

# PHOTO, MEDIA AND DIGITAL ART

Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art  
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Photo Magazine. Visual, Audio and Surround Art Galleries.  
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## PREFIX.

For Immediate Release (January 16, 2014)

### SYLVIA SAFDIE PREMIERES NEW VIDEO INSTALLATIONS AT PREFIX

(Toronto) – Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is pleased to present *The Absent Present*, a solo exhibition by esteemed artist **Sylvia Safdie**, curated by Scott McLeod. Well known for her paintings, drawings and, particularly, sculptural installation, she has devoted the past decade to video installation. Presenting the world premiere of three recent video works as well as an earlier light sculpture, this exhibition meditates on the convergence of place, time and memory.

An **opening reception** will be held on **Thursday, February 6 from 7 to 10 PM** at Prefix, located at 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 124, Toronto. The artist and curator will be present. During the reception, an artist/curator walk-through will be held at 7:30 PM. The gallery is open from Wednesday to Saturday, 12 to 5 PM, and admission is free. The exhibition continues until **March 29, 2014**.

The themes of temporality and transformation run deeply throughout the artist's oeuvre, though perhaps never so deeply as in her recent video installations. Similar to her previous artworks, the videos are a canvas in motion on which ideas around space and time, stasis and movement, and embodiment and nature are explored.

*The Absent Present* features three related video works: *Pond/Auschwitz* (2011), *Reflection/Auschwitz* (2011) and *Web/Auschwitz* (2011-13). Shot during the artist's first visit to the site of the eponymous concentration camp, the works focus on natural phenomena found in the camp's surroundings. As a result of uncharacteristically heavy rainfalls at that time, much of the site was flooded. This seeming liability ultimately inspired the artist to work with the water, utilizing its surface, raindrops and reflections to speak of the "absent present."

*Pond* captures the effect of rain on the ashen surface of a small body of water. *Reflection* depicts what appears to be a window of light on the surface of a murky puddle, the dark liquid in continuous motion, stirring with the hint of a breeze. *Web* focuses on the subtle rise and fall of a complex network of fine threads that remains ostensibly undisturbed, unknown particles knitted into its tangled fibres.

In order to situate these video installations within the artist's lifelong artistic practice, the exhibition also features *Lehav* (1993), an earlier sculptural installation that employs the reflection and refraction of light.

#### About the Artist

**Sylvia Safdie** is a visual artist who works in the media of painting, drawing, sculpture, installation and video. Born in Aley, Lebanon, in 1942, she lived in Israel before moving to Canada in 1953. In 1975, she obtained a BFA from Concordia University (Montréal). Her work has been exhibited internationally, with recent solo exhibitions at the Canadian Cultural Centre (Paris), Galerie de la Porte d'Italie (Toulon, France), Lentos Kunstmuseum (Linz, Austria), Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery (Montréal), MacKenzie Art Gallery (Regina), Tom Thomson Art Gallery (Owen Sound, ON) and Wan Fung Art Gallery (Beijing), among others. Her work is included in numerous public and private collections, including the Art Gallery of Hamilton (Hamilton, ON), Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, (Halifax), Canada Council Art Bank (Ottawa), Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, and Musée des beaux-arts (Montréal), among others. Her work has been the subject of the film *Earth Marks* by Doina Harap and of several publications, most recently *The Video Art of Sylvia Safdie* by Eric Lewis. Safdie lives and works in Montréal, where she is represented by Galerie Joyce Yahouda.

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### **About the Curator**

**Scott McLeod** is a writer, curator and arts administrator. His work focuses on contemporary practices, with a specialization in photographic, media and digital art. Since 2000, he has been the director and curator of Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art, where he also serves as the editor and publisher of *Prefix Photo* magazine.

### **About Prefix**

Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is a public art gallery and arts publishing house based in Toronto. A registered charitable organization, Prefix fosters the appreciation and understanding of contemporary photographic, media and digital arts through exhibitions, publications, public programmes and related activities.

### **Acknowledgements**

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For more information, print-ready images or to schedule an interview with the artist or curator, please contact:

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