

FEATURES



# 5 Shows to See at the Scotiabank Contact Photography Festival

Various locations, Toronto, May 1 to 30, 2015

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BY CANADIAN ART



Jimmy Limit, *Bottles with Sea Sponge and Pink (Ambiguity, Anxiety, Arrangement, Balance, Citrus, Commerce, Exotic, Fresh, Healthy, History, Hope, Isolation, Lifestyle, Malleability, Memory, Natural, Prosperity, Support, Ubiquity, Urban, Yellow)*, 2014. Courtesy Clint Roenisch Gallery.

The 2015 [Scotiabank Contact Photography Festival](#) launches across Toronto tomorrow with exhibitions at more than 175 venues. Here are five projects that the *Canadian Art* team will be visiting.

## Vanley Burke, "Watchers, Seekers, Keepers" at Black Artists' Networks in Dialogue Gallery

Contemporary photography spends so much time pushing against its indexical function that it's easy to forget the weight and value of documentary images. Vanley Burke's work will make you remember. As a black immigrant to England during the 1960s, Burke began documenting the diasporic experience throughout Britain during the following decades. If photographs by Gordon Parks have become synonymous with civil rights-era America, Burke's work should come to mind as images of a similar struggle. All things are not equal, though, and the struggles of the black community in Britain are frequently forgotten, and

rarely given the same level of attention as their American equivalents—that this exhibition is Burke's first in Canada offers a case in point. Consider ["Watchers, Seekers, Keepers,"](#) curated by Marlene Smith and co-presented by BAND and the Room Next to Mine, an antidote to this amnesia. Runs from April 30 to May 31.

## Jimmy Limit, Susana Reisman, PUTPUT and Takashi Suzuki, "Productive Displacement" at various locations across Canada

[This public project](#) is the most extensive of this year's Contact programming, geographically speaking. It will mount a takeover of multiple billboards in eight cities across Canada, replacing ads with photo-based works that mock the conventions of advertising. Among the selection of works will be Jimmy Limit's hyper-saturated still lifes of surrealist arrangements of household products and foods, and Susana Reisman's clean, chic images of domestic items fit for inclusion in a Muji catalogue. Also featured will be equally punchy images from Tokyo's Takashi Suzuki and Copenhagen-based artist duo PUTPUT. These artists are variously engaging with formal play and experimental techniques, but the particular billboard display will surely bring into high relief the codes of photographic genres—and how they function to fetishize objects, represent a lifestyle and elicit desire through the consuming eye. Runs from May 1 to 31.

## Chih-Chien Wang, "A Person Who Disappears" at the Art Gallery of Mississauga

Before leaving Taiwan for Canada, now Montreal-based photographer Chih-Chien Wang worked as a filmmaker of television documentaries. Like the establishing shot in documentary film, Wang's photographs—mostly of objects and places—capture quiet, discreet moments that seem about to dissolve into some larger story. Wang's AGM show, "A Person Who Disappears," finds its starting point in a news story of a woman and child who boarded an elevator and were never seen again. [The show's photographic installation](#) will examine some larger questions behind the mysterious disappearance: how does the self relate to its environment, and can one attain true absence in society? If his previous work is anything to go by, expect Wang's installation to toy with physical orientation and proffer multiple points of perception, eluding fixity with a subtle hand. Runs from April 30 to June 21.

## Public Studio, "The Accelerators" at O'Born Contemporary

Toronto artist collective Public Studio (Elle Flanders and Tamira Sawatzky) are notable for their au courant engagement with fraught global issues such as political strife and surveillance culture. Their projects often take on these issues in creative ways that generate active engagement. Last year, at an artist residency at ARTPORT TelAviv, the duo's project *Visit Palestine: Change Your View* set up a "travel agency" in Jaffa to stir discussion among Israelis on everyday conditions in Palestine. Their [latest project at O'Born Contemporary](#), *The Accelerators*, is less pointed at a particular issue, but should be equally generative. The project presents pairings of found images to stir associations: the Kouachi brothers, who attacked the *Charlie Hebdo* offices, with *The Battle of Algiers* filmmaker Gillo Pontecorvo; the French Revolution with the Toronto Purchase; Marie Antoinette's porcelain bowl with its

reproduction in a 2014 *T Magazine*. With its mashing of chronologies and genres, it should be a show that highlights the restlessness of photographic images. Runs from May 1 to June 27.

## Colin Miner, "What is to be done (available light)" at Album Gallery

Colin Miner offers a meta take on photography in "[What is to be done \(available light\)](#)," which takes photographic manuals dating from the 1980s to the present day as its source material, reordering and representing the encyclopaedic nature of the manuals. There's a collage-like feel to the monochromatic pieces, which offer a collapsing approach to photography: images of images, reflections on reflections. It seems appropriate to nod to the strictures and limits of photography itself, given the festival's focus on the medium. Runs May 1 to 29.