of Christi Belcourt, whose touring retrospective stops at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ont. until January 24. On view will be more than 30 paintings produced over the course of the artist's rich and varied 25-year career, which has included a collaboration with fashion house Valentino as well as the travelling exhibition *Walking With Our Sisters*, which pays tribute to Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous women. *Uprising: The Power of Mother Earth* also includes work by Isaac Murdoch, a frequent collaborator of Belcourt's in projects relating to social change and justice for Indigenous Peoples.