

# ROM IDEAS: GLOBAL STORIES OF ONTARIO

March 2, 2025

1:00 PM, Doors open 12:30 PM

Eaton Theatre, President's Choice School Entrance

**ROM Ideas: Global Stories of Ontario** highlights the importance of ROM's work as caretaker of cultural belongings in Ontario and leader in local scientific research and collaboration. By featuring stories that connect directly to Ontario's communities and resources, ROM Ideas underscores the high degree to which the museum is woven into the fabric of Canada's most globally connected and diverse province.

## 1:00 PM OPENING REMARKS

### 1:05 PM

#### **Between Sun and Lens: The Photography of Mazher Master**

Explore the recently identified archive of photographer Mazher Master (1920-1977) with Deepali Dewan. This unique archival resource traces his previously unrecognized photographic practice from the 1940s to the 1970s and from Palanpur, Gujarat, India to Karachi, Pakistan to Ottawa, Canada. How did the archive of this South Asian photographer make its way to Ontario, what does it tell us about the history of photography in South Asia, and why is it important to local communities?



**Deepali Dewan** is the Dan Mishra Senior Curator of Global South Asia at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. She is also an Associate Professor (status only) in the Department of Art History at the University of Toronto and co-editor of the open-access, online, peer-reviewed journal *Trans Asian Photography*, published by Duke University Press. Her research spans issues of colonial, modern and contemporary

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visual culture in South Asia and the South Asian diaspora, with a focus on the history and theory of photography and its critical historiographies.

# 1:40 PM

## **Naming our Freshwater Neighbors: 30 Years of Teaching Ontario Fish Identification**

Over the last three decades, ROM's retired Assistant Curator of Fishes Erling Holm has written the guide to identifying the diverse freshwater fishes of Ontario and led an annual series of ROM workshops that use this book to train enthusiasts, resource managers, and scientists from throughout the province. Join Erling and ROM Associate Curator Nathan Lujan as they explore the challenges of differentiating Ontario's 129 native fish species, the joys of teaching these skills to over 160 passionate students per year, and the critical importance to all Ontarians of ensuring that this specialized knowledge continues to be passed on.



**Nathan Lujan** is ROM's Associate Curator of Fishes with a research program that examines the scope, origins, and ecologies of freshwater fishes. He has led over two-dozen expeditions to tropical South America and Africa, but was most recently sampling Ciscoes and Lake Trout in northern Lake Superior. He has described over 40 fish species as new to science, including one he named after his mom.



**Erling Holm** was ROM's Assistant Curator of Fishes for over 40 years before retiring in 2022. He is the first author of ROM's Field Guide to the Freshwater Fishes of Ontario and the founder of ROM's highly sought-after Fish Identification Workshops.

# 2:10 PM

## From Formosa to Ontario, Canada: a Global Connection Preserved in the ROM George L. Mackay Collection

George Leslie Mackay (1844–1901) born in Oxford, Ontario, left his hometown in 1871 to become the first foreign missionary in Taiwan, where he helped establish schools, hospitals, and chapels across the country. Wen-chien Cheng and Gwendolyn Adams explore McKay's life through the lens the extensive collections at ROM of his work, still considered one of the most important assets in understanding Taiwanese history by communities in both Taiwan and Canada.



**Wen-chien Cheng** received her Ph. D. in art history at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Joining the ROM in 2011, she co-curated *Forbidden City: Inside the Court of China's Emperors* (2014) and *Gods in My Home: Chinese New Year with Ancestor Portraits and Deity Prints* (2019). She was the main contributor to the catalogue accompanying the exhibit held at Berlin 2017-18, *Faces of China: Chinese Portrait Painting of the Ming and Qing Dynasties*. She co-authored *Gods in My Home: Chinese Ancestor Portrait and Popular Prints* (2019). Her specialty is on pre-modern Chinese paintings, including the genre subject of Song dynasty painting, images of women, and ancestor portraits and prints in late imperial periods. Her recent research focuses on the ROM's George Leslie Mackay Collection (Taiwanese folk religious sculptures), the George Crofts Collection (the formation of ROM's early Chinese collection), and the artistic hybridity in the female images of the Qing dynasty.



**Gwen Adams** earned her undergraduate degree in Art History from York University in Toronto and a Master's degree in Art History from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. During her time at UBC, she cultivated a particular interest in Asian Art History and Post-Modern Chinese Art. It was in this academic environment that she developed a keen fascination with propaganda posters and China's socio-political history, as well as the Gutai movement, a post-war artistic group founded in 1954 by the painter Jiro Yoshihara.

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# 2:40 PM

## Museum Sustainability in the 21st Century

Museums have long acted as places that bring the past to life through exhibitions and collections. However, the storage of fragile materials requiring specific temperature and humidity controls within large heritage buildings can pose major challenges that result in vast energy demands. Today, ROM is playing a global role in leading a new vision of institutional sustainability, including reducing the energy consumption of its building- critically important as we mitigate the impacts and adapt to a changing climate. Explore the innovations driving these changes with Soren Brothers and Heidi Sobol, whose work strives to care for some of Ontario's most treasured collections *and* its environment.



**Soren Brothers** is the Allan and Helaine Shiff Curator of Climate Change at the Royal Ontario Museum. He is also an Assistant Professor at the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Toronto. Soren's research examines the effects of climate change on lakes, and how changes in aquatic systems can influence their greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere. More broadly, he is interested in understanding how feedback loops and the transdisciplinary study of lakes can help us better understand and predict global tipping points that may accelerate anthropogenic climate change.



**Heidi Sobol** obtained her Bachelor of Fine Art from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University in 1996 and her Master of Art Conservation at Queens University in 2000. Heidi has worked throughout North America, including the National Gallery of Canada and as a practicing paintings conservator in the private sector in Halifax, Nova Scotia. During her time in the Maritimes, Heidi provided the burgeoning arts community with an outlet to have their paintings conserved.

# 3:10 PM BREAK

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# 3:45 PM

## 2025 Vaughan Lecture

The Vaughan Lecture Fund was established with a generous gift from the estate of Nora E. Vaughan in 1994 to support the ROM's Annual Vaughan Lecture. Mrs. Vaughan established this endowment to continue the ROM's tradition of selecting a staff member each year to share their latest research with the public.

## The Art and Fashion of African Textiles

African fashion and cloth are now in the global spotlight, the subject of major exhibitions, publications and catwalk successes. But fashion has a long history on the continent. Join ROM curator Dr Sarah Fee as she shares insights into the art and fashion of historic African textiles, and unveils an acquisition of 170 pieces to ROM. Dr Fee will be joined by ROM's newly appointed Curator of Global Africa, Tandazani Dhlakama, and Cali Greenidge, President of TMU's Black Students Fashion Association to discuss contemporary art and fashion practices inspired by African textiles.



[Dr. Sarah Fee](#) joined the ROM in April, 2009. She is responsible for the museum's renowned collection of ca. 15,000 textiles and fashion that come from greater Asia and Africa, as well as eastern Europe.

Sarah's fascination with textile making and dress first grew during four years of doctoral field research in southern Madagascar, where she learned to spin, dye and weave. In addition to Madagascar, her multi-disciplinary research focuses on the textile and dress traditions of the wider western Indian Ocean world, which embraces southern Arabia, eastern Africa and western India. She has edited and written for numerous books, journals and catalogues, including *Objects as Envoys: the Textile Arts of Madagascar* (2002), *Textile Trades, Cultures of Cloth, and Material Worlds of the Indian Ocean* (2018), "The Translocal Textile Trades of Eastern Africa," a special volume of *Textile History* (2017), and *Cloth that Changed the World: The Art and Fashion of Indian Chintz* (2020).

Thematic interests include woven and printed textiles, textile trades, cross-cultural appropriations of cloth and dress, ceremonial exchange, spinning and dye technologies, the history of museum textile collecting.

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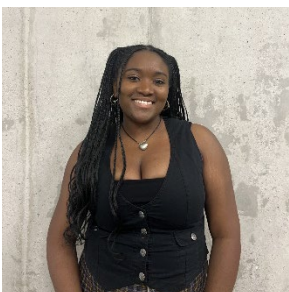
Her research has been supported by grants from the Smithsonian Institution, The Wenner Gren Foundation, The Pasold Fund, and the Social Science and Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Sarah's recent exhibition projects include "Cloth that Changed the World: India's Painted and Printed Cottons," ["Born of the Indian Ocean: The Silks of Madagascar,"](#) and BIG. Before joining the ROM, she guest-curated Gifts & Blessings, the Textile Arts of Madagascar" (NMAfA, Smithsonian Institution) and co-founded the Tandroy Ethnographic Museum (Berenty, Madagascar).

Dr. Fee is cross-appointed to the Art Department, University of Toronto. She is a Chercheuse Affiliée at the Musée du Quai Branly (Paris), a Research Associate at the Indian Ocean World Centre (McGill University), a Senior Fellow of Massey College, and currently serves on the editorial board of the *Textile Museum Journal*.



**Tandazani Dhlakama** is the Curator of Global Africa at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. Previously she was a curator at the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art (Zeitz MOCAA) in Cape Town, where she spearheaded the launch and development of the Zeitz MOCAA & University of the Western Cape (UWC) Museum Fellowship Programme in 2021. At Zeitz MOCAA she curated, *Seekers, Seers, Soothsayers* (2023), co-curated the travelling exhibition *When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting* (2022), co-curated *Shooting Down Babylon: A Tracey Rose Retrospective* (2022), and curated *Five Bhoobh: Painting at the End of an Era* (2018) amongst others. Tandazani has also worked at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Harare and was a co-curator for the 13th Recontres de Bamako- African Biennale of Photography in Bamako (2022). Tandazani's writing appears in the artist monographs of Akinbode Akinbiyi, Sungi Mlengeya, Georgina Maxim and Wallen Mapondera, in publications such as *Audacious Art Practices: Situating the Contemporary Arts of Africa* and others.



**Cali Greenidge** is a fourth-year fashion design student and co-president of the Black Fashion Students' Association (BFSA) at Toronto Metropolitan University. Throughout her academic journey, Cali has delved deeply into her cultural heritage, combining her studies in Black Studies with her passion for design. Her current thesis project, *Afia*, is a reflection of this exploration, where she works closely with traditional Ghanaian textiles, such as wax prints and kente cloth. Kente cloth, the focal fabric of her upcoming collection, has allowed Cali to deepen her understanding of its rich cultural

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significance, intricate craftsmanship, and inherent beauty. Through this project, she continues to celebrate and honor the delicate artistry and history embedded in these textiles.

**4:50 PM CLOSING REMARKS**

**5:00 PM END**

**5:30 PM DOORS CLOSE**

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