

What to see, do, read and hear in Toronto this October - Toronto Life

By Anthony Milton

8–10 minutes



Photo by Helle Aarensbak/Getty Images

An introspective hip-hop artist's latest album

1 American rapper, singer and actor Vince Staples has come a long way from the streets of North Long Beach, California. Hitting the road in support of his sixth album, *Dark Times*, he's also the star of his own semi-biographical Netflix series, *The Vince Staples Show*, and lists collaborations with Odd Future, JPEGMafia and the late Mac Miller on his resumé. A flag-bearer of modern West Coast hip hop, Staples comes to Toronto this month for the only Canadian stop on his Black in America tour. [History, Oct. 23](#)

A beloved pop icon's farewell tour

2 The working day is done for Cyndi Lauper. The groundbreaking pop singer, who turned 71 this year, is embarking on her first tour in a decade—and the last of her career. The 23-show Girls Just Wanna Have Fun farewell tour follows the June release of *Let the Canary Sing*, a feature-length documentary celebrating Lauper's life and career. The Grammy-winning icon, known for her powerful voice, pop-punk aesthetic and LGBTQ rights advocacy, is set to go down as one of the great rock and roll artists of our time. Fans won't want to miss her swan song, complete with surprise appearances by special guests. [Scotiabank Arena, Oct. 20](#)





Photo by Tarragon Theatre

An impish take on a Shakespeare classic

3 After 400 years, it's a miracle that people still find new ways to interpret the Bard. *Goblin: Macbeth* is an improv show in which three pointy-eared imps stumble upon Shakespeare's works and decide to stage the Scottish play. It's the brainchild of Spontaneous Theatre's Rebecca Northan, who's known for her improvs of Shakespearean comedies and other audience participation-driven shows. [Tarragon Theatre, Oct. 3 to 27](#)

A journalist's harrowing family saga

4 Toronto journalist John Lorinc is best known for his writing on urban affairs, but his latest book is something of a departure. In *No Jews Live Here*, Lorinc focuses on four generations of his Hungarian Jewish family, who escaped the Holocaust, fled Budapest during the 1956 revolution and faced ongoing antisemitism before emigrating to Toronto. Drawing on his understanding of cities and culture, Lorinc traces how his ancestors were swept up in forces beyond their control and fought to survive the swift-moving stream of history. [Out Oct. 29](#)



Photo by Monica Schipper/Getty Images

A mix of stand-up and song

5 Hot off his debut album, *Now More Than Ever*, comedian and actor John Early is hitting the road for a 21-city tour. His profile has been on the rise since his star turn in HBO's *Search Party*; the album is an extension of his 2023 HBO special of the same name, and he appeared in Tim Robinson's *I Think You Should Leave* and Taylor Swift's "Anti-Hero" video. The album includes eight cover songs plus a stand-up performance. [The Opera House, Oct. 3](#)

A celebrated punk-folk singer's retrospective

6 British singer-songwriter and activist Billy Bragg has been on the scene for 40 years. He got his break in 1983, when he hand-delivered mushroom biryani to a BBC DJ who had announced on air that he was hungry—the DJ put Bragg's first record on the airwaves as thanks. Since then, Bragg has released 13 studio albums and used his fame as a vehicle for social change, speaking (and singing) out against racism, sexism and homophobia. Last year, he released a new box set of his collected works, titled *The Roaring Forty*, and now he's touring North America to mark the occasion. [Massey Hall, Oct. 11](#)

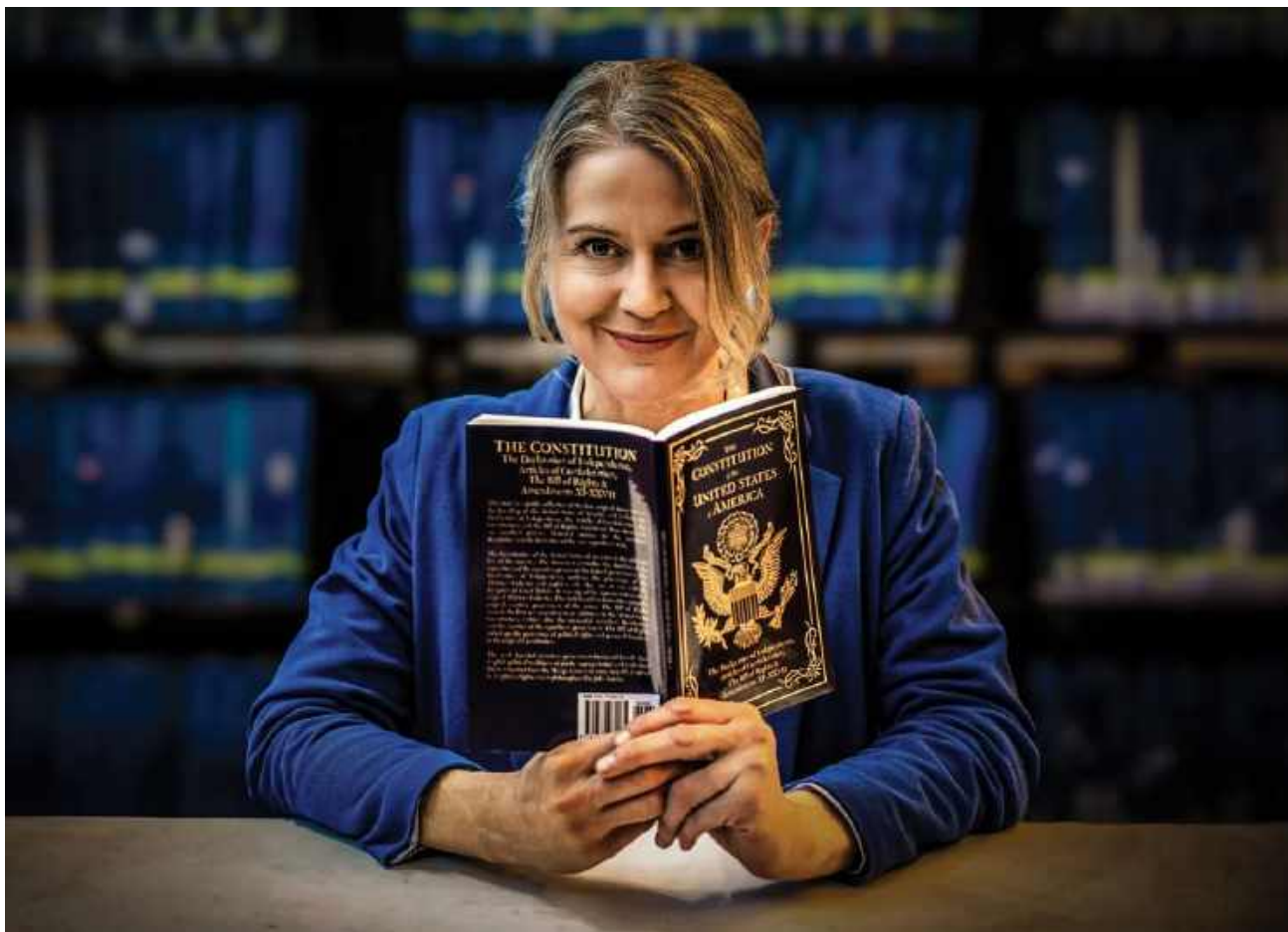


Photo by Soulpepper

A Canadian spin on a Pulitzer-nominated play

7 Who could turn a meditation on the American constitution into a Broadway hit? Heidi Schreck, a New York-based playwright who paid her way through college by winning constitutional debate competitions around the US. That story and others are recounted in her Tony-nominated one-woman play, *What the Constitution Means to Me*. Five years after its premiere—and just in time for another US election—a new version is being put on by Soulpepper and Nightwood Theatre, in which Schreck's role is played by Canadian actor and playwright Amy Rutherford. [Soulpepper Theatre, Oct. 31 to Nov. 8](#)

A calamitous quest for eternal youth

8 *Faust* graces the stage this fall in a new production led by award-winning director Amy Lang and long-time company music director Johannes Debus. Tenor Long Long stars in the title role—one of his many leading performances across North America and Europe this year. The tragic opera, composed by Charles Gounod in 1859, tells the tale of one man's deal with the devil for eternal youth. The unsettling theme is reflected in the set,

which depicts blood vessels and lung X-rays. An English translation of the French performance will be displayed above the stage. [Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, Oct. 11, 13, 16, 18, 24 and 26 and Nov. 2](#)

A worldly artist's Canadian debut

9 Born in 1946 in the northern Philippines, artist Pacita Abad fled political instability in her home country and immigrated to the United States in 1970. From there, she travelled the globe, visiting six continents while perfecting her trademark technique, trapunto, which takes its name from the Italian word for "embroider." Abad's massive quilt-like paintings layer fabric and other materials to create striking three-dimensional images. Her work, which reflects themes of migration and multiculturalism, has been exhibited around the world, from Bangkok to Washington, DC. Months before her death, in 2004, she painted a 55-metre-long bridge in Singapore, transforming it into a colourful sculpture. Now, 20 years later, a first-of-its-kind retrospective spanning three decades is touring North America, with the AGO as its final stop. Here, curator Renée van der Avoird gives us a sneak peek. [AGO, Oct. 9 to Jan. 19](#)



Pacita Abad, *Old Dhaka*, 1978. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the Pacita Abad Art Estate. Photo by Rik Sferra for Walker Art Center

Old Dhaka This scene from one of the artist's early works depicts the bustling old town of Dhaka, Bangladesh, one of the many cities Abad visited on a year-long hitchhiking trip from Istanbul to the Philippines. Bursting with colour, the piece captures the thronging crowds among the quarter's vibrant buildings and billboards.

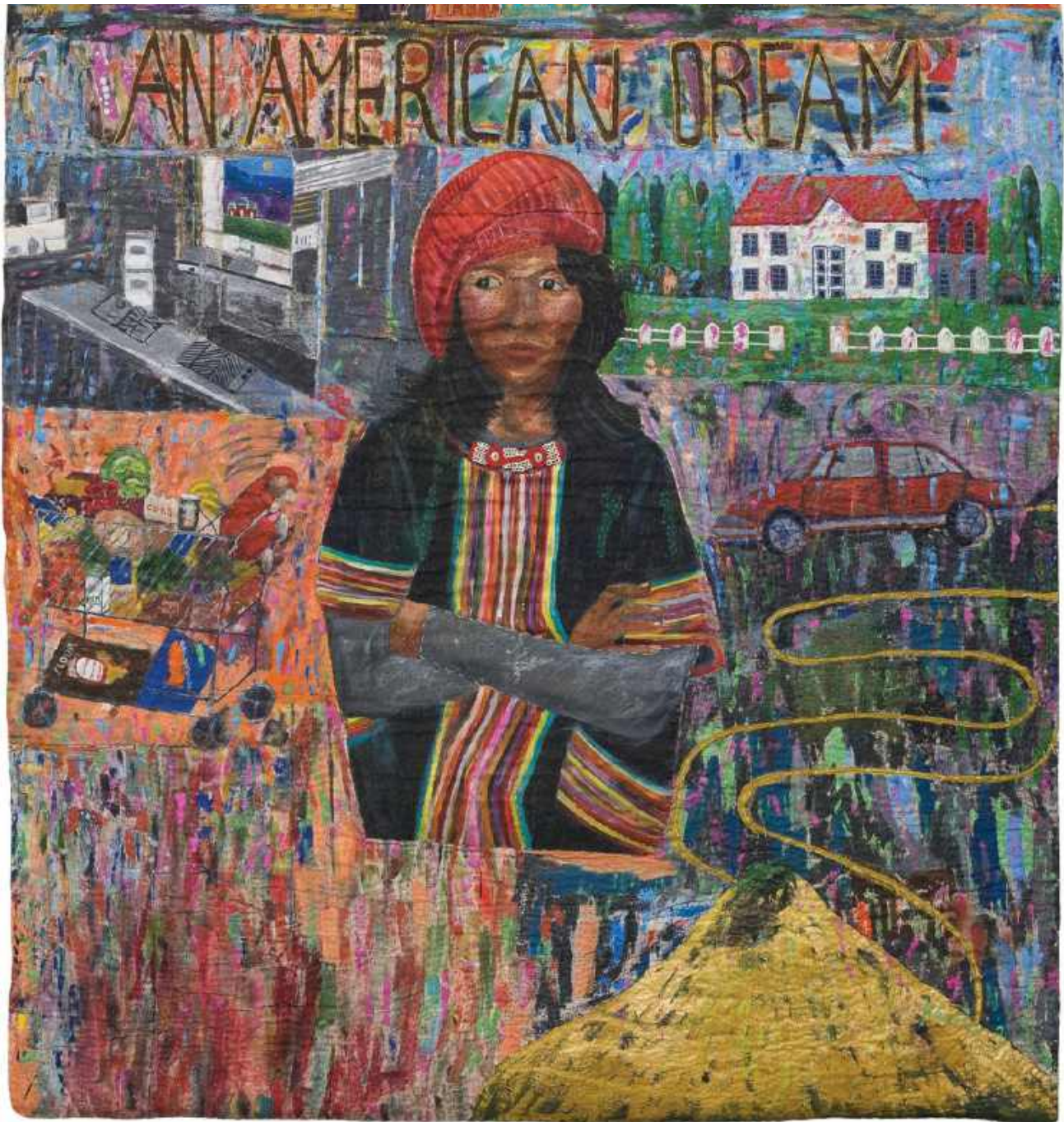




Pacita Abad, *European Mask*, 1990. Acrylic, silkscreen thread on canvas. Tate: Purchased with funds provided by the Asia Pacific Acquisitions Committee 2019. Courtesy of the Pacita Abad Art Estate and Tate. Photo by At Maculangan/Pioneer Studios

European Mask This eight-and-a-half-foot-tall trapunto is one of six pieces originally commissioned for the metro in Washington, DC, each representing a continent Abad visited. Europe, as the sole continent lacking a mask-making tradition of its own, has a trapunto inspired by designs from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This choice, along with the glancing eyes, symbolizes Europe's penchant for cultural appropriation, says Van der Avoird.

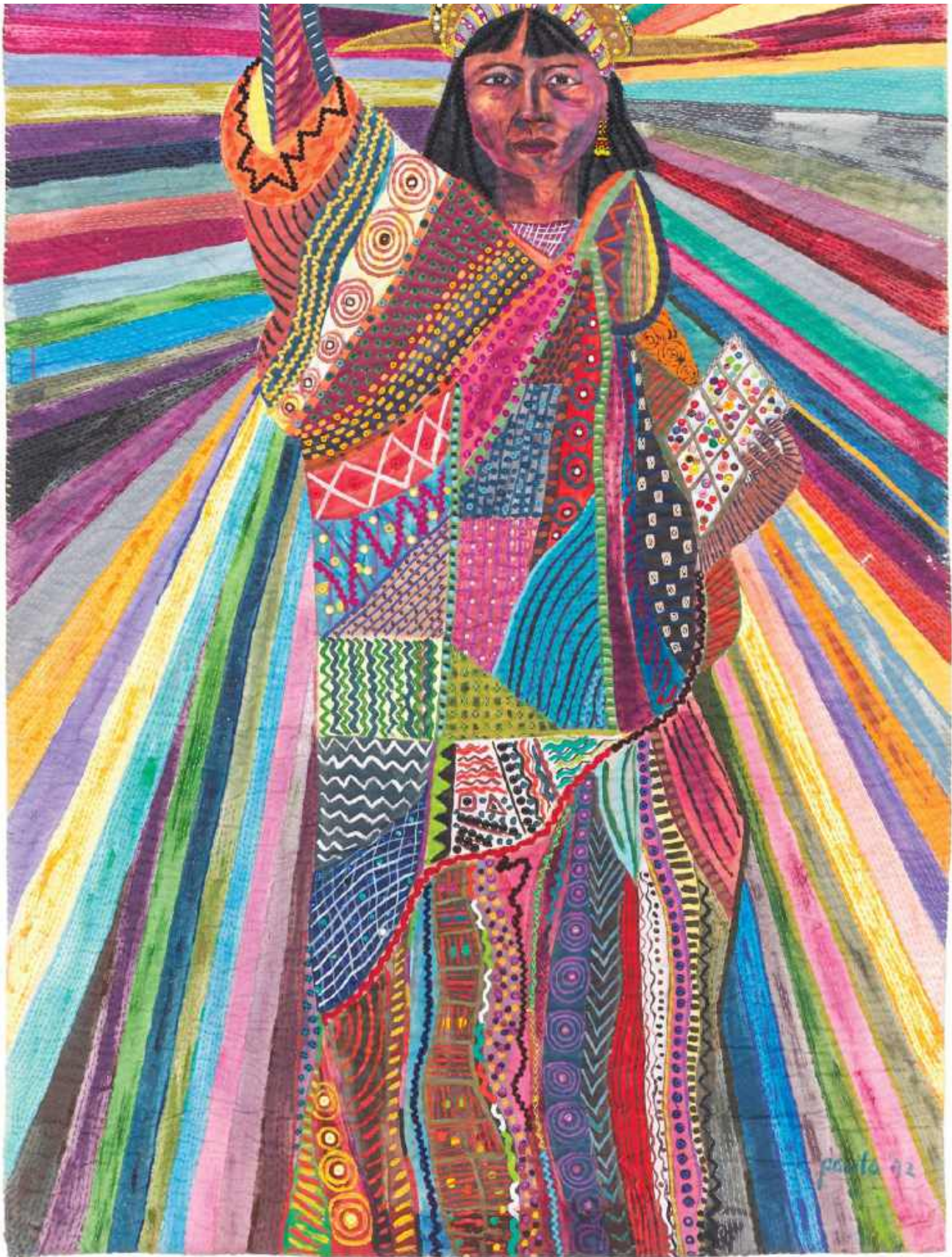




Pacita Abad, *If My Friends Could See Me Now*, 1991. Acrylic, painted canvas, gold yarn on stitched and padded canvas. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: purchased, by exchange, through a gift of Peggy Guggenheim. Courtesy of the Pacita Abad Art Estate and Tina Kim Gallery. Photo by Charles Rousset

If My Friends Could See Me Now This piece is one of several trapuntos in Abad's *Immigrant Experience* series. A figure who could be Abad stands below the words "An American Dream" while vignettes representing immigrant life in the US unfurl in the background. "It's a portrait of the textured reality that immigrants face," says Van der Avoird. "Excitement mixed with nostalgia, hopefulness but also despair."





Pacita Abad, *L.A. Liberty*, 1992. Acrylic, cotton yarn, plastic buttons, mirrors, gold thread, painted cloth on stitched and padded canvas. Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; T.B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 2022. Courtesy of the Pacita Abad Art Estate and Spike Island, Bristol. Photo by Max Clure

L.A. Liberty Abad's take on Lady Liberty was inspired by a trip to Ellis Island, where she found that the National Immigration Museum was celebrating the stories of European immigrants exclusively. The central figure here is a woman of colour who stands strong and triumphant, dressed in a gown woven from the textiles of different cultures. From this position, she welcomes the world.

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