

September 15, 2020

Explore the history and resonance of Black Canadian dance at the Mitchell Art Gallery

It's About Time: Dancing Black in Canada 1900 – 1970 and Now curator Seika Boye illuminates the largely undocumented dance history of Canada's Black population before 1970. Boye has invited Alberta-born or based contemporary performing and visual artists to contribute perspectives on what the history of Black people dancing in Canada reveals about our contemporary moment.

"This is such a timely, important project for us to both grapple with history and to celebrate the brilliance of Black artists, past and present," says Carolyn Jervis, curator of the Mitchell Art Gallery. "The artworks and reflections Boye has commissioned give us a chance to see the legacy left by Black social and professional dance through the eyes and experiences of Black dancers and artists in Alberta."

The archival components of the exhibition expose the representation of Blackness on Canadian stages, as well as audience and media reception of Black performance in Canada during this era. *It's About Time* also explores legislation of leisure culture, dance lessons and the role of social dances at the time.

"If we want to think deeply, develop knowledge, and honour the history of Black people in Canada we must consider how dancing helps us to understand that history," says exhibition curator Seika Boye. "We must ask: what is revealed when dancing is at the centre of our questioning."

The archival collection and newly commissioned works will be on display in the Mitchell Art Gallery September 15 - December 5, 2020. The Mitchell Art Gallery will be open to the public and is following all COVID-related provincial health guidelines.

The MAG will be hosting talks online with the dancers, artists and scholars throughout the exhibition:

September 23, 6 p.m.

Ashley Colours Perez and Adriana Contreras.

Adriana used graphic recording to translate the oral history of Ashley, a dancer originally from Calgary, into a visual form. Ashley will talk about her experiences as a black dancer in Canada and the two will discuss the process of working together.

October 21, 6 p.m.

Curator Seika Boye will be in conversation with local visual artists Braxton Garneau and Preston Pavlis, who both were commissioned to create works in response to archival objects in the collection that will be on display.

November 18, 6 p.m.

Mpoe Mogale, a local dancer, in conversation with scholar Cheryl Thompson about the black beauty industry.

December 2, 6 p.m.

Michèle Moss and Cheryl Fogo.

Michele co-founded Decidedly Jazz Danceworks in Calgary and took lessons at a Black cultural centre in Toronto when she was young.

Cheryl is a Calgary-based writer and historian who can speak to family experiences in Alberta and social dance.