



# Stan Douglas

Catherine, Connor, Eli, Hadrian and Quinn

**“I’m an artist, and  
history is one thing I  
use to make what I  
make.”**



# Biographical Timeline/Career Overview

Born in Vancouver, Canada on **October 11, 1960**

Studied at Emily Carr College of Art in Vancouver **1979-1982**.

Multifaceted mediums reflect on the powerful potential that is embedded in significant historical moments

- film and video installations, photography, projects in television. More recently, theater productions

Represented by David Zwirner

First solo show in **1981** — Two Hangers at the Jericho Beach Air Station, Jericho Beach, Vancouver

In **1988** created Television Spots (1988) — Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal,

In **1991** started producing and broadcasting Monodramas

In **1993**, represented by David Zwirner, hosted first American solo show — “Hors-champs” in New York

**1997-98** Douglas created a series of photographs, Detroit Photos in New York and Le Detroit in **1999**

In **2008** Stan Douglas exhibited Humor, Irony and the Law, David Zwirner, New York

In **2013**, Stan Douglas: Photographs 2008–2013, presented at Carré d’Art – Musée d’Art Contemporain in Nîmes,

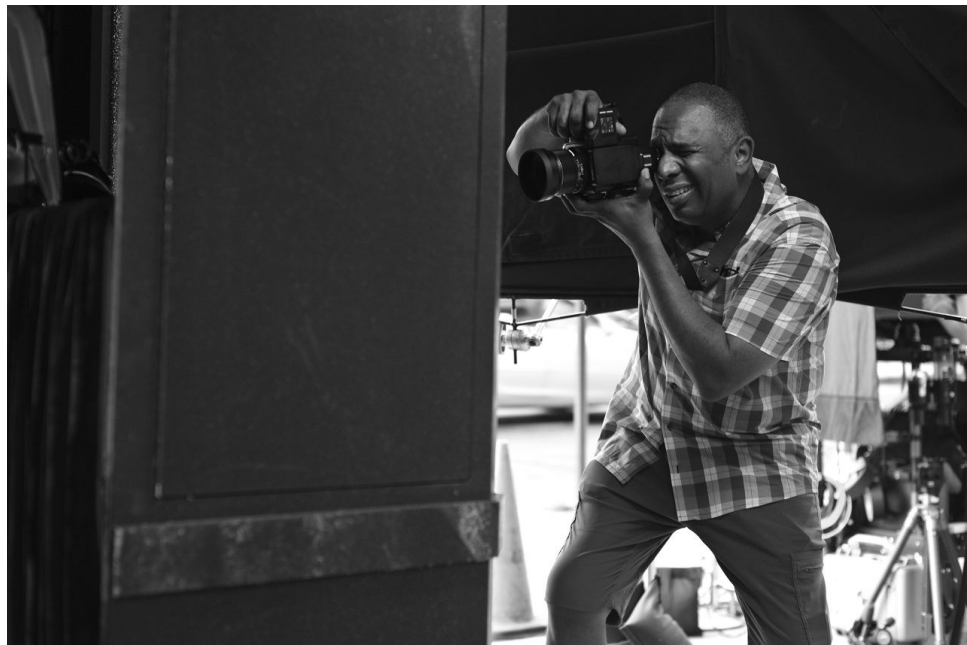
France. Traveled as Stan Douglas: Mise en scène through 2015 to Munich, Copenhagen, and Dublin.

In **March 2014** Douglas showcased his first multimedia theater production, Helen Lawrence, premiered at The Arts Club Theatre Company, Vancouver.

In **2019** 58th Venice Biennale: May You Live In Interesting Times, Venice, Italy Doppelgänger

In **2021**, Douglas revealed his permanent installation “Penn Station’s Half Century”.

**'The fact that you can never control what [photography] does completely. It's not like painting, while you're taking a photograph there's always a sort of alien consciousness working with you. The photograph is a collaboration with the real; the image is based on something outside of your head. It means that you have to put the right sort of stuff in front of the camera. Of course, now with digital technology, photography doesn't have quite the same connection to reality.'**



# Stan Douglas on display

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Pérez Art Museum Miami

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Tate Gallery, London

Vancouver Art Gallery

The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

# Awards

**2019** — Audain Prize for Lifetime Achievement in the Visual Art

**October 17, 2016** — The Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography

- On October 18, an exhibition of Douglas's work opened at the Hasselblad Center

**2013** — Scotiabank Photography Award

**2012** — The Infinity Award from the International Center of Photography, New York

**2008** — Bell Award in Video Art

**2006** — The Hnatyshyn Foundation Visual Arts Award

## October 17, 2016 — The Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography



Abbott & Cordova, 7 August 1971, 2008 (C) Stan Douglas  
(PRNewsFoto/Hasselblad Foundation) (PRNewsFoto/Hasselblad Foundation)

“An artist of outstanding significance, Stan Douglas has received international recognition for his powerful photographic art, as well as his work with video and film. His practice reflects carefully and poignantly on the history of photography and film, offering new understandings of the cultural and technological developments of both media. Furthermore, Stan Douglas has an open and highly innovative approach to both analogue and new digital formats. At the heart of his work lies a strong interest and commitment to social issues of race, gender, identity and post-colonial politics, whilst maintaining a valuable self-critical perspective on the role of the artist in contemporary culture.”

- The Hasselblad Foundation’s citation regarding Stan Douglas after winning the 2016 Hasselblad Award

# **Examples + analysis of Douglas' work**



## ***Monodramas - 1991***

Douglas's Monodramas, ten 30- to 60-second videos conceived as interventions into commercial television, interrupted the usual flow of advertising and entertainment when broadcast nightly in British Columbia for three weeks in 1992. These micronarratives mimic television's editing techniques, but as kernels of a story they refuse to cohere. They are tales of dysfunction and dislocation, misanthropy and misunderstanding: a car and a school bus nearly collide at an intersection, only to drive away; a pedestrian greets an Afro-Canadian man he encounters on the street but is told in response, "I'm not Gary." When the videos were aired unannounced during commercial breaks, viewers called the station to inquire about what was being sold, their responses evincing how the media can refocus attention from content to consumption.



## ***Hors-Champs (1992)***

A video filmed live by Douglas which captures the performance of 4 American musicians playing “Free Jazz” which was a popular experimental style of African-American music emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s

Douglas’s selection of these 4 musicians is a reference to the continual presence of African American music in Europe which started with Josephine Baker

The performance invited viewers to question the nature of black music as the form “Free Jazz” seems to fuse the traditional styles of Call and Response, Blues, Gospel and Jazz. The music’s complexity serves as a reminder of the importance of African-American cultural achievement

# CINEMA + BESPOKE



# ***Detroit Photos (1997-98) and Le Détroit (1999)***

Douglas conducts intense periods of research and “scouting” a landscape site that might inspire ideas for a video or film

Such architectural and landscape photography provided a foundation for the specter of urban decay viewed in Le Detroit’s film loop

Documents vacant lots and decrepit buildings, some partially demolished yet all clinging to lost grandeur

These classically composed shots, with strangely beautiful backgrounds propose a haunting interpretation of the social conditions that give rise to urban decay in modern cities such as Detroit



# ***Detroit Photos (1997-98) and Le Détroit (1999)***

Film installation showing a woman breaking into a house at the abandoned Herman Gardens in Detroit, whose former inhabitants have left behind a collection of domestic articles and junk

Two-tracks of 16mm black-and-white film continuously loop with the story and its negative print shown side by side. The interaction of the two images produces frequent afterimages, shadowy forms that seem to blend into one another

A photographic negative produces its own “truths” or revelations when it is reproduced

“Do you feel the breath of an empty space?” (Taussig)

Douglas’s reply is an effort to characterize that space by way of an open response, one that points to an emptiness in which anything might happen and in which meaning might be made anew



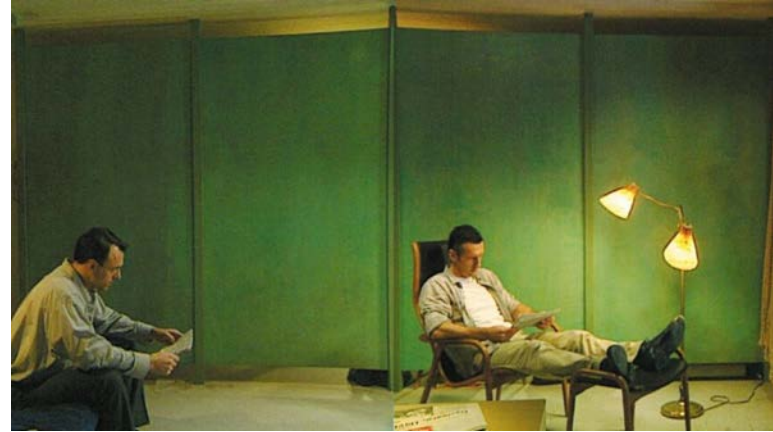


# Win, Place or Show (1998)

Win, Place or Show is a perceptually harrowing work that endlessly scrutinizes the claustrophobic social problems created by modern urban planning and architecture.

Addresses urban regeneration, television and mass production as abstract systems that while utopian, can also become modes of control or of social exclusion

From the apartment window you can see the town buildings that reflect a modernist planning model that also features in the set, producing the typical working-class home such planning would create





# ***Inconsolable Memories* - 2005**

Douglas' deep interest in urban spaces and "failed utopias" brings him to the island of Cuba where in 2005 he compiles a series of stills and video titled *Inconsolable Memories*. He creates a film which intricately incorporates elements from Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's film *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*) (1968) and a set of photographs of the island's abandoned buildings. Through the work, Douglas explores the problematic relation among history, memory, experience and subjectivity.





# ***The Secret Agent - 2015***

A tension between revolution's brief suspension of apparently unshakeable historical frameworks, and subsequent attempts to appropriate these moments of potential transformation, lies at the heart of *The Secret Agent*. Characteristic of Douglas' sensitivity to the nuanced dynamics of public and private memory in its subtle blending of historical fact, meticulous reconstruction, and fictive source material, this immersive six-screen work implies the latent impact of unresolved past moments on the present, and even on our sense of futurity.





# ***Penn Station's Half Century - 2021***

In 2021 Douglas revealed his permanent installation located in the Moynihan Train Hall, Penn Station in NY.

Commissioned by the Empire State Development in collaboration with the Public Art Fund this work is made up of four digital panels. Each one depicts a unique aspect within the extensive history of Penn Station.



# **Statements from Artist**

**“Typically historical fiction, just like science fiction, is usually an allegory of the present. So often in works I’m thinking about the present through the past.”**

**“This might be about what’s happening to these people in Portugal in the 1970s, but it’s really about what’s happening right now.”**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/12/arts/design/stan-douglass-the-secret-agent-offers-a-refracted-vision-of-history-and-terrorism.html>



# Reviews/Critiques

**"From his perspective, forgotten or naturalized incidents of modern utopia hold within them counterfactual narratives of the past and reveal elements of the future as chance (as much as power) that do not guarantee the received wisdom of our present."**

**-Warren Crichlow**

**<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.920.6192&rep=rep1&type=pdf>**

**"What makes Mr. Douglas's film different from its inspiration is the Kafkaesque way the scenes weave together when projected. Not a single one relates directly to another."**

**-Bridget L. Goodbody**

**<https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/03/arts/design/03doug.html>**

**“Like the best contemporary visual art forms, Douglas’s film and video installations are highly cognitive and perceptual, designed for experience and completion by unforeseeable meanings the viewer may produce.” -Warren Crichlow**



# Venice Biennale

## **In the past ...**

Douglas' work has been featured in the Venice Biennale in 1990, 2001, 2005, and 2019, and in documenta in 1992, 1997, and 2002. At the 58th Venice Biennale in 2019, Douglas debuted his video installation Doppelgänger and also presented a selection of photographs from his 2017 series Blackout. The artist has been chosen to represent Canada at upcoming the 59th Venice Biennale in April 2022.

# Stan Douglas: Doppelgänger



# **“Stan Douglas: 2011 ≠ 1848”**

This exhibit will be on display at the Venice Biennale from April 23–November 27, 2022.

It will unfold across two venues in Venice. The exhibit consists of 4 large-scale photographs which will be on display in the Canada Pavilion in the Giardini, and a new 2-channel video installation which will be on display in a sixteenth-century salt warehouse on Dorsoduro — the Magazzini del Sale No. 5.

As the title suggests, the exhibit highlights the disruptive events of 2011 and 1848 commenting on the difference in how the events were broadcasted.

- In 1848, there were disturbances in Europe. News of the revolts spread via print media.
- In 2011, there was disturbance all over the globe. News of these events spread virally through electronic media.



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