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## Toronto Biennial takes waterways as inspiration for its fourth edition

Opening in September, the exhibition will feature works by 30 artists including Kent Monkman, Rebecca Belmore and Coco Fusco

**Larry Humber**

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The [Toronto Biennial of Art](#) (TBA) will return this autumn for its fourth iteration, *Things Fall Apart* (26 September-20 December), with works by 30 artists and collectives from around the world—17 of them new commissions. And for the first time this year, the biennial is expanding beyond Toronto.

Among the artists whose work will be featured this year are [Kent Monkman](#), Rebecca Belmore, Bonnie Devine, [Dawoud Bey](#), [Coco Fusco](#), Nani Chacon, Julien Creuzet, Brendan Fernandes, Dala Nasser, Antonio Obá, Solange Pessoa, Dawit L. Petros and Charisse Pearlina Weston.

"We are living in a moment of intense rupture, and this title encompasses both the historical usage of this phrase and the contemporary moment," Allison Glenn, the biennial's curator, tells *The Art Newspaper*, "learning from artists who explore rupture as an ontological tool, or way of understanding. Many of them are making work at an extremely difficult time, during wars and escalating conflicts in their home countries, including Lebanon and Iran."

Glenn hails from Detroit, only a couple hours' drive west of Toronto across the US border. The two cities are linked in many ways, perhaps most notably by their location on the Great Lakes. Detroit is close to Lake Erie, and Toronto sits on the northwestern shore of Lake Ontario. As a result, water once again figures prominently in the biennial.

Glenn calls the biennial "an invitation to view the Great Lakes, and global waterways, as a confluence". She says she was initially inspired by the Great Loop—a 6,000-mile system of waterways that encircles the eastern portion of the US and part of Canada via the Great Lakes, Mississippi River, through the Gulf of Mexico and along the Atlantic coast.

"Growing up in nearby Detroit deeply informed my understanding of how water, as both a physical resource and a historical witness, connects distant geographies through shared, fluid systems," she adds, noting that the biennial has sought to expand its international footprint via "a cohort of artists and collaborators whose work is profoundly site-responsive, connecting to histories and moments of rupture across vast waterways".

This marks the first year TBA will extend beyond the Greater Toronto Area, which itself is quite expansive. “We are proud to facilitate dialogue at a time when so much feels uncertain,” TBA director Patrizia Libralato said in a statement, “reaffirming our shared commitment to access, cultural vitality and a recognition that contemporary art is not peripheral to public life but central to it.”

As in the past, the bulk of TBA will take place at cultural institutions, public spaces and non-traditional sites throughout Toronto. The main exhibition will be at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, with programming also scheduled for the [Royal Ontario Museum](#), [Aga Khan Museum](#) and [Art Gallery of Ontario](#), among many other spaces. Even the Toronto Pearson Airport will take part, as will Scarborough Gurdwara, a Sikh place of worship dating from 1979.

Beyond Toronto, programming partners include the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Halifax, the Musée des Beaux-arts de Montréal, Saskatoon’s Remai Modern, the University of Victoria and the [Vancouver Art Gallery](#). Across the border in the US, Alaska’s Anchorage Museum is also taking part. And in New York City, [Times Square Arts’](#) Midnight Moment programme will turn the famed tourist spot into a splashy, open-air showcase for TBA artists every evening.

“We are still a young biennial but came out of the gates in 2019 very strong with worldwide attention for the model we created,” Libralato says. “We could never be a Venice, but we can strive to keep leading something important and impactful in Toronto that continues to grow its reach while staying rooted in local contexts.” (She does note, however, that five of the 2026 TBA participants are involved in [this year’s Venice Biennale](#).)