



INNOVATIVE PUBLIC ART TRAIL ANNOUNCES RENOWNED ARTIST KENT MONKMAN AS FIRST MAJOR COMMISSION



First of its kind in Canada, the Lassonde Art Trail is on pace to launch in 2026, featuring two major commissions and a dynamic program of artworks that will be free to the public 365 days a year.

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September 24, 2024, Toronto—Internationally renowned Cree visual artist Kent Monkman will contribute a permanent sculpture for the Lassonde Art Trail (LAT)— a

new innovative outdoor art destination that will add a shot of cultural adrenaline to Toronto's ambitious waterfront development plan.

"I'm honoured to have been asked to be part of this project. Given the importance of water to us as Cree people, all Indigenous people—really everyone— it means a great deal to me to create an artwork that will live on the shores of Lake Ontario in Toronto, where I have lived and worked for over three decades," said Kent Monkman. "I want to create an artwork that sends a message to this city—which is home to people from many diverse backgrounds from all over the world—referencing, in a playful way, the many layers of Indigenous presence here."

On pace to launch in 2026, the public art trail will be unique in Canada. The open-air cultural experience will unfold over 4.2-kilometres of walking paths within a massive new public waterfront park system overlooking Lake Ontario in Toronto's Port Lands.

Monkman's work is the first of two major art commissions that will anchor a dynamic program of rotating artworks by Canadian and international artists, exhibited on a series of interconnected outdoor locations. The Lassonde Art Trail will be open year round, and will be free to the public.

"Thank you to the Lassonde family for contributing to the legacy of great public art on our waterfront that all residents and visitors can enjoy," said Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow, who met with Monkman at the site earlier this week. "Kent Monkman is one of my most cherished artists. Over the years I have attended many of his exhibits," Mayor Chow added. "This exciting commission by Kent Monkman will add to the creation of strong Indigenous markers across the city, such as the new Spirit Garden and Turtle sculpture soon opening at Nathan Phillips Square. We are thankful that Monkman's destination artwork will become part of the City's Public Art and Monument Collection."

"We believe public art builds a great city, enhances wellbeing, and helps guide respectful cultural dialogue," said Chloë Catán, Executive Director of the Lassonde Art Trail Foundation. "We're thrilled that Kent Monkman will be contributing an outdoor artwork for this new cultural destination. Working with our partners at Waterfront Toronto and the City of Toronto, LAT is currently ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is created to support this extraordinary program of works by artists

across Canada and around the world. We're excited to share this unique experience with the public."

"We're grateful that Kent Monkman has agreed to create his first ever public artwork for this new outdoor destination; it will be one of many thoughtful responses to the site," said November Paynter, Artistic Director and Chief Curator, Lassonde Art Trail Foundation. "I am also excited to work on the rotating program that will give local, national and international artists opportunities to realize their visions in such a unique and inspiring environment."

"It's a privilege and an honour to have Kent Monkman create a unique, large-scale work of art for the Art Trail. Kent is at the zenith of his career. His work is inspiring, questioning and fun," said philanthropist Pierre Lassonde.

The site for the trail is currently under construction by Waterfront Toronto, who envisioned an art trail with embedded infrastructure as a complement to the vast network of new parks and public spaces being created in the Port Lands. Situated on a new island in the Toronto harbour archipelago, it is at the heart of a massive \$1.25 billion project that reroutes the mouth of the Don River and builds flood protection for downtown Toronto.

This feat of civil and bioengineering will see Waterfront Toronto establish a new river valley with functional wetlands and deliver 62 acres of publicly accessible open space along the riverbanks and inner harbour. It will clean and restore soils contaminated from past industrialization, and naturally accommodate the effects of flooding and erosion. In the process it will re-establish aquatic and terrestrial habitat where Indigenous species of plants and animals can thrive.

"The Lassonde Art Trail will be a magnetic destination for those seeking immersive arts and culture experiences all within a network of new parks and public spaces that Waterfront Toronto is delivering through the Port Lands Flood Protection project," said George Zegarac, President and CEO, Waterfront Toronto.

In 2022, Toronto-based philanthropist Pierre Lassonde was invited to view progress on the site, and committed a transformational \$25M gift to realize the art trail. The gift

included \$10M for two permanent destination artworks that will be donated to the City of Toronto's Public Art and Monuments Collection. The remaining \$15M is allocated as a challenge fund to sustain programming over the long-term, and manage the outdoor public art trail.

"The Art Trail will be a very special addition to our new park system in the Port Lands," said Paula Fletcher, Toronto-Danforth City Councillor. "It will provide free cultural programming for all visitors and many opportunities for outstanding artists to contribute to the public realm. Having artwork by world-renown Cree artist Kent Monkman on the new island is exciting and will make an incredible contribution to the cultural fabric of our new waterfront."

Incorporated as a non-profit charitable organization in 2023, LAT is actively fundraising to unlock the Lassonde family's matching funds and achieve its goal to be a world-class, dynamic art destination. Kent Monkman's artwork will be unveiled in 2026 at the launch of LAT's program, which will be made possible through collaborations with a range of donors, supporters, city-builders, and partners both near and far.

Later this fall, LAT will announce a second major art commission as well as the first partnerships with local and international organizations. For more information and to sign up to the art trail's newsletter, please visit: www.latfoundation.org

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Clockwise from top left

- Chloë Catán, Executive Director Lassonde Art Trail Foundation; Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow; Kent Monkman; Paula Fletcher, Toronto-Danforth City Councillor; November Paynter, Artistic Director and Chief Curator Lassonde Art Trail Foundation. Image Credit: Vid Ingelevics and Ryan Walker
- Kent Monkman
Image Credit: Vid Ingelevics and Ryan Walker
- Rendering of Lassonde Art Trail site on Villiers Island by Norm Li AG+1, courtesy of Waterfront Toronto
- Chloë Catán, Executive Director Lassonde Art Trail Foundation; Kent Monkman; November Paynter, Artistic Director and Chief Curator Lassonde Art Trail Foundation. Image Credit: Vid Ingelevics and Ryan Walker