

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, February 26, 2021

Suzy Lake: Life & Work
The new ACI book by Erin Silver

The mother of Canadian art activism, **Suzy Lake (b.1947)** was decades ahead of her time. Using her camera as a tool and herself as a model she has investigated issues of identity, gender, beauty, and aging—changing the course of art history in the process. ***Suzy Lake: Life & Work*** is part of the Art Canada Institute’s mission to provide free online educational resources honouring and exploring the work and creativity of those who have shaped and defined this country’s cultural landscape.



Left to right: *Miss Chatelaine*, 1973; *Performing Haute Couture #1*, 2014; *Choreographed Puppet #3*, 1976/1977. All works by Suzy Lake.

February 26, 2021, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE— The Art Canada Institute (ACI) is proud to launch ***Suzy Lake: Life & Work*** by Erin Silver, chronicling the iconic visual artist’s journey over her 50-year career that has made her one of the world’s most important image makers.

Decades before “the selfie” sparked a cultural revolution, Lake rose to prominence by focusing her camera on herself and using it as a tool to investigate how images are at the core of our identity. Through her compelling works utilizing cutting-edge photography, performance, role-play, and technology, Lake fearlessly drew attention to body-politics, gender, Indigenous land-claims issues, and ideas of beauty and ageing, earning a well-deserved reputation for creating subversive art.

“Lake’s concepts were often so far ahead of her time that it has taken the art world nearly 20 years to catch up to her work,” says Erin Silver, the book’s author.

Lake is renowned for her artful rejections of the social establishment, and her mode of resistance was shaped in early experiences. Detroit-born, Lake became immersed in political activism from a young age during the U.S. civil-rights movement before immigrating to Montreal in 1968, importing her activist-energy to its thriving art scene. Starting in 1970, Lake utilized her own body as the site for her work,

delivering powerful critiques on a range of contemporary subjects, including the portrayal of women by the fashion industry (*On Stage*, 1972–74), and in media and advertising (*Miss Chatelaine*, 1973).

“Through innovations in her approach and in her teaching, she influenced other artists—including legendary American photographer Cindy Sherman, as well as younger generations—to do the same,” says Sara Angel, the Founder and Executive Director of the Art Canada Institute.

Eventually settling in Toronto, Lake evolved into an influential instructor and mentor, while continuing to stun the Canadian art world with ground-breaking exhibitions and performances, including insightful examinations of social and political issues: a series dedicated to an Indigenous land claims dispute in Ontario (*Authority is an Attribute ... part 2*, 1989–91); and mediations on the ageing body (*Forever Young*, 2000), long before DOVE released its famous “Real Beauty” ad campaign.

Widely recognized as one of the first women to use photography and performance to address the politics of gender, Lake’s work has been lauded globally and at home in Canada. In 2016, she earned a Governor General’s Award in Visual and Media Arts, and later that year when Lake received the Scotiabank Photography Award, its judge and jury chair, Edward Burtynsky, stated: “Her influence has spread throughout several generations of artists, both nationally and internationally.”

Suzy Lake: Life & Work is the 45th edition in ACI’s landmark Canadian online art book project, and honours Lake as one of the world’s most prominent photo-based practitioners, for having impact and influence on a new generation of artists, especially those performing in front of the camera, and as a Canadian trailblazer in activist-art.

To explore the Art Canada Institute’s free digital book **Suzy Lake: Life & Work** by Erin Silver, please visit: <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/suzy-lake>

For **media requests** or for **interviews with**:

- **Erin Silver**, author of **Suzy Lake: Life & Work**
- Multi-award-winning visual artist **Suzy Lake**
- **Sara Angel**, Executive Director, **Art Canada Institute**

please contact: media@aci-iac.ca

For images cleared for copyright and image credits, please see the gallery on the following page.

About Erin Silver

Erin Silver is assistant professor in the Department of Art History, Visual Art & Theory at the University of British Columbia. A historian and curator of queer and feminist art, visual culture, performance, and activism, she earned her PhD in Art History and Gender and Women’s Studies from McGill University in 2013. Silver’s writing has appeared in *C Magazine*, *CAA Reviews*, *Canadian Art*, *Ciel Variable*, *Prefix Photo*, *Fuse Magazine*, *Momus*, *Performance Matters*, and *Visual Resources*, and in various exhibition catalogues in the area of Canadian photography and queer and feminist art. She is the co-editor of *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories* and an editor for *RACAR (Revue d’art canadienne / Canadian Art Review)*.

About the Art Canada Institute

The Art Canada Institute is the only national institution whose mandate is to promote the study of an inclusive, multi-vocal Canadian art history to as broad an audience as possible, on a digital platform, and free of charge in both English and French, across Canada and internationally. To accomplish this, ACI

works with Canada's leading cultural institutions, art historians, curators, and visual culture experts, and is dedicated to the creation of authoritative original content on the people, themes, and topics that have defined Canadian art history.

Suzy Lake: Life & Work forwards ACI's mission to create a central digital resource to share Canada's most important artists, and works of art, with the world. ACI is an indispensable resource for exploring and learning about Canada's visual arts heritage. To date, ACI has published 45 expert-authored digital books that are available free of charge. As well, the Art Canada Institute has recently developed Canada's only comprehensive art education guides for teachers and students from kindergarten to grade 12 — content that is also free and available online and serves over 700,000 educators.

To learn more about ACI and to access our free digital library, please visit us!

aci-iac.ca

IMAGES

Download image files here: <http://bit.ly/suzy-lake>

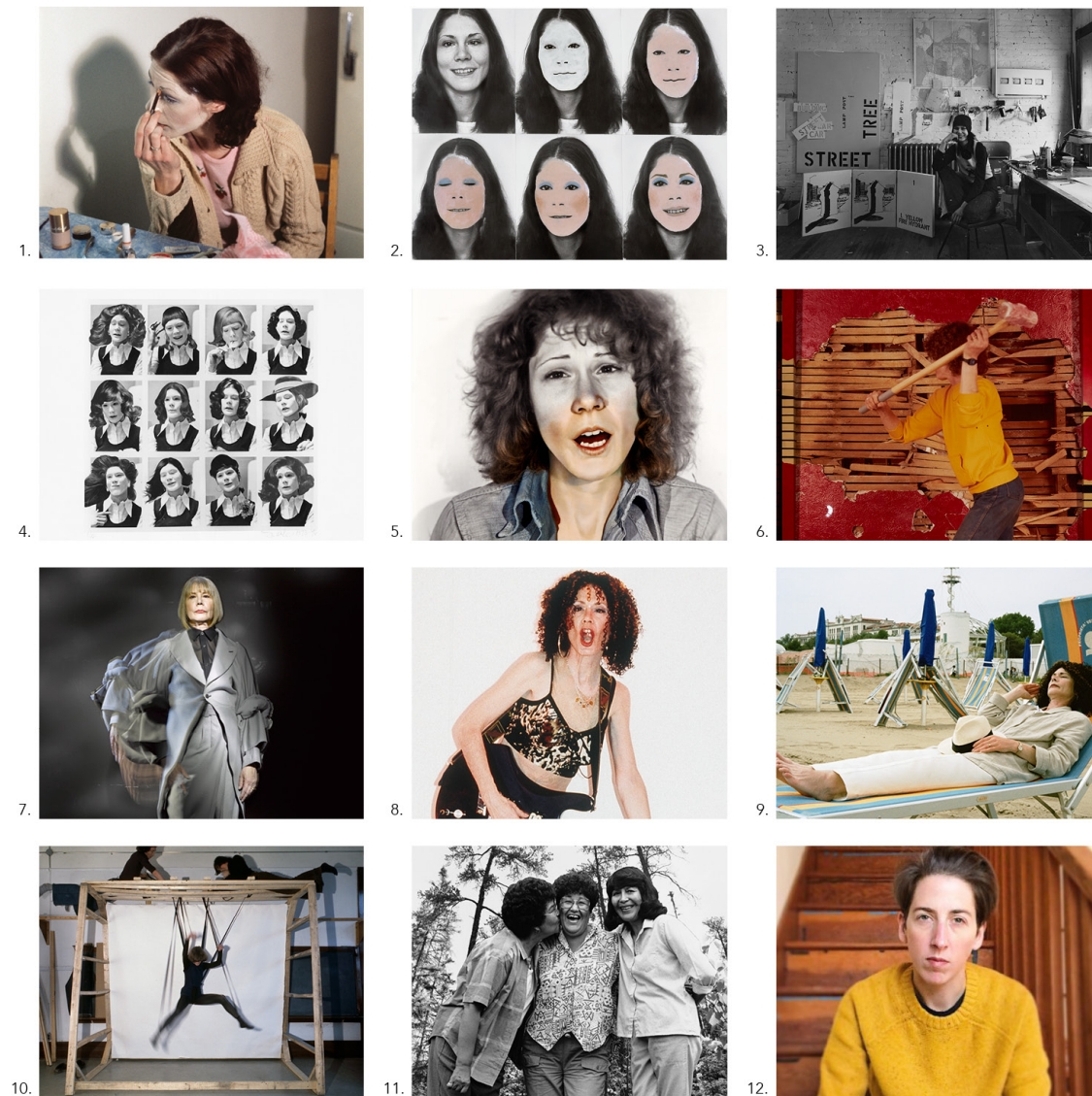


IMAGE CAPTIONS & CREDITS

1. Suzy Lake, *Imitations of the Self (study #3)*, 1973/2012, archival pigment print, 20 x 18.6 cm, Silver Editions, Gallery TPW, Toronto.
2. Suzy Lake, *A Genuine Simulation Of... No. 2*, 1974, 6 gelatin silver prints and commercial makeup mounted on fibre-based print, 70 x 82.5 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.
3. Suzy Lake in her studio on Craig Street in Montreal, c.1970s, photographer unknown, Collection of the artist.
4. Suzy Lake, *Miss Chatelaine*, 1973, gelatin silver fibre-based print (printed 1996), 22.3 x 22.4 cm, various collections.
5. Suzy Lake, *Are You Talking to Me? (detail)*, 1978–79, 76 gelatin silver and chromogenic prints, total size 94 x 649 cm, Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa.
6. Suzy Lake, *Pre-Resolution: Using the Ordinances at Hand #6*, 1983–84, chromogenic print, oil paint and lumber, 162.6 x 109.2 x 10.2 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.
7. Suzy Lake, *Performing Haute Couture #1*, 2014, chromogenic print, black frame with museum glass, 167.7 x 127 cm, Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto.
8. Suzy Lake, *Forever Young*, 2000, 3 chromogenic prints, laminated, 210 x 107 cm each, Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto.
9. Suzy Lake, *Peonies and the Lido #9*, 2000–2002/2010, 3 light-jet chromogenic prints; 101.6 x 137.2 cm, 101.6 x 141 cm; 101.6 x 137.2 cm, Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto.
10. Suzy Lake, *Choreographed Puppet #3*, 1976/1977, Cibachrome print, 40.6 x 50.8 cm, Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto.
11. Suzy Lake, *Cautioned Homes and Gardens: Three Sisters*, 1991; triptych, gelatin silver fibre-based prints, photo montage; 151.8 x 58.4 cm, 151.8 x 103.5 cm, 151.8 x 58.4 cm, Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto.
12. Erin Silver, author of *Suzy Lake: Life & Work*.