

## **CONTACT PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL 2025 ANNOUNCES HIGHLIGHTS OF ITS 29th EDITION**

**Toronto's preeminent, annual, month-long festival presents an outstanding roster of North American and international lens-based artists in May 2025**

**Toronto, Ontario, Canada...** [CONTACT Photography Festival](#) today announced highlights of the 29th edition of its annual citywide event spanning the month of May 2025. CONTACT is a Toronto-based festival dedicated to exhibiting, analyzing, and celebrating photography and lens-based media through its annual festival. The Festival provides numerous opportunities to experience a diverse range of exhibitions in neighbourhoods across greater Toronto, and to take in hundreds of events including openings, lectures, artist talks, book reviews, workshops, and more, forging creative connections and sparking engagements.

The 2025 Core Program features curated Exhibitions and Public Art Installations highlighting projects by Canadian and international artists and photographers, developed both independently and in partnership with numerous local and international arts and cultural organizations. In 2025, lens-based and mixed-media works explore subjects including anti-colonial practices, community-building, Afro-futurism, activism, protest and revolution, personal and collective memory, addressing gaps in historical and contemporary archives, and a return to early photographic practices and experimentation.

The preliminary list of artists featured across the Core Program includes Steven Beckly, Sandra Brewster, Kiri Dalena, Buck Ellison, Rosalie Favell, Alanna Fields, Tamara Abdul Hadi, Natalie Hunter, Shawn Johnston, Andreas Koch, Christina Leslie, John Latour, Glenn McArthur, Pinar Ögrenci, M. NourbeSe Philip, Alison Postma, Ho Tam, and Helena Uambembe.

### **Preview of selected 2025 CONTACT Festival exhibitions and public art projects**



#### **Buck Ellison | *Untitled***

March 10 – May 4, 2025

Pattison Outdoor Billboard Public Art Project

Sited on two billboards on Davie St, between Bute St and Jervis St, Vancouver

May 1 – 31, 2025

Sited on four Billboards on Dupont Street, Toronto

Curated by Emmy Lee Wall

Across billboards in Toronto and Vancouver, CONTACT and Capture jointly present the work of American artist Buck Ellison. In his *Untitled* series of still lifes on view in Toronto, the artist combines coded symbols of wealth such as flowers, silk fabric, and images of historical paintings depicting families of social and political standing. In Vancouver, Ellison's images deploy the visual tropes that comprise stock photography, staging pictures that mimic and draw attention to the pervasive white privilege that has become part of the North American visual vernacular. These works help make visible the signs and symbols that have been used to propagate wealth over centuries and that continue to circulate broadly today. Presented by CONTACT Photography Festival in partnership with Capture Photography Festival, Vancouver. Supported by PATTISON Outdoor Advertising.

**Natalie Hunter | *Bathed in Strange Light***

May 23 – October 5, 2025

The Bentway Studio, 55 Fort York Boulevard

Curated by The Bentway

Durational in nature, Natalie Hunter's *Bathed in Strange Light* is a photo-based architectural response that investigates natural sunlight's effect on the body and mind in urban settings. The sun's light is nourishing and volatile. Its rhythms, both positive and negative, govern how urban planning policies and public spaces are created for people to thrive. Hunter's installation will unfold in a kind of slow-moving cinema, activated by daily rhythms of the sun across The Bentway Studio and Terrace. Transparent images will respond to changing lighting conditions and viewers' movements as they project latent images and moments of shade across the site.



**Kiri Dalena | *Erased Slogans and Birds of Prey***

May 1 – 31, 2025

Billboards at Lansdowne Ave & Dundas St W/College St

Curated by Su-Ying Lee



Two distinct series by Filipina artist Kiri Dalena will be displayed on billboards across Toronto. Digitally wiped by the artist, the protest signs in *Erased Slogans* allude to the silencing of dissenting voices. The original photos were taken around the time that Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law (1972). News media was shut down and protests declared illegal. *Erased Slogans* remains regrettably current. In *Birds of Prey*, the artist explores a more distant yet equally impactful chapter of Philippine history. During the early years of U.S. occupation, a collection of at least 16,000 racializing photographs was produced for the purpose of portraying the Filipino people as incapable of

self-governance. Presented by CONTACT Photography Festival. Supported by PATTISON Outdoor Advertising. Rescheduled from 2024.

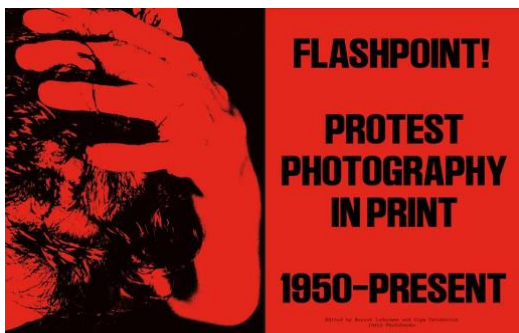
**Alanna Fields**

May 1 – 31, 2025

Billboards at King St W & Strachan Ave

Curated by Luther Konadu

U.S. artist Alanna Fields' practice salvages photographic traces of Black queer life from the 1990s and earlier, focused on the mundane moments that usually fall into the margins of sensationalistic mainstream narratives of queer life. The new project, 'Unveiling', features a selection of large-scale collages symbolizing the complexities and limitations of visibility and invisibility. Remixing imagery from Fields's past series *Audacity and Mirages of Dreams Past*, these collages render kaleidoscopic layers that break open veils and reveal audacious queering. Meditating on black queer memory, vulnerability and desire, each work brings to focus every-day representations of black queer life in the U.S. between the 1960s and 1970s. This project is a continuum of Fields's first monograph also titled, *Unveiling*, to be released in February 2025. Presented by CONTACT Photography Festival. Supported by PATTISON Outdoor Advertising. Rescheduled from 2024.



***Flashpoint! Protest Photography In Print***

May 1 – June 15, 2025

CONTACT Gallery, 80 Spadina Ave, Suite 205

*Flashpoint!*, an exhibition focusing on protest photography in print, presents a global selection of photobooks, zines, posters, pamphlets, independent journals, and alternative newspapers addressing protest and resistance from the 1950s to the present. Since its inception, photography has captured defining historical moments, serving as either a tool or a document

of protest—or both. In placing photobooks next to posters, DIY zines, and independent journals, *Flashpoint!* explores the diverse roles and varying aesthetics that photography in print undertakes in its support of protest and resistance. Based on an anthology of the same title published by 10x10 Photobooks in 2024, the Flashpoint! Reading Room shares diverse voices to encourage a constructive and respectful discourse. Edited by Russet Lederman and Olga Yatskevich (New York City: 10x10 Photobooks, 2024). 10x10 Photobooks is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization with the mission to foster engagement with the global photobook community through an appreciation, dissemination and understanding of photobooks. Founded in 2012, 10x10 offers an ongoing multi-platform series of public photobook events, including reading rooms, salons, publications, grants, online communities, and partnerships with arts organizations and institutions.



**Sandra Brewster: *FISH***

April 12, 2025 – January 2026  
 McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 10365 Islington Ave  
 Curated by Sarah Milroy

Toronto-based artist Sandra Brewster will create a site-specific wall installation featuring a drawing and photo-based gel transfer of images of the Essequibo River in Guyana and the fish species found solely within it. Immersing viewers in what feels like a calm rush from one place to another place, the Essequibo River is a metaphor for movement. Drawing from her own Guyanese parentage, Brewster's photo-based practice speaks intimately to the migration of Caribbean people. The materiality of the photo transfer process—layered, removed and

imperfectly fixed on the wall— evokes diasporic identities and personal histories that encompass overlapping experiences of time, land, place, and home.

**Andreas Koch, Pinar Öğrenci, Helena Uambembe | *Still Film: Photography in Motion***

May 1 – 29, 2025  
 Goethe-Institut Toronto, 100 University Ave, North Tower, 2nd floor (fully accessible)  
 Curated by Olaf Stüber and Jutta Brendemühl

The Goethe-Institut is collaborating with the Berlin artist film project Videoart at Midnight to look at the creative manifestations and manipulations of photography in film and video. Pinar Öğrenci uses archival material to investigate the history and present of Turkish and Kurdish migrants in German coal-mining areas. Helena Uambembe performs her shadow image in front of an oversized 1975 photo portraying the leaders of South Africa's factious opposition movements. Andreas Koch guides viewers through a skillfully, mirrored montage of photographs from his favourite bar amidst a cacophonous voice-over. Presented by the Goethe-Institut with CONTACT Photography Festival.



**Rosalie Favell | *Rosalie Favell - Facing the Camera: TSÍ TKARÒN:TO***

May 1 – December 30, 2025  
 Onsite Gallery (window) + Indoor Exhibition  
 199 Richmond St W (exterior windows) + indoor exhibition  
 Curated by Ryan Rice

Rosalie Favell's *Facing the Camera: NIGIG Residency Toronto 2016*, is a renowned black and white portrait series that is part of a monumental ever-growing national and international visual archive of more than 500 photographs taken between 2008 and 2024 in cities across Canada, the U.S., and Australia that documents the broad diversity across Indigenous arts and cultural communities. In this iteration, a curated selection of images taken by Favell over three open invitation sessions during her 2016 Nigig Artist in Residence at OCAD University were hosted by the Indigenous Visual Culture program. Presented by Onsite Gallery in partnership with CONTACT Photography Festival.



**Alison Postma | *Tender to the Touch***

May 10 – July 5, 2025  
Xspace Cultural Centre, 2-303 Lansdowne Ave  
Curated by Avalon Mott

Alison Postma is a Toronto-based multidisciplinary artist, exploring various mediums including photography, video, sculpture, and design. Her work invites interactive experience through photographs, video, and more recently furniture pieces.



**Christina Leslie | *Pinhole Portraits and Places***

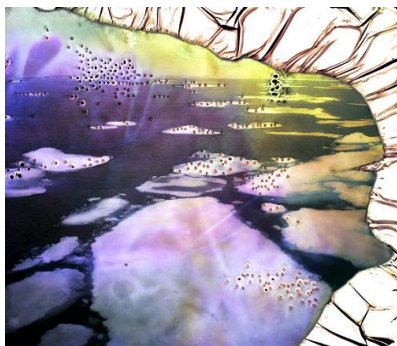
May 10 – August 30, 2025  
Stephen Bulger Gallery, 1356 Dundas St W

Christina Leslie began experimenting with historical photographic techniques in 2016 as a response to the rapid advancements in digital photography. Her investigations stemmed from a desire to reflect on and re-engage with the roots of analog photography while integrating contemporary methodologies. Much of her photographic practice revolves around the themes of de-colonialism, identity, immigration, issues of marginalization, history, memory, race, and her West Indian heritage. She often utilizes text and alternative and historical photographic processes to produce her photographs. Presented by Stephen Bulger Gallery.

**Steven Beckly | *Handy Work***

April 24 – May 31, 2025  
Daniel Faria Gallery, 188 St Helens Ave

A Chinese Canadian artist residing in Tkaronto/Toronto, Steven Beckly cultivates a visual language of light and colour, exploring the continuum of intimacy by creating multidimensional images, objects, and environments. Playful, touching, and evocative, their photographic artworks encompass bodily abstraction, material manipulation, and site-responsive installations. Presented by Daniel Faria Gallery.



**Ella Morton | *Pack Ice #1 and Pack Ice #2***

April 1 – August 31, 2025  
Vancouver City Centre Canada Line Station  
Presented by Capture Photography Festival in partnership with CONTACT Photography Festival and the Canada Line Public Art Program – InTransit BC

*Pack Ice #1* and *Pack Ice #2* are images created as a result of a long-term project called *The Dissolving Landscape* that began in 2016 during Ella Morton's Arctic Circle residency in Svalbard, Norway. Situated as murals on the glass façade of the Vancouver City Centre, the two seemingly abstract images of the vast ocean, appear to shift and crack like the polar ice packs themselves. A Canadian visual artist and filmmaker living in Tkaronto/Toronto, Morton's expedition-based practice has brought

her to residencies and projects across Canada, Scandinavia, Latin America, Greenland, and Antarctica.

**Special Projects & Initiatives**

**The CONTACT Photobook Lab** champions photobooks through a year-round reading room and store. During the Festival, the Lab presents a roster of programs that investigate contemporary approaches to photobooks and connect photographers with the resources they need to develop and publish their work.

**The Photobook Lab** pop-up reading room will be presented by The Sustainable Photobook Publishing (SPP) network (UK), a group of photographers, publishers, academics, and writers who discuss and share knowledge on issues around environmentally conscious approaches to photobook publishing in printed form. Through ongoing conversations, they spark new ways of thinking and develop resources that support and actively encourage individual practitioners.

The **CONTACT Photobook Fair** returns in 2025, hosting independent publishers and leading contemporary photographers, designers, and artists from around the world to bring their latest releases to Toronto. Hosted at Stephen Bulger Gallery, this unique event fosters opportunities for enthusiasts to build connections, discover new projects, and exchange ideas on books and photography. Publishers include Sustainable Photobook Publishing Network, 10x10 Photobooks, SPBH Editions, GOST Books, Free Pony Press, VU Photo, and more.

### **CONSTELLATION | Public Art Guest Curators**

Through CONSTELLATION, CONTACT invites local and international curators to program public art installations over a three-year term. Established in 2022, this program allows for a plurality of voices, perspectives, and dialogue to take shape throughout the city in public spaces. CONSTELLATION curators in 2025 include Mark Sealy (London, UK), Su-Ying Lee (Toronto, ON), and Gaëlle Morel (Toronto, ON).

**Su-Ying Lee** is an independent curator living in Tkaronto/Toronto whose projects have taken place across Canada, in Hong Kong, Mexico City, and Quezon City (Metro Manila, Philippines).

**Dr. Gaëlle Morel** is an art historian and the Exhibitions Curator at the Image Centre, Toronto, whose research deals with the figure of the artist as author in French contemporary photography and the artistic and cultural recognition of the medium in France and in the U.S.

**Mark Sealy** OBE is a British curator and cultural historian with a special interest in the relationship of photography to social change, identity politics, and human rights.

### **Preliminary List of Festival Partners**

CONTACT's 2025 Core Program of Exhibitions and Public Art Installations are developed through collaborations with partners across Toronto and beyond, including:

Aga Khan Museum	Dianna Witte Gallery	Pattison Outdoor Advertising
Art Gallery of Mississauga	Galerie Nicolas Robert	Paul Petro Contemporary Art
Artspace Gallery	Goethe-Institut Toronto	PHOTO Australia (Melbourne)
BAND Gallery	The Image Centre	The plumb
The Bentway	John B. Aird Gallery	Prefix ICA
Blouin Division	McMichael Canadian Art Collection	Stephen Bulger Gallery
Capture Photography Festival	Mercer Union	United Contemporary
Daniel Faria Gallery	Olga Korper Gallery	Xpace Cultural Centre
Davisville Subway Station	Onsite Gallery	Zalucky Contemporary

More exhibitions and programming details will be announced in the coming months.

### **About CONTACT Photography Festival**

CONTACT fosters and celebrates the art and profession of photography with its annual Festival across greater Toronto in May and year-round programming in the CONTACT Gallery. CONTACT presents lens-based works by acclaimed and emerging artists, documentary photographers, and photojournalists from Canada and around the world.

The curated **CORE PROGRAM** of exhibitions, site-specific public art installations, and public programs featuring work by local and international artists, presented in collaboration with major museums, galleries, and artist-run centers, are the heart of the Festival. These are cultivated through partnerships, commissions, and new discoveries, framing the cultural, social, and political events of our times. The **Open Call Exhibitions** are community-generated, independently organized exhibitions presented at unique venues throughout the city. The **Photobook Lab** champions photobooks through a year-round reading room store, book club, talks, and more. During the Festival the Lab presents a roster of programs such as the Photobook Fair and workshops that investigate contemporary approaches to photobooks. Please check the [CONTACT website](#) for updates.

CONTACT, a not-for-profit organization founded in 1997, is generously supported by its lead sponsors 3M Canada, Beyond Digital Imaging, BIG Digital, Four By Eight Signs, Pattison Outdoor Advertising, Toronto Image Works, The Gilder, Transcontinental PLM, and Waddington's Auctioneers and Appraisers.

CONTACT gratefully acknowledges the support of Canada Council for the Arts; Ontario Arts Council; Toronto Arts Council; The City of Toronto; Destination Toronto; The Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario / Government of Canada; The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming through the Experience Ontario Grant; La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso; and all funders, donors, and program partners.

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### **Media Contacts**

For additional information, Libby Mark or Heather Meltzer at Bow Bridge Communications, LLC, Toronto and New York City; [info@bow-bridge.com](mailto:info@bow-bridge.com)

### **Photo Captions**

Kiri Dalena, *Erased Slogans*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist. (Original image from the Lopez Memorial Museum and Library Archives).

Buck Ellison, *Untitled (Winter)*, 2023. Courtesy of the Artist.

Natalie Hunter, *Peony for Mum*, From Series: Crystal Garden, Archival pigment prints on transparent film from 120mm negatives, 2023. Courtesy of the Artist.

Alanna Fields, *Close Your Eyes and Remember*, 2021, from the series *Mirages of Dreams Past*. Courtesy of the artist.

Cover image of *Flashpoint!* Edited by Russet Lederman and Olga Yatskevich (New York City: 10x10 Photobooks, 2024).

Sandra Brewster, *DENSE (detail)*, 2021–2022. Exhibition view: *By Way of Communion*, The Power Plant Contemporary Art. Acrylic, drawing and photo-based gel transfer on wall. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid.

Pınar Öğrenci, *Glück Auf in Germany*, Video Still, 2024. Courtesy of the Artist.

Rosalie Favell, *Tom*, 2016. From Series: *Facing the Camera*: NIGIG Residency Toronto 2016. Courtesy of the artist.

Alison Postma, *Guts*, From Series: *Tender to the Touch*, 2024. Digital Video, Courtesy of the Artist.

Christina Leslie, *Max, Shabazz, and the BK steps*, 2023. © Christina Leslie / courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

Steven Beckly, *Handy Work*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Daniel Faria Gallery.

Ella Morton, *Pack Ice #2*, 2024. Colour photograph with mordantage. Courtesy of the artist.