

# Urbanspace Gallery

## The Urban Forest of Ontario Place Curatorial Statement

I believe most city dwellers who have regular access to public green spaces take them for granted. We seldom stop to think about them. We make our way regularly with little thought of how such spaces came to be, and we just expect they will always be there. The questions and conversations around the coming changes to Ontario Place have unearthed memories of this place for many as we consider the reality of changes that may destroy much of this unique urban forest.

This exhibition came out of a desire to draw attention to the uniqueness of the urban forest that is fifty years old this year at Ontario Place.

Many of us may not be able to differentiate one green spaces from another. We see trees, greenery and some landscaping and just think - park. However, there is a unique and important distinction to this place. *Ontario Place, stands out as a unique and internationally celebrated park that is immediately recognizable.* Having been only recently introduced to the **urban forest** as a concept, an idea I never really considered, I have developed a heightened awareness of what the irreversible changes to Ontario Place may mean.

We all know the benefits of green spaces for environmental or mental and physical health. A research study published in 2014 by Pacific Forest Trust in the United States, points to the benefits of mature trees on the environment.

“A sweeping study of forests around the world finds that the older the tree, the greater its potential to store carbon and slow climate change.

The 38 researchers from 15 countries found that 97 percent of trees from more than 400 species studied grew more quickly as they aged, thus absorbing more carbon.” 1.

The urban forest at Ontario Place is special because of its size and thus benefits to our environment, it’s global world heritage significance and its importance to communities across Ontario as a public gathering place.

“Ontario Place, a cultural heritage landscape, remains a rare and intact Modernist expression of integrated architecture, engineering and landscape that honours and incorporates the natural setting of Lake Ontario. It was a remarkable and ambitious achievement of late twentieth century architecture, and holds an enduring influence in Toronto, the province and internationally” 2.

The photography featured in this exhibition invites you to spend time considering the importance of the urban forest at Ontario Place.

The artists responded to a call to document the trees of Ontario Place. The Jury was happy to see such a beautiful selection of photographs come in for review. The winning images are included here along with some other outstanding works. We know that pending development changes to this historic public park in the coming years means this body of work is helping to create a record of the hundreds of trees that were planted on site over 50 years ago.

We hope you will take the time to visit this urban forest as warmer weather approaches us. We hope you become re-acquainted with Ontario Place's significance and create some memories that may motivate you to advocate for these trees to be enjoyed for many generations to come.

Curator: Karen Carter

Thank you to our Jury Members: Darcy Killeen Craig D'Arville and Margaret Zeidler.

1. <https://www.pacificforest.org/ee-old-trees-store-more-carbon-more-quickly-than-younger-trees/>
2. <https://uwaterloo.ca/heritage-resources-centre/blog/post/ontario-place-special-place-and-case>