

## Universal experiences of love and loss reflected in internationally acclaimed video homage to music legend Leonard Cohen



Candice Breitz *I'm Your Man (A Portrait of Leonard Cohen)*, 2017,  
Shot at Phi Centre, Montréal, May-June 2017, Commissioned  
by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

### Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki reopens on Monday 31 August with a celebration of musician Leonard Cohen in Candice Breitz's *I'm Your Man (A Portrait of Leonard Cohen)*.

'Love, loss, impermanence and mortality – these universal experiences are at the heart of Candice Breitz's poignant video-portrait, *I'm Your Man (A Portrait of Leonard Cohen)*', says Kirsten Lacy, Auckland Art Gallery's Director.

'Throughout the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been reminded of the comfort of community to be found in sharing music; an impulse which is at the very heart of this powerful 21st-century artwork.'

Globally renowned South African artist Candice Breitz's ambitious multi-channel video portrait, *I'm Your Man (A Portrait of Leonard Cohen)*, 2017, celebrates Cohen's musical contemplations of life and the importance his devotees find in his music in a work that is an emotionally immersive experience.

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Cohen, known as a poet as much as a musician, was the writer of quintessential early ballads 'Hallelujah' and 'Suzanne' with a career spanning from the 1960s until his death at the age of 82 in 2016.

Often referred to as Cohen's great comeback album, *I'm Your Man* (1988) was a critical success and a departure from the classical folk style for which he was known with the inclusion of 80s synth-pop style music. The album is revered as a modern masterpiece for its sobering reflections on aging and losing love.

*I'm Your Man (A Portrait of Leonard Cohen)* is a spectacular posthumous tribute to Cohen and an homage to the album. The video installation brings together a community of 18 ardent Leonard Cohen fans from his hometown of Montreal – all over the age of 65 – each of whom has cherished Cohen's music for over half a century.

These men interpret and perform *I'm Your Man* in individual recordings that merge via a multi-channel video installation. As the group of men dance, sway and croon, the work reflects on a youthful passion for music, as well as on the poignancy of time passing. The work incorporates backing vocals sumptuously re-interpreted by the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue Choir, an all-male choir from the Westmount congregation that Cohen belonged to all his life.

Kirsten Lacy continues: 'This extraordinarily moving artwork is one to which I have found myself both professionally drawn and personally attached. I first saw this work when my stepfather lay on his deathbed and found great solace in connecting with its reflections on love and loss. I care deeply about its message and am compelled to share it now – and to invite everyone back to Auckland Art Gallery to experience this moving, nostalgic and humbling work for themselves.'

Presented for the first time in New Zealand, this remarkable work now exists in perpetuity in Auckland Art Gallery's collection thanks to the Friends Acquisition funds, and confirms the Gallery's intention to substantially grow its collection of key works by artists of global repute and significance.

*I'm Your Man (A Portrait of Leonard Cohen)* will be followed by presentations of two other works by internationally acclaimed video artists recently acquired by Auckland Art Gallery: Angelica Mesiti's *Mother Tongue* and Julian Rosefeldt's, *My home is a dark and cloud-hung land*.

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and interview requests contact:**

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## About the artist

Candice Breitz (born in Johannesburg, 1972) is a Berlin-based artist whose moving image installations have been shown internationally. Throughout her career, she has explored the dynamics of an individual's relation to a larger community. Most recently, Breitz's work has focused on the conditions under which empathy is produced, reflecting on a media-saturated global culture in which strong identification with fictional characters and celebrity figures runs parallel to widespread indifference to the plight of those facing real world adversity.

Breitz represented South Africa at the 57th Venice Biennale (2017). Breitz's Venice Biennale piece, *Love Story*, 2016, was commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria in partnership with Outset Germany and was exhibited as *Wilson Must Go* at the NGV Triennial (15 December 2017 – 15 April 2018). In the past, Breitz has participated in biennales in Johannesburg (1997), São Paulo (1998), Istanbul (1999), Taipei (2000), Gwangju (2000), Tirana (2001), Venice (2005), New Orleans (2008), Goteborg (2003 + 2009), Singapore (2011) and Dakar (2014). Her work has been featured at the Sundance Film Festival (New Frontier, 2009) and the Toronto International Film Festival (*David Cronenberg: Transformation*, 2013).

Works by Breitz have been acquired by museums including the Museum of Modern Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (both in New York), Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Humlebæk), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus (Munich), Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), FNAC / Fonds national d'art contemporain (France), Castello di Rivoli (Turin), Hamburger Kunsthalle (Hamburg), M+ / Museum of Visual Culture (Hong Kong), National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne), Milwaukee Art Museum, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, MUDAM / Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (Luxembourg), MUSAC / Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (León, Spain), Kunstmuseum Lichtenstein (Vaduz), MONA / Museum of Old and New Art (Tasmania), QAGGOMA / Queensland Art Gallery (Brisbane), Museum of Fine Arts (Boston) and MAXXI / Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (Rome).