

# CONTACT

## CONTACT Toronto Photography Festival Brief History & Overview

CONTACT is an annual festival with over 1000 Canadian and international artists and photographers exhibiting at more than 220 venues throughout Toronto in May. Founded as a grassroots initiative in 1996 and incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in 1997, CONTACT celebrates the art and profession of photography. Over the years the festival has fostered a thriving local community devoted to the photographic image. Stimulating excitement and discussion among a diverse audience that has grown to more than 1,000,000, CONTACT is the largest annual metropolitan photography festival in the world. From May 1st to 31st each year, the CONTACT Toronto Photography Festival presents the following initiatives:

- **Annual Theme:** introduced in 2005 to provide a critical focus for the festival, the theme is explored through curated exhibitions and public installations, lectures and panel discussions.
- **Primary Exhibitions:** since 2007 an international exhibition of photography by distinguished and emerging Canadian and international artists at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art has been the primary focus of our annual theme. As of 2010, an annual exhibition at the University of Toronto Art Center will provide a divergent investigation of the theme.
- **CONTACT Gallery:** officially launched in May 2009, the CONTACT gallery will host three exhibitions annually. The gallery adjoins the CONTACT office and also functions as the information hub for the entire festival.
- **Public Installations:** since 2003 photographic images by local, Canadian & international artists is presented in high profile public spaces throughout Toronto. Integrating art into the fabric of the city, CONTACT reaches millions of people from all walks of life.
- **Feature Exhibitions:** since 2003, approximately 30 selected high-caliber exhibitions provide a multi-faceted exploration of the festival theme at prominent venues throughout Toronto.
- **Open Exhibitions:** responding to our open call for submissions, festival venues have grown from 56 in 1997 to almost 200 locations throughout the greater Toronto area including public & commercial galleries, artist-run centres, educational & international organizations, community centres, libraries, restaurants, cafes, retail stores, and many alternative locations.
- **Educational Events:** esteemed international professionals have provided innovative workshops and seminars to engage all levels of interest in photography since 1997.
- **Lectures:** since its inception, the festival has annually presented lectures and panel discussions with local and international artists & photographers.
- **Magnum Workshop:** a partnership with the Magnum Photos agency began in 2008 and The Magnum Workshop Toronto now annually involves six Magnum photographers from around the world
- **Portfolio Reviews:** prominent Canadian & international experts in the field of photography are assembled each year for one-on-one critiques with emerging and established artists, photojournalists, commercial and documentary photographers.
- **Film Program:** from 2004 to 2008 an international series of films that incorporate photography as their central theme was presented at National Film Board of Canada. As of 2009, our films program is televised on TVO throughout Ontario in May.
- **Festival Magazine:** launched as a 14-page brochure in 1997, the now 134 page festival magazine continues to expand and evolve. Including full festival details, critical essays and striking reproductions, 25,000 free copies are distributed locally, nationally & internationally each year.
- **Festival Website:** launched in 1998, contactphoto.com is annually updated with full festival details and magazine texts for a local & worldwide community. A re-designed website will be launched in 2010.

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