



MAX AND IRIS STERN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM 17

RISK TAKING HOW DO MUSEUM, CURATORIAL, AND ARTISTIC PRACTICES DEAL WITH UNCERTAINTY?

Participants: Abbas Akhavan, eunice béliador, Nuria Carton de Grammont, Karen Cheung, Jérôme Denis, Guillaume Désanges, Emma Dickson, Caterina Florio, Annie Gauthier, Nasrin Himada, Pip Laurensen, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Tanya Lukin-Linklater, François Morelli, Rasha Salti, Stephan Schulz, Tino Sehgal, Guillaume Tremblay.

Curators: Mélanie Boucher and Marie Fraser, with Mark Lanctôt, Curator of the collection at the MAC.

The next Max and Iris Stern International Symposium at the Musée d'art contemporain will focus on the place of risk in modern and contemporary art museums: how do these institutions accept, avoid, embrace, or suppress it?

Risk is among the current and wide-ranging issues currently faced by museum collections. It manifests itself in the concerns regarding acquisition protocols, conservation, preservation and exhibition standards, as well as in the growing urgency imposed by technological obsolescence and the anticipated degradation of artworks that feature living organisms. Risk can also be found in how museums position themselves in the face of political issues, not to mention in the threats brought on by the climate crisis and armed conflicts.

Addressing risk raises several questions: How do artistic, curatorial, archival, conservation, and restoration practices navigate between notions of risk and care? In a context where museum collections are based on the material durability and stability of objects, how do museums that acquire unstable and changing works handle the risks that come with them? Or is the opposition between risk and care a false dichotomy? Will works that have the necessary resources to survive their own programmed obsolescence form a new *de facto* canon? In cases such as these, what role does documentation play?

By bringing together several stakeholders with multiple, complementary perspectives and experiences, the 17th Max and Iris Stern International Symposium will present an overview of current practices and examine the notion of risk-taking in a convivial setting, conducive to discussion and exchange.

PROGRAM

The lectures will be in French and in English.
Simultaneous interpretation will be available.

FRIDAY, APRIL 4

1:00 p.m.

WELCOME ADDRESSES AND INTRODUCTION

Francesco Garutti, Associate Director, Programs, Canadian Centre for Architecture
Catherine Julien, Director, Philanthropic Development and Major Campaign, Fondation du MAC
Mark Lanctôt, Curator of the Collection, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal
Mélanie Boucher, Professor of Museology and Art History, Université du Québec en Outaouais; Co-founder, ClÉCO; and Researcher

1:15 p.m.

THE MUSEUMIZATION OF RISK [in French and English]

Jérôme Denis, Professor of Sociology and Director, Centre de sociologie de l'innovation, Mines Paris – PSL
Karen Cheung, Curatorial Associate of Media Arts, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Caterina Florio, Head, Conservation, McCord Stewart Museum
François Morelli, Artist
Moderated by **Annie Gauthier**, Director and Chief Curator, Musée d'art de Joliette

3:00 p.m. – BREAK

3:30 p.m.

ATELIER LOZANO-HEMMER [in English]

Rafael Lozano Hemmer, Artist
Stephan Schulz, Head of R&D
Guillaume Tremblay, Head of Legacy
Emma Dickson, Conservation Technician

4:30 p.m. – BREAK

5:00 p.m.

OPENING LECTURE [in English]

Pip Laurenson, Professor of Conservation, Director MSc Conservation of Contemporary Art and Media

6:00 p.m.

COCKTAIL

At the Shaughnessy House of the Canadian Centre for Architecture

This event is organized in collaboration with the ClÉCO Research and Inquiry Group as part of its *New Uses of Collections in Art Museums* Partnership activities, the UQAM Research Chair in Curatorial Studies and Practices, and the UQO Équipe Art et Musée.

SATURDAY, APRIL 5

10:00 a.m.

ART : UNE HISTOIRE DE LA VIOLENCE (Art: A History of Violence)
[videoconference, in French]

Guillaume Désanges, President, Palais de Tokyo

11:15 a.m. – BREAK

11:30 p.m.

CONVERSATION [hybrid, in English]

Tino Sehgal, Artist
Pip Laurenson, Professor of Conservation, Director MSc Conservation of Contemporary Art and Media

12:15 p.m. – LUNCH

1:30 p.m.

SCREENING [in French and English]

Films de Ben Vautier: Extraits des performances de Ben Vautier et du groupe Fluxus depuis 1960 (The Films of Ben Vautier: Excerpts from Performances by Ben Vautier and the Fluxus Group since 1960)

2:30 p.m.

CONFERENCE [videoconference, in French]

By Rasha Salti, Co-Curator, *Past Disquiet* exhibition

3:30 p.m. – BREAK

4:00 p.m.

RISK POLICY [in English]

Nuria Carton de Grammont, Director/Curator, SBC Gallery of Contemporary Art
Nasrin Himada, Associate Curator, Academic Outreach and Community Engagement, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University
Tanya Lukin Linklater, Artist
Moderated by **eunice béliador**, Independent Curator

5:00 p.m.

CLOSING ADDRESS [in English]

Abbas Akhavan, Artist

PARTICIPANTS

ABBAS AKHAVAN

Born in Tehran and living and working in Montréal, Abbas Akhavan's practice ranges from site-specific, ephemeral installations to drawing, video, sculpture, and performance. The direction of his research is influenced by the specificity of the sites in which he works, including the architectures that house them, the economies that surround them, and the individuals that frequent them. The concept of the garden—and, by extension, the spaces and species just outside the home, such as the backyard, public parks, and other domesticated landscapes—form the foundational components of Abbas's work. In recent large-scale installations, Akhavan recreates cultural sites affected by international conflicts, attending to the multivalent ways in which ongoing geopolitics fight for control of historical narratives. Through his work, Akhavan engages with formal, material, and social legacies that shape the boundaries between public and private, domesticated and wild, hostile and hospitable. Abbas holds an MFA from the University of British Columbia and a BFA from Concordia University. Upcoming solo exhibitions include the Canada Pavilion at the Biennale di Venezia, the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), and the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery (Vancouver). He is the recipient of the Fellbach Triennial Award, the Sobey Art Award, the Abraaj Group Art Prize, and the Berliner Kunstpreis.

ATELIER LOZANO-HEMMER

Atelier Lozano-Hemmer is an artist studio in Montréal dedicated to the development and presentation of media art. Established in 2003, the studio comprises a team of twenty-six full-time employees from ten countries—architects, programmers, artists, scientists, writers, designers, and musicians. Team members work in three divisions: Antimodular Research, an R&D company, Vectorial, a production company, and the Antimetric Institute, a nonprofit organization. The Atelier is proud to operate a progressive environment featuring gender equity, an active social practice, and continuing philanthropic projects.

eunice béliidor

Born in Montréal, eunice béliidor is a curator, author, and researcher. Her curatorial practice addresses epistolary writing as a vector of affective archives in curatorial research. She holds an MA in Art History and Visual Culture and a graduate diploma in Curatorial Studies from York University, in Toronto. Her projects have been presented at the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, the Galerie de l'UQAM, and *articule*. Her writing has been published in the *Brooklyn Rail*, *Hyperallergic*, *Esse arts + opinions*, *Espace art actuel*, and *Vie des Arts*. In 2018, she received a TD Bank Group Award for Emerging Curator of Contemporary Canadian Art from the Hnatyshyn Foundation.

MÉLANIE BOUCHER

Mélanie Boucher is a researcher specializing in museology and art history, and is currently a full professor in both disciplines at the Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO). She is a co-founder of the research group CIÉCO, where she directs the research work of Axis 3 (Expanded Collections) of the New Uses of Collections in Art Museums Partnership. At the same time, Mélanie holds the position of Principal Researcher with Art et musée: Entre recherche et création, a group of researchers, visual artists, and exhibition designers from three Québec universities. Her current research focuses on performative practices and their musealization as well as on modes of exhibition and presentation effectuated by contemporary art. In 2023, she co-edited (with Marie Fraser and Johanne Lamoureux) the book *Réinventer la collection: L'art et le musée au temps de l'évènementiel* (Presses de l'Université du Québec).

NURIA CARTON DE GRAMMONT

Nuria Carton de Grammont is an art historian, curator, and lecturer. As director of the SBC Gallery of Contemporary Art in Montréal, she and her team, which includes Antoine Bertron, Marcela Borquez, and Santiago Tamayo Soler, engage in curatorial and artistic research on decolonial practices, cultural security, eco-social engagement, and awareness of the inherent risks of these approaches. Together, they have produced several exhibitions and public programs, and have published articles with institutional partners such as the Laboratoire d'art et de recherche décoloniaux at the Université du Québec à Montréal (LabARD-UQAM), and the Observatory of Cultural Mediation of the Institut national de la recherche scientifique (OMEC-INRS). At the heart of their mandate is the notion that art is a space for personal and collective emancipation, that assures everyone's right to culture while embracing the risks of social and political transformation that this entails.

KAREN CHEUNG

Karen Cheung is a curator based in San Francisco. She has contributed writings to *Art Practical*, *Open Space*, *MARCH Journal of Art and Strategy*, *Voices in Contemporary Art Journal*, and *Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions*, as well as book publications by Heesoo Kwon and Isaac Chong Wai. Previous curatorial projects include performances by Naama Tsabar, Suzanne Lacy, and Postcommodity; solo exhibitions by Julian Charrière, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, and Nam June Paik; and group exhibitions at SWIM Gallery and the Mills College Museum of Art. Karen has lectured at the Tainan National University of the Arts in Taiwan, and presented at programs and symposiums organized by the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco), Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, and the Mori Art Museum (Tokyo). She has held various positions at KADIST (Oakland), the Vancouver Art Gallery, the De Young Museum (San Francisco), and the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. She is currently the Curatorial Associate of Media Arts at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where she recently organized the exhibitions *Janet Cardiff: The Telephone Call*, *Alexandra Pirici: Re-collection*, and *New Work: Samson Young*, and is working on a new commission by Raven Chacon.

PARTICIPANTS

JÉRÔME DENIS

Jérôme Denis is a professor of sociology and the Director of the Centre for the Sociology of Innovation at Mines Paris – PSL. His research focuses on the production, circulation, and maintenance of data, especially in urban management and architecture. He has published numerous scientific articles and is the author of *Travail invisible des données* (Presses de Mines, 2018). For the past several years, he has worked with David Pontille on leading an international multidisciplinary community of scientists around the role and organization of maintenance practices. Together, they have published the *Petite sociologie de la signalétique* (Presses des Mines, 2010), and *Le Soin des choses. Politiques de la maintenance* (La Découverte, 2022, winner of the Architecture Book Award). He is the co-founder of *Scriptopolis*, a website of micro-surveys on writing, which was published in book form in 2019 by Éditions Non Standard.

GUILLAUME DÉSANGES

Guillaume Désanges is the President of the Palais de Tokyo, exhibition curator, and art critic. He runs Work Method, an independent production company. He develops international exhibitions and conference projects. His latest projects include: *There was a time in the Past where the Future was Present* (2015, Museum of Art and History, Saint-Denis, Paris), *Ma'aminim / Les Croyants* (2015, Museum of Art and History, Saint-Denis and Tranzitdisplay, Prague), *Poésiede Balistique* (2016, La Verrière, Fondation d'entreprise Hermès, Brussels), *L'esprit français, Countercultures 1969-1989* (2017, La maison rouge – foundation Antoine de Galbert, Paris), and *L'ennemi de mon ennemi* (2018, Palais de Tokyo, Paris).

CATERINA FLORIO

Caterina Florio joined the McCord Stewart Museum in Montréal in 2021 as the Head of Conservation. Prior to this, Caterina was the Textile Conservator at the Canadian Museum of History, in Gatineau, Québec. Preceding her institutional positions, she gained extensive experience in the private sector as a conservation consultant, both in Canada and Italy. Caterina is a member of the (Re)conciliation Working Group and the Ethics Committee at the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property. She has served on the board of directors of the North American Textile Conservation Conference since 2017. With a strong interest in how museums function and what they can achieve, Caterina is committed to the wider relevance of conservation as it interfaces with museology and society more broadly.

MARIE FRASER

Marie Fraser is a professor of art history and museum studies, and the current Research Chair in Curatorial Studies and Practices at UQAM. She is a founding member of the Groupe de recherche et de réflexion CIÉCO, and director of Axis 1 – Exhibited Collections – of the *New Uses of Collections in Art Museums* Partnership, funded by CRSH. She is also leading the research project *Muséologie d'enquête*, which documents and analyses the history of exhibitions from the trajectory of artworks. She was the co-editor of the book *Réinventer la collection. L'art et le musée au temps de l'évènementiel* (PUQ, 2023), issue no. 40 of *Marges. Revue d'art contemporain* on activism within collections, as well as issue no. 43 of *RACAR, What is Critical Curating? / Qu'est-ce que le commissariat engagé ?* Fraser was also the Chief Curator at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (2010-2013), and the curator of the Canada Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale (2015).

ANNIE GAUTHIER

Annie Gauthier has been the Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Musée d'art de Joliette (MAJ) since January 2024. Before returning to the helm at the MAJ, she spent the previous eight years in strategic positions at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, first as the Director of Collections and Exhibitions, and then as Director of Exhibitions and International Partnerships. During these mandates, she contributed, among other things, to improving the collection through research and acquisitions and helped standardize and digitize the institution's collections. In addition, she produced nearly forty exhibitions and several publications. Previously, Gauthier was actively involved with many Canadian associations, namely as Director of the Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference. She also worked at the Canada Council for the Arts for five years, and sat on the boards of directors of the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec and the Mois de la photo de Montréal (now MOMENTA).

NASRIN HIMADA

Nasrin Himada is a Palestinian curator and writer. Their practice is heavily influenced by their long-term friendships and many collaborations with artists, filmmakers, and poets. Nasrin's ongoing project, *For Many Returns*, experiments with writing as an act dictated by love and typifies their current curatorial interests, which foreground desire as transformation and liberation through many forms. Nasrin currently holds the position of Associate Curator at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, in Kingston, Ontario.

PIP LAURENSEN

Dr. Pip Laurenson is Professor of Conservation at University College London and Director of the Conservation of Contemporary Art and Media MSC program at UCL East. Now with thirty years' experience in the conservation of contemporary art, Pip began her career as a sculpture conservator at Tate, later establishing and leading the institution's Time-based Media Conservation section (1996–2010). Pip is committed to interdisciplinary research and practices that respond to the challenges facing the conservation of contemporary collections in the twenty-first century. Between 2010 and 2022, Pip was Head of Collection Care Research at Tate, where she secured research awards from a range of funders and led the Mellon Foundation-funded project *Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum* from 2018 to 2022. Pip received her doctorate from UCL and is an accredited member of the Institute for Conservation (ICON) and a Co-Chair at ICON Contemporary. She is a member of the Steering Committee for the International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA) and a Fellow at the International Institute for Conservation (IIC).

PARTICIPANTS

TANYA LUKIN-LINKLATER

Tanya Lukin Linklater’s artistic practice spans video, sculpture, and dance in museums. Sensation, embodied inquiry, scores, rehearsal, and being in relation (to ancestral belongings, communities, and weather) structure her work. Through citation of Indigenous peoples’ lived experience and cultural work, she honours practices and lineages that exceed dominant ideas of who we are. Tanya’s recent exhibitions include the Aichi Triennale (Japan), the Gwangju Biennale (South Korea), the New Museum Triennial (New York), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Toronto Biennial of Art. Her solo exhibition *Inner blades of grass (soft) (cured) (bruised by weather)*, which includes works from the last ten years as well as new commissions, was presented by the Wexner Center for the Arts (Columbus, Ohio) in 2024. She recently completed her PhD in Cultural Studies at Queen’s University. Tanya is a faculty mentor with the MFA in Studio Arts program at the Institute of American Indian Arts, in Santa Fe. Her Sugpiaq homelands are in the Kodiak Archipelago of Alaska.

FRANÇOIS MORELLI

François Morelli is based in Montréal. From 1981 to 1990, he lived and worked in and around New York City, completing an MFA at Rutgers University (NJ) in 1983. He began teaching in 1981, and retired in 2019. Among his many honours are the Louis-Comtois Award (2007), the Ozias-Leduc Award (2022), and the Paul-Émile-Borduas Award (2024). Morelli’s interdisciplinary practice includes drawing, printmaking, installation, performance, and sculpture, and is marked by a sustained investigation on the status of the object within the creative practice and the perception of the artwork itself. He is interested in notions of *passage, circulation and transformation. For him, the work often becomes the echo of a previous action or intervention that aims to translate (not only within space, but also within time) the relationships between the artist and society, between individuals themselves, or between the individual and the object.**

*Pierre Landry, *L’origine des choses*, Montréal, Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, 1994 (our translation).

RASHA SALTİ

Rasha Salti is a researcher, writer, and curator of art and film currently living in Marseille. Salti has co-curated (with Kristine Khouri) the documentary and archival exhibition *Past Disquiet* at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (2015), the HKW in Berlin (2016), the Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende in Santiago de Chile (2018), the Sursock Museum in Beirut (2018), the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Cape Town (2023), the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2024), and Framer Framed in Amsterdam (2025). In 2022, Salti was a co-curator of the 8th Triennial of Photography Hamburg and part of the curatorial team for the 12th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art.

TINO SEHGAL

Born in 1976 and based in Berlin, Tino Sehgal studied dance and political economy. For more than twenty years, he has been presenting what he calls “constructed situations” consisting of choreographic sequences and oral instructions executed by players in various exhibition venues. Explicitly distinct from performance art, theatre, and dance, these works take place continuously during the host museum’s or gallery’s public viewing hours. The conceptual nature of Sehgal’s practice arises out of a reflection on what constitutes an artwork and a crystallization of the artistic experience, which, in his work, leads to direct engagement between the public and the players in carefully designed situations. Thus, the visitors are considered an integral part of the work: they participate in it and affect how it proceeds. The immateriality of Sehgal’s work also stems from a concern for sustainable development, a commitment that he conveys by eschewing the production of commodities, resisting the excessive proliferation of material goods, and minimizing the art world’s ecological footprint. Major exhibitions of Sehgal’s work have been presented all over the world at venues such as the Tate Modern in London, the Guggenheim Museum in New York, Tai Kwun Contemporary in Hong Kong, KYOCERA Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto, Bourse de Commerce in Paris and Fondation Beyeler in Basel. The MAC held a major solo exhibition of Sehgal’s work in 2013.

Since 2006, the prestigious international symposiums held by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal have been known as the Max and Iris Stern International Symposium. From the time the Musée was founded in 1964, Max and Iris Stern contributed significantly to its growth by enriching the Collection with many gifts, including works by Hans Arp, Paul-Émile Borduas, Emily Carr, John Lyman and Jean-Paul Riopelle. The goal of this annual event is to provide a public forum for research by practitioners and theoreticians working in diverse fields, in connection to the Musée's programs. Through this commitment, the Musée wishes to foster a greater understanding of contemporary art and pay tribute to the Sterns by carrying on their vision on the international scene.

Cover:
Abbas Akhavan, *Study for a Blue Shield*, 2010,
gallery wall cut, painted and displayed on the roof
of the exhibition space. (300 x 250 cm)
Courtesy of Catriona Jeffries.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

April 4–5, 2025

Paul Desmarais Theatre, Canadian Centre for Architecture
1920 Baile St., Montreal, QC, H3H 2S6

The lectures will be in French and in English.
Simultaneous translation will be available.

To receive full details on symposiums and lectures at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, simply add your name to the mailing list for the Musée's e-newsletter, at **www.macm.org**.

Information: **info@macm.org**

Reserve your tickets online:

Tickets are reserved through the MAC's electronic ticket office.
<https://macm.org/en/activities/max-and-iris-stern-international-symposium-17/>

The CIÉCO Research and Inquiry Group contributes to offering this event free to the public.

Tickets give access to both days of the symposium.
