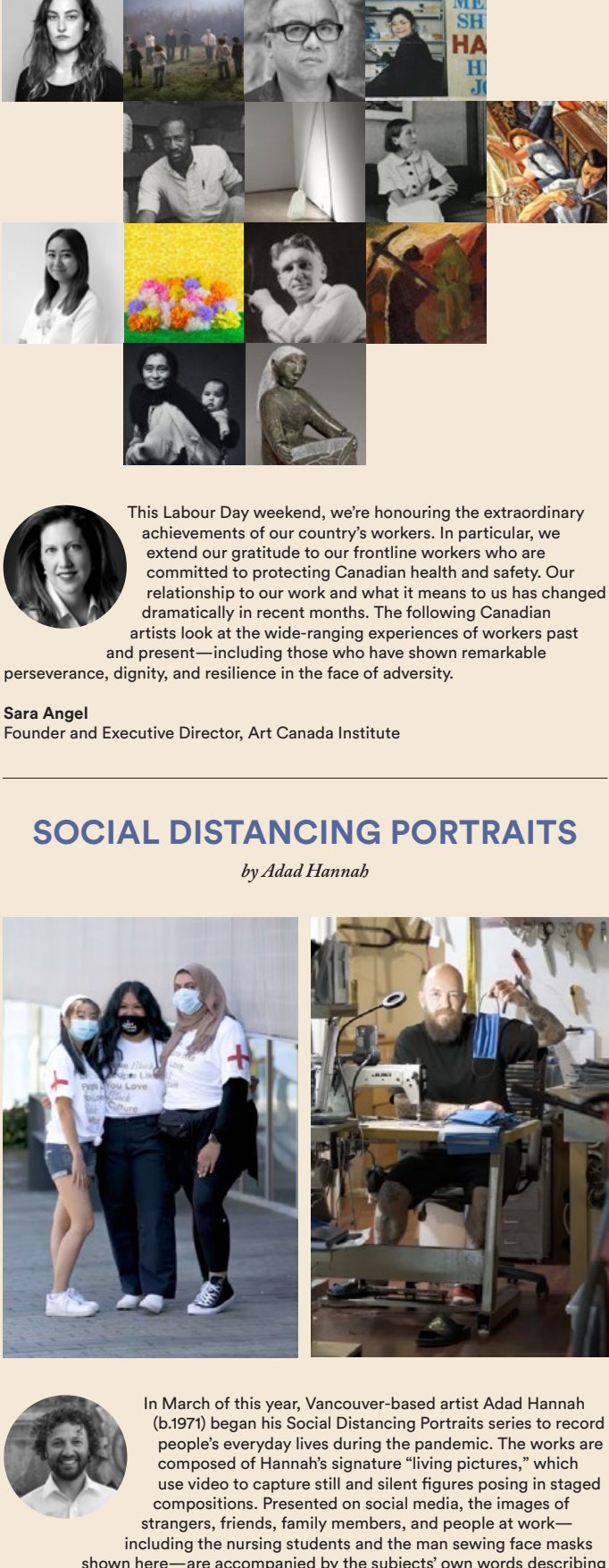


MAKE IT WORK: A LOOK AT LABOUR BY THIRTEEN CANADIAN ARTISTS

*Art that brings the meaning of industry,
employment, toil, and effort into focus*



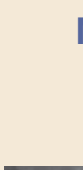
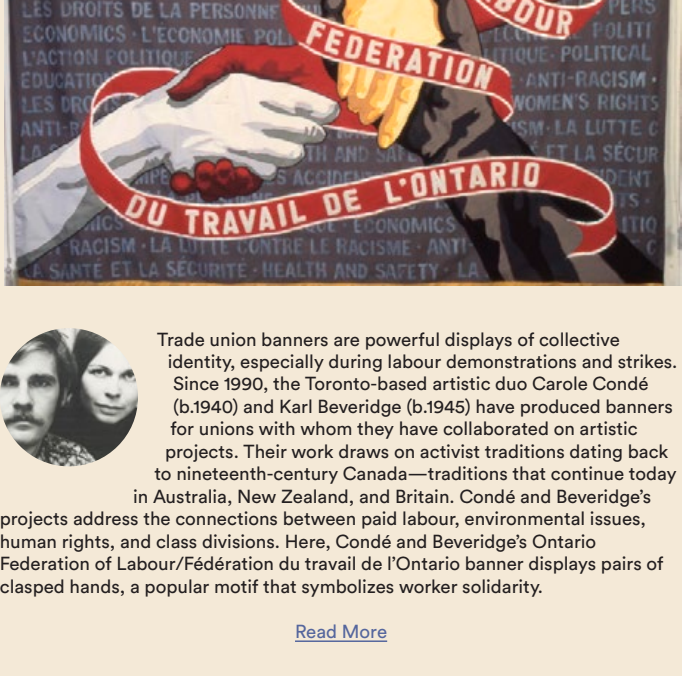
This Labour Day weekend, we're honouring the extraordinary achievements of our country's workers. In particular, we extend our gratitude to our frontline workers who are committed to protecting Canadian health and safety. Our relationship to our work and what it means to us has changed dramatically in recent months. The following Canadian artists look at the wide-ranging experiences of workers past and present—including those who have shown remarkable perseverance, dignity, and resilience in the face of adversity.



Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

SOCIAL DISTANCING PORTRAITS

by Adad Hannah



In March of this year, Vancouver-based artist Adad Hannah (b.1971) began his Social Distancing Portraits series to record people's everyday lives during the pandemic. The works are composed of Hannah's signature "living pictures," which use video to capture still and silent figures posing in staged compositions. Presented on social media, the images of strangers, friends, family members, and people at work—including the nursing students and the man sewing face masks shown here—are accompanied by the subjects' own words describing their experience of, as the artist puts it, "this strange, tense in-between moment we're currently in."

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SURVEYOR

by Alex Colville



Famous for his precisely rendered realist paintings of Atlantic Canada subjects and landscapes, Alex Colville (1920–2013) presents a surveyor at work, assessing a bucolic countryside. With her back to the viewer, she peers through the telescope of a total station, an electronic instrument used to measure the angle and distance between two designated points. The act of perceiving—by the artist, subject, and viewer—is a recurring theme in Colville's work. In *Surveyor*, 2001, as with many of his depictions of women, the subject embodies what he describes as "the searching vision of the female," a profound look at her surroundings and one that goes much deeper than what Colville described as the "passive" approach of the male gaze.

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TRADE UNION BANNERS

by Carole Conde and Karl Beveridge

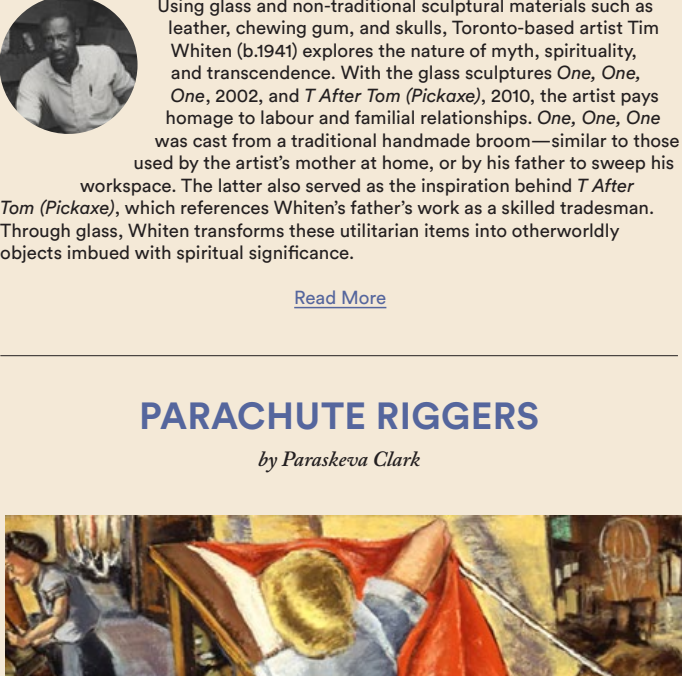


Trade union banners are powerful displays of collective identity, especially during labour demonstrations and strikes. Since 1990, the Toronto-based artistic duo Carole Conde (b.1940) and Karl Beveridge (b.1945) have produced banners for unions with whom they have collaborated on artistic projects. Their work draws on activist traditions dating back to nineteenth-century Canada—traditions that continue today in Australia, New Zealand, and Britain. Conde and Beveridge's projects address the connections between paid labour, environmental issues, human rights, and class divisions. Here, Conde and Beveridge's Ontario Federation of Labour/Fédération du travail de l'Ontario banner displays pairs of clasped hands, a popular motif that symbolizes worker solidarity.

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YOUNG LADIES OF NOTMAN'S PRINTING ROOM, MISS FINDLAY'S GROUP

by William Notman



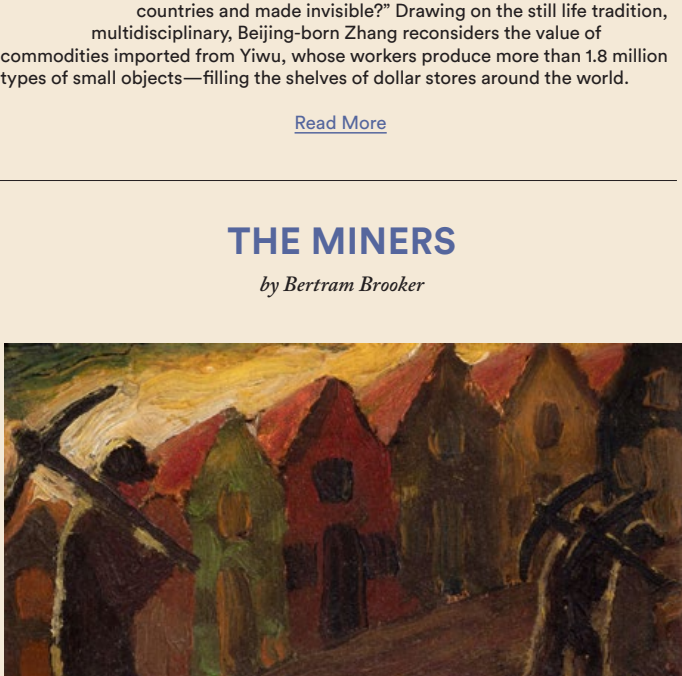
William Notman (1826–1891) was the leading photographer in Canada in the nineteenth century, renowned for his ambitious composite photographs and staged winter scenes. Notman's thriving Montreal studio was reliant on a large staff that included teams of women, such as the working-class ones pictured here in 1876. These employees had the tedious and messy task of preparing paper and printing negatives, whereas middle-class women mounted or retouched photographs in the art department. The division of labour in Notman's studio reveals how gender and class restricted the types of work available to women during this period.

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PIECE WORK

(detail)

by Sara Angelucci

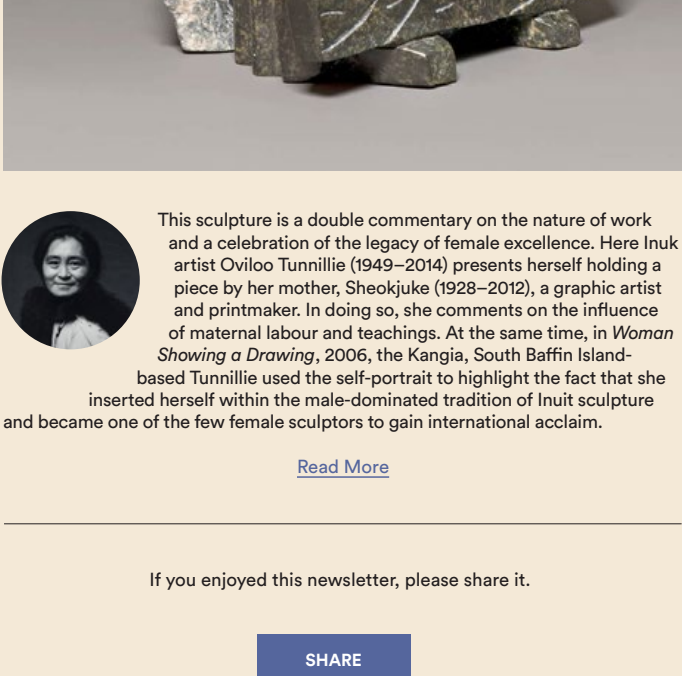


Originally from Hamilton, Ontario, Toronto-based artist Sara Angelucci (b.1962) created the autobiographical and multi-media *Piece Work*, 2017, combining still photography, moving image, sonic performance, sculpture, and installation. Based on her family's history and archives, with *Piece Work* Angelucci explores the lives of the predominantly female immigrant employees at Hamilton's Coppley Apparel, a clothing factory specializing in men's suits. This was where the artist's Italian-born mother received her first paying job, working as a sewer from 1956 to 1968. The photographs provide close-up views of the sewers' hands as they work, emphasizing their skill, strength, and dignity.

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CANOE MANNED BY VOYAGEURS PASSING A WATERFALL

by Frances Anne Hopkins



During the twelve years that British artist Frances Anne Hopkins (1838–1919) lived in Canada, between 1858 and circa 1870s, she frequently accompanied her husband, Edward Hopkins, a Hudson's Bay Company official, on trips along trading routes throughout the Great Lakes. Inspired by their journey, she produced captivating paintings of trade canoe travel. In this breathtaking example from 1869, Hopkins depicts herself in the centre, next to her husband, as they travel with several voyageurs. As reliance on the canoe as the primary mode of transport within the fur trade was waning during this period—in favour of travel by steamboat and train—Hopkins's paintings provide important documentation of this disappearing aspect of industry.

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TREE PLANTING: MORNING MEETING

by Sarah Anne Johnson

This tableau of sculpted tree planters meeting at dawn—their body language and facial expressions conveying exhaustion—was created and photographed by Winnipeg-based interdisciplinary artist Sarah Anne Johnson (b.1976). Known for manipulating her photographs—often by incorporating other media, or burning, scratching, and gouging them—to convey her emotional response to the subtitled, Johnson's *Morning Meeting*, 2005, to document her summers working in northern Canada. In addition to taking photographs of her fellow tree planters and natural surroundings, Johnson created scenes like this one, in which the small figures further express her visual and emotional experience of working as a tree planter.

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MELLY SHUM HATES HER JOB

by Ken Lum

Currently based in Philadelphia, Vancouver native Ken Lum (b.1956) examines issues of race and class, as well as the nature of language, with *Melly Shum Hates Her Job*, 1990. The intensity of the word "hates" in pulsating red contrasts with the picture's woman's pleasant, mild-mannered demeanour, reflecting Lum's characteristic dry humour. When this photo-text work was featured in Lum's exhibition at the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam in 1990—and a reproduction on the building's exterior advertised the show—the piece became a famous fixture in the city. Although it has since been removed, the work has become a popular presence on social media.

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ONE, ONE, ONE

and

T AFTER TOM (PICKAXE)

by Tim Whiten

Using glass and non-traditional materials such as leather, chewing gum, and skulls, Toronto-based artist Tim Whiten (b.1941) explores the nature of myth, spirituality, and transcendence. With the glass sculptures *One, One, One*, 2002, and *T After Tom (Pickaxe)*, 2010, the artist pays homage to labour and familial relationships. *One, One, One*, 2002, was cast from a traditional handmade broom—similar to those used by the artist's mother at home, or by his father to sweep his workspace. The latter also served as the inspiration behind *T After Tom (Pickaxe)*, which references Whiten's father's work as a skilled tradesman. Through glass, Whiten transforms these utilitarian items into powerful objects imbued with spiritual significance.

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PARACHUTE RIGGERS

by Paraskeva Clark

This dynamic scene of female workers preparing parachutes at the Royal Canadian Air Force training base in Trenton, Ontario, in January 1945 was created by the Toronto-based Russian émigré Paraskeva Clark (1898–1986), who examined Canadian contemporary social and political issues in the late 1930s and 1940s. After spending a week at the training base, Clark completed this and two other paintings as part of a commission from the National Gallery of Canada to document the role of the Women's Division of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the war effort.

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MEANS OF EXCHANGE

by Shellee Zhang

In North America, the label "Made in China" has negative connotations, referring to poor-quality and mass-produced goods. With her photographic series *Means of Exchange*, 2019, depicting colourful displays of pop-culture products manufactured in the Chinese city of Yiwu, Toronto-based artist Shellee Zhang (b.1990) explores this idea and asks: "How are acts of labour devalued when regulated to other countries and made invisible?" Drawing on the still life tradition, multidisciplinary, Beijing-born Zhang reconsiders the value of commodities imported from Yiwu, whose workers produce more than 1.8 million types of small objects—filling the shelves of dollar stores around the world.

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THE MINERS

by Bertram Brooker

English-born, Toronto-based artist Bertram Brooker's (1888–1955) sombre depiction of workers on their way to the mining pit suggests that the plight of the working class was at the forefront of his mind in the immediate post-war years when he created this oil painting, the only one that survives from 1922. Three years earlier, Brooker had been living in Winnipeg when the Winnipeg General Strike—the largest strike in Canadian history—occurred, opening his eyes to the economic inequality and poverty experienced by the city's working class. In the same year that Brooker created *The Miners*, he started producing non-objective paintings, a move that would make him one of Canada's first abstract painters.

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WOMAN SHOWING A DRAWING

by Oviloo Tunnilie

This sculpture is a double commentary on the nature of work and a celebration of the legacy of female excellence. Here Inuk artist Oviloo Tunnilie (b.1990) explores this idea and asks: "How are acts of labour devalued when regulated to other countries and made invisible?" Drawing on the still life tradition, multidisciplinary, Beijing-born Zhang reconsiders the value of commodities imported from Yiwu, whose workers produce more than 1.8 million types of small objects—filling the shelves of dollar stores around the world.

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