

## **String Games: Bonavista Biennale announces theme and artist list for 2025 edition**

March 4, 2025 - Bonavista Biennale returns this summer for its fifth edition, August 16 to September 14, 2025. Curated by Dr. Heather Igloliorte, in collaboration with the Biennale's Artistic Director, Rose Bouthillier, the 2025 Biennale will feature 22 artists and collectives at multiple indoor and outdoor sites across the scenic and historic Bonavista Peninsula.

The Biennale's strong representation of artists from Newfoundland and Labrador grounds the exhibition while creating thoughtful dialogue with artists from across Canada and internationally. The 2025 Biennale brings together artists of diverse backgrounds, emerging and established, who work in textiles, sculpture, installation, sound, photography, painting, drawing, video, performance, and land-based practices.

The 2025 Biennale is being produced in partnership with Igloliorte's Canada Excellence Research Chair in Decolonial and Transformational Indigenous Art Practices and the Taqsiqtuut Indigenous Research-Creation Lab at the University of Victoria.

### **Curatorial theme**

Today, Bonavista Biennale announces the curatorial theme for 2025, *String Games*, along with the list of participating artists.

Ayaraut. Na'atl'o'. Ayatori. Cat's Cradle. *String Games* are one of the oldest forms of handcraft, invented by cultures around the world to tell stories, share wisdom, highlight dexterity, and evoke vivid and fleeting images. Through the careful manipulation of strings of thread, fiber, or sinew, new shapes, figures, and pictures are formed. With endless possibilities bound in a single loop, these games speak to resourcefulness, the spark of imagination, collaborative world-building, and the celebration of the handmade. These connections are woven through time and space, and passed down intergenerationally for millennia, intertwining the past with the present.

This edition of the Bonavista Biennale invites local and visiting artists alike to consider what ties them to place. Many of the artists featured in *String Games*—whether they are from Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) or Nunatsiavut or Nitassinan (Labrador), or connected to these lands by air and oceans—are themselves from islands or remote places, where distance shapes community bonds and notions of time. The artists also forefront traditional crafts, folk histories, and intergenerational knowledge. Collaboration, play, and the spirit of creativity are celebrated alongside family, community, and international connections. Together, the artists in *String Games* invite us to see and feel something new, through the images, forms, sounds, and movements that they share.

For the first time, artists from multiple international locations have been invited to participate in the Biennale. Hailing from other island, ocean or circumpolar locations, including Hawai'i, Japan, Kalaallit Nunaat / Greenland and Sápmi / Norway, they share resonant contexts, histories and contemporary realities with artists in Newfoundland and Labrador.

## **Program Highlights**

Program highlights for the 2025 edition include new commissions, partnerships, and an opening weekend symposium.

The Biennale invited two artists in residence, Haruna Sugisaki and Melissa Tremblett, to spend time on the Peninsula in 2024 to conceive of new works. Sugisaki will create a large-scale painting over the course of three weeks, in collaboration with residents of the Bonavista Peninsula. Her pigments are made with locally gathered materials including whale bone, shells, seaweed, rock, soils and plant pigments. Tremblett will create an outdoor sculpture, continuing her work inspired by Innu caribou coat designs, an artform that has been lost because of settler influences.

In a co-commission with Hawai'i Triennial 2025, Bonavista Biennale will feature a new work by Sancia Miala Shiba Nash, a filmmaker, weaver, and organizer from Kīhei, Maui, Hawai'i, with ancestral roots in the Japanese archipelago. The work, *Kuroshio*, is an immersive multimedia installation that traces relationships between Hawai'i and Japan across salt water, oral tradition, language, material practice and song.

Eastern Owl, an Indigenous-led music ensemble of eight vocalists from throughout Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland), will create a site-responsive sound installation. In a special exhibition highlighting elders and intergenerational knowledge, works by three senior artists from Nunatsiavut (Nellie Winters, Sarah Baikie, and Andrea Flowers) will be curated by their granddaughters (Jessica Winters, Ella Jacque, and Vanessa Flowers).

In a special collaboration, the Peninsula's Women's Institute is being invited to participate in the Biennale through an exhibition of pieces by their 30+ local members, who work in craft and textiles. This remarkable collective of seamstresses will also produce the Biennale's fifth anniversary tote bags.

## Artist list

### The complete list of 2025 Biennale Artists (locations indicate where artists currently live and work)

The Women's Institute (Port Union/Catalina/Little Catalina, NL)  
Douglas Penney (English Harbour, NL)  
Eastern Owl (St. John's, NL)  
Ethan Murphy (St. John's, NL)  
Daniel Rumbolt (St. John's, NL)  
Toby Rabinowitz (St. John's, NL)  
Brian Amadi (St. John's, NL)  
Melissa Tremblett (Corner Brook, NL)  
Larry Weyand (Corner Brook, NL)  
Michael Massie (Kippens, NL)  
Nellie Winters (Makkovik, Nunatsiavut)  
Sarah Baikie (Rigolet, Nunatsiavut)  
Andrea Flowers (1934-2019, Hopedale, Nunatsiavut)  
Clara Clayton Gough (Halifax, NS)  
Lisa Myers (Toronto, ON)  
Maureen Gruben (Tuktoyaktuk, NWT)  
Marianne Nicolson (Langford, BC)  
Haruna Sugisaki (Ōiso, Japan)  
Sancia Miala Shiba Nash (Honolulu, HI, USA)  
Inuuteq Storch (Sisimiut, Kalaallit Nunaat / Greenland)  
Dáiddadállu (Guovdageaidnu, Sápmi / Norway)

Artists' bios and examples of their work for press purposes can be [accessed here](#).

### Opening Weekend Activities (August 16-18)

Biennale artists and curators will be gathering on the Bonavista Peninsula August 16-18 to celebrate the opening of *String Games*. Artists will be present at their sites on the afternoon of Saturday, August 16, to engage with audiences, followed by a public opening party at Port Rexton Brewery.

A symposium to mark the Biennale's milestone fifth edition will take place on Sunday and Monday, August 17-18, bringing artists and the public into dialogue on the event's impact, potential, and future direction. The symposium will place artists in conversation with curators, scholars, cultural innovators, and community leaders, creating new provincial, national and international connections and generating new discourses.

## **Additional programming**

A full program of performances, tours, artist talks and workshops, as well as the 2025 site map, will be announced later this spring.

## **About Bonavista Biennale**

Bonavista Biennale is an innovative, rural-based, public art event occurring every two years on Newfoundland's Bonavista Peninsula. It provides a unique platform for artists and audiences to explore, exchange and challenge different ideas and perspectives. Biennale visitors experience artworks alongside the complex and compelling histories, economies, geological features and environments that shape the Bonavista Peninsula. Projects are realized in unconventional outdoor and indoor sites, including historic and industrial buildings, outport villages, beaches and cliffsides. The 2023 Biennale saw attendance figures of nearly 20,000.

## **Biography of Dr. Heather Igloliorte**

Dr. Igloliorte is an Inuk-Newfoundlander and Nunatsiavut Beneficiary, and the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Decolonial and Transformational Indigenous Art Practices at the University of Victoria, B.C., where she is a professor in the Visual Arts Department. Dr. Igloliorte has been a curator since 2005 and has worked on more than 30 curatorial projects, including national and international touring exhibitions, permanent collection exhibits, festivals, and public art installations. She has made significant contributions to the art history of Newfoundland and Labrador, including *SakKijâjuk: Art and Craft from Nunatsiavut*, created and circulated by The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery in St. John's. *SakKijâjuk* toured across Canada from 2016-2020 and was awarded the 2017 Award of Outstanding Achievement in Education from the Canadian Museums Association. Igloliorte's curatorial work has been recognized by the Hnatyshyn Foundation with the Award for Curatorial Excellence in Contemporary Art (2021). She is the current president of the board of the Inuit Art Foundation and was the first Indigenous person in Canada to be awarded a Royal Canadian Academy of Arts Medal for her service to Indigenous art and artists, also in 2021.

## **Biography of Rose Bouthillier**

Rose Bouthillier (she/her) joined the Bonavista Biennale as Artistic Director in April 2022. Previously, she served as Curator (Exhibitions) at Remai Modern, and Associate Curator and Publications Manager at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland. She is based in Maberly, NL.