



museum of arts and design

**MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN PRESENTS NEW YORK DEBUT OF
VISUAL ARTIST AND PERFORMER SHARY BOYLE'S UNSETTLING
NARRATIVE, *OUTSIDE THE PALACE OF ME***

Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me
September 23, 2023—February 25, 2024



Images (from left to right): Shary Boyle, *Centering*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Patel Brown Gallery. Photo: John Jones. Shary Boyle, *White Elephant*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Contemporary Art Forum Kitchener and Area (CAFKA). Photo: John Jones.

NEW YORK, NY (August 24, 2023) – This fall, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) will present the New York museum debut of Canadian visual artist and performer Shary Boyle. On view from September 23, 2023–February 25, 2024, *Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me* explores the forces that create our inner and outer selves, both individual and collective. The multisensory solo exhibition of new works by the artist includes exquisitely sculpted ceramics, life-sized automatons, two-way mirrors, a coin-operated sculpture, and an interactive soundtrack. To help realize her creative vision for the

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exhibition, Boyle enlisted a team of collaborators, including a scenic designer, costume artist, robotics engineer, amusement park innovator, and acrylic nail artist. Each work in the exhibition is a testament to slow, skilled, passionate handcraft.

The exhibition's title, *Outside the Palace of Me*, references a lyric from "Europe is Lost," written by UK poet and singer Kae Tempest in 2016. In this visceral protest song, Tempest catalogs society's ills, including the commodification of the self through reality TV, social media, and the influencer economy.

"Building on MAD's commitment to challenging expectations, *Outside the Palace of Me* transcends the passivity of the museum experience in the most ingenious and intimate ways. Casting the visitor as the protagonist interacting with and activating the works on view, the exhibition asks us to consider how we come to perform different roles in society influenced by how we see ourselves and others," said Tim Rodgers, MAD's Nanette L. Laitman Director.

Adopting the structures of theatre, Boyle's "Palace" functions as a metaphor for the construction and presentation of self. Within its confines, the audience alternates between the role of observer and observed as they engage with an array of uncanny characters and objects—from the miniature to the monumental. Boyle's small-scale clay sculptures are placed throughout the exhibition, including *The Procession* (2020), an installation of 28 stoneware figures honoring the spirit of collective action. *White Elephant* (2021) is a gigantic, seated figure dressed in a knitted sweater and woolen trousers. The figure's porcelain head rapidly spins 360 degrees when triggered by a motion detector activated by a passing visitor. *Centering* (2021), a coin-operated pottery wheel sculpture built of wood, textiles, beads, crystals, feathers, human hair, sequins, mirror, and electronics, spins when its foot pedal is pressed.

Wall paintings and works on paper add a supporting cast of complicated narrators to Boyle's deeply imaginative, idiosyncratic, and unsettling realm. The second floor of the exhibition surveys the artist's abiding interest in forms of theatre and performance perceived as amateur or antiquated that, through Boyle's exceptional handcraft, become potent forms of image-making.

"Shary Boyle has been galvanized by the global turmoil over the last decade to create extraordinary works of art, ambitious in their breadth of scope and the depth of discourse concerning the essential challenges facing our society, such as racism, misogyny, and environmental destruction," said Elissa Auther, MAD's Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs and William and Lasdon Chief Curator.

"Boyle sees the artist as a risk-taker and wants her art to start conversations, ask questions with no right answers, and change thought. To achieve this, she has called on all her powers as a multimedia artist and enlisted a team of collaborators to create a deceptively nostalgic space for play—and provocation. Her work addresses heavy histories but is also hopeful about our ability to creatively reimagine and collectively enact a better future," Auther added.

An audio tour for *Outside the Palace of Me* will be available on the Museum's mobile guide on Bloomberg Connects, the free arts and culture app created by Bloomberg Philanthropies, part of its longstanding commitment to supporting digital innovation in the arts. On the app, visitors will be able to hear directly from the artist about her work and practice.

On Sept. 23, the Museum will host a public conversation with artist Shary Boyle, exhibition curator and chief curator of the Gardiner Museum Sequoia Miller, and MAD's chief curator Elissa Auther. The discussion, free with admission to mark the exhibition's opening day, will explore Boyle's highly collaborative practice, the role of playfulness and the uncanny in resistance, and will feature a live demonstration of the artist's work with shadow puppets.

Other exhibition programming highlights will include a richly illustrated artist's talk on Oct. 24; a screening of *Children of Paradise (Les Enfants du Paradis)* (1945) directed by Marcel Carné, a film whose protagonist inspired Boyle's drawing *Baptiste Kills His Father*; and a series of hands-on puppetry workshops.

The exhibition is accompanied by a 177-page publication by Art Canada Institute, featuring more than 150 full-color images, an essay by Miller, and ten original texts by Boyle on key artworks. The catalog will be available for purchase at The Store at MAD

For more information about *Outside the Palace of Me* and related programming, please visit madmuseum.org.

EXHIBITION CREDITS

Outside the Palace of Me is organized by the Gardiner Museum, Toronto.

Generous funding was received by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature. The exhibition was funded in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and with the support of the Consulate General of Canada in New York.

We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Shary Boyle (Canada, b. 1972) works across diverse media, including sculpture, drawing, installation, and performance. Highly crafted and deeply imaginative, her practice is activated through collaboration and mentorship. Boyle's work considers the social history of figurines, animist mythologies, antiquated technologies, and folk-art forms to create a symbolic, politically charged language uniquely her own. Boyle's work is exhibited and collected internationally. She represented Canada with her project *Music for Silence* at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013, and her work has been featured at the 2017 Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale in South Korea and the 2021 Kaunas Biennial in Lithuania. Boyle is the recipient of Canada's Hnatyshyn Foundation Award, the Gershon

Iskowitz Prize, and holds a 2021 Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from the Ontario College of Art and Design University.

Outside the Palace of Me, a major solo exhibition of new work commissioned by the Gardiner Museum in Toronto, traveled to the Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal in 2022, and the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2023, prior to being mounted at the Museum of Arts and Design in 2023. An accompanying monograph was published by Art Canada Institute.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. For more information, visit madmuseum.org.

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