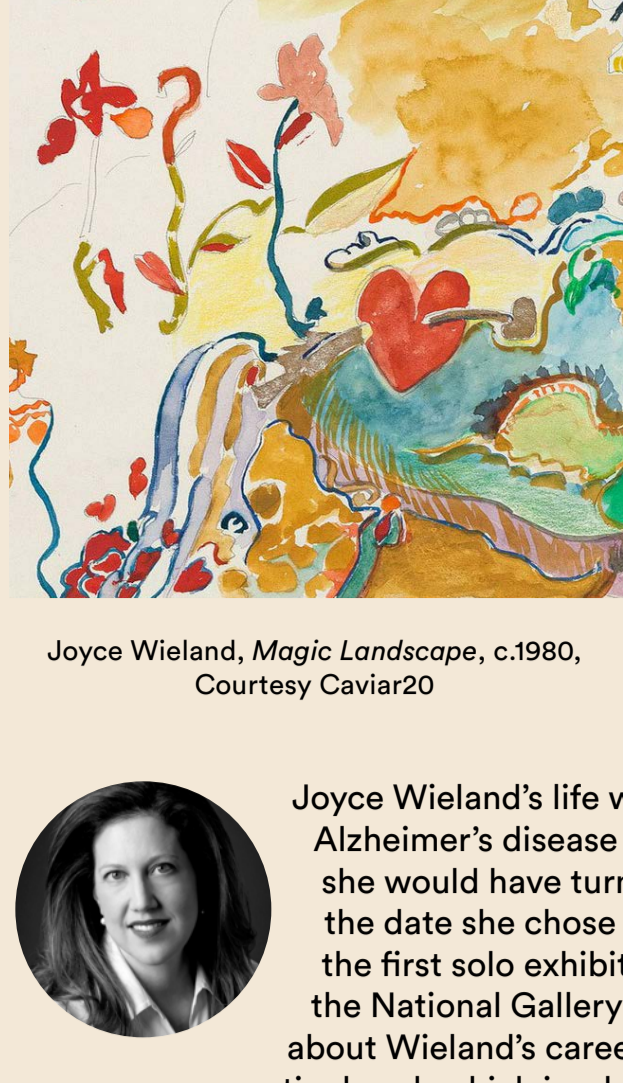
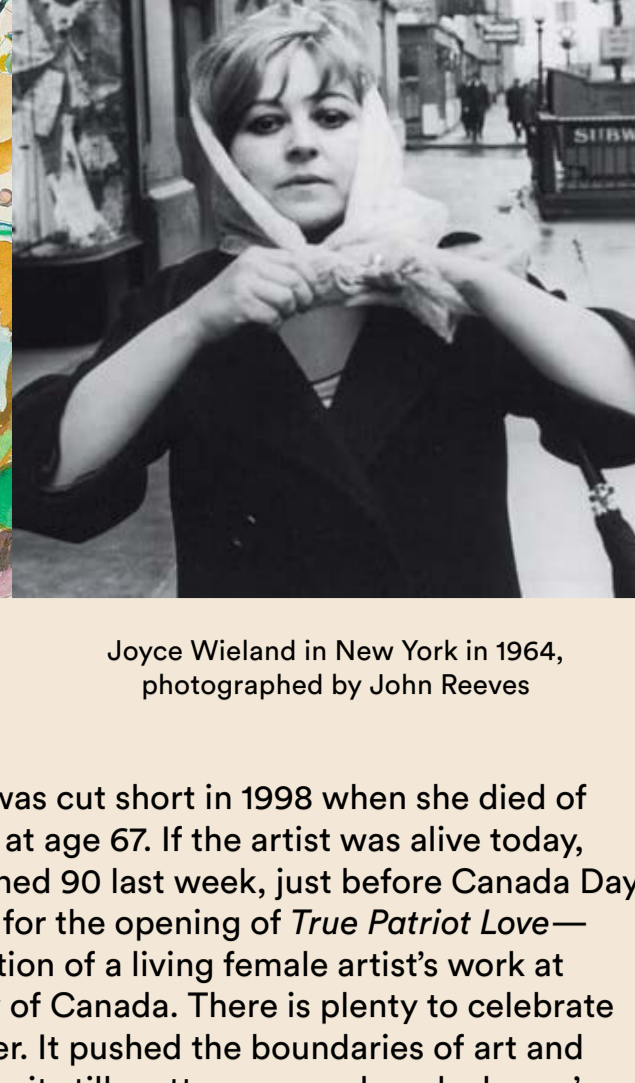
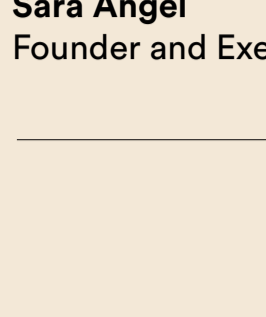


RE-JOYCE! WIELAND!

Remembering the Artist on Her 90th Birthday

Joyce Wieland, *Magic Landscape*, c.1980, Courtesy Caviar20

Joyce Wieland in New York in 1964, photographed by John Reeves

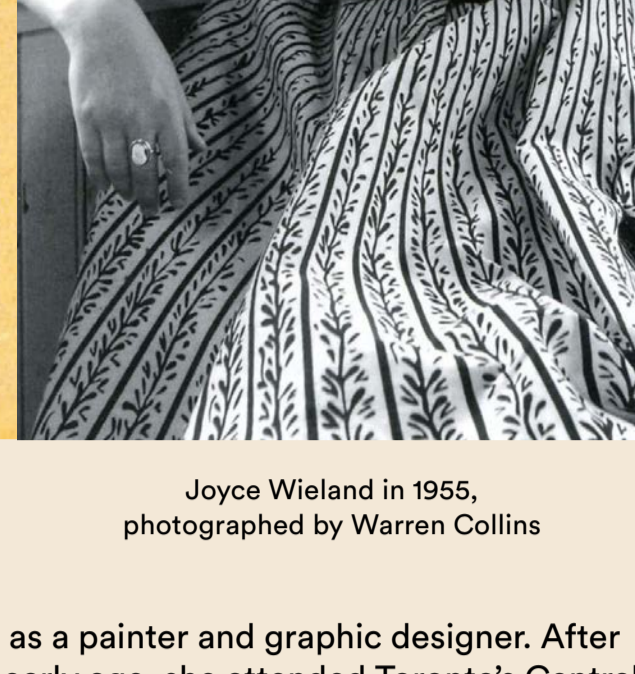


Joyce Wieland's life was cut short in 1998 when she died of Alzheimer's disease at age 67. If the artist was alive today, she would have turned 90 last week, just before Canada Day, the date she chose for the opening of *True Patriot Love*—the first solo exhibition of a living female artist's work at the National Gallery of Canada. There is plenty to celebrate about Wieland's career. It pushed the boundaries of art and nationhood, which is why it still matters so much and why we're marking the occasion of her birth by remembering highlights from her life with excerpts from ACI's book *Joyce Wieland: Life & Work* by Johanne Sloan.

Sara Angel

Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

AN APTITUDE FOR ART

Joyce Wieland, *Untitled (Myself as a Young Girl)* (detail), n.d., private collection

Joyce Wieland in 1955, photographed by Warren Collins

Wieland started her career in Toronto as a painter and graphic designer. After she expressed an aptitude for art at an early age, she attended Toronto's Central Technical School. There, she came into contact with sculptors and painters, including Doris McCarthy (1910–2010), who became an important role model.

Socially and politically engaged, Wieland would soon find herself drawn to activism, espousing feminist and ecological causes and exploring the Canadian question of national identity.

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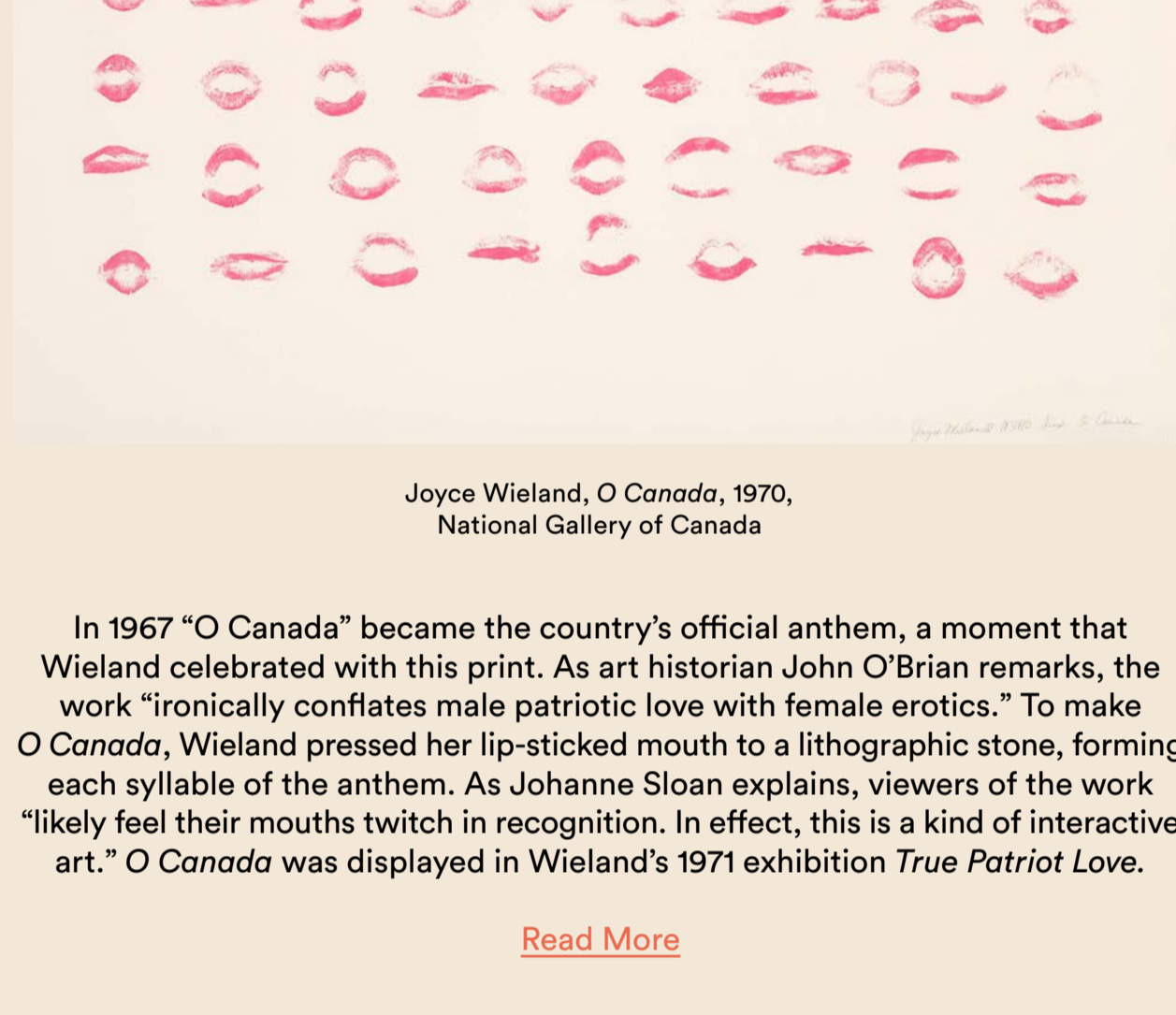
POP STAR

Joyce Wieland, *Cooling Room No. 1*, 1964, University of Lethbridge Art Collection

Between 1962 and 1971, while living in New York with her husband, Michael Snow, Wieland made a dozen experimental films, as well as paintings, collages, assemblages, quilts, and erotic drawings. This period—a productive time when Wieland opened up her practice to encompass a range of new materials and media as she plugged into the Pop Art zeitgeist of the day—saw the artist begin to move away from painting, preferring instead to create assemblages like this one and quilts that hung on gallery walls.

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MOUTHING THE WORDS

Joyce Wieland, *O Canada*, 1970, National Gallery of Canada

In 1967 "O Canada" became the country's official anthem, a moment that Wieland celebrated with this print. As art historian John O'Brian remarks, the work "ironically conflates male patriotic love with female erotics." To make *O Canada*, Wieland pressed her lip-sticked mouth to a lithographic stone, forming each syllable of the anthem. As Johanne Sloan explains, viewers of the work "likely feel their mouths twitch in recognition. In effect, this is a kind of interactive art." *O Canada* was displayed in Wieland's 1971 exhibition *True Patriot Love*.

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MAKE AMERICA CANADIAN

Joyce Wieland, stills from *Rat Life and Diet in North America*, 1968, National Gallery of Canada

While living in New York, Wieland joined a generation of activists, intellectuals, students, and artists outraged by the Vietnam war—and inspired by Canada.

These stills are from Wieland's experimental film *Rat Life and Diet in North America*, a story about rats (played by pet gerbils) held as political prisoners in the United States (by a jailer cat), who make a heroic escape to Canada. With this work Wieland conveys a sense of American menace and an urgency for Canada to become a utopian destination of abundance, pleasure, and peace.

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PASSION PLAY

Joyce Wieland, *Reason over Passion*, 1968, National Gallery of Canada

In 1968 Wieland saw Pierre Elliott Trudeau as the champion of a strong Canada, capable of countering American cultural and ideological expansion. In honour of Canada's 15th prime minister she created *Reason over Passion*, a quilt-like work stitched with an appliqué quotation from Trudeau's assertion, "Reason over passion—that is the theme of all my writing." The genius of *Reason over Passion* is its innovative, hybrid art form that pays homage to aspects of traditional quilt-making—an art form undertaken by women that had historically been devalued because it was categorized as craft, or "women's work"—while still engaging with Pop, Conceptual, and other neo-avant-garde art practices.

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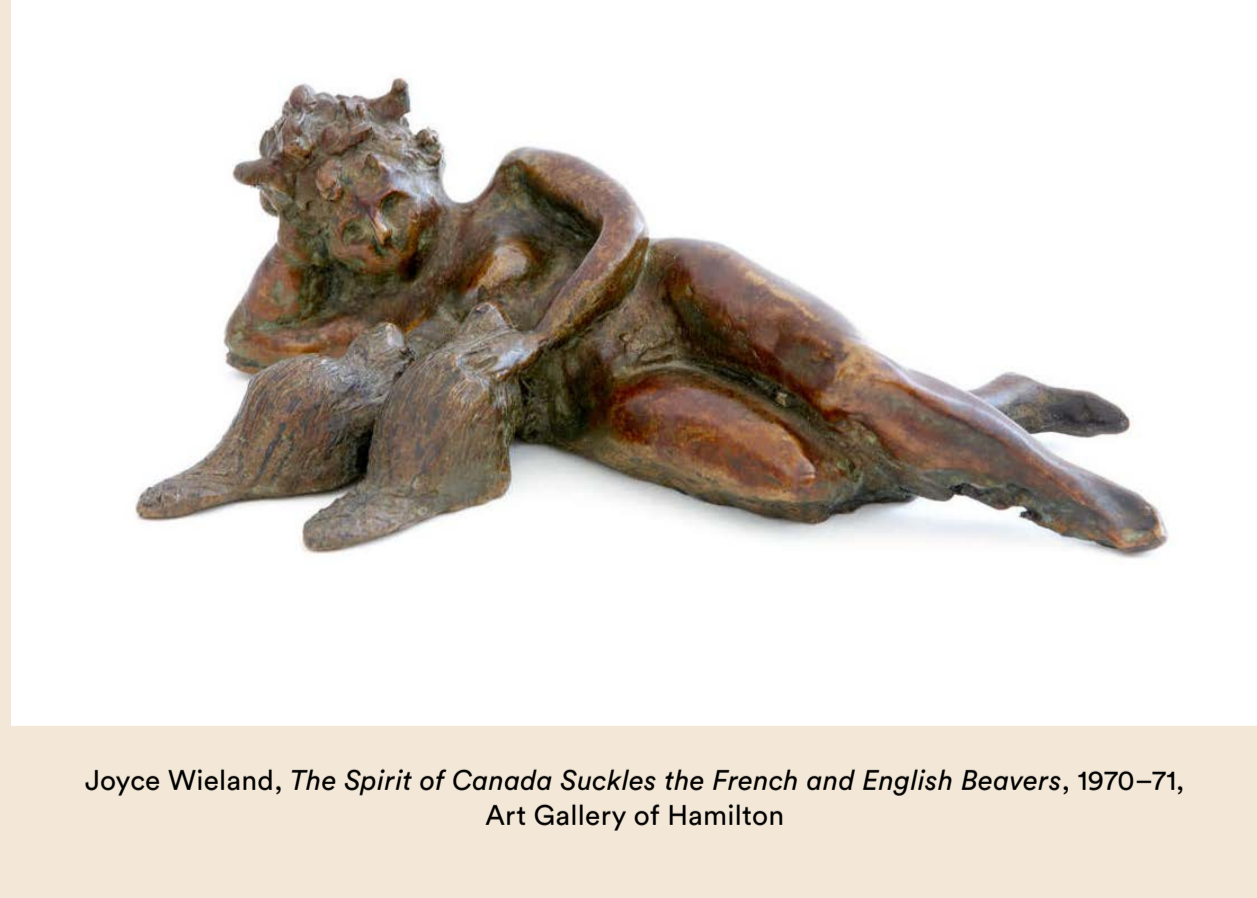
BREAKING BOUNDARIES

Joyce Wieland's *True Patriot Love* exhibition opening on July 1, 1971, at the National Gallery of Canada

This installation shot of Wieland's one-woman National Gallery of Canada show reveals how she redefined the nation's experience of museum going. In addition to sculpture and art that was hung on the wall, the exhibition included a live-animal art installation, with a dozen ducks splashing in a cordoned-off blue plastic pool. "Today, the transformation of an institutional space is business as usual in the art world," notes Marc Mayer, the former director of the National Gallery of Canada. Not so in 1971. "Wieland was at the vanguard of doing such things."

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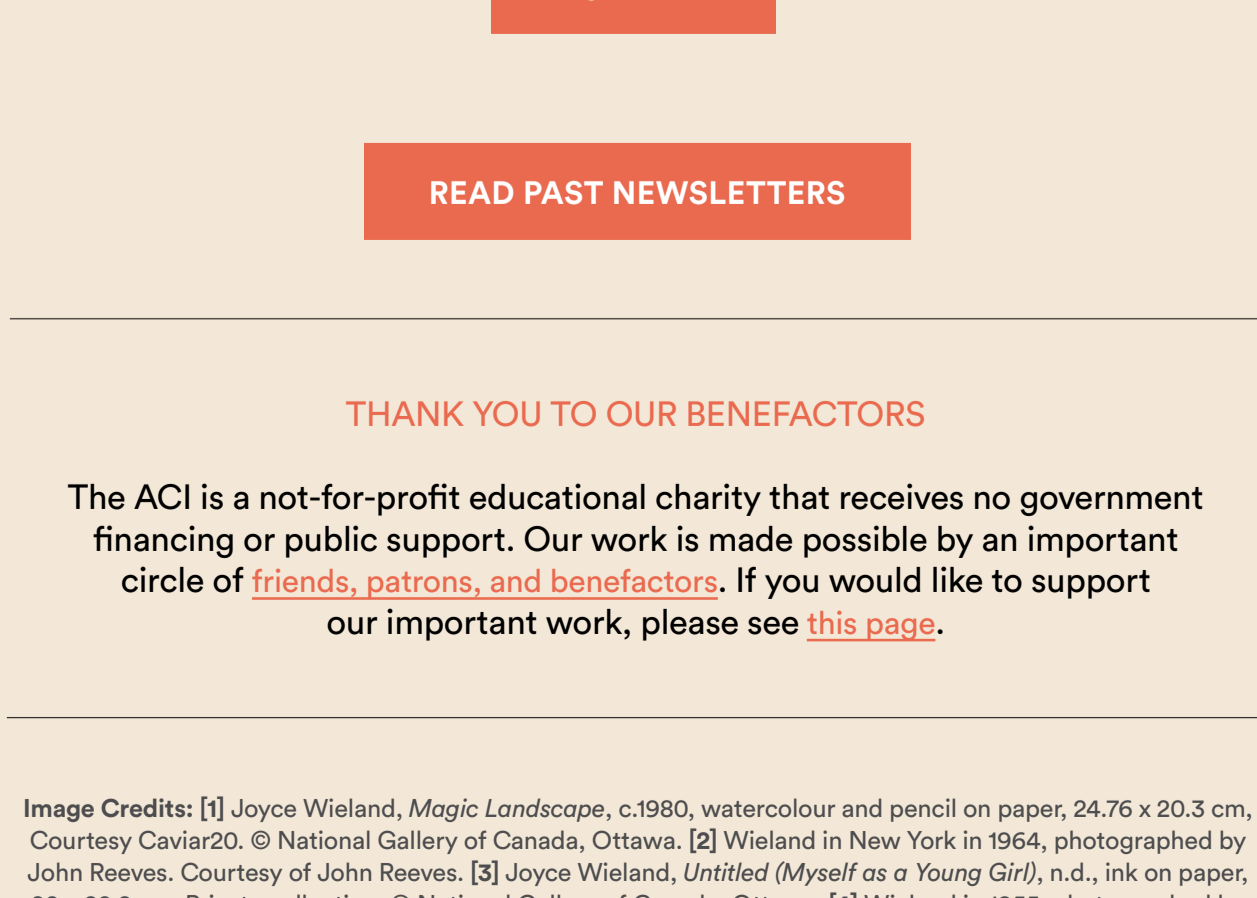
BED WARNING

Joyce Wieland, *The Water Quilt* (detail), 1970–71, Art Gallery of Ontario

In addition to being a filmmaker, collagist, painter, and sculptor, Wieland was an environmental activist. *The Water Quilt* (also shown in *True Patriot Love*) comprises sixty-four square cushions. Each is adorned with a flap embroidered with an Arctic flower, and the fabric hides photo reproductions of text from James Laxer's *The Energy Poker Game*, a topical book that outlined the danger of selling domestic natural resources to the United States. With works like this one, Wieland aimed to use *True Patriot Love* to educate viewers into falling in love with Canada while also alerting them to the peril it faced.

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MOTHER OF REINVENTION

Joyce Wieland, *The Spirit of Canada Suckles the French and English Beavers*, 1970–71, Art Gallery of Hamilton

Like a religious allegory of charity, *The Spirit of Canada Suckles the French and English Beavers* features a nursing woman, but beavers rather than cherubs suckle at each breast. "I think of Canada as female," Wieland famously stated—this is why *True Patriot Love* is often remembered as a feminist milestone. For her, the show's objective was to reinvent and reinterpret the nation's symbols and iconography, "everything from the trillium to the name of the country...to renew and begin to invent its future."

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Image Credits: [1] Joyce Wieland, *Magic Landscape*, c.1980, watercolour and pencil on paper, 24.76 x 20.3 cm, Courtesy Caviar20. © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. [2] Wieland in New York in 1964, photographed by John Reeves. Courtesy of John Reeves. [3] Joyce Wieland, *Untitled (Myself as a Young Girl)*, n.d., ink on paper, 20 x 20.2 cm. Private collection. © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. [4] Wieland in 1955, photographed by Warren Collins. [5] Joyce Wieland, *Cooling Room No. 1*, 1964, wood, metal, and plastic, 73.7 x 58.9 x 27.9 cm. University of Lethbridge Art Collection; Gift of Vivian and David Campbell, 1989. © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. [6] Joyce Wieland, *O Canada*, 1970, lithograph in red on wove paper, 57.4 x 76.4 cm. © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo © NGC. [7] Joyce Wieland, *Rat Life and Diet in North America*, 1968, 16mm film, colour, sound, 14 min. 30 sec. Cinéma-thèque québécoise / © Cinéma-thèque québécoise. © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. [8] Joyce Wieland, *Reason over Passion*, 1968, quilted cotton, 256.5 x 302.3 x 8 cm. © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo © NGC. [9] Joyce Wieland's *True Patriot Love* exhibition opening on July 1, 1971, at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photographer: unknown. [10] Joyce Wieland, *The Water Quilt*, 1970–71, embroidered cloth and printed cloth assemblage, 134.6 x 131.1 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. [11] Joyce Wieland, *The Spirit of Canada Suckles the French and English Beavers*, 1970–71, bronze, 6 x 19.3 x 12.5 cm. Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of Irving Zucker, 1992. © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.