

Press release

New exhibition

From October 26, 2023 to January 7, 2024

**The 2023 MNBAQ
Contemporary Art Award**

*Five artists propose five singular universes
to be discovered*

Parc des Champs-de-Bataille
Québec (Québec) G1R 5H3

418 643-2150
1 866 220-2150

mnbaq.org

Press Contact

Linda Tremblay
Media Relations Officer

418 644-6460, ext. 5532
linda.tremblay@mnbaq.org



Québec City, Wednesday, October 25, 2023 ✕ The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) and its foundation are proud to launch the fall season by showcasing the work of the five winners of the 2023 *MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award*: **Maria Ezcurra, Anahita Norouzi, Celia Perrin Sidarous, Eve Tagny and Sara A.Tremblay**. This landmark group exhibition featuring these talented women offers a snapshot of the most relevant contemporary art in Québec.

The exhibition will be presented from **October 26, 2023, to January 7, 2024**, with support from RBC Royal Bank, a valued partner since 2013. It tackles some of today’s most pressing issues through a variety of media (installation, sculpture, photography, and video): migration, nature and the garden, memory and identity, and expressions of resilience. This multifaceted adventure has everything it takes to capture the imagination.



Musée national
des beaux-arts
du Québec

New!

For the first time, the public will be invited to vote for their favourite exhibit. The distinction will be revealed in December, at the same time as the overall winner of the 2023 edition of the *MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award*, who will be selected by a jury of experts. The winning artist's work will be published in a monograph in 2024 and acquired for the MNBAQ's collections.

Five artists and their unique worlds

Five women from varied backgrounds—**Maria Ezcurra**, **Anahita Norouzi**, **Celia Perrin Sidarous**, **Eve Tagny**, and **Sara A. Tremblay**—were selected by a jury based on the excellence and relevance of their creations. Enter their worlds to discover rich sensory experiences and deep-rooted artistic approaches stemming from unexpected and diverse blends of sources.



Maria Ezcurra: Clothing, the Material of Choice

In her art practice, **Maria Ezcurra** adopts an ecofeminist perspective to reflect on clothing and the social construction of gender, along with questions of identity and immigration.

The sculptures, installations, performances and wearable pieces the artist creates are composed of domestic materials – textiles, shoes and other personal objects – that she transforms in order to probe their subjective dimension and their cultural significance. Deconstructed and reconfigured, her clothes redefine the body's physical and emotional limits, laying bare the complex social relations that shape our identities.

Liminal

The suitcases the artist includes in her latest works act as a metaphor for mobility and displacement. These second-hand items of luggage contain skilful constructions made of pantyhose and tops held up by threads and

stones. Tights and other garments – extensible, semi-transparent and body-hugging, identity markers of modern womanhood – are stretched into unexpected shapes that push the fabric to its physical limits.



Maria Ezcurra's artistic career

Maria Ezcurra was born in Buenos Aires in 1973 and raised in Mexico City. She studied visual arts at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas of UNAM in Mexico, the Chelsea College of Art and Design in London and the San Francisco Art Institute. Since 2010 she has been living in Montréal, where she earned a PhD in art education from Concordia University. Her work has been seen in over sixty group shows and fifteen solo exhibitions in Latin America, North America and Europe. She has taught in several universities and organizations in Mexico and Canada over the past twenty-five years. She has also developed various public, participatory and community art projects in diverse contexts. She was awarded the Prix de la diversité en arts visuels of the Conseil des arts de Montréal in 2019 and the Prix Powerhouse in 2022.

Anahita Norouzi: Or How to Revisit History



Anahita Norouzi's practice examines the notions of displacement, memory and identity from a psycho-historical perspective. Intent on illustrating the effects of colonialism on the contemporary world, she unearths forgotten stories, directing her attention particularly to botanical heritage and archaeological excavations.

Her approach, based on the reappropriation of her own history, draws parallels between the migration of people, plant species and cultural artefacts, revealing how varying geopolitical interests can transform our perception of reality. Interweaving past and present, here and elsewhere, individual and collective, her works question the links between culture and politics in an era of globalization.

Half of the Red Sun

Over the course of a lengthy and meticulously documented investigation, the artist has reconstructed the history of an archaeological fragment from

the ruins of the Achaemenid palace of Persepolis, in Iran, which was looted from the site in 1936, acquired by a Canadian museum in the early 1950s, stolen, rediscovered and finally returned to its country of origin – only to inexplicably disappear again.

Half of the Red Sun examines the question of the restitution of cultural treasures pillaged during the colonial era and the responsibility of museums with regard to the vast numbers of artefacts that have been exported illegally from their country of production and distributed across the world, depriving local populations of their cultural heritage.

This installation combines a large assemblage of interconnected objects and images – archival documents, a 19th-century lithograph, rubble, sculptures, a video – that all provide clues to the vanished object and its turbulent history. Viewers never see the relief that inspired the work: its presence is felt only through its absence, its spectre, the space it once inhabited.

Anahita Norouzi's artistic career

Born in Tehran in 1983, Anahita Norouzi is a multidisciplinary artist active in Montréal since 2018. She holds a BA in art and graphic design from Sooreh University in Tehran and an MFA from Concordia University. Her work has been exhibited on numerous occasions in Canada and abroad, notably at London's Royal College of Art and in Buenos Aires at BIENALSUR, the International Biennial of Contemporary Art of the South. More recently, she has shown at Oboro in Montréal, at the New Gallery in Calgary and at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. In 2021 she received a creation prize from the Grantham Foundation for the Arts and the Environment, and in 2022 was awarded an Impressions Residency by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Anahita Norouzi is represented by the Galerie Nicolas Robert of Montréal and Toronto. She is the Québec finalist for the 2023 edition of the prestigious Sobey Art Award.

Celia Perrin Sidarous: Fragments of Stories

Celia Perrin Sidarous creates powerfully poetic image sequences and photographic assemblages by transforming items from her extensive collection





of personal objects via the camera's lens, as well as imbuing found images with new semantic significance. Her staged arrangements resonate simultaneously with the historical genre of still life, confounding the usual conditions of viewing and interpretation.

The artist also makes experimental short films, an extension of her photographic practice that she describes as temporal collages.

Flotsam

This title refers to a seafaring term used to describe the wreckage of a ship or its cargo found floating in the sea or washed up onshore.

For this body of work, Celia Perrin Sidarous is exploring the links between sight and touch, using a process of intuitive selection to create combinations of disparate items that she encourages to interact. The recurring presence of familiar objects—marbles, mirrors, vases, small flasks—and a characteristic chromatic palette give the ensemble a highly personal nature.

Vessels for a film



The previously unseen cycle *Vessels for a film* is composed of seven short films in which the artist indirectly addresses her family history by attempting to capture the richness of a mixed cultural heritage. The non-narrative parts, shot in 16mm and Super 8 film, focus on performative gestures around inanimate elements: amphorae and sculptural objects, fruit and shelled foodstuffs, as well as—more experimentally—beams of light and modulations of volumes. *Vessels* is a fragmentary and fragmented film composed of gestures and observations, transparencies, translucencies and juxtapositions that evoke other lives and other spaces.

Celia Perrin Sidarous's artistic career

Celia Perrin Sidarous, who was born in Montréal in 1982, has shown her work in numerous solo and group exhibitions at a wide range of venues. These include the McCord Museum and the Centre Clark in Montréal, the Embassy of Canada Prince Takamado Gallery in Tokyo, the Norsk Billedhoggerforening in Oslo, the CONTACT Photography Festival in

Toronto, the FOCUS Photography Festival in Mumbai, Arsenal Contemporary Art in New York, the Esker Foundation in Calgary, the Dunlop Art Gallery in Regina, the Banff Centre, the Centre VU in Québec City as well as 8eleven and Gallery 44 in Toronto. She also took part in the Biennale de Montréal 2016 – Le Grand Balcon, presented at the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal. She received the Barbara Spohr Memorial Award in 2011 and the Prix Pierre-Ayot in 2017. Celia Perrin Sidarous is represented by Patel Brown in Montréal and Toronto.



Eve Tagny: The Garden, a Symbol of Memory

Eve Tagny combines video, photography, performance and installation to explore various forms of loss. Adopting a fragmented narrative approach, she examines the role played by ritual, movement and gestures of nurture or resistance as ways of countering the violence that characterizes human relationships. Her practice focuses particularly on garden and landscape spaces, which she sees as sites imbued with our memories and our individual and collective identities.

Unadorned Landscapes

This installation focuses on the relationship between earth, its extraction and its valorization. It includes a large-scale photograph of the window of a vacant retail space on Finchley Road, in London, that reflects several of the neighbourhood’s luxurious apartment buildings, together with a video shot at the construction site of the new Université de Montréal campus, close to where the artist grew up. In the video, Tagny presents an unrehearsed gestural performance that features emotional responses to a site undergoing radical transformation. Collectively, the images offer fragments of landscape that embody memories of the soil and represent earth as an archive suffused with traces of those who have lived there.

Unadorned Landscapes highlights the history of the site: the complex links between the wealthy community of Outremont and the lower-income neighbourhood of Parc-Extension, the impact of capitalism on real estate development, the social dynamics that shape the reuse of space. The artist prefers to work at sites that have been transformed by human activity, sometimes drastically, spaces that ask for restoration. The performers’

ritualized gestures suggest a healing process, their movements constituting a form of resistance and emancipation, evoking the resilience with which people confront the mechanisms of oppression and trauma.



At the heart of the installation, terracotta tiles with incised inscriptions tell the story of both sites' development and commercial value. The artist employs various other organic materials – structures made of cob (a mix of mud and straw), bales of hay – and introduces architectural elements – arches, platforms, staircases – that act as thresholds or passages. Ultimately, the installation resembles a landscape that is a paradoxical blend of garden, building site, landfill and archaeological dig, an edgy encounter between spaces disrupted by human activity and fertile places that strengthen our connection to the living world.

Eve Tagny's artistic career

Born in Montreal in 1986, Eve Tagny earned a BFA in film production from Concordia University and a certificate in journalism from the Université de Montréal. She has held noted exhibitions at the Musée d'art de Joliette, the Centre Clark and the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, at Cooper Cole, Franz Kaka and Gallery 44 in Toronto, and, more recently, at Platform in Winnipeg and the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle. She is a recipient of the Women Photographers of the African Diaspora Legacy Grant (2018) and the Bourse Plein Sud (2020), and has been shortlisted for the Contemporary African Photography Prize (2018), the Burtynsky Photobook Grant (2018), the New Generation Photography Award (2022) and the Prix Dynastie (2023). Eve Tagny is represented by the Cooper Cole Gallery, Toronto.



Sara A. Tremblay: From the Ordinary to the Extraordinary

Adopting a photographic and performative approach, Sara A. Tremblay accumulates images that shift between the ordinary and extraordinary aspects of life in the Eastern Townships countryside. She uses photography, video and sculpture to document the objects, bodies, actions, interventions and transformations she witnesses daily. Her practice is deeply connected to the place where she lives – to its territory and the moods it encompasses.

She captures evidence of the tranquil forces of nature in ephemerally fragile moments shaped by the seasons or the wind. At once poetic and conceptual, her work illustrates experiences lived and landscapes marked by time.

Portrait (2004-2017)

In this survey work, which summarizes over a decade of art production, Sara A. Tremblay has included vestiges from several projects executed over the years, including entire series of mutilated photographs, large drawings taken from the *In and Out* body of work, concrete spheres that were part of *277 Days* and clay amulets from *Worry Stones*. Some of the works were left outdoors for extended periods, at the mercy of the elements, before being permanently confined within something very like a coffin. This *Portrait* of recycled earlier works seems like an act of emancipation: the artist is cutting loose from the past, freeing herself to pursue new avenues.



Poids, plumes

In 2019, Sara A. Tremblay quit the city for the country, taking refuge in an old house at the foot of Mont Orford. She created an enormous garden, a place of pleasure and of sustenance, and set up an outdoor studio: a large canvas hung on a barn wall became the backdrop against which she could stage her daily life. For her subjects the artist drew on the harvest from her garden and diverse elements from her domestic world, gradually accumulating thousands of photographs: squash, melons and other fruit and vegetables, masses of gladioli, dried flowers and wild herbs, pets, personal objects – all punctuated by multiple variations on her own likeness.



Tout t'empêche – Il faut travailler fort pour se reposer

First shown on Instagram as part of a virtual residency at the Centre d'exposition de l'Université de Montréal, the series of images and videos entitled *Tout t'empêche (Everything Slows You Down)* is composed of sequences that show the artist improvising different actions in her garden. The project emerged out of a reflection on the pressure to create, the need to earn a living and the stress generated by a lack of time, means and goals. In this work,

Sara A.Tremblay strives to construct a space where she can finally take a break.

Sara A.Tremblay's artistic career

*Sara A.Tremblay, born in Les Éboulements in 1983, has been living in Orford since 2018. Her move to the country proved a major source of inspiration that has had a decisive impact on her career. Holder of an MFA from Concordia University, she teaches photography at the Université de Sherbrooke. In recent years her works have been exhibited at the Colby-Curtis Museum in Stanstead, at the Musée des beaux-arts de Sherbrooke, at the artist-run centre Vaste et Vague in Carleton, at the Maison des arts de Laval, at the Guido Molinari Foundation in Montréal and at the YYZ Artists' Outlet in Toronto. In 2016, as part of a creative residency awarded by Les Rencontres de la photographie en Gaspésie, she walked the 650 kilometres of the Sentier international des Appalaches au Québec, which resulted in the book *Sentier difficile* (2023). In the spring of 2020, in response to the lockdown, she founded Les Encans de la quarantaine, a virtual auction group devoted to the sale of work by independent and emerging artists, or those without gallery representation.*

The MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award, at a glance

Every two years since 2015, the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, in collaboration with the RBC Royal Bank, has presented the MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award, a major event on the current art scene. The award contributes towards the professional development of artists who have been practicing for between ten and twenty years by offering them greater recognition and enhanced visibility.

For the first time this year, the Award is supporting five artists rather than just one. Selected by a jury based on the excellence of their output, these five women from diverse backgrounds explore a wide range of disciplines. Their works, at once poetic and political, reflect deep preoccupations with questions related to migration and displacement, identity and memory, nature and gardens.

The MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award, which is the only contemporary art prize in Canada that combines exhibition, acquisition and publication, confirms the museum's commitment to playing a leadership role in the realm of Québec art by encouraging promising artists and helping to further their career.

Credits

The exhibition *The MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award* is organized by the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec.

Curatorship

André GILBERT

Curator of Exhibitions, MNBAQ

Selection Committee

Sylvette BABIN

Director, Esse

Management

Yasmée FAUCHER

Head of Museography, MNBAQ

Nuria CARTON DE GRAMMONT

Director and Curator, SBC

Gallery of Contemporary Art

Catherine GAUMOND

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Isolda GAVIDIA

Registrar and Curator of the
Rencontres Collection, MNBAQ

Dominique FONTAINE

Curator and Founder,
Aposteriori

Design and Graphic Design

Marie-France GRONDIN

Designer, MNBAQ

Marc-Antoine K. PHANEUF

Artistic Director,
L'Œil de Poisson



The MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award is produced with financial support from the RBC Royal Bank.

The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is a state corporation funded by the Gouvernement du Québec.

Québec The logo for the province of Québec, featuring the word 'Québec' followed by a stylized grid pattern.

The 2023 MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award
Pierre Lassonde Pavilion
From October 26, 2023 to January 7, 2024

INFORMATION:

418 643-2150 or 1 866 220-2150 / mnbaq.org

Page 1 – Photos from left to right and top to bottom: aria Ezcurra, *Enclosed*, 2023. Repurposed suitcases and wood, 210.8 x 185.4 x 147.3 cm. © Maria Ezcurra // Celia Perrin Sidarous, *André Malraux, Le Musée imaginaire de la sculpture mondiale, NRF Paris*, 1952, 2020. Inkjet print on cotton paper, 40.6 cm x 50.8 cm © Celia Perrin Sidarous, Courtesy of the Artist // Eve Tagny, *Unadorned Landscapes* (detail), 2022 © Eve Tagny / photo: Jessann Reece, Courtesy Cooper Cole and the Artist

Page 2 – Photo: Maria Ezcurra: Photo: © Freddy Arciniegas

Page 3 – Photos from top to bottom Maria Ezcurra, *Personal Baggage: Red and White*, 2023. Suitcase, garment, rock and thread, 83.8 x 63.5 x 50.8 cm. © Maria Ezcurra Photo: Mike Patten // Anahita Norouzi: Photo: Courtesy Anahita Norouzi

Page 4 – Photos from top to bottom: Anahita Norouzi, *Reading Through the Gaps*, 2023. Inkjet print on archival paper, mounted on aluminum, 106.8 x 160 cm © Anahita Norouzi, Courtesy of the artist // Anahita Norouzi, *The Future Can Be Only for Ghosts*, 2023. Video still, 4K, sound, 7 min, continuous loop © Anahita Norouzi, Courtesy of the artist

Page 5 – Photos from top to bottom: Celia Perrin Sidarous: Photo: © Tess Toby // Celia Perrin Sidarous, *Vessels for a film (Part V: Doubles)*, 2023. Film still, 16mm, digital transfer, 3 min 34 s © Celia Perrin Sidarous, Courtesy of the Artist

Page 6 – Photo: Eve Tagny: Photo: courtesy of Eve Tagny

Page 7 – Photos from top to bottom: Eve Tagny, *Unadorned Landscapes*, 2022. Installation view, Cooper Cole, Toronto © Eve Tagny / photo: Jessann Reece, Courtesy Cooper Cole and the Artist // Eve Tagny, *NW3 Landscape*, 2022. Digital print, 152.4 x 203.2 cm © Eve Tagny / photo: Jessann Reece, Courtesy Cooper Cole and the Artist // Sara A.Tremblay: Photo Sara A.Tremblay, *Autoportrait avec fleurs d'épicerie*, March 23, 2021

Page 8 – Photos from top to bottom: Sara A.Tremblay, *Portrait (2004-2017)* (detail), 2023. Concrete, clay, paper and works from various sources, 182.9 x 91. x 30.5 cm. © Sara A.Tremblay Photo: Guy L'Heureux // Sara A.Tremblay, *Mauves et pavot*, 2021. Inkjet print, printed 2023, 45,7 x 30,5 cm © Sara A.Tremblay

General Information

OPENING HOURS OF THE MNBAQ*

Until May 31, 2024

Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Wednesday until 9 p.m. / Closed on Monday, except January 1, March 4, April 1 and May 20, 2024

** During the construction of the Riopelle Space, only the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion is open.*

ADMISSION*

** Save up by purchasing your ticket on line*

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Ages 18 to 30: 15 \$

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Families (2 adults accompanied up to 5 children aged 17 and under): 54 \$

Group rate (15 people or more) for hotels, tour operators and companies: 22 \$

12 years and under: free

Membres: free

Wednesdays from, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.: half-price

First Sunday of every month: free

MNBAQ Collections

Adults: 16 \$

Seniors (65 and Over): 15 \$

Ages 18 to 30: 10 \$

Ages 13 to 17: 5 \$

Families (2 adults accompanied up to 5 children aged 17 and under): 36 \$

Group rate (15 people or more) for hotels, tour operators and companies: 13 \$

12 years and under: free

Membres: free

Wednesdays from, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.: half-price

First Sunday of every month: free

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