



Mark Dion, *The Life of a Dead Tree*, installation view, Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery New York / Los Angeles. Photograph: Tom Arban Photography Inc.

Museum
Of
**Contemporary
Art**

Toronto Canada

Annual Report 2019



Photo by Ben Rahn/A-Frame.

A Message from Brad Keast, Board Chair

Hello friends of MOCA,

Culture is the bedrock of Canada. Art has a massive impact on who we are. Art opens eyes and enriches the soul. The ability of an artist to experience the same world we are all living in, and reflect it back to us in a way we never considered, expected, or even thought possible is so incredibly powerful.

As a platform for contemporary art, MOCA plays a critical role in Canada’s cultural ecosystem to bring fresh ideas, perspectives, and experiences to you. In 2019, our first full year of operation since reopening in the Tower Automotive Building on Sterling Road, MOCA welcomed 130,000 visitors through our doors; presented 13 major exhibitions; organized 85 public programmes; and provided education activities and tours for 2,000 students.

In 2019 the programming embodied the expansion of MOCA’s ambition in our new facility. We were able to show you the range of programming that MOCA is now capable of presenting due to our expanded space. Our programmes sparked dialogue and debate about many important challenges and opportunities the world is facing. We are fortunate to be presenting these ideas in Canada, where these discussions are not only permitted, but encouraged.

Throughout the year we presented strong exhibitions and public programmes sharing ideas about how we relate to nature, each other, and ourselves. The artists involved were from diverse backgrounds; each with fascinating personal and professional stories. Mark Dion’s *Art in the Field: The Tree of Life* complete with an actual dead tree to underscore the critical conversations about both global trade and invasive species while also highlighting the intersection of art and science; Hans Ulrich Obrist, Shumon Basar, and Douglas Coupland’s thought-provoking exploration of the extreme self in *Art in the Field: The Tree of Life*; and Chantal Akerman’s acclaimed films *L’image sonore* and *Le beau temps* are but three highlights of an exciting calendar.

Reflecting upon the year that MOCA had in 2019 fills me with pride. Everyone at MOCA is grateful to the entire community who made this possible. I would like to extend my deep gratitude for the tremendous support of our donors, the commitment of our members, the hard work of our staff team and Board of Directors, the creativity of the artists and curators we had the pleasure to work with, and of course for all of our visitors. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Brad Keast
Board Chair

Letter from November Paynter



We opened 2019, MOCA's first full year of programming, with two strong exhibition statements by women artists: Basma Al Sharif and seminal filmmaker Chantal Akerman. The artists share many concerns – geopolitical definitions, the collapsing of histories and how we form individual versus collective memory. Alsharif's exhibition was organized through a partnership with Mophradat, a foundation supporting artists from the Arab World, and Akerman's was conceived with curator Andréa Picard as an extension of her work on an Akerman retrospective for TIFF. Lisa Steele worked with the team to programme a series of well-attended, local performative responses by female voices such as Moyra Davey and Anique Jordan.

This focus on community and partnerships continued as we worked on a major commission with renowned New York-based artist Mark Dion to explore the devastation of North American tree populations in particular the Ash. At MOCA Dion exhibited a fully-grown deceased ash laid out in a chilling composition and we collaborated with the ROM and the Faculty of Forestry at the University of Toronto to create a range of workshops and discussions. We stepped out of the museum with a series of walks, while a student scientist was on hand in the gallery to share their research with those visiting the exhibition.

MOCA's interest in artists who engage with urgent issues such as climate change and societal health, through interdisciplinary practices, fed into many of our 2019 engagements, including a series of projects under the title *Art in Use*. These ranged from a *Light Therapy* room by Apolonija Šušteršič, a commission by local artist Ange Loft

that explored habitual holding patterns and over-exertions in the name and image of power, to an Honest Shop that presented hundreds of artists' works made locally by hand.

In the fall we continued to support new production with a commission by Shezad Dawood organized in collaboration with the Toronto Biennial of Art and Fogo Island Arts. On the museum's two main floors, we shifted attention to another urgent phenomena – that of our reliance on digital platforms in the project *Age of You*. Curated by Shumon Basar, Douglas Coupland and Hans Ulrich Obrist, this exhibition of more than 70 visual contributors, also expanded notions of contemporary art by sourcing from the worlds of art, design, filmmaking, photography, performance and electronic music. *Age of You* was commissioned and produced by MOCA and will go on to be presented at the Jameel Art Centre in Dubai in 2021.

MOCA is attentive to what is happening around us right now and many of the artists we work with respond with very immediate ideas and propositions. This shared enthusiasm has created a special ecology for the museum and the unique spaces and community that we inhabit. We thank everyone who worked with us and supported the incredible arc of conversations, partnerships and new productions that energized MOCA throughout 2019 and that will go on to provide momentum for the years ahead.

November Paynter
Artistic Director

Art for Our Sake

MOCA is motivated by our belief that museums can be culturally and socially useful. We promote exceptional artistic thinking and provide a community space for discourse and creativity.

Working across all contemporary art forms, we empower the local Toronto art scene, while contributing to the international. MOCA is an accessible, welcoming hub rooted and engaged in a culturally rich neighbourhood; it is here, through art, that you can feel the specialness of this invigorating and hyperdiverse city.

The Year in Review



Basma Alsharif, Installation View at MOCA Toronto, 2019.

2019 Exhibitions

Basma Alsharif

Basma Alsharif's exhibition at MOCA intertwined four major works, each one presented as a staged setting.

Chantal Akerman

In the Mirror (2007) and *NOW* (2015) spoke to the issues that Akerman has explored throughout her career: trauma, gender, belonging and identity.

The Life of a Dead Tree

Mark Dion

Mark Dion brought a massive, fully grown, deceased tree, along with its inhabitants, to MOCA. Visitors observed and participated in a kind-of autopsy of the tree that unfolded over the exhibition period.



Chantal Akerman, *In the Mirror*, 2007. Photo by Tom Arban Photography Inc.

The Year in Review



2019 Exhibitions

Age of You

Age of You was a timely exhibition about how the self has become more extreme, and what it means to be an individual today. It was curated by Shumon Basar, Douglas Coupland and Hans Ulrich Obrist.

Leviathan

Shezad Dawood

MOCA presented elements from Shezad Dawood's *Leviathan*, an ambitious ten-part film cycle launched in Venice in 2017.

kiya iitako (be you)

Joi T. Arcand

kiya itako (be you) by Joi T. Arcand consisted of two Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree) phrases written in syllabics set atop imagery of a prairie sky and a photo of the artist as a child.

DEMOS – A Reconstruction

Andreas Angelidakis

DEMOS – A Reconstruction was an installation of 74 foam modules that visitors of all ages could move and rearrange.

The Year in Review



Art in Use

Art in Use is an on-going programme that explores how art and museums can be useful in today's communities. New commissions and public events ask: can art motivate social, political and cultural change? What meaningful role does art play in our lives? How can we use it as a tool?

Light Therapy **Apolonija Šušteršič**

Light Therapy was originally produced for the Moderna Museet in Sweden in 1999 to explore how contemporary museums function as a public space, and as a social or healing device.

Resolution (Mass of Clarity) **PA System Art Collective**

Visitors sculpted clay representations of a need, desire, dream, or goal to make your intention tangible. This exercise drew upon strategies of visualization, and is similar to sympathetic magic, wherein symbolic representations –like a vision board –are used to influence real life.

A foreign source of extraordinary power **Ange Loft**

In the third project in the □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ series, Loft's sculptures were physical references that invited us to think about our habitual holding patterns and over-exertions in the name and image of power.

Honest Shop

The Honest Shop was a self-service store that showcases and sells products handmade by people in the Junction area, the *Honest Shop* relied on a system of trust and generosity, where customers recorded their purchases and left cash in an 'honesty box' for collection.

Honest Shop at MOCA Toronto, 2019. Photo by Gabriel Li.

The Year in Review



Partnerships Summary

Projects

LUCID

Powered by an artificial intelligence system, this “dream-like” experience, [□□□□](#) let you co-create your environment through the unique behaviour of your brainwaves at the museum.

Biidaaban: First Light

Lisa Jackson with Mathew Borrett, Jam3 and the National Film Board of Canada

Biidaaban: First Light was an interactive virtual reality experience that allowed users to move through familiar spaces overgrown by vegetation while being immersed in the original languages of Tkaronto.

An Index

Exhibition with Artists from the Akin Studio Program

MOCA invited curators Marsya Maharani and Marjan Verstappen, associated with the Younger than Beyoncé Gallery, to work with the first cohort of residency artists who entered Akin’s Studio Programme.

BMO 1st Art! 2019

Celebrating Canada’s New Artists

The thirteen artists featured were recent graduates of postsecondary art programmes from every province and territory who have been honoured for their talent and exceptional accomplishments.

An Index, Installation View at MOCA Toronto, 2019.
Photo by Marsya Maharani.

The Year in Review



Community Engagement

Events

Sterling Weekend

Sterling Weekend featured two full days of free, interactive programs open to visitors of all ages. Coinciding with Doors Open, MOCA's Sterling Weekend activities took inspiration from Mark Dion's exhibition, *The Life of a Dead Tree* and the 100th anniversary of the Tower Automotive Building.

A series of film screenings, workshops, and lively conversations delved into the unique history of the building, and investigated the concrete architecture and parklands that make up our city.

TD Community Sundays

Visitors were able to enjoy free admission to the museum on the last Sunday of each month from 10am to 2pm. TD Community Sundays include guided tours of the exhibitions on view.

TD Community Sundays were made possible by TD Bank Group through its corporate citizenship platform, The Ready Commitment.

Nuit Blanche

***It All Makes Sense* by Stephanie Comilang**

It All Makes Sense recreated a memory of the first time Comilang saw *Perfumed Nightmare* by Kidlat Tahimik — a figure who, like Comilang's father, comes from Baguio, a mountain city and old American airbase in the Philippines. This teen moment in a basement changed Comilang's perspective on life.

The Year in Review



Public Programmes & Learning

New Public Programmes Partnerships:

- Canadian Art
- Ryerson University, School of Image Arts
- Digital Justice Lab
- Aboriginal Curatorial Collective
- McLuhan Centre for Culture and Technology

Public Programmes

Coinciding with our exhibitions, accessible public programmes were available to visitors of all ages. Our events drew people in from many disciplines: science, technology, nature and more.

Highlights:

- Female Voices: Talk series with Anique Jordan, Serena Lee, Moyra Davey, Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue, curated by acclaimed filmmaker Lisa Steele.
- Dead Tree Walks: Sold out series of offsite nature walks in tandem with Mark Dion's *Life of a Dead Tree*
- Digital Justice Labs: Tech workshops alongside our *Age of You* exhibition
- Trevor Paglen Talk: 250 attendees join us for our largest talk, held offsite at Ryerson University, formed by a new partnership with Canadian Art and Ryerson University, School of Image Arts.
- Victoria Sin Performance: Sold-out premiere of the *If I had the words to tell you we wouldn't be here now* in Canada and Sin's first performance in Canada.

Tours & Schools

Launched in September 2019, our new tour and education programmes included guided tours and studio visits. We had 74 tours (1,117 people on guided tours) and 48 school groups (1,515 students).

2019 by the Numbers

130,613 Visitors

8,821 Public Programmes Attendance

1,894 Members

17
Member
Events

16
Community
Events

74
Tours



109
Volunteers

1,842
Hours

Statement of Operations

Year ended December 31, 2019, with comparative information for 2018

	2019	2018
Revenue:		
Donations and sponsorship	\$ 2,678,449	\$ 2,333,747
Amortization of deferred capital contributions (note 8)	692,766	160,354
Grants (note 11)	448,801	567,146
Facility rental	337,593	45,191
Merchandise and ticket sales	222,565	107,205
Membership	91,232	42,674
Interest and other	14,285	33,574
	4,485,691	3,289,891
Expenses:		
Salaries and benefits (note 12)	1,708,280	1,808,803
Amortization	775,743	154,194
Professional fees	501,757	278,211
Programming	442,446	348,519
Facility, operating and rental (note 10)	311,404	347,073
Artistic and production fees	233,586	72,729
Marketing and communication	162,712	384,209
Fundraising	70,022	65,534
Administration	132,716	228,585
Other	—	16,893
	4,338,666	3,704,750
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	\$ 147,025	\$ (414,859)

Statement of Financial Position

December 31, 2019, with comparative information for 2018

	2019	2018
Assets		
Current assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 971,646	\$ 3,226,173
Accounts receivable	106,579	172,544
Prepaid expenses	84,249	53,215
	1,162,474	3,451,932
Long-term investments (note 3)	42,055	40,302
Capital assets (note 4)	14,017,180	13,375,648
	\$ 15,221,709	\$ 16,867,882
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current liabilities:		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities (note 5)	\$ 249,149	\$ 404,764
Deferred revenue (note 6)	222,458	208,806
Deferred grants (note 7)	49,467	69,282
Deferred rent	127,508	351,248
Loan payable (note 9)	–	60,000
Other payable (note 13)	–	2,148,000
Current portion of loan payable to developer (note 13)	–	295,333
	648,582	3,537,433
Long-term liabilities:		
Deferred capital contributions (note 8)	14,252,198	7,249,878
Loan payable to developer (note 13)	–	5,906,667
	14,252,198	13,156,545
Total liabilities	14,900,780	16,693,978
Net assets:		
Unrestricted	320,929	173,904
Commitments (note 14)		
Subsequent events (notes 13 and 16)		
	\$ 15,221,709	\$ 16,867,882



Your support has been transformational in helping us open the museum and reach our goals. Your contribution is critical to sustaining the museum's operations, programmes, and exhibitions.

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Photo by Gabriel Li.



Mark Dion, *The Life of a Dead Tree* (Installation View), 2019.
Photo by Constabile Carpinelli.

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MOCA volunteers contribute their time, skills, and labour as well as their dedication and passion. We thank each and every volunteer for their contribution to our first successful launch year. Their hard work and effort is greatly appreciated by the staff, Board and every visitor at the Museum.

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Photo by Gabriel Li.

Museum Of Contemporary Art

Toronto Canada



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Installation view: Agnieszka Kurant, *A.A.I.*, 2014-17 (foreground); *Age of You*,
MOCA Toronto. Photo by Tom Arban Photography Inc.