

A behind-the-scenes look at the Lassonde Art Trail, the city's new destination for outdoor contemporary art

The trail's curator walks us through seven new sculptures just unveiled in Biidaasige Park

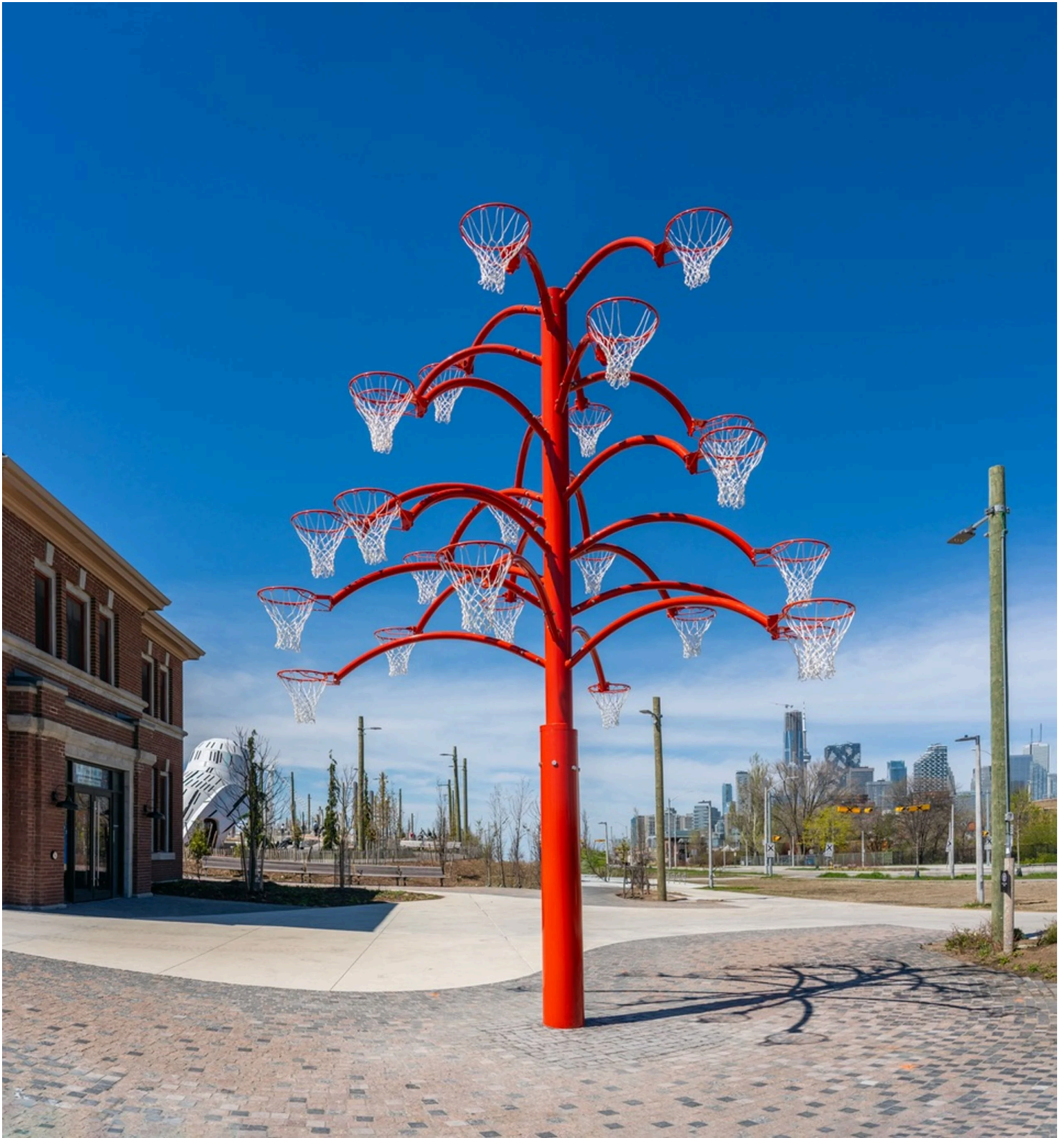
BY TATUM DOOLEY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY VID INGELEVICS AND RYAN WALKER | JUNE 5, 2026



The once-desolate strip of waterfront south of the Gardiner Expressway has undergone a major transformation over the past several years. The area is home to Biidaasige Park, which opened last year, a lush parkland filled with prairie grass, ponds, several swans and, now, a brand-new destination for public art that the city anticipates will attract more than a million visitors each year.

The Lassonde Art Trail—named after Pierre Lassonde, a mining magnate who donated \$25 million to the project—is a 4.2 kilometre stretch of

interconnected trails that will host 14 sculptures on a rotating basis. Various sections of the park double as open air galleries, with new commissions from Toronto artists as well as loans from international artists such as Tracey Emin. On June 4, the first seven sculptures were unveiled to the public, and the second section is scheduled to open in late July. We spoke with the Lassonde Art Trail's artistic director and chief curator, November Paynter, to learn more about the various works on display.



Alexandre Arrechea, *Orange Functional*, 2022

“I first encountered this work of art in upstate New York, at an arts centre called Art Omi. I immediately imagined how people in Toronto would respond to it, knowing how many people here love basketball. It was really about tapping into the idea of a work that could be played with, which I thought would be a beautiful introduction to the whole art trail. It’s been fun to watch people shooting hoops. Anyone can bring a ball and take a shot.”

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Oluseye, *Crown Act*, 2026

“This is by a Nigerian Canadian artist, Oluseye, who was on the longlist for the Sobey Art Award this year. The idea behind the work is the Underground Railroad, the route that escaped slaves in the US followed to find freedom in Canada. He was also thinking about the importance of braids in black culture, so he came up with this small labyrinth made of black braids produced in wood with a beautiful cowrie shell in the centre. We often think of public art as being vertical, but this piece is very low to the ground. Anyone can walk through it.”



Photo by Isabel B. Slone

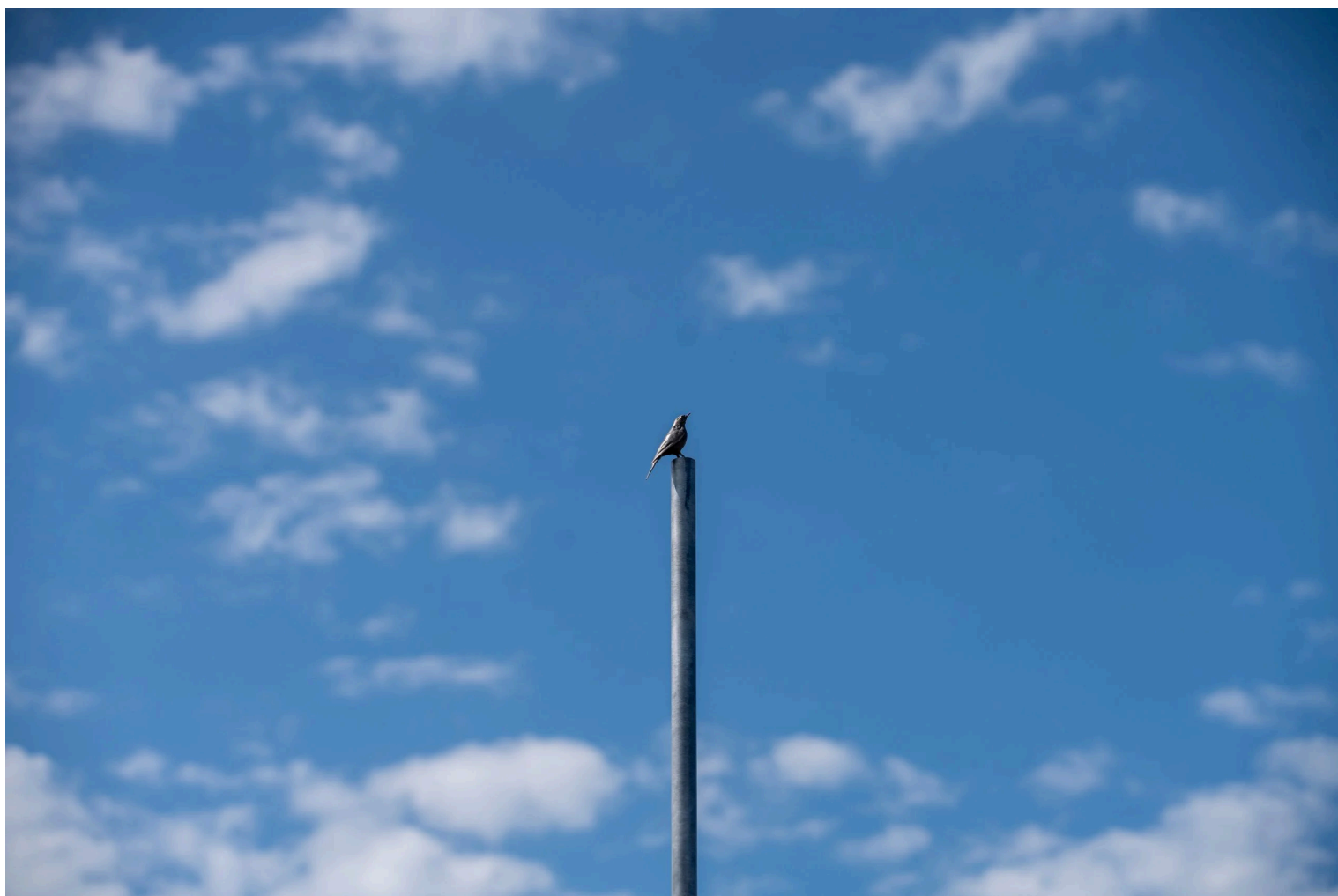
Ryan Gander, *Stories of Relics*, 2026

“Ryan Gander is a British artist who does a lot of work around time and uses clocks in his practice. He was thinking about the layers of history that exist here but also that it was once a dumping ground. During the remediation, the workers found certain objects, including an alarm clock. He came up with the idea of having four clocks from different moments in history positioned in different parts of the park. There’s an alarm clock, a digital clock, a candle timer and a sand timer. The alarm clock in particular was a very complex piece of art to make. They used a 3D scanner to scan the rock and then cast the bronze sculpture to fit it perfectly, like a fossil from the future.”



Kara Hamilton, *Delicate Matter (for the Birds)*, 2026

“Kara Hamilton is interested in rewilding and bird life, and she wanted to make a piece out of organic materials. She made two objects out of cob, which is straw and soil, and then installed them atop two plinths made from rammed earth. You can see all these beautiful strata in the plinths that mimic the idea of the soil beneath our feet. This was a pretty experimental one for us. There are trumpets and other musical instruments emerging from what appear to be an ear and a mouth, so the sculptures are speaking to each other. One of them has a hyssop plant on top, which is a big pollinator. It’s a piece that will evolve with the park and its context in nature.”



Tracey Emin, *Roman Standard*, 2013

“Tracey Emin’s is quite a modest piece. It’s a pole with a tiny bird on the top. It refers to the Roman standards carried into battle, often adorned with an eagle. She’s replicating that idea, but instead of an eagle, it’s a songbird. This piece speaks to the ecology of the park system and how important every living creature is. We borrowed this from the National Gallery of Canada’s collection. It’s part of a series of work she’s done that has been shown outdoors internationally, so we figured it would be a nice moment to bring it to the public’s attention.”



Nadia Belerique and Tony Romano, *Homing*, 2026

“Nadia Belerique and Tony Romano are both artists in Toronto. They’re a couple, and this is their first-ever collaborative project. I approached them both independently at first, and after conversations about how the park system is for families and people coming together, they were inspired to work together. It’s a series of two stacked tables, based on the idea of a dining room table and how it’s often a meeting place. They created this beautiful structure from found objects, then cast them in aluminum, and that’s what’s been installed in the park. From a certain angle, the composition of the whole piece looks like the skeleton of a horse or some other beast. It becomes a single image, which is quite phenomenal. I think it’s really playful.”



Dean Baldwin Lew and Caroline Monnet, *Trajet*, 2019

“This piece acknowledges footprints that were found at the bottom of Lake Ontario in 1908. Lew had found a story in the Toronto archives about these footprints, and he went to Caroline Monnet to discuss making a work acknowledging this discovery and the people who might have made the footprints 11,000 years ago. They brought together a community of Indigenous folks in 2018 and invited them to walk across clay, then cast the pieces in bronze. The names of those who walked on the clay are inscribed around the edge of the disc. They wanted to install it so that the water would touch it and sometimes fill the footprints, really a memory of where the footprints were found, which is lovely.”

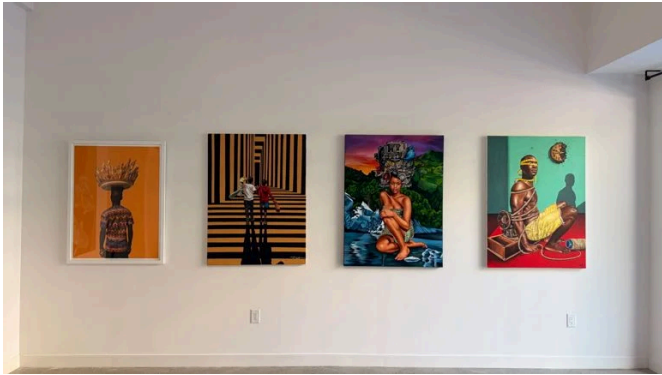
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This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



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