

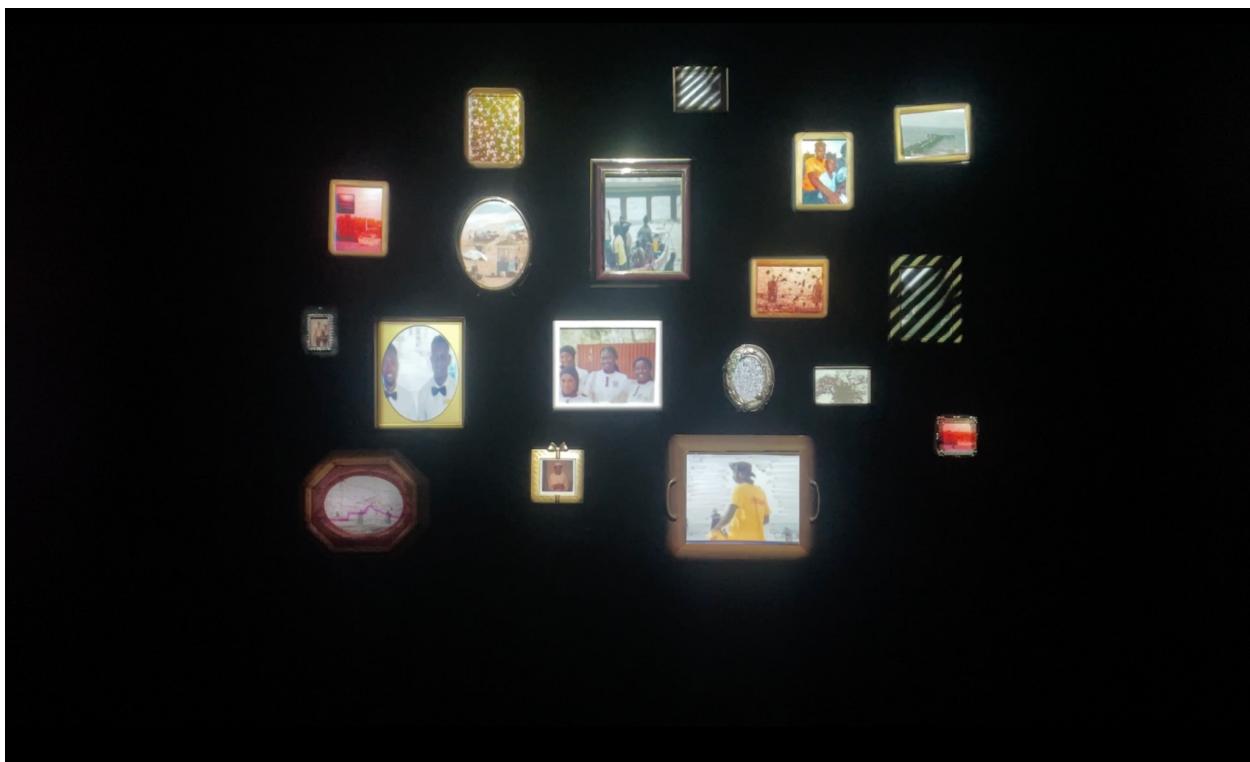
Title: *I Knew This Place Before*, Single-channel video projection on found frames - 8min.

Artist: Adam Mboge

Year: September 3rd - December 12, 2025

Institution / Location: Featured at FOFA gallery, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada.

Relevance: The FOFA Gallery is the primary venue dedicated to showcasing the current artistic and research practices of the Faculty of Fine Arts.



I Knew This Place Before by Adam Mboge is an introspective short film composed of a sequence of visual moments displayed across the gallery wall. Projected within picture frames resembling a family photo arrangement, the work reflects the rapid transformation of The Gambia, memory, myth and loss. Through a mix of still images, videos and paper animation, each frame opens onto fragments of memory, myth, and loss, merging a personal archive with documentation of national change. Adam Mboge is a Gambian-Canadian filmmaker and artist based in Montreal. Her work blends documentary, performance, and experimental forms to explore memory, identity, and Black diasporic experience.

Currently being exhibited at Concordia Undergraduate's very own FOFA gallery, as part of their most recent exhibition showcasing the work of undergraduate artists. The gallery's mandate is to highlight the creative voices of the university's community, a living archive of how students express their moment in time, collectively encapsulating the evolving expression of each generation.

The theme guiding the curation of this piece centers around memory and transformation; how personal and collective recollections shape our identities and reflect the passage of time. Mbewe's work stood out to me for how it intertwines the intimate and the historical. Her piece not only acts as an archival documentation of change, but also a tender portrayal of family, community and home.

While experiencing this installation, I imagined how the artist must feel moving through their own piece, stepping into each frame as if entering an old memory. The work echoes the functioning of declarative or explicit memory, the memories we can consciously recall and describe: facts and experiences, like family gatherings, and knowing where we come from.

The hippocampus helps create these memories, while the medial temporal lobe and prefrontal cortex aids in retrieving them, like sorting through frames on a wall in our minds. Yet, memories often feel scattered or unclear, blurred by time or lack of active retrieval, much like the flickering images of Mbewe's piece.

From a neuroscience perspective, this fragmentation mirrors the working of memory itself. When we remember we piece together a bunch of clues, pieces that help us recall them but it doesn't restore the actual memory. Memories move from the immediate, held for seconds, to the short-term, for minutes, and to the long-term, that can be held for days, weeks, years or even a lifetime, stored across different regions of the brain depending on their type and meaning.

Like any muscle, our synapses, the connections between neurons, can be strengthened or weakened through synaptic plasticity. Repeated activation makes them more efficient, while inactivity causes them to fade. The same principle applies to human relationships: both memory and connections rely on continuous care to stay alive.

This installation embodies this process. Its flickering, asynchronous frames resemble neurons firing in uneven rhythms, some clear and others blurry, much like the fluctuating strength of our memories and relationships. As the visuals move and glitch, existing in their own picture frames,

playing different visual images, they replay snippets of experience with care and tenderness. Some remain vivid, others less activated and barely even visible, evoking memories slipping away.

This piece illustrates how we perceive and reconstruct memory, how recollections shift, distort and fade over time. While change and loss are inevitable factors, reminding us that the strength of our bonds, both neural and personal, depends on our actions: revisiting, nurturing and keeping them alive. Her work becomes an act of preservation, hinting that remembering, like living, is a continuous work in progress.

Mbowe's installation also invites us to linger between images and silences, to reconstruct meaning from disparate parts. Inside the dimly lit gallery, the low hum of the projector and the grainy texture of the moving images fills the space with a sense of intimate quiet. The darkness softens the boundary between viewer and image, we almost become part of the work's rhythm standing among the flickering memories.

Without much context, the artist leaves us to ponder what each frame represents, using their different parts to try to make up the bigger picture behind each scene. The soft light of each of the projections and the pauses between them echoes how our minds work, retrieving, inventing, and reshaping memories through absence as much as presence.

The work not only acts as an archival-like documentation of the passage of time but with her caring portrayal of family, community and home changing. It made me think about how we store change in our bodies. Like phylogenetic memories, which are essentially encoded in our nervous system, passed down through our DNA. These things we know, we feel and carry with us, without necessarily knowing where or when they came from, our instincts, guided by the amygdala and hypothalamus, like a pre-mapped landscape we continue to expand. Through the grain, silence, and shifting light of her work, Mbowe shows that memory itself is living, fragile and deeply human.

Title: Suicide total (extrait)

Artist: Julie Doucet

Year: 2023 (original print); the excerpt is used for the 2025 outdoor mural at Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC) Murale – Palissade extérieure.

Institution / Location: MAC – Place des Arts (Montreal). The mural runs until 31 January 2026.

Relevance: This work is part of the exhibition Mondes graphiques – Palissade extérieure, a large-scale public outdoor installation that brings graphic narrative, drawn comics aesthetics, and introspective themes into a public space in Montréal.



For this curatorial piece I wanted to explore how artists make us see emotions. More than just recognizing them, they make us feel them through visual form. For this particular artpiece, let's focus on how art translates inner mental states into visual storytelling representing how our emotions can be portrayed in a chaotic yet cohesive manner.

Emotions aren't still, they shift and collide in unexpected ways depending on our individual reactions. In neuroscience, that tension is shown between reason and reaction which in the brain is present between the prefrontal cortex, which helps us think and regulate, and the limbic system, which pushes us to feel and act. I came across this specific artwork that captures that clash, turning the hidden chaos of the mind into something tangible and relatable.

Julie Doucet's *Suicide total (extrait)*, part of the outdoor mural exhibition *Mondes graphiques – Palissade extérieure* at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, expresses exactly that. Her black-and-white drawings are emotional explosions. They are messy, repetitive, sometimes humorous, sometimes dark, that reveal how fragile the line between control and collapse can be. Seeing her work displayed on the museum's wall makes it feel like our private mental world has

spilled out into the street and exposed to the world. It reminds us that emotions are public as much as they are personal, like shared links between our bodies, our brains, and the people around us.

Suicide total (extrait) is an autobiographical visual diary. Doucet transforms parts of her everyday thoughts into overlapping scenes such as crowded rooms, self-portraits, floating words, and surreal bodies to represent tangled messes of emotion and human reality. The title itself, “Total Suicide,” doesn’t point to death as much as it does to emotional exhaustion and self reflection; the feeling of being consumed by one’s own thoughts. The chaotic lines, scratched surfaces, and dense compositions reflect what emotional overload looks like when reason starts to fade over time. In this public-scale adaptation, Doucet’s work becomes a giant confession wall, displayed for anyone walking by downtown Montreal. That shift from private sketchbook to bigscale mural amplifies its honesty and rawness. The way she translates these emotions with honesty showing a handmade, imperfect, often humorous style, invites empathy instead of distance. It’s not about dramatizing sadness; it’s about showing emotion as a human constant. Doucet is known as one of the key voices in feminist and underground comics that explores inner life without filters. Her presence in Mondes graphiques celebrates how personal expression can also be collective, connecting everyday mental struggles to shared emotional experience.

Doucet’s mural offers a living example of how the brain creates, processes, and regulates emotion. The raw, unfiltered imagery immediately activates the amygdala, the brain’s alarm system for emotionally charged cues like vulnerability or distress. Her expressive drawings stimulate the limbic system, which translates these images into feelings like empathy, tension, or recognition. As we look closer, the prefrontal cortex engages to make sense of what we see, to reason through discomfort and interpret meaning. This is the same cognitive process that helps us regulate emotional impulses, just like trying to calm ourselves after an intense reaction. Some panels evoke a visceral bodily response for their trueness and vulnerability such as tightness, unease, or even fascination. This ties directly to the insula, the region involved in interoception and the feeling of disgust or bodily awareness.

The way she uses humor in her piece incorporates the reward system as it helps ease the tension from the reality people are being exposed to as it releases dopamine and offers emotional balance. Therefore this is why I find that this piece is a perfect bridge between art and neuroscience because

it visually captures the complexity of emotional processing; what we learned in theory and its connection to art, she brings to life on the wall. Through her chaotic yet controlled drawings, we can connect how the brain's emotional systems operate: the amygdala reacting to intense feeling, the prefrontal cortex struggling to make sense of it, the insula sensing the body's discomfort, and the reward system searching for relief. Just like the case of Phineas Gage shows what happens when the balance between emotion and reason is disrupted, Doucet's work reflects that same tension, but in an artistic language. Her mural turns the invisible neuroscience of emotion into something visible, relatable, and human.

Title: Gold Girl

Artist: Chun Hua Catherine Dong

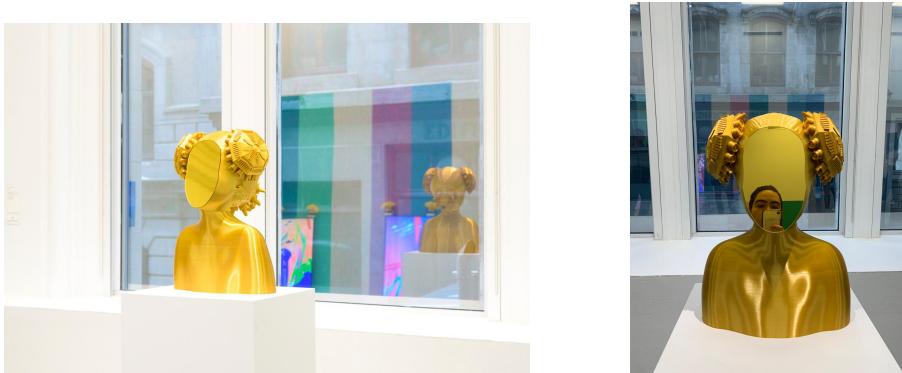
Year: 2022

Medium: 3D-printed sculpture with metallic gold finish

Institution / Location: PHI Centre, Montreal in 2023 exhibition

Relevance:

“Gold Girl” is a golden 3D-printed bust that reflects on how we see ourselves and others. Its smooth, mirror-like face hides the artist’s features, so when you look at it, you see your own reflection instead. Inspired by Chinese ideas of “face” and shame, the piece suggests that without a face, there can be no shame, turning the act of looking into a moment of self-awareness and quiet freedom.



This exhibition explores how we see, not just with our eyes, but with our minds. Our vision isn’t a camera that records things; it’s something the brain constantly rebuilds, filling in gaps and turning light into meaning. Every image we encounter is filtered through memory, expectation, and emotion. Our brains don’t just process the world; they rebuild it, layer by layer, according to what we expect or want to see. I was drawn to artworks that play with this idea, pieces that make you aware of how easily perception can shift, how seeing can become a kind of reflection of yourself. These pieces remind us that perception isn’t fixed; it’s fluid and deeply personal. What we see often says as much about us as it does about what’s in front of us.

Neuroscience tells us that humans are wired for faces, even newborns turn toward them. The brain’s visual system gives special priority to facial features, symmetry, and eyes. Faces help us connect, feel empathy, and understand emotion. That’s why we also see them where they don’t

exist, like in clouds or objects. This phenomenon, called pareidolia, reflects our constant need to make the world familiar, to find a human presence within it.

Chun Hua Catherine Dong's Gold Girl (2022) captures that instinct beautifully. The sculpture is a 3D-printed golden bust with a mirrored face. It's striking, both human and unreal. When you look at it, you expect to see her face, but instead, you see your own reflection. It's a simple moment, but an unsettling one; you realize how much of "seeing" is actually about projection. The piece turns looking into self-recognition, blurring the line between who is being seen and who is doing the seeing.

On a scientific level, the sculpture also plays with how the brain processes faces. Our brains rely on light, shadow, and contrast to recognize people, but the gold surface removes all those details. The reflection confuses the visual system, so we start trying to fill in what's missing, searching for eyes, a mouth, or emotion. It's the brain doing what it always does: trying to make sense of what it sees, even when there's nothing to find. We also realize that what we perceive in others is often a reflection of ourselves.

But Gold Girl is also about more than perception, it's about identity, culture, and shame. In Chinese culture, shame is often used as a tool of social control, especially for women. It's connected to the idea of "face" meaning your dignity, your reputation, and your sense of worth. To "lose face" means to bring shame upon yourself and your family. Dong plays with that concept directly. Her sculpture has no face at all. The smooth, mirror-like surface suggests that without a face, there can be no shame. By erasing her own features, Dong frees herself from the pressure of how others might see her. Yet, the mirror reflects the viewer instead, turning that judgment back outward. It's no longer about her being seen, it's about us confronting our own gaze.

In the end, Gold Girl brings science and symbolism together in a haunting way. It's about how the brain rebuilds what it sees, but also how society shapes who we think we are. The same way the mind fills in the missing parts of a face, culture fills us with expectations of beauty, behavior, belonging. By taking her own face away, Dong steps outside of that. She becomes something beyond identity, both anonymous and endless, like a reflection that keeps changing with whoever stands before it. The sculpture feels alive yet unreachable, warm yet distant, as if it's watching you as much as you're watching it.

Gold Girl reminds us that seeing isn't just about using our eyes. It's about feeling, recognizing, and questioning. It asks us to look past what's visible; to see what's hidden, what's silent, what's

in ourselves. Even without a face, the piece feels full of presence. It glows softly, like a mirror holding a secret you can almost understand but never quite name.

Title: *Report*, 2025. Sound, installation, performance documentation and video.

Artist: Raven Chacon.

Year: September 3 to November 1, 2025.

Institution / Location: Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada.

Relevance: Report is part of his larger solo exhibition: *Place Where the Waters Crossed*, 2025.

Presented for the 2025 MOMENTA Biennale X Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery. [Report](#), [video](#)



Report by Raven Chacon turns acts of violence into a striking composition. In this piece, firearms (pistols, shotguns, and rifles) are used as musical instruments by a group of interpreters performing a musical score. This work blurs boundaries between shock, noise, and choreography. Each shot fired produces a rhythmic structure of gunfire and silence. The bursts echo through the space giving a very physical viewing experience. The act the visual and the visual compelling the audience to listen as pressure and vibration, less as melody.

Chacon, is a Diné (Navajo) composer and artist, who uses sound to confront histories of colonization, erasure, and violence against Indigenous peoples. By turning weapons into instruments, he reclaims the sonic domain of power. Unlike traditional concert set ups this piece instead exposes the political implications of listening and of silence. Report transforms a symbol of domination into one of resilience, shifting sound towards a form of resistance and performance as one of survival. It situates the listener in a tension between fear and fascination.

From a neuroscientific perspective, this work directly activates the body's stress response system. The sharp, sudden bursts of gunfire stimulate the amygdala, which signals the hypothalamus to

trigger the sympathetic nervous system; initiating the classic fight, flight, or freeze response. The hypothalamus–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis releases adrenaline and cortisol, increasing heart rate, blood pressure, and glucose availability while suppressing digestion and immune functions. The body becomes entirely focused on the perceived threat.

In the safe environment of a gallery, this acute stress reaction is recontextualized. The viewer's fear response becomes an aesthetic experience. Each gunshot sways the nervous system between sympathetic arousal and parasympathetic recovery, producing rhythmic cycles of tension and release reflecting the musical form of the work.

Chacon's piece demonstrates how stress can act as a creative force. Short-term stress (eustress) sharpens attention and heightens sensory perception; conditions that often enhance artistic focus and emotional resonance. In contrast, chronic or overwhelming stress (distress) impairs memory and cognition. By compressing the stress experience into a controlled temporal frame, this work turns biological reflex into deeper reflection, showing how fear can be transformed into structure, and violence into understanding.

When experiencing Report it was an intense, physical encounter. The performance documentation was presented in a dark, theater-like room with a large projection screen, isolated from the surrounding installations. The sound strikes the body before the mind can process it. Some visitors, including myself, hesitated before entering the space, but I caved to my curiosity, and took on the physical impact of the work's vibrations. The layout directed the visitor's movement: entering through a black curtain, pausing at the threshold, and confronting the first bursts of sound head on, triggering instinctive responses linked to fear and survival.

When translating this sensorial experience to writing, the challenge I faced was to hold together both perspectives: the emotional power of the artwork and precision of the science behind the stress response. In early drafts I focused too much on the artistic context and not enough on the science implicated, I found a “juste milieu” by reflecting Chacon's own structure, a dialogue between systems.

Title: *San Giorgio Maggiore au crépuscule*, 2018.

Artist: Nathan Sawaya.

Year: Opening on September 3rd, 2025

Institution / Location: 312 Rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest, Montréal. Produced by Entertainment Hub, FEVER and Knight Live.

Relevance: Featured in the global Exhibition: Art of the Brick, 2025.



Nathan Sawaya is an award-winning artist who creates awe-inspiring works of art using only toy LEGO bricks. This global touring exhibition, Art of the Brick, regroups Sawaya's huge body of work, both in size and in number, all the pieces in the exhibition are made entirely out of LEGO bricks, becoming an international phenomenon reinventing the way people see both LEGO bricks and art.

Sawaya's version transforms Monet's fluid brushwork into a structure of dots, or bricks, of colour. Where Monet layered color and light through quick intangible strokes, Sawaya rebuilds them through deliberate, tangible bricks. Each LEGO piece replaces brushstroke, turning the ephemeral qualities of Impressionism into a precise pixel-like surface. The work keeps the original composition's softness, yet its edges reveal the rigid geometry of its new medium.

Approaching the piece we get to see the intricacies that build up this work, each plastic block placed at a specific point to create the illusion of the bigger picture.

By choosing LEGO, a material associated with childhood and play, as his medium of choice the artist introduces a nostalgic tactile quality to the work. By bridging a gap between this classic toy,

and a renowned painter this piece feels both serious and fun, high craftsmanship and mass production. When moving around the piece, you notice that the plastic surface reflects light differently giving a sort of glossy texture which contrasts with Monet's matte oils, a visual metaphor for modern reinterpretation.

The artwork also comments on the accessibility of art, Monet's masterpiece, confined to museums and prestigious galleries, becomes available to everyday people using an everyday building tool. Bringing in new generations of audiences. This aligns with Sawaya's broader artistic philosophy of making fine art fun and engaging, physical, and emotionally immediate.

Nathan Sawaya's San Giorgio Maggiore at Dusk connects beautifully to what neuroaesthetics teaches us about how the brain experiences art; not just as an image, but as a layered, evolving process of perception, knowledge, and emotion.

At first glance, from a distance, we recognize the familiar harmony of Monet's impressionist scene like the soft light, the calm water, the quiet atmosphere. Our brain's aesthetic judgment areas (like the prefrontal and orbitofrontal cortex) respond to that balance and familiarity, appreciating the composition as something beautiful and peaceful. But as we move closer, the illusion breaks: the painting is not made of brushstrokes, but of thousands of LEGO bricks. This moment of realization activates deeper cognitive and emotional processing, as the brain turns from passive viewing to active interpretation.

That shift from recognizing to understanding, is exactly what neuroaesthetics describes as the blend of knowledge, emotion, and sensory experience. The viewer's brain connects memories of Monet's art with the playful, tactile world of LEGO, sparking curiosity and delight. The work asks us to rethink what counts as "art" and how meaning can be built, quite literally, from unexpected materials.

There's also a sensory dimension to the experience. Even without touching it, we can almost feel the small ridges of the plastic bricks and imagine the process of constructing it piece by piece. That tactile imagination engages our sensory-motor system, showing how the brain doesn't just see art, it simulates the act of making and touching it. Especially with materials that are so well-known to us.

This act of shifting from passive seeing to active reflection engages the brain's Default Mode Network, responsible for introspection and meaning-making. Even individuals with brain damage in visual or emotional areas have shown the persistence of aesthetic response, suggesting

that beauty and recognition are deeply wired processes. In Sawaya's monumental recreation, there's also a quiet sense of the sublime: awe at the scale, patience, and transformation of an ordinary material into something transcendent. It evokes admiration rather than horror or disgust, channeling the brain's reward systems toward wonder and joy.

So, Sawaya's version of San Giorgio Maggiore at Dusk reminds us what neuroaesthetics is really about: how our brain connects what we see with what we know and feel. The moment we realize it's made of LEGO turns a simple act of looking into something deeper. It becomes a mix of surprise, memory, and appreciation, showing how art can change the way we think and feel just by making us see differently.