

Gardiner Museum unveils new public sculpture by Toronto artist Shary Boyle

9-foot-tall vessel by renowned ceramist now sits on Queen's Park

Toronto—The Gardiner Museum has revealed a new monumental ceramic sculpture by acclaimed Toronto-based artist Shary Boyle. The 9-foot-tall sculpture, entitled *Cracked Wheat*, now sits in front of the Museum on Queen's Park—a voluptuous cartoon figure to compliment the squat silhouette of the Jun Kaneko “head”, a fixture on the Gardiner Plaza since 2013.

Mounted on larger-than-life childlike legs, the polished bronze and white clay of Boyle's sculpture reimagines the 18th-century European decorative tradition of ormolu. A map of gold painted cracks between 220 unique porcelain “shards” pays homage to the reinvigorated 16th-century Japanese tradition of Kintsugi, which celebrates breakage and repair as part of an object's history.

Boyle's sculpture is decorated with a vintage “Canadian Wheat” pattern, which was internationally mass-produced in the 1960s as common, affordable tableware.

“*Cracked Wheat* playfully dares us to confront our complicated relationship to vulnerability, value, and colonialism,” said Boyle.

“This new work by Shary Boyle is a testament to the versatility and potential of clay on a grand scale, and a gift to the people of Toronto by one of Canada's most important contemporary artists. It's also a wonderful expression of the Gardiner's commitment to improving access and deepening public engagement with clay,” said Kelvin Browne, Executive Director and CEO of the Gardiner Museum.

The Gardiner is currently in the midst of a major renovation on its front entrance, slated to reopen this fall as the Linda Frum and Howard Sokolowski Plaza. The project includes the replacement of the front steps with concrete and local stone, the repositioning of the accessibility ramp to a more visible location on Queen's Park, improved lighting, and an expansion of the garden designed by Neil Turnbull Ltd.

Boyle's design was selected by a five-person jury consisting of artist and novelist, Douglas Coupland; Director of the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Gaëtane Verna; Associate Dean of OCAD University, Michael Prokopow, former Gardiner Chief Curator, Meredith Chilton; and Kelvin Browne, culminating the Gardiner Museum's Ceramic Sculpture Competition launched in 2016.

“Whether its purpose is to delight, inspire, or promote discussion, public art has the ability to enrich an entire community,” said philanthropist Emmanuelle Gattuso, who commissioned the sculpture.

Cracked Wheat was unveiled in front of the Museum on August 29.

Shary Boyle represented Canada at the Venice Biennale in 2013, and has held solo exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Ontario, The Power Plant, the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver, and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. Her work has been featured in numerous group shows, including at the Gardiner Museum, the National Gallery of Canada, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montreal, the Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale in South Korea, MASS MoCA, and Cité de la céramique Sèvres in France.

The Gardiner is grateful to La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso for commissioning the artwork and to the City of Toronto and Jane Perdue for their support of the Gardiner Museum Ceramic Sculpture Competition. The Museum would also like to recognize Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam and Emmanuelle Gattuso, in particular, for their leadership.

ABOUT THE GARDINER MUSEUM

The Gardiner Museum celebrates the art of ceramics and engages local and international audiences by promoting understanding of the long history of people crafting in clay. The Museum stewards a highly important collection, connecting visitors to the fundamental role of ceramics in many cultures throughout history, and offers special temporary displays, many highlighting the relevancy of ceramics to contemporary life.

The permanent collection comprises approximately 4,000 objects, and focuses on specific areas which have been collected in depth. These include the most important collection of European porcelain in Canada, with particular strengths in Meissen, Vienna, and Hausmaler decorated porcelain, as well as a comprehensive collection of figures inspired by the commedia dell'arte. The Gardiner holds the best collection of Italian Renaissance maiolica in Canada, and a superb collection of English tin-glazed pottery. It preserves highly significant collections of ceramics from the Ancient Americas, Chinese blue and white porcelain, Japanese porcelain, and contemporary Canadian ceramics. The Gardiner is among the few museums in the world focused on ceramics, and is one of the most important specialty museums internationally.

The Gardiner strives at all times to provide goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We are committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access and benefit from our services in the same place and in a similar way as other customers whenever possible.

For more information, please visit: gardinermuseum.com.

Media Contact:

Rachel Weiner
Senior Manager, Marketing
Gardiner Museum
416.408.5062
rachelw@gardinermuseum.com

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La Fondation
Emmanuelle Gattuso

