



B E I N G T H E R E

Portraits from the Toronto Art Community

Dimitri Levanoff

Curated by David Liss

Oct 30 – Dec 14

koffler301

The new gallery at

kofflerarts

180 Shaw St., Toronto | kofflerarts.org



Angela Milana, 2021



Steven Beckly, 2020

B E I N G T H E R E

Portraits from the Toronto Art Community

Dimitri Levanoff

Dimitri Levanoff is a Toronto photographer who has been taking and developing pictures since his youth. In addition to his personal practice, he is well-known in the Toronto art world, and beyond, as the owner of Image Foundry, a studio specializing in custom photographic services and related projects that he launched in 1998. As a small operation, Dimitri works very closely with numerous artists, gallerists, curators, institutions, and other professionals in the field, forming friendships and a sense of community along the way.

A fitting launch for Koffler Art's newly renovated gallery space, Koffler301, a venue that will focus on Toronto-based artists, this exhibition features a selection of 21 portraits of some of the artists and collaborators with whom Dimitri has worked. Begun in 2015, this series was partially inspired by a famous photograph of British painter Francis Bacon in his studio, and he developed his approach through a series he shot during the pandemic of local small business owners in their shops.

As Dimitri is familiar with each sitter, the photo shoots had a casual atmosphere, collapsing any distance between photographer and subject. Rather than formally posed, the

sitters are positioned comfortably in the familiar environments of their studios, homes, or workplaces. Clear, straightforward, not overly staged, relying upon existing light, no photographic tricks or gimmicks, the pictures are not meant to idealize or mythologize the sitter, or pretend that these people are anyone other than who they really are. They are devoid of artifice, pretention, or any of the clichés and conventions often associated with commissioned, commercial, or celebrity portraiture.

Numerous pictures are taken during each session and sitters are allowed input into the final selection. Then, as a professional master printer, Dimitri adds elements in post-production, subtly adjusting a range of tones, textures, and contrasts, to conjure a timeless ambience and warmth.

Most of the subjects are figures publicly known for their accomplishments in the Toronto cultural world but they are not depicted as un-relatable, larger-than-life figures, or 'brands'. The images project an authenticity that transforms them into icons of the everyday. They are real people; there with us; part of our community.

David Liss, exhibition curator

Exhibition checklist

Steven Beckly, 2020

Sandra Brewster, 2024

Mat Brown, 2021

Julia Dault, 2021

William Fisk, 2021

James Fowler, 2021

Susan Hobbs, 2020

Micah Lexier, 2021

Angela Milana, 2021

Neoists, 2023

Oluseye Ogunlesi, 2021

Evan Penny, 2024

Rajni Perera, 2021

Clint Roenisch, 2020

Adina Sarig, 2021

Margaux Smith, 2022

Greg Staats, 2025

Sage Szkabarnicki-Stuart, 2021

Margaux Williamson, 2024

Ben Woolfitt and Sandra Van Iderstine, 2021

Cybèle Young, 2021

All photographs are archival pigment ink prints on Canson Baryta Prestige II 340, mounted to Dibond panels, 24 x 16", printed 2025.

Front cover portraits clockwise from top left: **Oluseye Ogunlesi**, 2021; **Rajni Perera**, 2021; **Sage Szkabarnicki-Stuart**, 2021; **Ben Woolfitt and Sandra Van Iderstine**, 2021



Neoists, 2023



Julia Dault, 2021



Micah Lexier, 2021



Sandra Brewster, 2024



BIO

Born to the family of a navy officer in what was at the time the Soviet Union, Dimitri spent his formative years traveling extensively. The bewildering variety of places, peoples, and cultures left an impression. He started to photograph at a young age, at first guided by his grandfather who was an amateur large-format photographer, and later by a succession of instructors.

Dimitri Levanoff: Artist Statement

My personal work is largely informed by a consistent, multi-decade drive towards discovering techniques and frameworks that I hope result in objects of numinous quality. The images in this collection therefore can be understood as an exploration into the methodology of creating an icon by using photographic tools.

Towards this end, I chose to photograph people from the art world: artists, gallerists, curators, and so on. They are a mix of friends, collaborators, and clients. The context of having a personal, tangible connection with my subjects is the key here, along with the forced “mundanity” of the backgrounds.

This selection includes photographs that I consider successful at capturing the sensation I aspire to, as well as photographs that strike the opposite tone. This is intentional and required to map out the spectrum of possibilities.

Graduating from art school (painting and drawing) in the mid-1980s helped him to fine tune his style and direction, and coming to Canada in the early 90’s further facilitated this process. Dimitri worked as a photographer, editor, and printmaker for a number of prominent Canadian artists. Phil Bergerson, Geoffrey James, Arnaud Maggs, Greg Staats were the teachers who influenced his practice the most, though this list includes many more contemporary Canadian photographers.

Today, Dimitri runs Imagefoundry, the boutique printmaking studio he founded in 1998. He helps Canadian artists, from emerging to famous, bring their ideas to life, while also pursuing personal projects like *BEING THERE: Portraits from the Toronto Art Community*.

From Matthew Jocelyn, General Director

For well over two decades, photographer Dimitri Levanoff has been helping artists produce the best possible impression of their work to the viewing world. His deep understanding of the work he is photographing, his forensic attention to detail, and his digital expertise form a rare toolkit with which Dimitri brings every subject to life. It's not surprising that he is sought after by artists from around the world who want their artwork recorded or reproduced.

Less well-known, more confidential has been Dimitri's own photographic opus, his portraiture. Leaning largely on the trusting relationships he has developed with so many artists over the years, Dimitri has created an album of intimate, in situ portraits, both documenting and celebrating Toronto artists in their studios. The current iteration of this ongoing project is a collection of vibrant, alive faces, and also an uncensored reflection of how these artists inhabit their work spaces, their creative homes. Serious, playful, chaotic, minimalist or manically organised, each photograph helps reveal the space as it needs to be to give birth to the poetic act of making art.

Koffler301 is a brand new, multi-use art space in the city of Toronto, situated on the top floor of the Youngplace creative hub, two floors up from Koffler Arts' main gallery. With its cinematic views across the treetops of Trinity Bellwoods Park to the crenelated cityscape beyond, this new public venue will be largely committed to the artistic creation generated in this city. To celebrate the opening of this new space nothing could be more appropriate than sharing a selection of Dimitri Levanoff's photographs of Toronto artists, the lifeblood of the poetic heartbeat of our city.

Exhibition Credits

Dimitri Levanoff, Artist

David Liss, Curator

Emily DiCarlo, Installation Technician

Koffler Arts

Matthew Jocelyn, General Director

Meredith Kenny, Gallery and Productions Manager

Josh Heuman, Head of Artistic Engagement

Laura Chapnick-Klein, Director of External Relations

Melissa Than, Senior Manager of Marketing and Communications

Jimena Perez, Communications and Outreach Coordinator

Maria Segura, Office Manager

Robert Hou, Finance Manager



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