
Jackman Humanities Institute
Year in Review

24- 25

Undergrounds/Underworlds



The Jackman Humanities Institute acknowledges the sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates. Indigenous peoples have shaped its history for thousands of years. It is on this land that they have developed distinct languages, cultures, economies, and ways of life; and this land remains a sacred gathering place for many peoples of Turtle Island. It is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. This territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy of the Ojibway and allied nations to share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes peaceably. Today the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in this community, on this territory.

ON THE COVER
Beichen Zhang
*The sun rises, the Great Northern
Telegraphy Station sinks into the
sea: Balcony and Frogs* 2022
Print on rubber
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist



Annual Theme: Undergrounds/Underworlds

Undergrounds have figured powerfully in human histories and imaginations as places of alterity, concealment, exploration, and discovery; of fear, transition, transportation, and transmutation. They have also figured as spaces of hope, refuge, and fugitivity that weave into radical traditions and visions of the future. From the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, through the Greek *katabasis* and Dante, to crime rings and chthonic gods, infrastructures and escape routes, DJs and the Dark Web: our languages are fascinated with depth. But our surface worlds depend crucially on subterranean networks of extraction, exploitation, and disposal. Now more than ever, we need to understand the place of underworlds in human pasts, presents, and futures. What might a descent into the underworlds reveal?

Morphing Lands, Impalpable Currents

Presented by the Art Museum

Works by
Parastoo Anoushapour,
Faraz Anoushapour,
and Ryan Ferko
Alvin Luong
Sanaz Sohrabi
Beichen Zhang

Curated by Yantong Li

Imagine the underground as a rhizomatic commons that holds imperceptible nexuses within a fractured land of colonial extraction. The exercise collapses temporal and spatial distance, aligning apparently disjointed constellations of colonial and environmental discourses. From rare earth minerals to undersea infrastructures; from subterranean petroleum sites to suburban sewage holes, the morphing landscape of colonial extraction reveals amnesias of a past rendered invisible to optics, hidden underground and growing hauntingly present the deeper we move. Underground sites of extractive regimes bring into conversation the geophysical, geopolitical, and geological repercussions of neoliberalism, colonialism, militarism, and the climate crisis.



<https://artmuseum.utoronto.ca/exhibition/morphing-land-impalpable-currents/>

EXHIBITION

11 September 2024 – 30 June 2025

COSPONSORS

The Art Museum, University of Toronto
Canada Council for the Arts
Ontario Arts Council

We are grateful for the contributions of the Art Museum, both financial and in-kind, through the contribution of expertise, planning and implementation. The curator, Yantong Li, is a student in the MVS Curatorial Studies program at the John M. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, and he produced this show under the faculty supervision of Professor Barbara Fischer. The Art Museum team that made this exhibition possible, extending their normal frame of work, includes Noa Bronstein, Assistant Director; Marianne Rellin, Communications Coordinator; Daniel Hunt, Assistant Coordinator, Exhibitions and Projects; and Micah Donovan, Exhibitions and Projects Coordinator.

Director’s Message

Our 2024-25 Annual Theme, Undergrounds/Underworlds, proved remarkably coherent and resonant for our Circle of Fellows, enriching their individual research projects and our communal endeavours.



A timely Art Exhibit, “Morphing Land, Impalpable Currents,” hosted at the JHI in partnership with the U of T Art Museum, explored extraction processes in dialogue with fellows working on underground cities and subway systems, burial practices and metallurgy production. The enthusiasm and engagement of the Fellows drove an energetic, fast-paced year that everyone enjoyed.

A central focus of the past year has been to ensure the smooth operation of our communications platforms, which lie at the heart of our efforts to support humanities research at the University of Toronto. Of primary importance has been the coordination of our new podcast series with our longer-standing YouTube series. The first season of the JHI podcast (Humanities at Large) aired in the fall of 2024, hosted by the JHI’s 2020-21 New Media and Public Humanities postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Melissa Gismondi (currently with CBC Radio); while the fourth season of the JHI Alumni Research Lecture Series, curated by Communications Officer Sonja Johnston, arrived on our YouTube channel in the winter of 2025. Four of six episodes of the second season of the JHI podcast have already been recorded for broadcast next fall. This year JHI suspended our X account and opened a Bluesky account; we remain on Facebook, LinkedIn, and the JHI Website, where we post the Year in Review.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives remain central to our programming. In fall 2024, John Crutch, Indigenous Cultural Competency Training officer in the U of T Centre for Learning, Leadership & Culture, led two workshops on the journey toward reconciliation. Also in the fall, JHI Distinguished Visiting Fellow Katherine McKittrick (CRC in Black Studies, Queen’s University) presented a public lecture (our premiere public event), “A Smile Split by the Stars/On nourbeSe philip’s Revolutionary Intention” at Innis Town Hall and led a public workshop on “Black Geographies, Black Life, and Black Method.” In winter 2025, JHI hosted the Wiegand Memorial Foundation Lecture, “Music, Joy, and the Good Life” which was delivered by Daniel KL Chua, Chair Professor of Music at the University of Hong Kong, and recorded by CBC Radio for broadcast on *Ideas*. The winter semester concluded with two capstone events at the beginning and end of April 2025: JHI Faculty Research Fellow Tong Lam (UTM Historical Studies) delivered the

fourth annual JHI CBC Lecture, “Strange Love is in the Air,” also recorded for broadcast by CBC Radio: *Ideas*; and the JHI Working Group “Classics and the Black Atlantic” (co-organized by Letticia Cosbert-Miller and Kenny Yu, both Classics) hosted a public lecture by Emily Greenwood (Harvard), entitled “Odysseus at the Bag Check” (25/04/25), on the reception of Homer’s *Odyssey* in the racially diverse literary cultures of Turtle Island.

Our research programming continues to be engaging, innovative, and thought-provoking. JHI Research Officer, Dr. Amy Ratelle, has brought funding and research together in ways that support scholarship at all levels, from two one-week JHI Writing Retreats, featuring a daily series of curated writing sessions, in May 2025 to her annual grant-writing Boot Camp, convening weekly meetings over June and July. The 2024 Boot Camp saw a 60% success rate on the resulting 10 submitted IDG/IGs – a small but mighty sample of her work in support of humanities research.

The JHI’s legacy programs, the Program for the Arts and the Working Groups, engaged with thousands of researchers from across the University and beyond, creating spaces for conversations about the difficult and necessary questions of our moment: racist legacies, environmental changes, suppressed histories of violence, as well as for the new research approaches that these discussions are driving.

The Fellows engaged in a record number of extramural activities: tours of the Thomas Fisher Library of Rare Books, the Art Museum, the Doris McCarthy Gallery, the Map and Data Library, the mycology collection at the Royal Ontario Museum; along with walking tours of Toronto’s underground rivers, The Path, and the Necropolis; workshops on French publishing and making zines; a playreading, and multiple film screenings.

My thanks to all the staff at the JHI, for their efforts to support not only our residential Fellows but all the faculty members and students who participate in our programming across the tricampus, multidivisional University of Toronto. The JHI is lucky to have such a superb team!

Alison M. Keith

University Professor and Director,
Jackman Humanities Institute

Research
Highlights

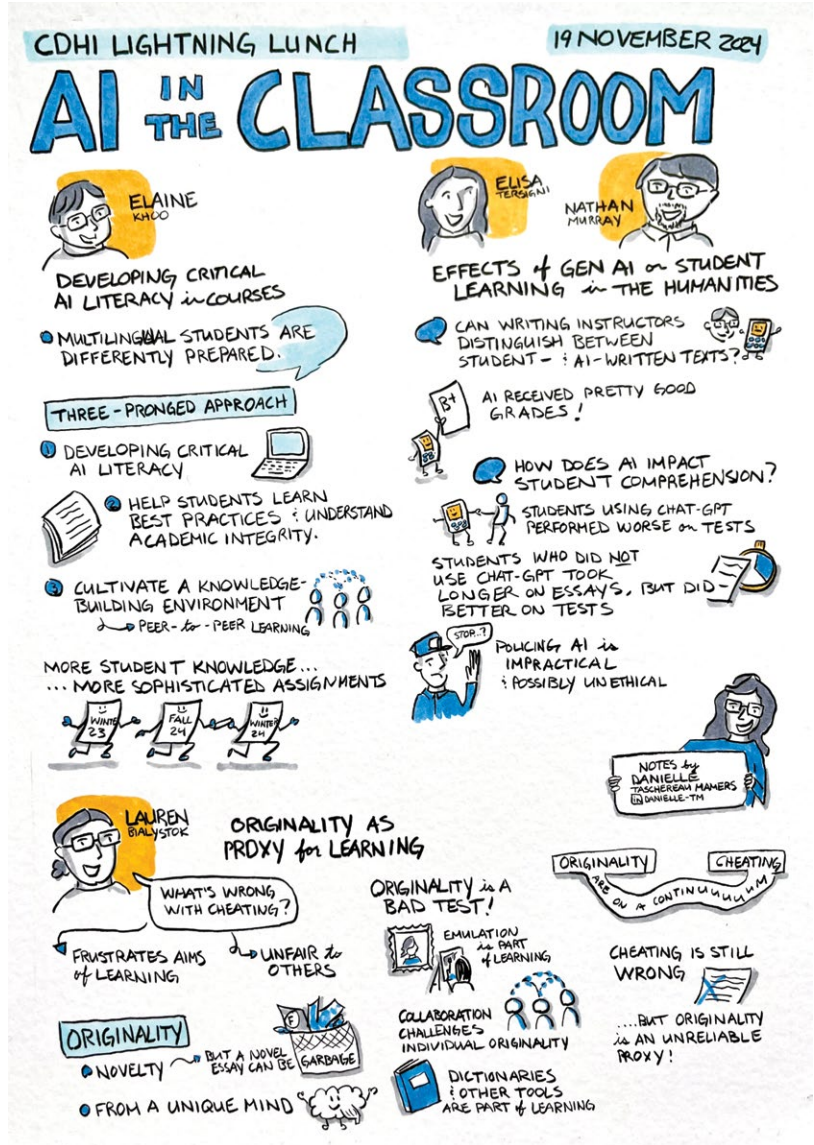


Alvin Luong
Hole Story 2019-2023
Video (still)
Courtesy of the artist

Critical Digital Humanities Initiative

Critical Digital Humanities is an emerging, intersectional field that emphasizes questions of power, social justice, and critical theory in making and analyzing digital technologies. This is a version of digital humanities that places anti-racist, decolonial, feminist, and queer/trans/non-binary work at its core, and which understands our current historic shift in digital technology as an opportunity for social and political transformation. Critical Digital Humanities foregrounds creative praxis, co-creation, public engagement, and community-based research. As critical digital humanities scholars, our grand challenge is to understand how digital technologies are reshaping the production and circulation of knowledge while, at the same time, to use these technologies—along with our training in questions of ethics, power, and inequality—to create a more equitable world.

Critical Digital Humanities Initiative



Sketch notes drawn by Danielle Taschereau-Mamers, November 2024 at the CDHI workshop on managing AI in the classroom. Courtesy of the artist.

CDHI is a diverse interdisciplinary network within and beyond U of T. For the past four years, the Critical Digital Humanities Initiative has enabled trans-disciplinary collaborations that emphasize questions of power, social justice, and critical theory in digital humanities research. By prioritizing diverse researchers and equitable access, our values-driven approach has resulted in 77% of our supported projects being led by women and BIPOC faculty, promoting queer, anti-racist, decolonial, and feminist perspectives.

CDHI has invested in shared research infrastructure to bring new research to life and to communities beyond U of T. We have developed a range of pathbreaking creative knowledge mobilization and digital research creation tools and training, including the UX Design for DH Accelerator and Digital Research Storytelling Workshop programs.

As of 1 July 2025, this tri-campus initiative will transition into a new home at UTSC. This marks an exciting new step in the longstanding collaboration between

CDHI and a range of UTSC campus partners and faculty. In collaboration with the UTSC's Office of the Vice-Principal Research & Innovation (OVPRI), UTSC Digital Scholarship Unit (DSU, housed in the UTSC Library's Department of Research and Digital Initiatives), and multidisciplinary pedagogical and praxis leaders at UTSC, this tri-campus initiative is deeply aligned with key strategic research priorities on the Scarborough campus, including UTSC Engage. The new office will continue to develop tri-campus infrastructure and knowledge mobilization methods for leading publicly-engaged, critical, and creative research in Digital Humanities.

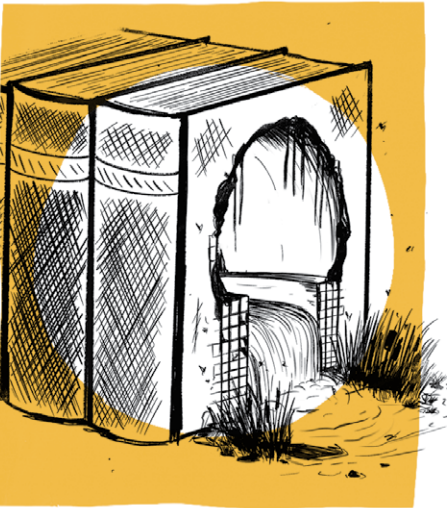
UTSC's Digital Scholarship Unit will integrate and evolve several flagship programs, including:

- Visiting Scholars
- Digital Research Storytelling Workshop (running at UTSC May-June 2025)
- An updated range of CDHI series including: Lightning Lunches, Praxis Workshops, Bi-Weekly Newsletter, and Annual Research Showcase
- Jackman Humanities Institute DH faculty Fellows (the UTSC/JHI DH Fellowship, featured below) and DH Postdoctoral Fellows
- Collaborative faculty research space
- New and renewed opportunities involving core facilities status and the Digital Scholarship Unit at the UTSC Library

CDHI has built vital infrastructure and community to support innovative digital humanities and digital research creation projects invested in social transformation. A needed incubator for innovative humanities research, CDHI has developed a shared resource of highly qualified personnel with the creative and technical capacity to bring research to an engaged public. We are excited to continue our work for the DH community, and to evolve new directions for Digital Humanities: at UTSC and across the tri-campus.

Scholars-in-Residence

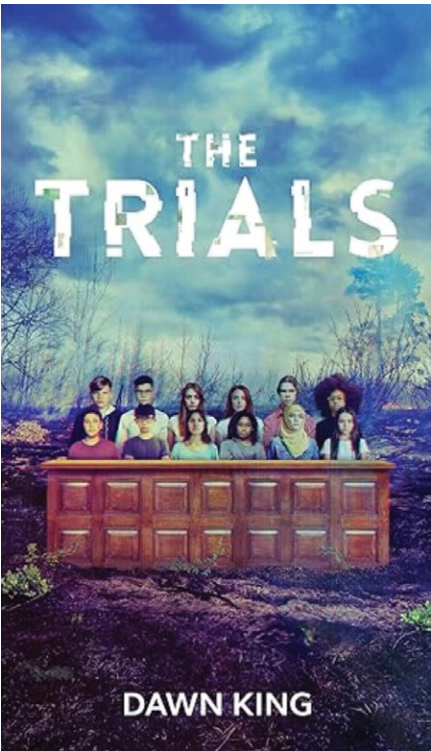
Jackman Scholars-in-Residence (SiR), a research community supported by the JHI, Victoria College, UTM, UTSC, Vice-Provost, Strategic Enrolment Management, VP–International, the Faculty of Arts and Science, Bader Philanthropies, and the Colleges of the University of Toronto, is an annual 4-week program in humanities and humanistic social science research. Upper-year undergraduates from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds work in 5-person teams on faculty-led research projects. Projects are hosted at all three U of T campuses (this year, 5 at UTM, 5 at UTSC, 14 at UTSG). In addition to 20 hours per week of Research Assistance work, students participate in multidisciplinary workshops on research methodologies and protocol, research roundtable sessions with University of Toronto faculty members, and community-building cultural excursions.



UTM Seminar
The Theatre of Science



Chantal Bilodeau play *Sila* in performance

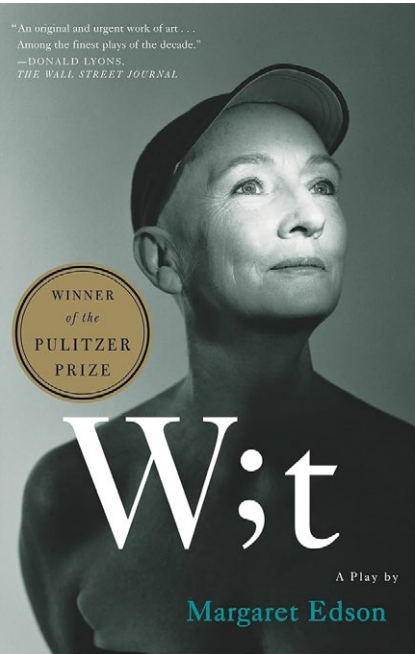


Dawn King *The Trials* cover image

Madeleine Mant (Anthropology)
Martin Revermann (Historical Studies)

The sciences need the theatre! Persuasive social theatre and performance techniques are crucial parts of scientific communication strategies. This need for self-theatricalization will only grow in the future, as the vast majority of ‘key sciences’ in the 21st century will be ‘embodied sciences’. This series examined some of the manifold ways in which sciences and theatre and performance art continue to interact by exploring key areas of contact between science/technology and theatre/performance: which sciences and scientists attract theatrical interest? Where and how does scientific knowledge begin and end? Who needs to know it? How can theatre and performance contribute to such reconceptualized scientific knowledge?

- This event series at the University of Toronto Mississauga undertook to address these questions from a series of evolving perspectives, bringing students, researchers, and community members together to read, watch, think, and talk.
- 20 September 2024: Theatre and the Environment: Lecture and workshop with Chantal Bilodeau
 - 4 October 2024: Theatre and the Environment: Dawn King’s *The Trials*
 - 8 November 2024: Medicine and Theatre: Margaret Edson’s *W;t*
 - 29 November 2024: Medicine and Theatre: Narrative Medicine Workshop
 - 17 January 2025: Mobility/Disability and Performance
 - 7 February 2025: Oppenheimer: Theatricalizing Physics and Physicists: *Dr. Atomic* and *Oppenheimer*
 - 7 March 2025: David Auburn’s *Proof*: Turning Math into Theatre
 - 21 March 2025: Indigenous Science: National Film Board’s North Star series organizers



Margaret Edson *W;t* cover image

Collaborative Curatorial Classrooms



Selfie by T.L. Cowan. Artwork by Tuula Lehtinen, “Et tiedä kuinka kaunis olet” / “Du vet inte hur vacker du är” / “You don’t know how beautiful you are”. Helsinki Art Museum, installed since 2015. Image circulated with permission of Tuula Lehtinen.

T.L. Cowan
UTSC/JHI Digital Humanities Faculty Fellow, 2024-2025

Collaborative Curatorial Classrooms is a curricular extension of the Cabaret Commons Exhibition Place (CCXP), an online research project for trans-feminist and queer materials of performance-based and other arts and activist practices. In this project I planned to bring together a 4th year undergraduate class, “Media and the Arts” at the University of Toronto Scarborough, and a Master’s class, “Digital Archives for Minoritized Materials” at the Faculty of Information in order to cultivate cross-level and cross-campus collaborations. Phases Two and Three will see students who want to continue this work join the Cabaret Commons team to further develop their exhibitions, and participate in the TADDA Research Symposium, a of scholars, artists, activists and curators from across the Hemispheric Americas in Fall 2025.

The emergence of readily-available GenAI has created an additional challenge for this kind of pedagogical work, and in Winter 2025, I focused on using Critical Digital Humanities pedagogies in my classrooms to co-develop student-faculty communities of practice in which we take seriously the importance of developing critical thinking, reading, writing, and presentation and conversation skills. The TADDA project is also co-researching the specific and urgent challenges that GenAI poses to the creation and circulation of minoritized materials in online research environments (ie: exhibit texts, images, alt text, audio description) in ways that do not evacuate the lived experiences of the people whose lives, memories and artefacts become the collections in our exhibitions. We understand the responsibilities of the researcher to maintain the integrity of situated and situation knowledges in our presentation of these materials.

Fellows



Sanaz Sohrabi
Future Relics 2021–ongoing
Digital collage, manual
superimposed inkjet
prints on matte paper
Size variable
Courtesy of the artist
Copyright BP plc,
BP International Limited
(for the original archives
used) and the artist.

Circle of Fellows Overview

The annual theme of Undergrounds/ Underworlds brought the 24-25 Circle of Fellows together in wonderful ways. Some approached it metaphorically, as political resistance, and some approached it literally, by way of cemeteries, fungi, natural processes of decay and human processes of extraction. The divisions collapsed as political and environmental undergrounds found their ways into each others’ explorations, creating a rich and often serendipitous intellectual environment. There were lots of extramural activities and the fellows’ enthusiasm and engagement drove an energetic, fast-paced year that everyone enjoyed.

Circle of Fellows

Distinguished Visiting Fellow Katherine McKittrick Black Studies, Queen’s University	Artist in Residence Tamara Abdul Hadi	Faculty Research Fellows Tong Lam Historical Studies Sarah Murray Classics Ato Kwamena Onoma Political Science Karina Vernon UTSC English	Doctoral Fellows Hassan Asif Information Alaa Mitwaly Anthropology Rhiannon Vogl Art History	Undergraduate Fellows Mitzi Badlis English/Sociology Ysabella Colwell English/Women & Gender Studies Jude Konyar Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations/History & Philosophy of Science & Technology Kaína Mendoza-Price Study of Religion/Latin American Studies Tiana Milacic English Ben Moriarty History/Cinema Studies
Distinguished Indigenous Faculty Fellow Aroha Harris History, University of Auckland	Visiting Public Humanities Faculty Fellow Julien Lefort-Favreau French/Cultural Studies, Queen’s University	Postdoctoral Fellows Chloe Bordewich History Francesca Econimo Classics Chris Miller Religion Cristiana Roffi Classics		



Katherine McKittrick

Professor and Canada Research Chair in Black Studies Queen’s University



A Smile Split by the Stars/On nourbeSe philip’s Revolutionary Intention

Katherine McKittrick researches in the areas of black studies, anti-colonial studies, the arts, and critical-creative methodologies. McKittrick’s research and writing centers black life—as empirical, experiential, spatial, and analytical processes—while also drawing attention to how black creative texts are expressive of anti-colonial politics. She is the author of *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, editor of *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, and co-editor (with Clyde Woods) of *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*. Her most recent work includes, *Dear Science and Other Stories*, *Trick Not Têlos* (in collaboration with Lyse Hébert, Liz Ikriko and Cristian Ordóñez), *20 Dreams* (with Cristian Ordóñez) and the tryptic honouring nourbeSe philip, *On the Declension of Beauty*. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

My two-week fellowship visit in Fall 2024 included two public presentations through JHI and in the University of Toronto Geography Department, a graduate seminar conversation, conversations and presentations by JHI fellows, field trips to museums, and more.

The high points and outcomes of my fellowship were threefold: First, the public presentations opened up a set of conversations with faculty, staff, and students at the University of Toronto that were new and renewed. Second, and related, my presentation on nourbeSe philip’s poem, “Meditations on the Declension of Beauty” has been circulated at King’s College, London, and reimagined as a public exhibition at Gallery 44 in Toronto. Finally, the learning opportunities offered by JHI were unmatched. Connecting with undergraduate students, graduate students, staff, and faculty, and being in conversation with them about their work and futures, was a major highlight. The JHI community was bright, curious, and generous—to foster these kinds of connections demonstrates the beauty of the JHI model, which works across small and large groups, offers quiet time, and encourages thematic connections that brings scholars from various backgrounds and fields together.

Aroha Harris

History University of Auckland Te Rarawa and Ngāpuhi iwi



The Future of History is Indigenous

It is difficult to isolate one or two high points from my JHI fellowship. It feels like the whole six months was a high point, from the administrative support before I even arrived, to the welcoming smiles of JHI staff, the camaraderie and intellectual stimulation of the Circle of Fellows, and the simple but vital act of dedicating time and space to my research. The degree of support built into the fellowship cannot be over-emphasized, and my entire experience at JHI was outstanding.

The academic energy of the circle of fellows, particularly as each of us shared something from our research at our weekly seminars, pushed me to explore areas of study I had not encountered before, at times leaving me with the feeling of being a fresh undergraduate again. I especially enjoyed the energy of the younger scholars who inspired me to step out of my comfort zone for my own presentation which conveyed an Indigenous/Māori worldview of what it means to belong to a place.

A centrepiece of my fellowship was *The Future of History is Indigenous*, a workshop convened for Indigenous historical scholars at Woodlands Cultural Centre on Haudenosaunee territory in Brantford, ON. Participants spent a day exploring the implications, possibilities, and limitations of Indigenous history writing and research being truly the future of History. Discussions spanned the conditions, policies, and process – particularly in universities – that support and impede the goals of Indigenous historical scholars; and strategies for strengthening Indigenous historical studies, with attention paid to developing ethical codes and standards grounded in Indigenous knowledge. With scholars joining from both sides of “the border” and across the Pacific Ocean, *The Future of History is Indigenous* was a dream event. Furthermore, those involved have kept up the momentum and look forward to another similar gathering in June, ahead of the annual meeting of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association in Oklahoma.

Julien Lefort-Favreau

French and Cultural Studies Queen’s University



Notes from the Underground: Invisibility and Bibliodiversity in the Publishing Industry

The spirit of collegiality, and the opportunity to learn new things every week during the fellows’ presentations: JHI is a wonderful place to develop one’s research in an ideal environment. I am grateful that my experience at JHI has been so transformative. My research projects focus on Canada’s book industry and ‘print nationalism’ – the interplay between publishing, cultural identities, languages, laws and regulations. Most of my work has involved exploring the history of the Coach House Books, a publishing house established just a few metres from the JHI on bpNichol Lane. I think it is worth pointing out that my residency enabled me to completely rethink the direction of my research and gave new impulsion to my work.

I spent most of my year doing fieldwork. This involved semi-formal interviews with publishers, visits to Toronto’s libraries and bookstores, meetings with colleagues from numerous departments at the University of Toronto, and weekly visits to archives (Fisher Library, Massey College Library, York University). My fellowship at Jackman was, therefore, an immersion in Toronto’s book culture, allowing a dialogue with some of the most interesting people in my field.

In March, I organized a workshop in collaboration with Claire Battershill (University of Toronto) on the state of book history in Canada from a translinguistic perspective. We were able to count on the presence of a dozen participants: undergraduates, graduate students and professors. During the year, I presented at several academic conferences, some others for the general public and book industry professionals, both in Canada and in Europe (Belgium, Netherlands), in French and English. I have also published an article in *The Conversation*. I have two scholarly articles in the works, to be submitted for publication in 2025, which deal directly with the results of my archival work. Finally, in late May, I signed a contract with Cambridge University Press for a small book on *Print Nationalisms in Canada* in the series Cambridge Elements (Publishing and Book Culture), forthcoming in 2026 or 2027. Thanks again to the JHI for providing a safe environment to think outside my usual paths!

Tamara Abdul Hadi



Re-Imagining Return to the Marshes

The Jackman Humanities Institute’s Artist in Residence fellowship offered me the privilege of time. It created room for slowness and intentionality—values that are foundational to my creative practice. Over the course of the year, I dedicated time and space to experimenting and delving further into my book project.

One of the highlights of my residency was teaching a senior research seminar that was very much in line with my practice and my research methods at the UTSC Department of Art, Culture and Media. The seminar investigated the links between colonialism and photojournalism, examining how visual narratives influenced and were influenced by colonial power dynamics. Another highlight was participating in “Cartographic Undergrounds, Cartographic Underworlds: How to Read a Map”. I leave this experience grateful not only for what I produced, but for some of the conversations that transpired, the people who inspired, and the generous space that held it all.

Tamara Abdul Hadi is an Iraqi photographer whose work is concerned with the historic and contemporary representation of her own culture, in its diversity. She has published and exhibited work across the Middle East, Europe, and North America. Her photography and commentary focus on the dispossessed and marginalized, the underside of Orientalist representations, the underground of settler societies, the underworld of war. She has photographed African asylum seekers in south Tel Aviv, the denizens of cemeteries in Cairo, the crumpled remains of weapons in Kurdistan, undocumented workers in Montreal, and barbershops in Gaza. Her first photobook, *Picture an Arab Man* (2023) re-imagines a much-maligned demographic through close, intimate portraits. She is a commentator on the ethics of photography, gender and masculinity, and the changing social and environmental landscapes of the Middle East.

During the year, Tamara was hosted by the University of Toronto Scarborough’s Department of Historical & Cultural Studies, taught in the Department of Arts, Culture and Media, and exhibited her work with the support of the Doris McCarthy Gallery.

Karina Vernon

English



Black Noise: Wayward Listening in the Black Prairies’ Sonic Archives

I arrived at the JHI hoping that the interdisciplinary composition of the Circle of Fellows would be productive for my similarly interdisciplinary project. I knew I didn’t yet have the vocabulary or methods I needed to effectively conceptualize my sonic prairie archive. I was not disappointed: the JHI proved to be an incredible research accelerator! Conversations with the fellows, staff, and guests—over lunch; in the kitchen; on walks—offered a continuous stream of fresh ideas, vocabularies and methods, and made my project bigger in scope and complexity. My project began as an archive of Black voyageur and cowboy songs, but became a multi-species archive including songs, seeds, and other-than human beings, one that goes beyond the prairies by following the thread of song to the US, the Caribbean, and Senegambia.

My project took on multi-media dimensions. Rhiannon Vogl brought an art history lens to my talk and suggested I conceptualize it as a public-facing installation. I am in the process of hiring an RA to help me develop the materials, and I plan to approach the Glenbow Museum and Archives (Calgary), the Dunlop Gallery (Regina) and the Rемаi (Saskatoon) to pitch an installation for 2027. Amy’s scholarly background in animal studies and her office library offered resources for thinking about human and other-than-human relations. Cristiana invited me to attend the Environmental Humanities conference, and thus to situate my work in this field formation. Chloe not only taught me to ask better questions, but she also inspired me to explore creative/critical forms of knowledge production. I took a trip to Alberta to drive 500 kilometers of the Cowboy Trail, from the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains west of Edmonton south to the foothills and ranch lands of southern Alberta. It was a stunning drive, one that inspired me to write poetry that I’m considering including in my manuscript. The guest I invited for my second presentation, Professor Larissa Lai, offered a rhetorical/ political trope, Black Lives Matter, that gives expression to my multi-species archive. In other words, I found exactly what I was searching for when I arrived at the Jackman.

The JHI is an interdisciplinary Humanities scholar’s dream come true. Thank you for spoiling us—not only with the excellent coffee and catering—but with the river of ideas that you help to sustain. My experience was exceedingly positive. I’ll treasure the friendships I made, and the time I had to follow my curiosity into underworld archives. One of the knock-on effects of the fellowship is that I recharged my batteries enough to say yes to chairing the Department of English at UTSC for a five-year term. In my new role I plan to implement some of the effective community-building strategies that I learned from the fellows and staff of the JHI during my time as a Faculty Fellow.



Karina Vernon selfie on the Cowboy Trail, Alberta, 2025

Christopher Miller

Religion



Re-Imagined Approaches to Going Underground: Green & Natural Burial in Canada

My project explores a range of questions: What types of eco-friendly alternatives to burial and cremation have been developed? Where in Canada are these practices available? Why are people drawn to these emergent death rituals? It also explores green burial against the backdrop of religious transformation. How do the shifting religious demographics of Canadian society impact the way that people approach and understand death?

My fellowship has afforded valuable time and support needed to conceptualize and conduct mixed-methods research. The early months of my fellowship were occupied with text analysis of digital materials including news articles about green burial and the websites of natural or hybrid cemeteries. This work illuminates the dominant motivations behind green burial, how organizations frame these practices, and how they are received by the broader public. My research also included mapping the terrain of available sites. How accessible is natural burial for people living in different parts of the country? Beyond full body burial, what other ‘eco-friendly’ options do cemeteries promote? How many of these sites are certified by the Green Burial Society of Canada? I used GIS technology to visualize where green burial exists and what types of services are offered.

My project also involved semi-structured interviews with over 60 individuals who are stakeholders in the green burial movement, representing a range of positions and identities including cemetery staff, funeral directors, members of advocacy organizations, and some who are interested in having a green burial for themselves. These conversations enriched my understanding of the motivations behind green burial and revealed the challenges to establish these practices and the complex internal organizational dynamics in this broad movement. I carried out field visits to seven natural or hybrid cemeteries in Ontario and British Columbia, and will visit another six in Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick before July. A particular highlight of my fieldwork was a visit to Salt Spring Island Natural Cemetery in BC. This 17-acre site located in a Coastal Douglas Fir forest is the only conservation burial ground in Canada, a form

of green burial which represents an even deeper commitment to principles of land restoration and conservation. These site visits have allowed me to collect photos and videos, which will help me to create vivid and engaging presentations of my work. More importantly, the chance to tread along pathways in these spaces provided a deeper appreciation for how people engage with green burial.

My fellowship has brought me into a vibrant community of thinkers. The weekly presentations from Fellows have allowed me to reflect on how my own work might be strengthened by engaging with theories, methods, and ideas from other fields and helped me to better understand how my research can be made more publicly-intelligible.



Salt Spring Island Natural Cemetery in British Columbia. Photo courtesy of Chris Miller, 2025.

Hassan Asif

Faculty of Information



Remixing Devotion: An Exploration of Digital Media Practices in Pakistan

I am deeply grateful for the wonderful experience I have had as a Graduate Fellow at the JHI this year. The Institute’s supportive environment, intellectual exchanges, and collaborative spirit have significantly advanced my research and enriched my understanding of interdisciplinary scholarship in the humanities. When I arrived at the JHI in September 2024, I had completed two chapters of my dissertation, which explores how religious media practices intersect with digital remix culture and cultural heritage preservation. Over the course of this fellowship, I wrote four additional chapters, bringing my dissertation to a total of six chapters. I am currently finalizing the minor revisions requested by my committee and expect to defend my dissertation in early fall 2025. Meanwhile, I am delighted to share that I will teach a new course during summer 2025 at the Faculty of Information, titled “Reimagining Global Copyright: Power Dynamics, Cultural Heritage, and the Global South.” This curriculum will integrate my research insights on remix culture, digital innovation, and ethical dimensions of intellectual property.

My experience at the JHI has been overwhelmingly positive, and I deeply appreciate the thoughtful support provided throughout the fellowship. In particular, the dedicated office space significantly enhanced my productivity, especially after my wife and I welcomed our first child in December 2024. Having nighttime access to this quiet workspace was invaluable, allowing me to effectively balance rigorous research demands with my new family responsibilities. The JHI’s formal Thursday lunches, informal hallway and office conversations with other fellows, and stimulating lectures have profoundly shaped my thinking this year. Engaging with scholars such as Tong Lam and Ato Onoma has encouraged me to explore new methodological frameworks. Jude Konyar’s research deepened my focus on right-wing subcultures and media production within online communities, significantly influencing my ongoing side projects. Katherine McKittrick left a lasting impression, particularly in her work’s analytical emphasis on how the earth itself can serve as an archive of colonial and postcolonial memory. The extracurricular

events—including the final Necropolis tour, the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library visit, ROM’s mycology collection, and walks exploring the Path and the city’s underground waterways—offered refreshing perspectives on how space, history, and culture converge in daily life Toronto. These experiences deepened my central argument that remix culture is rooted in the lived experiences of individuals who draw from diverse archives, both tangible and intangible. The presentations of the other fellows showcased innovative approaches from different academic disciplines; beyond substantive content, I learned from their creative presentation styles and refined my presentational aesthetics and methods in public talks.

My time at the JHI has been truly transformative, arguably the most rewarding year of my doctoral studies, both academically and personally. I am profoundly thankful for the unwavering support, vibrant exchanges, and collective vision that define this extraordinary community. Through the fellowship, I have grown as a scholar, deepened my commitment to interdisciplinary inquiry, and found renewed clarity in my research pursuits.

“Fundamentally, contact with all the other scholars opened me up to more interdisciplinary ways of thinking about my research.”

— Rhiannon Vogl, Graduate Fellow

Kaína Mendoza-Price

Study of Religion and Latin American Studies



Cosmovisions of a Travesti: Religious Expression Amongst Trans Women in Brazil’s Underworld

My research continued a longer project which makes visible trans and gender-nonconforming people in Afro-Diasporic religious spaces in the Black Atlantic, focusing on Brazil and Cuba. It is driven by the desire to make a forceful response to the extensive literature focusing on gender and sexuality in these ritualistic spaces that excludes the presence of trans folks. In a way, I am grateful that this space was left so open for me by those scholars who predate my own interventions, because I was able to address this topic in experimental and multidisciplinary ways, incorporating new media, critical geography studies, and archival studies into my work. I hope my work will encourage innovative interventions from the next generation of researchers.

JHI gave me meaningful levels of access to a series of events, presentations, and other opportunities which significantly enriched my work. The Cartographic Underworlds symposium created space for a collaborative effort to challenge the boundaries of what constitutes a map and to analyze its own epistemological framework; meeting Katherine McKittrick also felt like a tailor-made opportunity, given that both she and I have an extensive interest in Sylvia Wynter’s writings!

JHI is intentional about creating a space that fits a lot of interests and helps fellows to connect with one another in meaningful ways. Our disciplines and interests were varied, so I was always learning. My supervisor was a delight, but having access to a writing space and being able to strike up conversations with the other fellows had a real impact and added new depth to my research.

I plan to take my research back to Cuba and Brazil this summer to present it to the communities of trans practitioners with whom I worked with over the course of this year. As part of my work in Brazil, I put together a short documentary, and folks in Cuba now want to make their one of their own. My intention was always to think about how ethnography can work in service of a community who seek to speculate and create productions that allow them to tell their own story in their own words. Thank you, Jackman Humanities Institute, for making my final year of undergraduate study such an enriching experience.



Cecilia Amanayara Cruz dressed as a Pomba Gira in the JHI-supported short film “Pomba Gira Travesti,” which documents the relationships between a group of Trans Women and their female spirit guides in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil. 2024. Still from film, courtesy of Kaína Mendoza-Price.

Program for
the Arts



Alvin Luong
A Voluminous Crush 2021-2022
Photography printed on tarp
Courtesy of The Rockefeller
Foundation and the artist

Program for the Arts Overview

The 24-25 Program for the Arts supported nine events including three exhibitions of art, two performances, a symposium paired with a production of the Canadian Opera Company’s premiere of *La Reine Garçon*, two film screenings paired with discussions with the filmmakers, and an event series in partnership with the international doctoral cluster on Environmental Humanities. The scope of these events was wide: Black futurities, political caricatures, homoerotic tensions of nineteenth-century literature, gendered stresses of female rulership, gender violence in El Salvador and finally the environmental changes reflected in soils and waters. Each looked below a superficial narrative for a hidden, more truthful experience. This year’s events reached a total of 9,298 people.

Program for the Arts Featured Event

La Reine-garçon: Philosophy, Opera, and Gender



Nils Forsberg, *Dispute of Queen Cristina Vasa and René Descartes*, 1884.
Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

In January 2025, the Canadian Opera Company (COC) premiered the Canadian composer Julien Bilodeau’s new opera, *La Reine-garçon*, with a libretto by Michel Marc Bouchard. It focuses on Queen Christina of Sweden and her interactions with the philosopher René Descartes, whom she invited to Stockholm in late 1649. It portrays Christina as “torn between the masculine and the feminine, between faith and knowledge, between her love for a woman and the State which demands an heir”. She asks Descartes for counsel as she seeks to control her passions, given that his *Passions of the Soul* has just been published. He dies while in Stockholm, perhaps poisoned by courtiers out of concern that he was trying to convert Christina to Catholicism. She abdicates and converts in 1654.

Descartes framed his metaphysical views around a theory of substance that points to a concealed structure underneath and yet controlling our surface experience in the everyday world. As a dualist, Descartes thought there are two radically distinct kinds of entities in the underworld of substance: minds and bodies. The problem is how mind and body can interact: the underworld seems irremediably riven. The *Passions of the Soul* resolves this by arguing that emotions are mental states that have bodily manifestations. As *La Reine-garçon* illustrates operatically, the subterranean world of substance is reconciled through love. Timed to coincide with the premiere of *La Reine-garçon*, this symposium addressed the opera’s themes of philosophy and gender. The symposium opened with a panel on Christina and Descartes, from

ORGANIZERS

Donald Ainslie, Philosophy and Caryl Clark, Music

CO-SPONSORS

- Canadian Opera Company
- Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies
- Departments of French and Philosophy
- Faculty of Music
- University College

historical and philosophical perspectives. Our speakers, Marleen Rozemond (Philosophy) and Alison Smith (History) helped to ground the discussion by contextualizing the historical figures at the centre of the opera. The next panel considered how Christina has been represented in the arts over the years, especially in the 1933 film *Queen Christina*, featuring Greta Garbo. Alice Maurice (English) and Michael Slowik (Wesleyan University, Film) emphasized Garbo’s agency in the making of the film and the notable use of Garbo’s face in Rouben Mamoulian’s cinematography.

The afternoon sessions focused on opera. Jane Forner (Faculty of Music) and Aria Umezawa (Co-founder of Amplified Opera) explored how contemporary opera can deconstruct the gender stereotypes so prevalent in the canon. The next panel – perhaps the highlight of the day – was a conversation between Norbert Palej (Faculty of Music) and the composer, Julien Bilodeau, and librettist, Michel Marc Bouchard, of *La Reine-garçon*. The symposium closed with a panel featuring members of the Canadian Opera Company, including Angela Konrad, the director of *La Reine-garçon*, Johannes Debus, the Company’s music director, and several cast members.

Program for the Arts 2024-2025

EXHIBITION

Camille Turner: *Otherworld*
4 September 2024 – 22 March 2025

Otherworld was the first major solo museum exhibition by Camille Turner in Canada. It offered a mesmerizing journey transcending linear models of space-time. Recognizing historical silences, Turner’s Afronautic research methodology took audiences into the archive, tracing legacies of Canada’s enmeshment with the transatlantic slave trade. Utilizing Afrofuturism to reimagine the past, present, and liberated and whole futures, *Otherworld* explored the silences of Canada’s colonial past with particular focus on Newfoundland and Labrador’s social, economic, and geological entanglements with the Black Atlantic, including its connections to the transatlantic slave trade. The exhibition featured video, photography, installations and sonic environments that provided diverse visitors with a richly experiential environment from which to delve into buried archival materials and complex histories of violence and oppression but also of survival and resistance.

EVENT SERIES

Going to Ground: A Research-Creation Series Rooted in Environmental Humanities

Going to Ground enabled an innovative combination of scholarly exchange with creative-artistic activity and multiple opportunities for student and public engagement. We undertook this year of programming to amplify research-creative work of colleagues and grad students invested in exploring manifestations of undergrowth: these variously stemmed from materialities of ground, soil, vegetal life, and our modes/media of perceiving and knowing them—sensory (visual, auditory, tactile) or creative (in language, image, sound). They included underground movements, like guerrilla gardening and urban foraging or Indigen-ous land and food justice advocacy,



TOP: Camille Turner, *Afronautic Research Lab*, 2016–present. Installation view and performance at Art Museum, University of Toronto, 2016. Photography by Sandra Brewster. BOTTOM: Living Soil creative workshop, photo by Sherry Lee, 22 October 2024

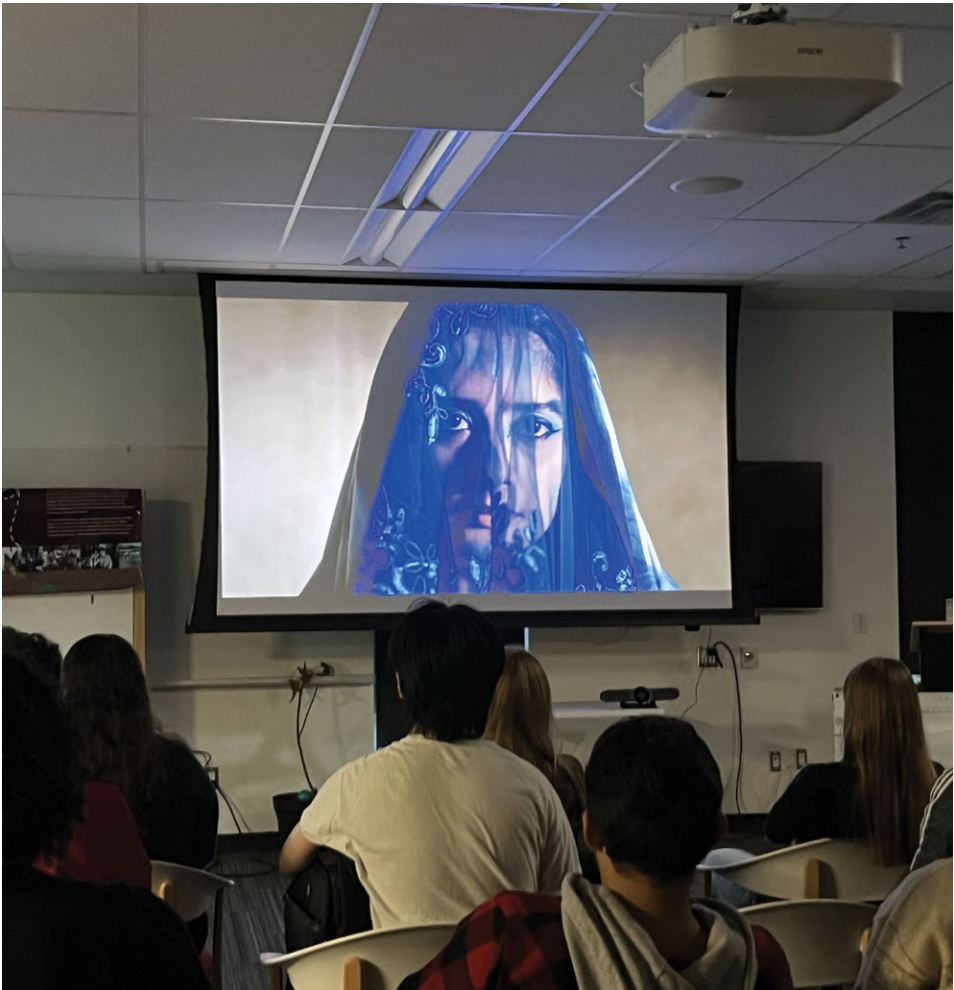
which are under-recognized, repressed, or willfully subversive. From September to June we participated in hybrid-format symposia and guest lectures, academic and creative workshops, planting and poetry sessions and narrative/sound walking. Finally, we commissioned an original artwork based on our work.

SCREENING WITH Q&A AND CONFERENCE

Fluid Medium / The Poetics of Water
3-5 October 2024

Jacquelyn Mill’s film, *Geographies of Solitude*, is an immersive ecological documentary on the Sable Islands and its watery ecologies, which documents the work of naturalist Zoe Lucas, making use of experimental practices and filmmaking processes that integrate the ecology into the film itself. Inspired by and contributing to the emerging field of Blue Humanities and its epistemological centering of water, this gathering approached water from

multiple perspectives and ways of knowing, disciplinary and methodological, examining its diverse affordances for thought. Participants included media theorists, scholars of literature and art (ancient and modern), religion and critical theory, cultural geographers, and poets. From their different disciplinary viewpoints, our participants asked how a “poetics” of water – the ways in which it has been imagined and represented, instrumentalized to practical or political ends – has contributed to our current ecological crisis and whether it might help us to formulate solutions and alternatives.



TOP: Jacquelyn Mills, *Geographies of Solitude* (still), 2022. BOTTOM: Audience watching Julio Lopez Fernandez’s 2023 film, *Añil / Indigo*. Photo by María Menedez, 2025.

SCREENINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Hidden Stories of Gendered Violence in the Salvadoran Civil War
4-8 October 2024

This event explored the experiences of women who endured sexual violence during the Salvadoran civil war (1980-1992), perpetrated by both state security and guerrilla forces. Featuring the first Canadian screening of *Añil* or “Indigo,” a 2023 documentary film that amplifies the voices of survivors and confronts the silence surrounding these atrocities, this documentary was a poignant reminder of the state’s failure to acknowledge and investigate these crimes even after 31 years. A metaphorical journey of song, dance, and theatrical performance, the film is outstanding for its poetic approach, deftly unearthing hidden realities of violence without succumbing to sensationalism or morbidity. Programming included a bilingual community screening and two on-campus screenings, each followed by a talk by Paula Cuellar Cuellar (History, UT-Dallas), whose research inspired the film. These were not only intellectual events—they were also affective spaces. Attendees from communities affected by war shared how the events echoed the lack of recognition of sexual violence in their own histories.



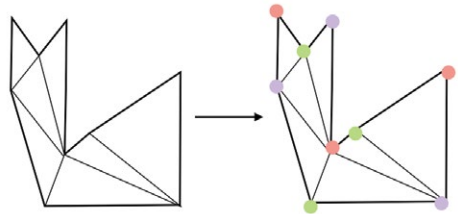
PERFORMANCE AND RESIDENCY

Melville and Hawthorne ReWritten
27 and 29 November 2024

The friendship between Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne is one of the most famous in American literature. Only eleven letters between the pair survive, all from a two-year period and all but one written by Melville to Hawthorne, but this correspondence has fueled discussion of their relationship since the Melville revival of the 1920s. *ReWritten* is an ongoing performance project conceived of by performer and educator Tom Truss (Nathaniel Hawthorne) and co-created

with collaborative dancemaker, writer, and artist educator Matthew Cumbie (Herman Melville) that weaves together dance, music, visual art, projection, and text, and reimagines a queer love story that extends the LGBTQ2A+ archive. The performance was integrated into a class taught by Melissa Gniadek (UTM English & Drama) in Fall 2024. Students read archival materials, participated in movement workshops, created an art installation, workshoped with the artists, were extensively engaged in the performance itself, and went on to produce research-creation projects. The connection of performance and pedagogy enriched everyone it touched and will contribute to future offerings.

LEFT: Tom Truss and Matthew Cumbie in performance at the University of Toronto Mississauga, 2025. Photo by Melissa Gniadek.
BELOW: Vector file, Wikimedia Commons



EXHIBITION

The Art Gallery Problem
8 January – 5 March 2025

The “art gallery problem” is a well-known math problem with a simple premise: what is the minimum number of guards or surveillance cameras necessary to observe an entire gallery? This exhibition appropriated the art gallery problem as a framework to consider how objects and bodies are put to work in galleries and museums. The “problem” is in fact not singular: there is more to the presentation of art than the securitization of objects; there are problems of narrative, representation, hegemony, and access to knowledge.

The art gallery problem asked: Do norms of exhibition and display serve audiences and galleries alike? What are the alternatives to reification, permanence, ownership, and surveillance? What are other ways for living with objects? Five events at UTM and one at the St. George campus took place in public spaces and mobilized new participants and audiences across the university. Tours tailored to course content were offered to 28 classes. The exhibition also included notable contributions from U of T faculty members Matt Nish-Lapidus and Sneha Mandhan (both Architecture), Robyn Maynard (Women & Gender Studies), and Naisargi N. Davé (Anthropology).

EXHIBITION AND ARTIST TALK

Cartoons from Accra: Memoirs of Politics and Activism from Ghana and Beyond
6-11 May 2025

Based in Accra, Bright Ackwerh creates cartoons that bring to the surface the unspoken and unseen worlds of post-colonial politics, activism and extractive capitalism in Ghana and beyond. Over the last 10 years, his political cartoons have documented the ways in which Ghana’s elite are involved in an extractive politics, Africa’s postcolonial ties with former US and European countries, the role of China in Africa, and various activist responses to these issues. Bright’s cartoons tell important stories that are either left out of state narratives or media agencies are too afraid to tell. Bright Ackwerh gave an online talk on 28 April titled “From Accra with Love Laughter” to contextualize the inspirations of his work.

PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP AND SYMPOSIUM

The Inkawu Project: Performing the Animal-Human Relationship in South Africa and Canada
1 June 2025

The relationship between humans and monkeys has been marked by centuries of dehumanizing representation: colonial anti-Black racial stereotyping weaponized analogies between humans and monkeys to justify physical and symbolic acts of violence and exclusion. In South Africa, “simianization” discourse is almost literally unspeakable. In many African histories, however, monkeys are cherished gods, protectors, and tricksters, as well as therianthropes, figures of the human becoming animal. How might the monkey’s example inspire us to re-signify its injurious appropriations? Artists and scholars in South Africa and Canada have begun to explore performance as a means to query, interrupt, and heal racist animal/human stereotyping and to recover the disavowed bonds between monkeys and humans.

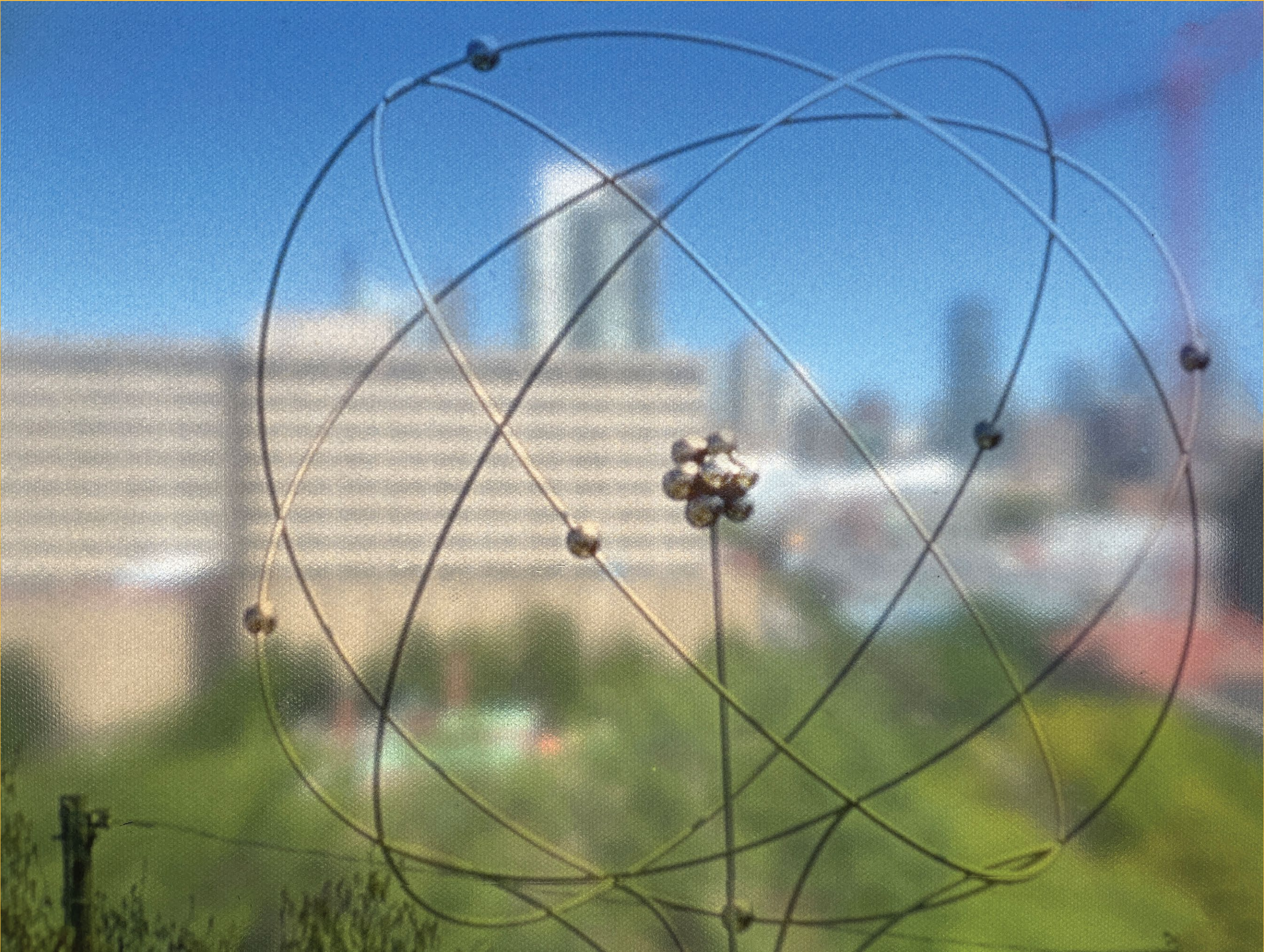
This project commissioned a new puppet play about humans, animals and



the experiences we have in common. It is a collaboration between the JHI, Indigenous-led Punctuate! Theatre in Edmonton, Johannesburg-based collective Noma Yini, and the Cape Town playwright Buhle Ngaba. The play-in-progress and its development were presented during the Fresh Ideas in Puppetry Festival on 1 June 2025 at the Helen Gardiner Phelan Playhouse.

TOP: Bright Ackwerh, *Journey to the East*, 2016. Courtesy of Bright Ackwerh. BOTTOM: Johannesburg-based theatre collective Noma Yini practices animal movement. Photo by Catalina Diaz, 2025. Used with permission.

**Working
Groups**



Parastoo Anoushahpour, Faraz Anoushahpour, and Ryan Ferko
Surface Rites 2021
16mm film still (detail)
Courtesy of the artists
Photograph in situ looking east through film applied to window at JHI by Kimberley Yates, 2025

Working Groups Overview

Working Groups bring faculty researchers and graduate students from multiple disciplines into conversation with each other, with scholars at other institutions, and with artists, advocates, and community experts. They are potent generators of collaborations, communities, and new questions. While a group may form around any subject, they tend to coalesce around topics that are under-researched, misunderstood, or in need of an update. They examine the things that scholars want to talk about in the moment, and thereby provide an interesting barometer of intellectual developments in motion. Working Groups germinate the seeds of larger endeavors that will blossom in the next few years.

Featured Working Group



LEADS
Letticia Cosbert Miller
Ph.D. student, Classics and
Kenneth Yu
Classics

LEFT: A montage of three of the ‘Fayum’ mummy portraits discovered in Egypt and dating from the Imperial Roman era. Wikimedia Commons CC share-alike licence.

Classics and the Black Atlantic

This group discussed texts which re-imagine, revise, and/or reject Classical themes and tropes, placing Black contemporary culture in relationship with an ancient tradition from which it has long been excluded. The title is intended to evoke Paul Gilroy’s definition of Blackness, which is not only African but simultaneously American, Caribbean, British, and its intersections by looking beyond the American context and towards the cultures and peoples which border the Atlantic Ocean. The intersection of Classics and Black Atlantic culture brings a new perspective to historical, methodological, and theoretical concerns across the humanities, such as anti/postcolonial strategies, legacies of imperialism and capitalism, and feminist intersectionality.

Our Working Group met once a month to consider the contributions of Black artists, writers, and theorists to the field of classics and its reception. These discussions took shape through guided discussions of primary texts, such as

Wole Soyinka’s *The Bacchae of Euripides*, coupled with scholarship that helps take us beyond the content of the text itself. This working group built on foundational works such as Emily Greenwood’s *Afro-Greeks*, and the edited volume *African Athena: New Agendas*, which examine the cultural encounters between Blackness and Classics from the sixteenth century onward.

The benefits of the working group were immense, particularly for scholars whose research interests fall outside of the traditional parameters of classical scholarship. As it turns out, there is an entire community of motivated scholars eager to engage in the reception of Classics in the Black Atlantic. This working group gave us the opportunity to converse with like-minded scholars from all over the university and broader intellectual community. A highlight was our final meeting which hosted Professor Emily Greenwood of Harvard University. As one of the world’s most prominent classicists, Professor Greenwood’s

groundbreaking contributions to the fields of Black Studies and Postcolonial Theory, vis-a-vis Classics, has informed not only the formation of this Working Group but much of its structure. We were thrilled and honoured to have her lead our final discussion, which considered the reverberations of Homer in Derek Walcott’s poetry. Professor Greenwood’s invitation to the working group evolved into the inaugural Arts & Science Lecture in Classics on 25 April 2025. Professor Greenwood’s lecture, “Odysseus at the Bag Check: Greek Myth and Immigration in Contemporary Poetry,” examined how contemporary poets (including Anthony V. Capildeo and Monica Youn) use the myth of Odysseus as a “container” for immigrant and refugee experience. Setting ancient and modern texts in a mutually-illuminating dialogue on questions of exile and identity, this lecture showed the value of classical antiquity as an “archive of meaning-making” and a resource for imagining alternative histories and identities.

Working Groups 2024-2025



Asexuality and Aromanticism Studies

Asexuality studies examines the social norms and cultural beliefs about sex, taking asexuality seriously as a sexual orientation, while also undertaking critical and structural analyses of asexual individuals or subjects and forces of non-consensual hypersexualization and desexualization. Aromanticism studies examines what Elizabeth Brake calls “amatonormativity”: “the assumptions that a central, exclusive, amorous relationship is normal for humans, in that it is a universally shared goal, and that such a relationship is normative, in that it should be aimed at in preference to other relationship types.” Ace and Aro studies provide critical tools to analyze the normative expectations that structure our society.

LEAD: **Liza Blake**, English & Drama

Emerging Interventions in Contemporary Chinese Studies

This group provided a community for scholars in China Studies, and at a time of political and academic urgency. We focused primarily on sharing works-in-progress by participants and on discussions of methodology, sources, themes and research questions. We will create a space from which to ask how as scholars we shape, question and engage larger, conflicting realms of public discourse and action defining China, expanding our session formats to include targeted reading group-style events, and our discussions around the changes in archives, methods and other urgent issues relevant to the field.

LEAD: **Anup Grewal**, Historical & Cultural Studies

Figural Analysis

This working group examined the method of figural analysis as a dynamic mode of interdisciplinary discourse and study. By reading theoretical works on the figural, we addressed the following questions: How does figural analysis differ from other models of aesthetic and historical inquiry? How does a figure change in going from painting to mechanical and digital reproductions?

And, ultimately, how does one practice figural analysis? To this last question, we hope that the eminent film scholar, Nicole Brenez, can serve as the model. She quotes a Gilles Deleuze line as the central principle of figural analysis: “experiment, never interpret.”

LEADS: **Thomas Quist**, Ph.D. candidate, Cinema Studies and **Elizabeth Wijaya**, Visual Studies

Hong Kong-Canada Connections

This group explored the multifaceted socio-cultural and historical experiences of Hong Kong immigrants to Canada. We focus on how different generations negotiate diverse cultural and historical positions in Canada. We adopted an interstitial approach, advocating for studies of Hong Kong that have open boundaries and are filled with messy and fragmented narratives. Our approach included examinations of cultural terms, their evolution over time, and the unique, intergenerational links between Hong Kong and Canada. The Hong Kong-Canada group also evaluated the complex and contradictory relationships with the existing disciplines of Hong Kong Studies and Chinese Canadian Studies.

LEADS: **Mitchell Ma**, Ph.D. cand., Anthropology, **Maria Lau**, Director, Canada-Hong Kong Library, **Chris Song**, Language Studies

Medieval World Drama

This group cold-reads dramatic works written before 1550 translated into modern English from around the world. After three years, we have a remarkable catalogue of translations of global premodern drama, including medieval plays originally written in French, Chinese, Spanish, and Arabic. This year we reviewed the “greatest hits” of the previous years to organize those translations into a public syllabus of medieval world drama. We also partnered with PLS (Poculi Ludique Societas) in a production of the York Plays medieval drama festival in June 2025. The year culminated in a practical workshop on body-based perception and performance skills adapted specifically to medieval performance practices.

LEAD: **Matthew Sergi**, English

Public Writing in the Humanities

This group provided a supportive and critical space for humanities scholars to write, read, and learn together about public writing. As academics pressured by the

demand for research productivity, there are very few opportunities to slow down and focus on one of the essential tools of our trade – good, engaging writing to communicate with a broader public. Our group carved out a space for sustained and supported writing to occur through workshops and regular writing sessions.

LEAD: **Christy Anderson**, Art History

Scribbling Academia: Comic Art and Theory

This group harnessed the collaborative potential between scholars and comic artists, transforming academic research into illustrated narratives. Our workshops fostered interdisciplinary dialogue, exchange of ideas and experimentation with storytelling techniques. Artists and academics reflect on their collaboration and discussed comic art’s potential for knowledge dissemination by exploring art forms such as illustration and digital art to visually articulate theoretical concepts. Participants created artwork such as collages, comics, and even dialogue. These

activities were platforms for interdisciplinary exchange, pushing the boundaries of academic discourse, enhancing accessibility to theory through hands-on experimentation. We created an intellectually stimulating environment where scholars and artists collaborated across the intersection of art and theory.

LEADS: **Maya El Helou**, Ph.D. student, Anthropology / Sexual Diversity Studies and **Amira Mittermaier**, Study of Religion



TOP: Ace Aro flag, Creative Commons
BOTTOM: Gérard Uféras, Gilles Deleuze with the mirrors ad infinitum, 1968.
© Gérard Uféras



TOP: Chloe Mason, Scribbling Academia 2024 – Ethnography Lab Room. Working group thinking through theory and objects to translate to visuals on theory.
BOTTOM: Bodleian Library MS.Bodl.264 f.129r, Romance of Alexander (detail). Illustration by Jehan de Grise, 1338-1410. Digital Bodleian, Creative Commons licence CC-BY-NC 4.0.

Theories and Praxis of Digital Labour

This working group was galvanized by the urgent need for new approaches to knowledge production, research methodology, and praxis to bridge the artificial division between academic labour and the world of (digital) labour. We revisited major theoretical breakthroughs from the past four decades related to digital capitalism, the (re)composition of the working class, the knowledge and creative economy, and the history of automation to connect theories with the praxis of digital labor by engaging with non-academic community members, such as worker-led collectives and artists. Through community engagement, we connected with the means of knowledge production and creative expression to identify viable ways for our research to make meaningful contributions to these communities.

LEAD: **Julie Yujie Chen**, Institute of Communication, Culture, Information & Technology

The Looting Lab

“Loot,” from the Hindustani lūt, means theft and banditry and also dispossession, destruction, and plunder. What do we learn when we study gallery and museum collections as “loot,” and how might this framework change the way that communities of origin, scholars, curators, and members of the public engage with cultural heritage? The Looting Lab is an interdisciplinary humanities research community based out of the University of Toronto Mississauga that is developing an innovative understanding of looted cultural heritage and its social, economic, and political underpinnings in response to the urgent need to re-evaluate cultural dispossession, loss, and restitution.

LEADS: **Isra Saymour**, Ph.D. candidate, Sociology and **Alexandra Gillespie**, English & Drama



TOP: Dessin Myles Hyman, in “Interview: Antonio Casilli : «Poster sur Facebook, c’est travailler. Comment nous rémunérer ?»” Libération, 11 September 2015. BOTTOM: Original artwork by working group members



The Other Sister: New Research on Non-Cloistered Religious Women

We examine women who live a vocation between the religious and secular spheres. Traditional historiography has accepted the cloistered nun as the archetypal expression of feminine religious devotion, but relegated the numerous women who lived as religious in the world to the margins. These women, who were known as house ascetics, beguines, penitents, bizzoche, and pinzochere (among other names), held a vital and vibrant role in their societies. This subject is global and transcends both temporal and confessional boundaries. We are working toward laying the framework for a new typology of women’s religious life.

LEAD: **Isabelle Cochelin**, History

Theorizing Scholar-Activism and Global Food Sovereignty

We are a transdisciplinary, internationally active team of food studies scholars, environmental historians, sociologists, literary practitioners, community advocates and public health specialists engaged in a variety of community-engaged research projects to theorize and support food sovereignty, food justice, and sustainability movement building with cross-sectoral practitioners and activists across local



TOP: Mary and other young women in the Temple (1325-1350), Johannes de Caulibus, Meditatione de la uita del nostro Signore Ihesu Christo, Paris, BnF, Ital 115, f.7v. BOTTOM: Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, October 2011. CC Share-alike non-commercial licence.

spaces and global networks. Our meetings this year examined Indigenous food in Mexico and local foraging, solidarity kitchens in Scarborough and Sao Paulo, projects in Global Asia and the Americas such as Chocosol Toronto; and food gardens, markets, and BIPOC small food enterprises.

LEAD: **Jayeeta Sharma**, Physical and Environmental Studies / School of the Environment

Looking Ahead

2025-2026 will be the eighteenth year of operations for the Jackman Humanities Institute. Our next theme, chosen almost three years ago, has turned out to be more fitting than it was ever intended to be. Dystopia and Trust will plumb both the depths and the heights of human capacity. Our fellows bring research that examines this theme all over the world and at important points in history. Indigenous writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s visit in January will be a highlight, as will the fellowships of Gina Starblanket (Indigenous Studies, University of Victoria), Audra Diptée (History, Carleton University), and Artist in Residence Eve Egoyan (pianist and composer). It is a privilege to gather their voices here for a year, and we look forward to cultivating their conversations and ideas.

JHI EXHIBITION OF ART
PROOF OF LIFE

CURATED BY
Chloe Gordon-Chow

EXHIBITION
10 September 2025 –
30 June 2026

Proof of Life explores material debris from the end of the world, considering the aftermath of our present-day ruin. Using archival matter and found or foraged objects, the artworks in the exhibition bear traces and remnants of our current world, speaking to a not-so-distant future. Featuring work by Ernesto Cabral de Luna, boring earth, Shannon Garden-Smith, and Jenine Marsh, the exhibition contends with “the end” not as a finite closure, but as a charged site of reimagining, reconfiguration, and becoming.

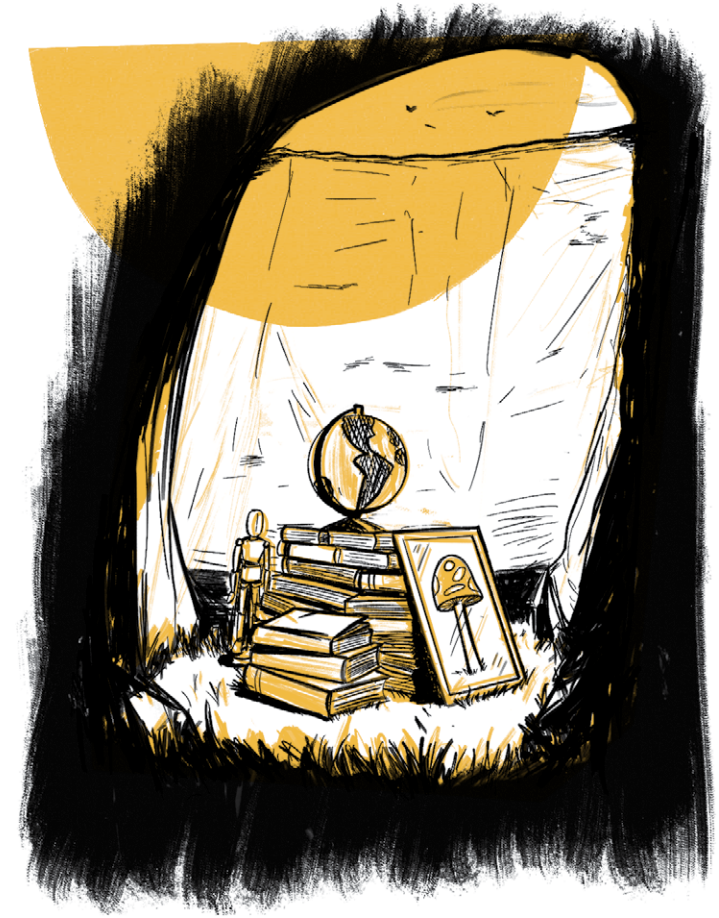
Annual Theme, 2025-2026
Dystopia and Trust

A new millennium, rapid advances in science and technology, and a new determination to fight social injustice could have encouraged dreams of utopia. Instead, as though from the predictable plot of some pulp sci-fi or true crime story, they seem to have delivered a nightmarish dystopia. Easy information has given way to facile misinformation, the promise of solidarity to faction and polarization, democracy to authoritarianism, supremacism, and the kleptocracy of the 1%. People all over the world have lost trust, not only in many major institutions of societies, but also in each other. Are these trends reversible? Can widespread political and social trust be achieved, within and across societies? If not, with what consequence? If so, how should the subjective, social scientific, and philosophical dimensions of our dystopia be analyzed and re-imagined? What possible utopia has our dystopia, if it is one, betrayed?



Ernesto Cabral de Luna
La Vida en Tres Quebradas / Trocitos de Memoria 2025
Wooden Plinth, light table, emulsion lifts onto various pieces
of broken coloured glass, shattered windshield

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The University of Toronto gratefully acknowledges the longstanding generosity of the Honourable Henry N.R. Jackman.

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