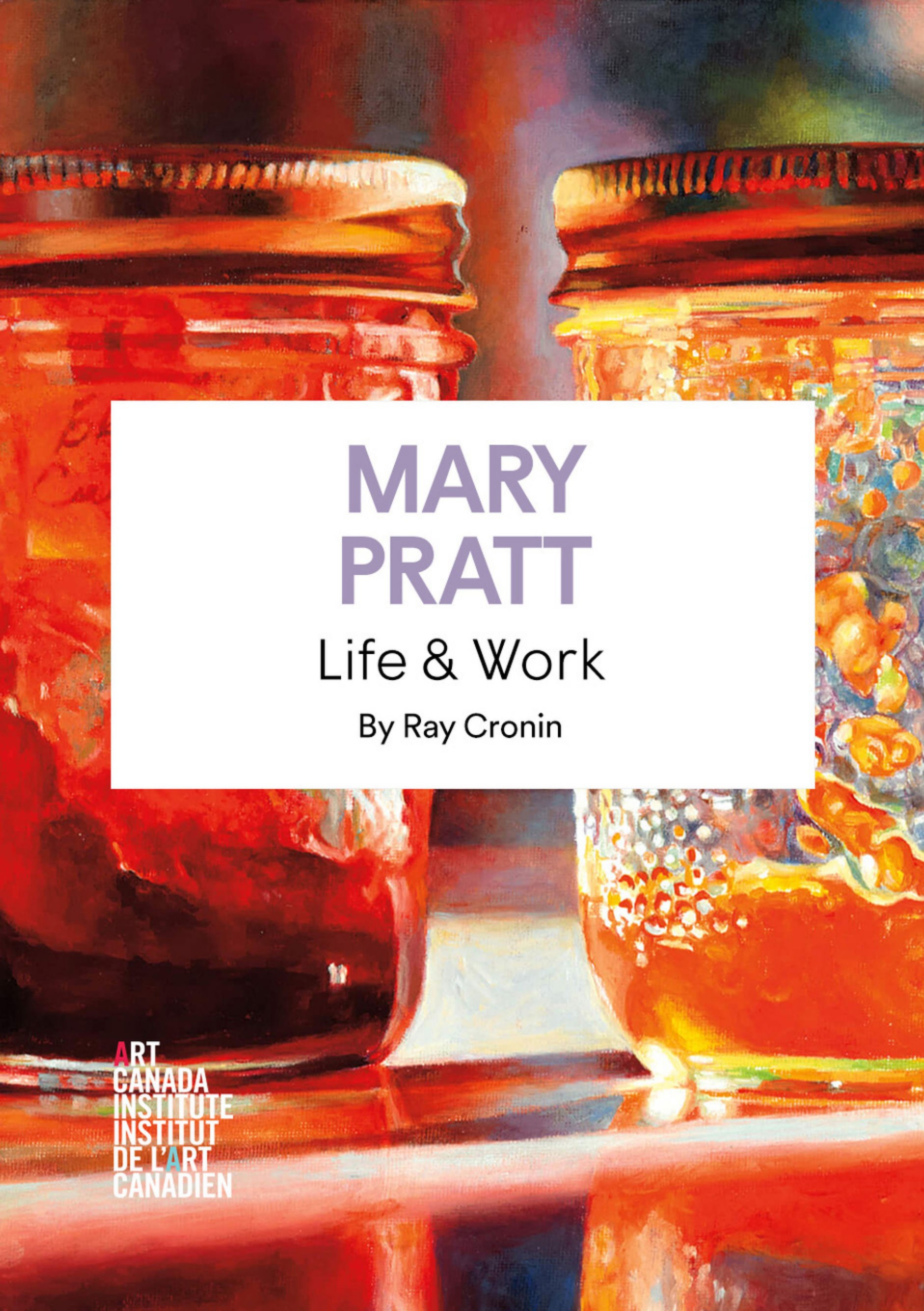


MARY PRATT

Life & Work

By Ray Cronin

ART CANADA INSTITUTE
INSTITUT DE L'ART CANADIEN

Contents

BIOGRAPHY

Mary Pratt (1935–2018) is an essential, beloved figure in Canadian art. Her paintings invest mostly domestic subjects with near photographic detail and compelling, often dark complexity. Pratt was born in New Brunswick but was based in Newfoundland for most of her career. Pratt's work first came to national prominence in the mid-1970s, after years of isolation and struggle. She eventually became an iconic Canadian artist in her own right, despite the public's tendency to compare her work with that of her former husband, Christopher Pratt. When Mary Pratt died in St. John's, Newfoundland, in 2018, friend and former governor general of Canada Adrienne Clarkson called her "our greatest female painter since Emily Carr."

UPBRINGING AND EARLY YEARS

Mary Pratt was born Mary Frances West in Fredericton, New Brunswick, on March 15, 1935, to a family that belonged to that small city's conservative establishment. Her father, William J. West, was a veteran of the First World War, a lawyer and politician who became New Brunswick's attorney general and later a judge. Her mother, Katherine, was the daughter of a well-known Fredericton businesswoman, Kate McMurray. William was much older than Katherine; they had met while she was working as a stenographer at his law firm, when she was twenty-three and he was forty-one. The Wests were religious—active in their local church, Wilmot United. They welcomed another daughter, Barbara, in 1938.

LEFT: Mary West as a toddler, c.1938, photograph hand-coloured by Katherine West (Mary's mother). RIGHT: Mary Pratt's mother, Katherine Eleanor West (née McMurray), c.1933, photograph by Harvey Studios, Fredericton, New Brunswick.

William and Katherine were creative people, finding diversion in artistic pursuits. Katherine's hobby was hand-painting photographs, an activity that fascinated both Mary and Barbara. The girls were enlisted to help as they grew older. Pratt remembered her mother explaining the use of colour: "She would say, 'Now look at that grass. This is the colour you think grass is,' holding up a tube of green pigment, 'but if you look down in the garden do you see this colour? No. What you see is lines of pink, lines of yellow.' I moved into doing it, just because my mother enjoyed it."[1]

In the conservative world of the Wests, certain kinds of artmaking were seen as appropriate accomplishments for young women. Pratt remembered that she "was no prodigy": "When I got to be about nine, my parents realized that I was unhappy. I was fat, I didn't know what to do with my hair, I couldn't do math. . . . I was truly miserable, and they were, 'Well, we'll get her a decent set of paints.' They bought me jars of poster paints, and they were wonderful."[2]

Pratt was encouraged to study drawing and painting, attending classes at the University of New Brunswick Art Centre with teachers such as Lucy Jarvis (1896–1985), Fritz Brandtner (1896–1969), and Alfred Pinsky (1921–1999), as well as taking private lessons from John Todd, a graphic artist who had been trained in New York at the Pratt Institute. Mary was a precocious student, once winning inclusion in an international exhibition of children's art held in Paris.[3] At ages sixteen and seventeen she went to Todd's studio for lessons every Friday evening, an important moment in her development as the instruction concentrated on the commercial aspects of artmaking, on design, and, in

particular, on photography. Tom Smart, director and CEO of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery and curator of the 1995 touring exhibition *The Art of Mary Pratt: The Substance of Light*, notes in the accompanying catalogue that "Todd urged her to keep a file of photographs, clipped from weekly new magazines, as a source of images for her art."[4]

Mary Pratt, *Waterloo Row–Fredericton*, 1972, oil on board, 75.8 x 117.2 cm, private collection.

Pratt remembered her childhood in Fredericton as idyllic. In many ways, it set the pattern for her future life. Her father was a veteran of the First World War's trench warfare, and was determined to build an insulated and tranquil home. She recalled that despite her father's professional prominence the family kept a lot to themselves: "We were always outside, always. I felt the otherness of us in Fredericton."[5] Her mother came from a long line of women who, as Pratt described, "had to go it alone, who had to take life and fight for it."[6] Like her father, Pratt's mother also wanted their home on Waterloo Row, the most prestigious address in Fredericton (then and now), to be a haven, albeit one ordered inside and out.

In an address given at Wilmot United Church in 1999, Pratt recalled: "I spent my life in a small part of Fredericton. Partly because of the polio"–as with many Canadians of her generation, the polio epidemic was a fact of Pratt's childhood –"partly because of protective parents who believed that little girls benefited from a simple life lived in a garden, a kitchen, a school, and a church."[7]

That simple life, with her parents and her younger sister, Barbara, gave Mary Pratt safety and protection, and turned her imagination inward. It also fostered a self-confidence that never left her. Privileged to have grown up loved, Pratt knew that she had potential as well as responsibilities. One of these responsibilities was an education. Though she had decided to study art at a young age, she had a change of heart at eighteen, telling her father that being an artist was "too selfish."[8] His counterargument, as Pratt told the art critic and curator Robin Laurence, was that it would be selfish of her not to be an artist. "You have a talent and it is a requirement of you to paint," he said. "It is your fate–you're going to have to study art."[9] And there was never any doubt where that study would take place: her father's alma mater, Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick.

LEFT: Mary West (*right*) with her sister, Barbara West, in Cavendish, P.E.I., c.1940, photograph by Myrtle Moffat. RIGHT: Mary West (with her new red CCM bicycle) and her father, William J. West, Fredericton, 1946, photograph by Katherine West.

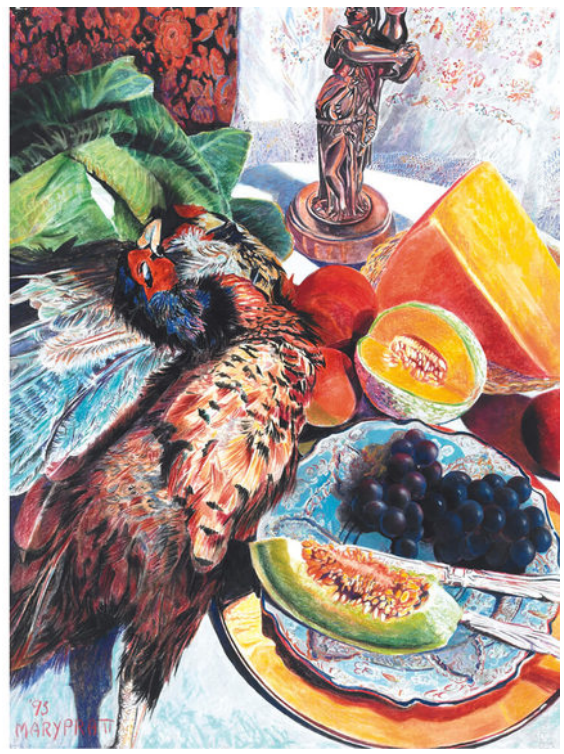
MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY

Eighteen-year-old Mary West began her studies at Mount Allison in 1953, at the School of Fine and Applied Arts. What she discovered was a small, conservative university, still true to its Methodist roots. In the arts, the focus was on strong practical fundamentals. Two of the faculty members were realist painters: Ted Pulford (1914–1994) and Alex Colville (1920–2013). The third, Lawren P. Harris (1910–1994), son of Lawren Harris (1885–1970), a founder of the Group of Seven, had been a realist, but by the 1950s was becoming an abstract painter. Tom Smart writes, "The department's reputation was based on an approach that taught technique almost exclusively."[10] This must have suited Pratt, who had long held that she was not "artsy," and claimed to have never looked to the larger art world for inspiration or validation. "The world of art escapes me," she said in 2014. "The world of life does not."[11]

LEFT: *Left to right:* Edward B. Pulford, Alex Colville, A.Y. Jackson, and Lawren P. Harris at the Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville, c.1951–52, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Summer art workshop at the Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville, 1956, photographer unknown.

Painting in the 1950s was undergoing one of its periodic convulsions. In Canada, the serious painters who represented what was most critically valued worked in an abstract mode: Jean Paul Riopelle (1923–2002), Jack Bush (1909–1977), Harold Town (1924–1990), William Ronald (1926–1998), and Paul-Émile Borduas (1905–1960), in particular. In the United States the painter of the moment was Jackson Pollock (1912–1956), at the head of a virtual flood of Abstract Expressionists. Entering art school, Pratt worried she was wasting her time, but she was fortunate to be in a milieu in which a certain kind of realism—known loosely as Atlantic Realism—was embraced and practised by her successful teachers. When Colville asked her what she was hoping for from the program, Pratt told him she was "terrified I might turn out to be a Sunday painter." Colville did not hesitate in his response, she remembered: "You won't be."[12] Colville was stating his faith in the demanding Mount Allison program, "a regimen of instruction that was guaranteed to bury amateurism in professional rigour."[13]

The program of study that Pratt followed was primarily intended to serve students who were seeking to become commercial artists, industrial designers, or teachers. Accordingly, it was based on a program of gradual and incremental approaches to artmaking—learning the fundamentals first, and only then experimenting. In a four-year program, Pratt and her peers spent three years on the basics of design and drawing, with courses in sculpture (modelling in clay from figurative sources), and painting and drawing from still-life arrangements. This included art history, giving students a grounding in the story of Western art, up to and including modernism. Here Pratt learned of artists who would come to be an influence on her, notably the Dutch masters, especially Rembrandt. In the fourth year of studies, students were given a less structured environment to pursue more independent directions. For the remainder of her career, however, Pratt would work primarily in the still-life genre in which she was immersed at Mount Allison.



LEFT: Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin, *Still Life with Game*, probably 1750s, oil on canvas, 49.6 x 59.4 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Classical Still Life with Pheasant*, 1995, mixed media on paper, 75 x 55 cm, Collection of Patrick and Lorin Kinsella.

CHRISTOPHER PRATT AND THE MOVE TO NEWFOUNDLAND

It was at university that Mary began what was one of the most important relationships of her life, when she met a young pre-med student from Newfoundland named Christopher Pratt (b.1935). "The fascination with Christopher lay almost entirely with his mind," she wrote—"that part of his thinking that concerned images and ideas."[14]

While Christopher had painted as a youth, he had been pressured by his family to study something practical. Christopher's father wanted him to take over the family's wholesale hardware business. At first, Christopher had considered engineering, taking preparatory courses at Newfoundland's Memorial University in 1952. In 1953 he moved to Mount Allison, registering in pre-med classes but ultimately taking only humanities courses, including art. Despite his parents' objections, Christopher became determined to be a painter.[15]

Mary West in Newfoundland, 1950s, photograph by Christopher Pratt.

Mary and Christopher knew each other from 1953, and began dating in early 1955. Mary graduated with a fine-arts certificate in 1956, qualifying her to be an art teacher or occupational therapist—what we would now call an art therapist. That fall she moved to St. John's, Newfoundland, to work as an occupational therapist, and to be near Christopher, who had quit his pre-med program at Mount Allison and moved back home to concentrate on painting.

In September 1957 Mary and Christopher married. Shortly after their wedding at Wilmot United they sailed for Scotland: Christopher had decided to continue his studies abroad and was accepted into the Glasgow School of Art. Once settled, Mary attempted to enrol in the fine-arts programs to take some classes but was refused admittance, as she was pregnant and the head of

school did not want her attending in her "condition."[16] (The systematic exclusion of pregnant women from professional life was common in the 1950s.) The Pratts returned to St. John's in July 1958 for the birth of their son John. Mary moved on to Fredericton for the summer while Christopher remained in St. John's. At the end of the summer, the family reunited and returned to Glasgow.

In 1959 the Pratts returned to Mount Allison, where Christopher completed his third-year studies in art, and Mary arranged to resume her studies toward a bachelor of fine arts, spreading the required courses over two years. Their elder daughter, Anne, was born in 1960. Near the end of Mary's program one of her professors, Lawren P. Harris, gave her advice that has become famous in her story: "Now you have to understand in a family of painters, there can only be one painter, and in your family, it's Christopher."[17] The advice may not have been meant as cruelly as it sounds today, and Mary herself maintained that she was eventually grateful for it, speculating that Harris was trying to save her from marital strife.[18] Nevertheless it stung, and it speaks damningly to the discrimination against women painters during this time.

LEFT: Mary and Christopher Pratt on their wedding day, 1957, photograph by Harvey Studios, Fredericton, New Brunswick. RIGHT: Mary Pratt (*centre*) with Christopher Pratt at their graduation from Mount Allison University, May 16, 1961, photographer unknown.

Mary took Harris's advice as a challenge, and rose to it. Robin Laurence writes, "Harris's words triggered Mary's fierce contrariness, forging her resolve to carry on painting."[19] Mary has told the story many times over the years, with all the slight variations one would expect. One thing remains constant: Harris's words confirmed her will to paint. "I've always felt that of all the things I learned at art school, that moment was probably the most important," she said.[20] Both Mary

and Christopher graduated from Mount Allison in 1961, after which they returned to St. John's to live. Christopher took a job as curator of Memorial University's art gallery.

During those first years in Newfoundland, Mary was able to work as an artist, teaching art two nights a week for Memorial's extension services. She was included in a group exhibition at the Dalhousie University Art Gallery, Halifax. The demands of a growing family pressed, of course, cutting into the little time she had to work at painting. In early 1963 the Pratts' third child, Barbara (Barby), was born.

Also that year, Alex Colville decided to quit teaching at Mount Allison in order to pursue his painting career full-time. The university made clear to Christopher that Colville's job was his if he wanted it. At the same time, Christopher's father offered them the rent-free use of a cottage he owned in the small village of St. Mary's, near the somewhat larger village of Mount Carmel and on the banks of the Salmonier River, a little over an hour's drive from St. John's. While Mary never explicitly said that she hoped Christopher would take the job at Mount Allison, they both knew it was her preference. Instead, Christopher opted for Newfoundland—for painting full-time (he had also decided to resign from Memorial), and for the cottage.

LEFT: Mary Pratt at the dining table in her home in Salmonier, Newfoundland, 1968, photograph by Christopher Pratt. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *October Window*, 1966, oil on canvas, 40.5 x 66 cm, The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's.

The move to Salmonier may have suited Christopher, but it became like an exile for Mary. The cottage, intended as a seasonal fishing lodge, was not winterized, nor did it have running water. Mary remembered: "You could drop dimes through the floorboards. . . . In the winter, when I was pregnant, I had to break the ice to get water from the brook."[21] She described the conditions to Robin Laurence as "medieval."[22] "The first years were so hard, it hurts me to think of them," she told Sandra Gwyn.[23] University educated, Protestant, come-from-away, a non-drinker (and so never seen in the local beer parlour or at the dances), and living in a cottage once owned by a well-off St. John's family (the "Murray place"), Pratt stood out in the poor, rural, and Roman Catholic St. Mary's of the late 1950s. "I felt that I'd been cut off from my childhood and from everything I'd ever known," she said in 1989.[24]

In addition to caring for the children, Mary was, initially, also caring for Christopher, whose resignation from Memorial was accompanied by stress-related health issues, including stomach problems and recurring panic attacks, which he attributed to teaching and anxiety about his art career. It was hoped that, with the small cottage, they could now live on Christopher's modest, but growing, income as an artist. In 1964 the Pratts' fourth child, Edwyn (Ned), was born.

Mary Pratt with her children, (*left to right*) John, Ned, Barby, and Anne, 1964, photograph by John Kerr (Jack) Pratt. Jack Pratt was Christopher's father, known in the family as Daddy Jack.

Settling into their rural life, and freed from the constraints of Memorial, Christopher flourished artistically, but Mary struggled. She continued to paint, but as Christopher's career grew, hers stalled. He had a studio, for instance, where he worked full-time. After breakfast he went there to work, and would emerge for lunch, then go back for the afternoon, staying until it was time for dinner. Mary's job, however, was first and foremost her children and the house.

Nonetheless, Mary stole time to paint, working on a small easel, moving it from room to room, and tucking it away out of sight (and far from small fingers) when she was not painting. Christopher was gaining a national reputation, with multiple inclusions in National Gallery Biennials, solo shows in Vancouver, Montreal, Edmonton, and Kingston, and a burgeoning commercial career, including gallery representation in both Toronto and Montreal. Many visitors made their way to the house to see Christopher's work and to meet his family. As Sandra Gwyn remembers, most of them viewed Mary as a housewife: "Visitors to Salmonier, including Richard and me, raved about her homemade

bread and said the right things about her flower garden and her children. Nobody thought to ask her about her paintings, because nobody knew there were any."[25] Mary remembered that she "was furious that Christopher had somehow got it all together and that somehow, I'd lost it."[26]

LEFT: Christopher Pratt, *Boys Dipping Caplin*, 1965, colour serigraph on illustration board, image: 19.7 x 25.3 cm; sheet: 37 x 33.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Vegetable Marrow*, 1966, oil on board, 40.6 x 50.8 cm, Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.

WHAT CAN YOU BE?

One person who did know there were paintings to see was Peter Bell, who had succeeded Christopher as Memorial's art-gallery curator. In 1967 he offered Mary a show, and she exhibited forty-four works—drawings and paintings—in an exhibition that almost sold out. (Small public galleries in those days often served as commercial venues for exhibiting artists.) But for Mary, her pieces still felt preparatory, and despite the success of her exhibition she was unsettled in her work, seeking some different direction.

At that time Pratt was painting in a manner that she described as "impressionistic," with loose brush strokes much influenced by the noted Montreal painter Goodridge Roberts (1904–1974), who had roots in Fredericton and had been an artist-in-residence at the University of New Brunswick Art Centre, Fredericton, though Mary had never met him there.[27] Her paint handling was, she believed, "ugly and messy,"[28] and she wanted to smooth out the surfaces, to rein them in. Then came the dual epiphanies of an unmade bed and a cluttered supper table.

LEFT: Mary Pratt, *The Back Porch*, 1966, oil on canvas board, 50.8 x 40.6 cm, Memorial University of Newfoundland Collection, The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Stove*, 1969, oil on canvas, 61 x 45.7 cm, Collection of Brendan and Renee Paddick.

In two paintings dating from 1968 and 1969 (*The Bed* and *Supper Table*, respectively) Pratt found an approach to her brushwork and to the use of photography in which her subject and her process coalesced, sparking a remarkable burst of creativity that fuelled her painting for decades. The first epiphany was the recognition that her subject was light, and the "erotic charge," to use her words, that she felt from engaging with it. The second was the use of photography, which Christopher encouraged—it was he who took the source images for *Supper Table*, while Mary had remained determined to draw her subject. Photography would free Mary to capture light uniquely, in her own time. She realized "what the nature of her painting project had to be, capturing not only the way light transformed the domestic moment, but her own physical response to it."[29]

LEFT: 35mm slide used as the source for *Supper Table*, 1969, photograph by Christopher Pratt. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Supper Table*, 1969, oil on canvas, 61 x 91.4 cm, Collection of the Family of Mary Pratt.

Initially for Pratt, using photographs as source material was difficult, even shameful, despite her early training with John Todd; Mount Allison had taught her that direct observation of life was the proper way to paint. Even her parents, who had always been supportive, disapproved: "They were very upset that I was working from photographs," she remembered. "They thought it was immoral. They thought that I was cheating."[30] Poised on the brink of fully realizing herself as an artist, Pratt had a crisis of confidence and pulled back. For a period in 1970, she quit making art altogether, leaving the painting *Eviscerated Chickens*, 1971, unfinished on her easel and taking sewing lessons instead.

Her family and friends encouraged her to go back to painting. Christopher wrote Mary a note, enclosing in the envelope her painting's source slides. (Both Christopher and Mary worked from slides—developed photographs printed on transparent bases and mounted in plastic or cardboard frames, which were then placed in a circular tray called a slide carousel in order to be projected.) "Please finish this picture, because if you don't, I foresee a long future of taking flowers to the mental hospital on Sunday afternoons," Christopher wrote.[31] In the end, it was Mary's then-seven-year-old daughter Barby who tipped the balance, asking, "Mummy, if you're not a painter, what can you be?"[32] The question brought Mary up short: "I thought, 'Oh my God, I can't let the girls down. They can't see me falter now. What will they do when they themselves grow up?'"[33] So, with her typical fortitude, Pratt returned to painting.

LEFT: Mary Pratt, *Red Currant Jelly*, 1972, oil on Masonite, 45.9 x 45.6 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Cod Fillets on Tin Foil*, 1974, oil on Masonite, 53.3 x 68.6 cm, Collection of Angus and Jean Bruneau.

Visitors still trooped to Salmonier to see Christopher's work, but more and more of them were seeing Mary's as well. Mayo Graham, curator of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, while on a visit with a colleague to see Christopher, saw Mary's *Cod Fillets on Tin Foil*, 1974, on an easel in a side bedroom of the house and asked about it. Pratt remembered that she did not place much importance on the conversation that stemmed from an accidental studio visit, but it led to her inclusion in her first major exhibition: *Some Canadian Women Artists*, a show curated by Graham for the National Gallery of Canada to mark International Women's Year in 1975. One of Mary's paintings from that exhibition, *Red Currant Jelly*, 1972, was purchased by the National Gallery in 1976.

DONNA

In 1978 Pratt's painting of the same year, *Girl in Wicker Chair*, was featured on the cover of *Saturday Night* magazine—not without controversy, as many readers found the image of a seemingly nude young woman shocking. This was the first in a long series of paintings of Donna Meaney, a teenager whom the Pratts had hired as a nanny and housekeeper when she was sixteen, and who would later return as an adult. She was Christopher's model first, and many of Mary's paintings of her were from slides he took years before.

Christopher eventually started a sexual relationship with Donna, although neither has ever said exactly when this began. As recounted by Carol Bishop-Gwyn in her 2019 book, *Art and Rivalry: The Marriage of Mary and Christopher Pratt*, the relationship was full-blown by 1971, when Donna was nineteen, and she and Christopher toured around Newfoundland in a VW camper van. Bishop-Gwyn describes the couple avoiding restaurants, in order to escape scrutiny, with Christopher doing the cooking: "Through the mostly warm days of August, they happily drove, hiked, and made love."[34]

Mary Pratt, *Girl in Wicker Chair*, 1978, oil on Masonite, 96.3 x 84 cm, private collection.

Mary continued to revisit Donna as a model, both in paintings drawn from photographs taken by Christopher, and in images she had taken herself. This may have been a way of dealing with the relationship between Christopher and Donna, perhaps to show she was rising above it, or maybe to allay any rumours. Whatever the reason, the paintings were a success. The contrast between the photographs taken by Christopher, where the subject is looking at her lover (*This Is Donna* of 1987 for example), and those by Mary, in which the model seems almost unaware of the photographer, despite being caught up in what can only have seemed to be a betrayal, such as *Donna with Powder Puff*, 1986, are striking. Mary's figures are somehow more alive than Christopher's, freighted with unspoken tension. Was Mary working out her feelings in these works? She never said one way or the other. "It's not what you see," Mary told

Sandra Gwyn, "it's what you find."[35] Pratt said that, with the Donna paintings, she was "coming as close as I ever care to come to making statements about my own situation."[36]

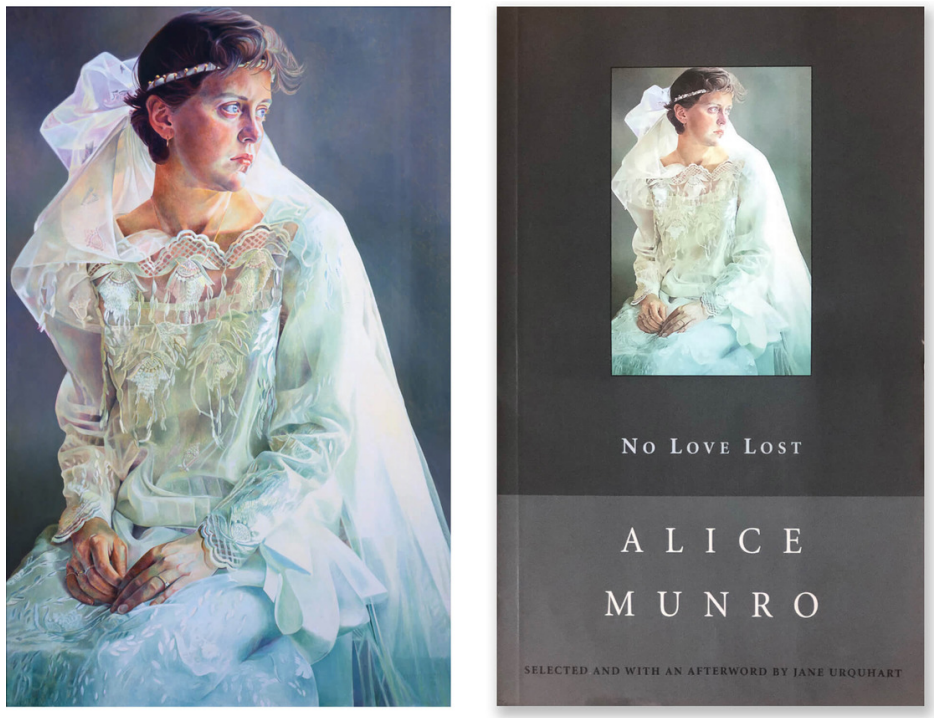
LEFT: Mary Pratt, *Donna with Powder Puff*, 1986, oil on Masonite, 55.9 x 34.9 cm, Collection of Lois Hoegg and Ches Crosbie.
RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Donna*, 1986, oil on Masonite, 90.2 x 69.9 cm, Memorial University of Newfoundland Collection, The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's.

Despite the affair, Pratt always maintained that Donna Meaney was a friend, even part of the family. She told a newspaper in 2014: "I've always enjoyed Donna. She always makes my Christmas cake. Her daughter is like a granddaughter. Her relationship with Christopher is not the same. Whatever happened between them is their business."[37]

INDEPENDENCE AND POPULARITY

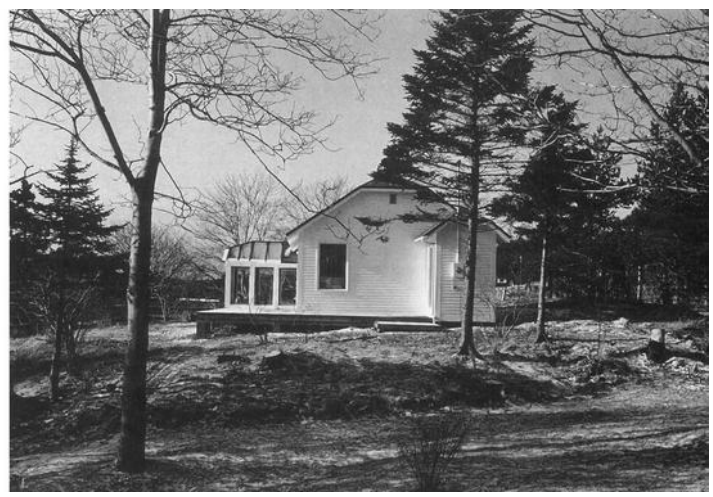
Despite the tensions at home, Mary continued her family tradition of public service, somehow finding time amid her domestic and studio duties to serve on the province of Newfoundland's task force on education, and, briefly, the Fishery Industry Advisory Board. In 1980, Pratt was appointed a lay "bencher," a member of the governance board for the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, and a few years later she joined the board of directors of the Grace Hospital in St. John's. She was also a member of Canada's Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, although she found the experience to be less important than she had hoped.[38] The pattern was set, however, and from then on until the state of her health precluded public service, Mary Pratt was a dedicated volunteer for many organizations. Perhaps her biggest legacy was as a driving force behind the creation of Newfoundland's iconic culture centre, The Rooms, in St. John's.

Mary Pratt continued to expand her subject matter throughout the 1980s. That decade she witnessed her children growing up and moving out of the house. Echoing the changes in her life, she painted a series of works about weddings, including a poignant portrait of her daughter Barbara, *Barby in the Dress She Made Herself*, 1986. The wedding paintings were all included in an exhibition at her Vancouver dealer, Equinox Gallery, in 1986. Two of the works from this exhibition were used as covers for books by Alice Munro: *Wedding Dress*, 1986, for *Friend of My Youth*, and *Barby in the Dress She Made Herself* for *No Love Lost*.



LEFT: Mary Pratt, *Barby in the Dress She Made Herself*, 1986, oil on Masonite, 90.8 x 60.3 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Cover of Alice Munro's book of short stories *No Love Lost*, 2003, featuring the painting *Barby in the Dress She Made Herself*, 1986.

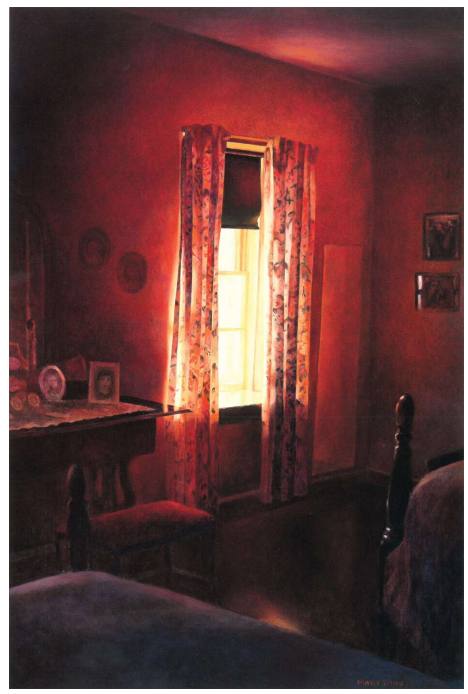
Another series of paintings and mixed-media drawings of fires, including *Burning the Rhododendron*, 1990, *Bonfire with Beggar Bush*, 1989, and *Bonfire by the River*, 1998, were overtly about sacrifice. By using pastels and coloured chalk, Pratt was able to work at a scale far beyond anything she had attempted in oils. She was also responding to personal physical constraints: her years of peering intently at a canvas and working with tiny sable brushes had exacerbated her arthritis and damaged her vision, and she was finding it increasingly difficult to paint. The process of making the drawings was somewhat easier on her body, and she embraced the creative possibilities they offered. Not that she was taking it easy—she was working on a large scale, stapling the paper to a board in her studio and working on the higher parts while standing on a small stepstool. As much as she enjoyed the new-found freedom of mixed media, she never stopped painting in oils; her drawings and watercolours were respites, a change being as good as a rest. But she depended on selling paintings for a living, so she painted.



LEFT: Mary Pratt in her studio, 1990s, photograph by John Reeves. RIGHT: Exterior view of Mary Pratt's studio, 1990s, photograph by John Reeves.

It was in the 1990s that the long-simmering tensions in Mary's marriage came to a head, and she and Christopher separated. "It wasn't Donna that broke us up," said Mary, quelling rumours, "it was the girl Christopher married."[39] He continued to live in the house in Salmonier, while she lived briefly in Vancouver and Toronto, before building a house and studio for herself in St. John's (a house designed by her brother-in-law, architect Philip Pratt). The couple remained separated for twelve years before divorcing in 2004.

In the paintings that she made at the time of the separation, one can sense a reassessment and a certain amount of anger. *Pomegranates in Glass on Glass*, 1993, depicts the fruit torn apart, spilling across the glass surfaces. In an interview years later, Pratt attributed that anger to her feelings about the divorce.[40] Similar feelings are expressed in *Dinner for One*, 1994, which is reminiscent of *Supper Table*, 1969, the painting that marked Pratt's first use of slides as source material and was pivotal in her development as a painter. The former work depicted the chaotic aftermath of a family dinner, the latter a neat, solo meal.



Mary Pratt, *My Parents' Bedroom*, 1995, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 61 cm, private collection.

Despite this turmoil, Pratt's career was flourishing. *The House inside My Mother's House*, a 1995 exhibition at Toronto's Mira Godard Gallery, featured several new works, many of them paintings of the house on Waterloo Row in which she grew up (which by then had become her sister's home). The "house" of the exhibition's title was a dollhouse made by her father, a model of the family home, which is featured in the painting *The Doll's House*, 1995. The dominant colour in Pratt's paintings of her mother's house is red, a rich, suffused glow in *My Parents' Bedroom*, 1995, or a bright splash in *The Dining Room with a Red Rug*, 1995. Although she had become known for depicting domestic objects in close-up, there are relatively few spatial interiors in the work of Mary Pratt, and nothing else that comes close to the concerted look at one place represented by these works. Pratt's mother died two years after the exhibition of these works, at the age of 87. (Pratt's father had died in 1985.)

Later in 1995 the Beaverbrook Art Gallery mounted Pratt's first retrospective. *The Art of Mary Pratt: The Substance of Light* was curated by Tom Smart and toured Canada for two years. Afterwards, Pratt's career continued to grow, and she regularly exhibited at her two dealers, Mira Godard in Toronto and Equinox Gallery in Vancouver. Despite her growing success, however, she still felt like an art-world misfit, telling an audience in Fredericton, on the opening of her touring exhibition *The Substance of Light*, that being a realist alienated her "from the main stream of contemporary art."[41]

Between 1995 and 2002 Pratt worked on a series of woodblock prints, a collaboration with master printer Masato Arikushi (b.1947). In 2000 her book *A Personal Calligraphy*, a collection of journal entries, previously published memoirs, and speeches and lectures, was published. The book was well received, and in 2001 won the Newfoundland Herald Non-Fiction Award from the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mary Pratt, *Mangoes on a Brass Plate*, 1995, colour woodblock print, 40.8 x 61.3 cm, Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville.

Pratt continued to exhibit regularly in commercial galleries in Vancouver, Toronto, Edmonton, Fredericton, and elsewhere. A museum exhibition, *Simple Bliss*, was organized by Regina's MacKenzie Art Gallery and toured the country from 2004 to 2005. This exhibition, curated by Patricia Deadman, featured works from the previous ten years, including the entire suite of *ukiyo-e* prints realized with Arikushi titled Transformations. Pratt remarried in 2006, to U.S. artist James Rosen, and they divorced a decade later. "I've always landed lucky," Pratt said in 2014, "except for men."[42]

In 2013 *Mary Pratt*, a retrospective exhibition jointly organized by The Rooms and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, also toured the country. It featured works spanning the entirety of her career. Co-curated by Mireille Eagan, Caroline Stone (both curators at The Rooms, St. John's), and Sarah Fillmore (curator at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax), the exhibition opened in St. John's in May 2013 and then travelled to the Art Gallery of Windsor, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, and the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina. Its last stop was the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, closing in January 2015.

Installation view of *Mary Pratt* exhibition at The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's, May to September 2013, photographer unknown.

Despite turning down this retrospective exhibition, the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, did mount an exhibition of Mary Pratt's work in 2015, as part of its Masterpiece in Focus series. Titled *This Little Painting* and co-curated again by Eagan and also by National Gallery of Canada curator Jonathan Shaughnessy, the small exhibition was mounted concurrently with an Alex Colville retrospective. The title came from how Mary had described *Red Currant Jelly*, 1972, her first work acquired by the National Gallery. The exhibition marked the first time that the Masterpiece in Focus series featured a living artist.

When Mary Pratt died in St. John's on August 14, 2018, she was one of the country's most popular artists. Former governor general Adrienne Clarkson, who had been Mary's close friend for forty-five years, wrote, "Mary created a body of work that is second to none in the history of art in Canada. She knew the time would come when people would say her vision counted and embrace her idea of what must be looked at, which combined both beauty and pain."[43] Mireille Eagan wrote that Mary "showed us how to hold, to cherish, a moment before we must inevitably turn to resume the day."[44] This echoes one of Mary's own statements, from 2000: "And so I roll my life along, trying to hold it together—keeping what I love, refusing to admit to loss, allowing layer after layer of pleasure to distract me from realities I have no ability to change."[45] Mary Pratt had to deal with many realities that she could not change, but she persevered and became, in the words of Clarkson, "our greatest female painter since Emily Carr."[46]

Mary Pratt with her painting *Chocolate Birthday Cake*, 1997, photograph by Greg Locke.

KEY WORKS

Mary Pratt's subject was the immediate world around her, most often the objects and people within her homes in Salmonier and St. John's, Newfoundland. She was primarily a still-life painter, but also did a series of dramatic figure studies of her friend and model Donna Meaney. She may have painted the domestic, but she responded to it viscerally. Using photographs and slides as the basis for her paintings, she tracked the effects of light on commonplace things. The works that follow begin with what she described as her first successful painting and continue through each phase of her long career.

THE BED 1968

Mary Pratt, *The Bed*, 1968
Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 91.4 cm
Private collection

Mary Pratt was doing housework, mopping the bedroom floor, when she was struck by the sunlight playing across the rumpled sheets and blankets of her marriage bed. She still remembered the impact of that experience years later:

> There was a blaze of light coming in off the river—that wonderful fall light that you get. The red chenille bedspread was dripping onto the floor, and there was this pink blanket, laid over it like a piece of skin. It was like a punch in the gut—it was the closest thing to an erotic reaction that I could imagine. And I thought: "All right. This is what you paint." Once that happened, it was really as if all the doors and windows had been flung open, and the world rushed to me.[1]

Pratt stopped her housework and got a sketchbook to make quick drawings and colour notes to try to remember what it was that had struck her so forcefully about the scene. Over the subsequent week she made this painting, which marks the first step toward what is, recognizably, her mature style. Her use of red, which figures prominently in her later work, highlights the scene's eroticism. In later years Pratt would find this eroticism in more seemingly innocuous subjects such as jellies and fruit.

Christopher Pratt, *Woman at a Dresser*, 1964, oil on hardboard, 67.2 x 77.5 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario.

The bed is painted with looser brush strokes than these later works, and seems to float in undifferentiated space, as if buoyed up by the soft light she has captured. This stripping away of extraneous detail (nothing on the walls, no bedside tables, no rugs on the floor) is reminiscent not so much of the style for which she would become known as of that of her then husband Christopher Pratt (in particular, *Woman at a Dresser* [1964], for which Mary was the model).

But in choosing the unmade bed, and in focusing on the effect of light on the fabric, Mary Pratt had found an approach to making images that she would follow for the rest of her career. *The Bed* is a beginning: Pratt had recognized what she wanted to paint but not quite how to capture it. "The light wouldn't stand still long enough for me to catch it," she recalled.[2]

SUPPER TABLE 1969

Mary Pratt, *Supper Table*, 1969
Oil on canvas, 61 x 91.4 cm
Collection of the Family of Mary Pratt

In 1969 Mary Pratt was struck by an experience that she would later call one of her "epiphanies." This collection of condiments, uneaten hot dogs, teacups, glasses of milk, and orange peels may not seem a likely subject for a painting, but Pratt saw something in it. The light fleeting moment offered her inspiration and a direction she had not considered. She rushed to obtain drawing materials to capture the effect of light on these remains of a family dinner.

As Sandra Gwyn recounts, "Christopher told her she was crazy. The light would be gone before she even got her paints out. She persisted, and started making a drawing. Christopher watched her, said nothing, left the room and came back with his camera. He took quick shots of the now fading light, shining onto the remnants of supper on the table. A month or so later he brought her the slides."[1]

For Mary, those slides were a revelation, equal to an earlier realization that she wanted to paint the "erotic charge" she occasionally felt from light on familiar, domestic objects: "I could see so many things that I hadn't seen before, all kinds of lights and shadows, and how a ketchup bottle hasn't just got an outside, but an inside, too."[2] Pratt would now paint from photographs, despite her initial misgiving that by doing so she was "cheating."

LEFT: Abraham van Beyeren, *Still Life with Lobster and Fruit*, probably early 1650s, oil on wood, 96.5 x 78.7 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. RIGHT: Johannes Vermeer, *The Milkmaid*, c.1660, oil on canvas, 45.5 x 41 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Supper Table is painted more crisply than *The Bed*, 1968, but it lacks the precision of Pratt's later work. Its composition is different, too. By having the slide to work from, rather than sketches and her memory of a feeling, Pratt found herself recreating not an impression, but the actual photographic image. The cap to the ketchup bottle, for instance, sits at one end of the table; the bottle itself is at the other end. The crumpled orange peels are reproduced just as they appear in the photograph, not edited out or simplified in the painting process.

In *The Bed* Pratt had found what would be her lifelong theme: moments when the quiet, ordinary trappings of life become freighted with meaning. Now, with photography, specifically through the use of slides, she had found a tool that would inform her technique and allow her to capture these moments.

In *Supper Table* we see Mary Pratt's style becoming Photorealist, a type of painting that mimics the precision and composition of lens-based images, and is often directly based on them. Tom Smart identifies *Supper Table* as the point at which Pratt "forcefully" adopts this genre, and "the immediate environment of her house in Salmonier" as her subject matter.[3] It is also part of a long tradition of Western art-historical still-life painting—specifically evoking Chardin and Vermeer—in which the subject matter is the simple domestic fare of daily life. Pratt would return to this theme throughout her career.

EVISCERATED CHICKENS 1971

Mary Pratt, *Eviscerated Chickens*, 1971
Oil on Masonite, 45.7 x 54 cm
Memorial University of Newfoundland Collection,
The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's

Over the course of the 1970s Mary Pratt's choice of subject matter began to expand, with less attractive subjects such as raw meat, fish heads, and eggshells playing an important role. She had chosen to focus on the domestic, and that meant that not all of her subjects were going to be pretty. But they all, at least to her, were beautiful, and in her paintings she teased out the qualities that had attracted her in the first place. In every instance she sought that evocative, arresting moment of objects bathed in light. She remembered *Eviscerated Chickens* as being somewhat controversial: "It was the first time I painted something that a lot of people didn't like."[1] Notably, it took Pratt months to finish this work, which was left unfinished while she contemplated whether to continue to pursue a painting career.

LEFT: 35mm slide used as a source for *Eviscerated Chickens*, 1971, photograph by Mary Pratt. RIGHT: Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Peacock Pie*, 1627, oil on panel, 77.5 x 128.9 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

As a child in Fredericton, Pratt had often visited the market with her mother and grandmother, and the sight of either plucked or eviscerated chickens was not uncommon. "I have never been able to entirely forget the barbarism of butchering," she wrote. "The 'Sunday chickens,' naked, empty, waiting on a Coca-Cola carton to be roasted, symbolized much about life in this civilization."[2]

The chickens are seen from above, against the shadowy background of a wall. Stark and unapologetic, the work reflects the visceral quality of much domestic labour. Yet Pratt sees, and conveys, beauty in her handling of light, texture, and colour. In numerous interviews over the years, she maintained that her work has a hidden edge, a thorn, awaiting the unwary viewer. There can be beauty in ugliness, too, these works assert, and surprise for the viewer in realizing it. *Eviscerated Chickens* is the earliest work of hers where this edginess is central.

Eviscerated Chickens also displays a tighter painting style—a smooth, flat, untextured surface created by smaller brushes and strokes. Like so much of Pratt's work, this painting is a kind of *memento mori*, a Latin phrase used to describe a genre of still-life painting common in the Northern Renaissance, and literally meaning "remember you will die." *Eviscerated Chickens* is a reminder that death and decay are inevitable facets of life, and indeed, that death feeds life.

SALMON ON SARAN 1974

Mary Pratt, *Salmon on Saran*, 1974
Oil on Masonite, 45.7 x 76.2 cm
Collection of Angus and Jean Bruneau

Salmon on Saran is one of Mary Pratt's best-known images, and it has the fully developed painterly virtuosity that became a hallmark of her work. Pratt's tour de force here is conveying the transparency of the Saran wrap through paint, an example of the artist pushing her technical abilities to their absolute limits. This painting took Pratt two years to complete. It is a bold statement about her technical abilities, a show of painterly bravado reminiscent of male artists in the Western tradition—from the Ancient Greek painting contests recounted by Pliny the Elder to the nineteenth-century Paris Salons. Pratt effectively managed to paint the unpaintable, making an opaque substance (oil paint) transparent (cellophane).

But this is also a painting about looking carefully, for the viewer must discover that the painted grey-and-white lines constitute cellophane. The cool tones of *Salmon on Saran* add to its impact; it almost has a temperature, as if the salmon had just come out of the refrigerator. Pratt meticulously recreates details from the original slide in every wrinkle in the underlying cloth and in the plastic wrap. Even the smudges of blood on the Saran wrap, transferred from the artist's own hands, perhaps, after cleaning the fish, are rendered with precision—making a clever, pointed connection between domestic and artistic gestures.

As with her 1971 work *Eviscerated Chickens*, Pratt uses the mundane image of a just-cleaned animal to convey something powerful about the potential for violence. Tom Smart writes, "By drawing attention to benign cruelty in the service of sustaining life, *Salmon on Saran* is a disguised statement about all violence in society, even as manifested in the trivial activity of gutting a fish."[1] But there are few trivial activities in Pratt's menacing domestic world. Smart describes this painting as a depiction of "ritual killing,"[2] and it is that sense of sacrifice that permeates much of Pratt's mature work.

Mary Pratt, *Cleaning a Trout 4*, 1984, watercolour on paper, 28 x 33.6 cm, Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville.

Pratt pushed herself to finish this technically challenging work. "This painting took nearly two years to complete," she wrote. "I had to discover a shorthand for plastic wrap, and I had to come to terms with how much 'reality' really interested me. Very easy now to discuss, very perplexing then to solve."[3]

EGGS IN AN EGG CRATE 1975

Mary Pratt, *Eggs in an Egg Crate*, 1975
Oil on Masonite, 50.8 x 61 cm
Memorial University of Newfoundland Collection,
The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's

In 1975, Mary Pratt had recently lost twins. The first was a late-term miscarriage and the second, David, lived only a day after his premature birth. *Eggs in an Egg Crate* was the first work Pratt made following that traumatic event. She came to see it as a means of coping. "I showed this painting to a friend, and she pointed out to me that the eggs were empty." Sarah Milroy is not alone among writers who have found this work one of Pratt's most moving: "This is an image," Milroy writes, "of fertility spent, an ethereal lamentation."[1]

The work is similar in composition to *Salmon on Saran*, 1974. Both share a view from above, a horizontal central subject, and a neutral background we might assume is a countertop. *Eggs in an Egg Crate*, however, is suffused with a gentle light that slants slightly from above so that faint shadows are cast in the foreground. The cardboard carton appears to glow with a subtle halo effect.

Mary Pratt, *Silver Fish on Crimson Foil*, 1987, oil on Masonite, 46.7 x 69.5 cm, Collection of Brendan and Renee Paddick.

Pratt's technical skill is particularly evident in her rendering of the albumen at the bottom of the emptied and stacked eggshells, and of the translucence at the tips of the shells. The work is a meticulous description, an object rendered so carefully that it transcends its context of the kitchen, relaying violence, significance, emotion. The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, author of the groundbreaking treatise on sense perception, considers phenomenology to be a similar process: "It is a matter of describing," he writes, "not of explaining or analysing."[2]

Pratt wrote much later that she had been making a birthday cake that required a dozen eggs: "As I broke the eggs, I simply put the shells back into the egg crate, intending to close the lid and throw everything into the garbage. However, the light shone on the slippery interior of the empty shells, and the light sank into the porous papier-mâché egg crate, and the textures and colours combined to create an image symbolic of life and abandoned life."[3]

SERVICE STATION 1978

Mary Pratt, *Service Station*, 1978
Oil on Masonite, 101.6 x 76.2 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Curator Mayo Graham of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, first saw Mary's paintings inadvertently on a studio visit with Mary's husband, Christopher. Graham later included Mary in a nationally touring exhibition, *Some Canadian Women Artists*, and championed the purchase of one of Mary's works, *Red Currant Jelly*, 1972, for the National Gallery's permanent collection. On a studio visit with Mary in Salmonier in 1976, Graham encouraged her to make a painting from a slide Graham found in Mary's collection of images that she hadn't used for paintings: a butchered moose hung on the back of a tow truck. Pratt didn't take the advice right away but did return to the slide in 1978 and painted *Service Station*, now in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

LEFT: Francis Bacon, *Figure with Meat*, 1954, oil on canvas, 129.9 x 121.9 cm, Art Institute of Chicago. © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved. DACS / SOCAN 2020. RIGHT: Rembrandt van Rijn, *Slaughtered Ox*, 1655, oil on panel, 95.5 x 68.8 cm, Louvre, Paris.

This is one of Pratt's most powerful –and toughest–paintings, given its evocations of sexualized violence. The work could be compared to other painted slabs of meat by male artists like Chaim Soutine and Francis Bacon, suggesting the more horrific aspects of life and death–though unlike these painters, Pratt lends her carcass an unsettling degree of painterly control, as if she is unafraid to look at it (and daring us to). *Service Station* received critical accolades when it was first shown in a commercial exhibition in Toronto, and has been included in most of Pratt's museum exhibitions. It was painted after an extended period of turmoil in her life. As she told Sarah Milroy, "We had lost the babies, then John got sick"–her son had a brief skirmish with cancer–"and I got through that, and then I said to myself: you can do this now. You know what this is about."[1]

The subtexts present in Pratt's other work–sacrifice and violence–are laid out here directly. Pratt acknowledges that such images are common enough in rural Canada, and anywhere people hunt for their food, but little is read into them beyond an appreciation of the amount of meat the carcass is likely to provide.

This moose had been killed by Ed Williams, the owner of the Pratts' local service station, who, knowing of Mary's paintings of fish and chickens, asked her if she wanted to see his moose. "He had no idea that I would be upset by this moose. But to me it screamed 'murder, rape, clinical dissection, torture,' all the terrible nightmares hanging right in front of me."[2] Pratt's neighbours saw less drama in such scenes. With her usual humour, she recalled much later to Sarah Milroy that when Williams saw the work, "He stood there in my studio looking at it for a moment, and then he shook his head and said, 'Well, there's my old truck.'"[3]

CHILD WITH TWO ADULTS 1983

Mary Pratt, *Child with Two Adults*, 1983
Oil on Masonite, 53.7 x 53.7 cm
Private collection

The baby in this painting is Mary Pratt's first grandchild: her elder daughter Anne's first child. The two adults on the periphery are Mary herself and Anne. In interviews over the years, Mary Pratt repeatedly called this work a favourite, telling *House and Home*, for example, that "the one I love the most is the baby in the bath."[1] The work is in a tradition of portraits of babies and children; one thinks of *The Child's Bath*, 1893, by Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), for instance, or *Children at the Basin*, 1886, by Berthe Morisot (1841–1895). In comparison to its Impressionist forerunners, however, the impact of this painting is much less

decorous than we might expect. The baby's genitals are clearly visible, a view that many would find uncomfortable, despite its innocence.

This work depicts an intimate family moment, as three generations of females interact, a private moment made public in the painting. It is both heavily symbolic and very ordinary–familiar and marvellous at once, as are so many of Pratt's paintings. Yet there is a thorn in this family scene, a sharp prick of discomfort. "The vivid, bloody red of both baby and bathwater seems to connote infant sacrifice, and it can be no accident that this child is female. Wonder and dread attend her ritual rebirth," wrote Robin Laurence about this work.[2] Just as the family's Sunday dinner could be painted by Pratt as if she was depicting a sacrifice, this deceptive painting can easily lead the viewer, as it did Laurence, down a darker path than is immediately apparent in the composition. Pratt was never surprised by these sorts of readings. "People will find out that in each one of the paintings there is something that ought to disturb them, something upsetting," she said. "That's why I painted them."[3]

Mary Cassatt, *The Child's Bath*, 1893, oil on canvas, 100.3 × 66.1 cm, Art Institute of Chicago.

The blood-like quality of the water and the raw redness of the baby's skin are two such elements, which work almost subliminally. A more deliberate insertion of psychological symbolism is the crack in the china bowl in which the baby is being bathed. This structural instability provides the painting with a subtle element of discord. This cozy domestic scene is at risk, the bowl's structural flaw standing in for the fears surrounding the future of the child. Babies are so fragile, this work reminds us. Indeed, for the retrospective exhibition *Mary Pratt*, the curators decided to hang this work next to *Eggs in an Egg Crate*, 1975. Co-curator Sarah Fillmore explained, "We started to think of everything as a self-portrait. Here's this moment. Sometimes it's painful and sometimes it's glorious and it adds up to the moments of a life lived."[4]

THIS IS DONNA 1987

Mary Pratt, *This Is Donna*, 1987
Oil on canvas, 185.4 x 106.7 cm
Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton

In 1996 Mary Pratt remembered meeting Donna Meaney in 1969 as "almost one of the most major days of my life."[1] Pratt first saw her at a dance at the local high school, Our Lady of Mount Carmel. She had been asked to choose the Valentine Queen and one student, Meaney, "stood out like a light," Pratt wrote. "Her pleasure in dancing filled her body, and her eyes, though deep-set, crinkled in smiling intimacy with the beat. She was the obvious choice."[2]

Meaney came to the Pratts' to help with the housework and children. She ended up living with them for three years from the time she was seventeen. She modelled for Christopher, and for Mary as well. The first of Mary Pratt's Donna paintings was made from slides taken by Christopher, part of a tray of slides he had given to Mary because he wasn't going to work from them. Eventually Mary started taking the photographs herself.

Mary's first Donna painting, *Girl in Wicker Chair*, was completed almost ten years after the source slide was taken. "When I painted it," Pratt said, "I was aware that [Donna] was looking at Christopher, not me."[3] Donna had become Christopher's mistress at some point in her modelling relationship with him, and Mary, though aware of it, did not challenge either of them. Instead, she painted. Carol Bishop-Gwyn proposes that Mary may have been trying to "paint the object of her husband's desire better than her husband could."[4]

LEFT: 35mm slide used as a source for *Girl in My Dressing Gown*, 1981, photograph by Christopher Pratt. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Girl in My Dressing Gown*, 1981, oil on Masonite, 152.4 x 76.2 cm, private collection.

Pratt has said of these paintings that she was trying to understand what men found erotic in representations of women. Tom Smart writes, "Using what she saw as Donna's strong sexual presence, Pratt wanted to explore the concept of female sexuality as an erotic muse to men, and she particularly wanted to understand her husband's erotic muse."[5]

The image for *This Is Donna* came from a photo shoot Christopher did with Donna during her second stint of living with the Pratts. Donna had left their home when she was twenty, becoming involved with a man who ended up in prison, and who went back to his wife on his release. "She came back to us," Mary said. "I think she was thinking of us as her parents. She was miserable."[6] Mary also noted that, in the photo, Donna had a "rumpled, sulky look that I hadn't expected. Once again, she was looking at Christopher. This wasn't the image I had intended, but I accepted it anyway."[7]

The power in *This Is Donna* stems in large part from that confusion of the gaze. As Pratt has stated, "Whatever happened between them is their business."[8] Nevertheless, the painting communicates much: a palpable tension, certainly. It is clear that the painter has a complicated relationship with her subject, though what that is specifically is left a mystery.

BURNING THE RHODODENDRON 1990

Mary Pratt, *Burning the Rhododendron*, 1990
Watercolour and pastel on paper, 127.6 x 239.4 cm
Sun Life Assurance Company, Toronto

At well over two metres wide, *Burning the Rhododendron* is one of Mary Pratt's largest works. This scale was possible only because of a change in working methods: switching from oil on panel or canvas to mixed media—watercolour and chalk, or oil pastels, on paper. It was made a year after she showed a series of these fire drawings at Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto, in an exhibition called *Flames*.

Light had always been Mary Pratt's chief subject, captured as it played across the surfaces of things, transforming the mundane into the sensual and erotic. We see that in the ephemeral play of light in *The Bed*, 1968, or on the scales of the fish in *Salmon on Saran*, 1974. Her series of fire works, however, is not so much about how light transforms objects, but about light itself as a beautiful destroyer. As Tom Smart writes, "In the bonfire drawings, she was able to represent light itself at the moment of its creation as it consumes matter."[1] Based on a photograph of the burning of a dead rhododendron bush in her back garden, this work references the biblical story of God appearing to Moses in a burning bush, and speaks directly to how light is revelatory. From the stained glass windows at her local church, through the jars of coloured water that she would leave on her windowsill, Mary Pratt's childhood fascination with light would never leave her.

Mary Pratt, *Christmas Fire*, 1981, oil on Masonite, 76.2 x 59.7 cm, Lavalin Collection, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

Pratt told Smart, "The fire had to be alive."[2] Writing about an earlier work from this series, she said, "The careless slap and dash of mixing a

water-based medium with a waxy medium allowed me to make this bonfire work."[3] Pratt was looking not for the deliberation and the realism of so much of her oil painting, but for a more immediate effect. She wrote, "It is an image as fluting and as ephemeral as a bonfire really is."[4]

Pratt worked on these images with her whole body, usually while standing, and the process provided a break from her usual cramped way of working—sitting and crouching over an easel and constantly twisting to see her slide viewer. "She could stand at her easel," Tom Smart writes, "move around, use her whole body to make marks on the paper."[5] She worked in this manner for several years, but eventually her ongoing health issues, particularly her arthritis, stopped her from working at such a large scale.

DINNER FOR ONE 1994

Mary Pratt, *Dinner for One*, 1994
Oil on canvas, 61 x 91.4 cm
Private collection

"Living alone has made the work stronger,"[1] Mary Pratt said in 1994. This work, *Dinner for One*, is an example of Pratt's use of the domestic image to make direct commentary on her own life, rather than on the more general domestic life shared by so many. Yet, as is so often the case in Pratt's work, the more personal she gets, the more universal the work feels.

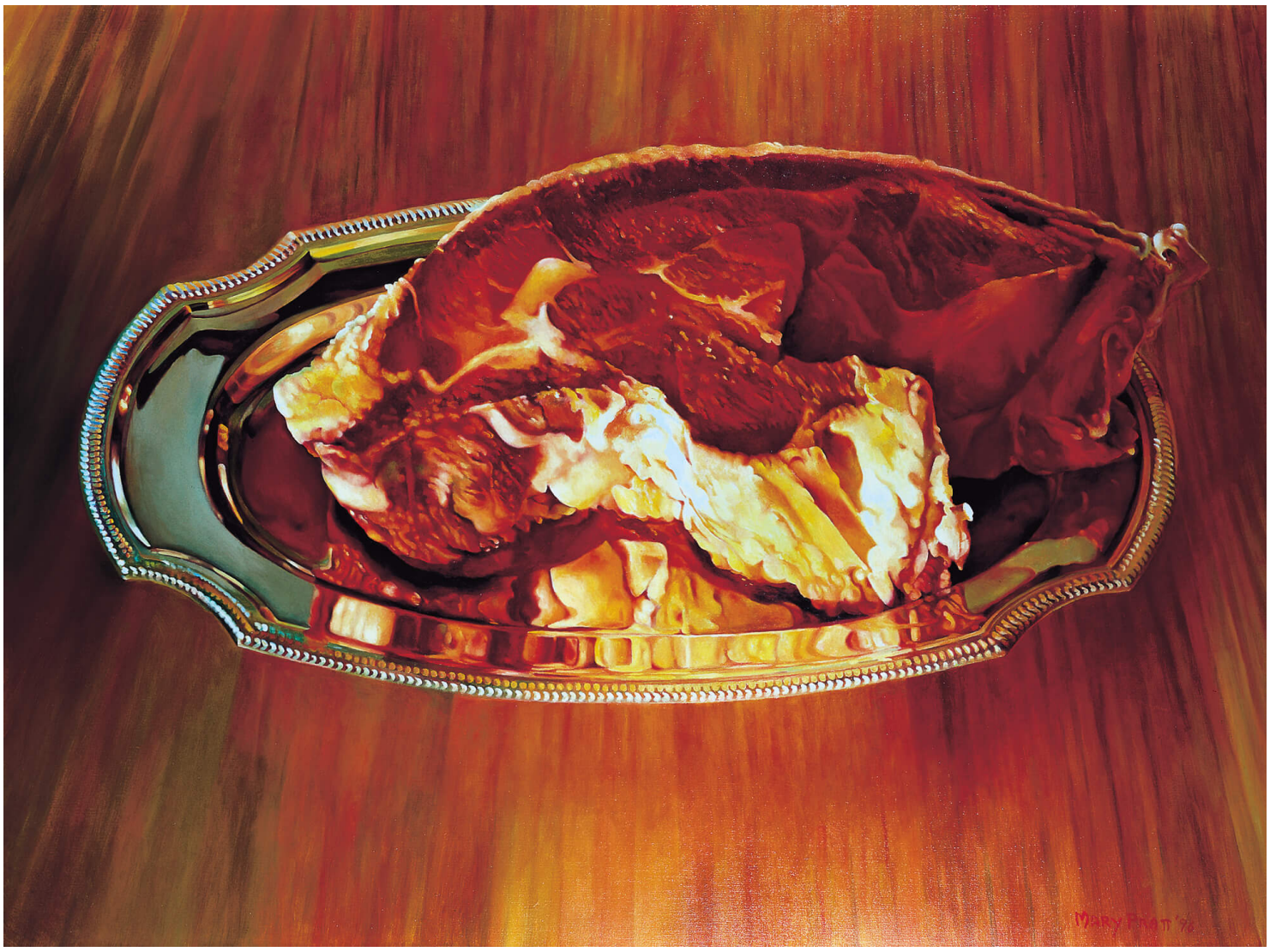
This painting must be understood in terms of Pratt's foundational work *Supper Table*, 1969. Both are part of a long still-life tradition, stretching back through Western art history, in which an everyday scene is elevated, filled with meaning. In *Supper Table*, the mostly happy chaos of a life with children is depicted in all its disarray: the satisfaction and tiredness of a brief moment of peace before life's whirl starts again.

Here, we are instead presented with a quiet, ordered life that seems as if it will always be this way. A modest dinner is laid out neatly on a polished wooden table: a small white plate, pasta salad in a Tupperware container, a single-serve white-china casserole dish, and a bowl of mixed fruit. The plate sits tidily on a mat, beside cutlery and a cloth napkin. The water glass is filled with a pale, golden liquid—wine perhaps, or juice. One suspects that the blue-patterned china bowl of fruit is a fixture of the table, rather than having been added specifically for this meal.

Mary Pratt, *Breakfast Last Summer*, 1994, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 121.9 cm, private collection, Vancouver.

For decades Pratt's painting had depicted the domestic life of a family, charting the way it changed with time. *Supper Table* depicts a full house, one emptying by the 1980s as the Pratt children grew up and moved out to pursue their own lives. A companion piece to *Dinner for One* is *Breakfast Last Summer*, 1994, a view of another table set for a meal, this time for two. It would have been laid out just before the Pratts separated, and Mary's decision to paint both scenes in 1994 has a certain diaristic quality. As Pratt often said of her work, "I see something, I've got to have it, I've got to keep it, I've got to paint it. And then, when I start to paint, I realize why."[2]

SUNDAY DINNER 1996



Mary Pratt, *Sunday Dinner*, 1996
Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 121.9 cm
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax

Sunday Dinner is a simple image: an expanse of wooden counter, a thin silver platter, and, centrally, raw flesh—glistening red, and dappled with white fat. A slab of beef before it goes into the oven for roasting represents a brief moment, but one in which it is most evident that an animal has died, and for which a whole system of distribution, value, and work is deployed.

Mary Pratt always maintained that she chose her images because they were beautiful to her. Something caught her eye and she photographed it, and later, perhaps months or even years later, she would come to a photograph again and find something else beautiful about it. Robin Laurence writes, "She condemns the romanticizing of the still life by European painters, and strives for a quality in her own work which she describes as a 'vicious reality,' a quality she sees as particularly North American."[1] Pratt's sense of that vicious reality often manifested itself in images of raw meat and fish, the blood and gore that

accompany the preparation of a meal. Sacrifice always lurks in her work, because, as she said so often, "You do have to have a sacrifice before you have a party."[2]

This is one of the few works in Pratt's oeuvre of raw red meat, the others being her two depictions of moose, *Service Station*, 1978, and *Dick Marrie's Moose*, 1973, which are very different in composition. The raw meat in *Sunday Dinner* has a blurry, out-of-focus appearance present in the original slide on which the painting is based. Typical for Pratt is the use of the silver platter, a signifier of the middle-class values represented by the whole idea of the Sunday roast.

LEFT: Mary Pratt, *Dick Marrie's Moose*, 1973, oil on Masonite, 91.4 x 61 cm, Blackwood Gallery, University of Toronto Mississauga. RIGHT: Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin, *Still Life with a Rib of Beef*, 1739, oil on canvas, 41 x 34 cm, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College.

The image is noticeably staged, as one wouldn't normally put a silver platter in the oven, or carve a roast on it. This staging device, in fact, highlights that the silver has communion overtones, framing the meat as both symbol and object.

JELLY SHELF 1999

Mary Pratt, *Jelly Shelf*, 1999
Oil on canvas, 55.9 x 71.1 cm
Private collection

When Mary Pratt was a child in Fredericton, she was struck by the light coming through the jars of jelly that her mother had put up in the kitchen. "When my mother lined up jars of jelly on the kitchen windowsill, they blazed in the same way as the church glass [of Wilmot United Church]. When she unmoulded the jelly into a crystal dish and brought it quivering into the dining room, the colours spread and changed as they shot through the facets of the crystal. . . . It was, for me, the most beautiful thing I could look at."[1] Trying to recreate the experience for herself as a child, Pratt filled jars with water tinted with food colouring. She put these on her windowsill, "to keep the magic of that brilliant coloured light."[2]

Pratt's 1999 painting captures this fleeting quality of sunlight through translucent jellies. In her composition, the jar sections form vertical slices, with a gap on the left looking back into the kitchen. The sense of both light and deep space keeps the viewer a little off balance. The reflective counter, shadowed by the jars, glows with deep, rich colour. In shadow, then, there is light–what critic Robin Laurence calls "a sense of blessedness."[3]

Mary Pratt, *Jello on Silver Platter*, 2001, oil on canvas, 61 x 91.4 cm, Fox Harb'r Golf Resort & Spa, Wallace, Nova Scotia.

In talking of her early work *The Bed*, 1968, Pratt maintained that the light wouldn't "stand still." Slides helped her capture those moments, and as her practice evolved, she became adept at the difficult technique of conveying light in a painting. Here the light doesn't stand still so much as vibrate–a liquid that seems embodied in the translucent jelly. Pratt's teasing of light out of shadow, her use of strong bright spots amid dark areas, is part of a long tradition that stretches back at least as far as Caravaggio, in which painters challenge themselves to capture the fleeting, spiritual qualities of light.

CHERRIES RIPE 2000

Mary Pratt, *Cherries Ripe*, 2000
Colour woodblock print, 42 x 61 cm
Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville

Cherries Ripe displays Pratt's mastery at depicting light, with the translucent fruit nestled in a transparent bowl, set off against a dark background that pushes the central image forward in the picture plane. This work and its related series are not paintings, but prints.

Prints do not play a major part in Mary Pratt's body of work, but one notable exception is a suite of ten woodblock prints realized by master printer Masato Arikushi (b.1947) between 1995 and 2002. The Transformations series is unique in Pratt's career, an example of a collaborative creation that put her in a different relationship to the finished work. Arikushi worked from original paintings, transforming them into complicated woodblock prints, often needing as many as one hundred impressions, "each impression carefully registered, hand-inked and hand-rubbed."[1]

The traditional Japanese *ukiyo-e* process, with its translucency and transparency, overcame Pratt's trepidation. She told Robin Laurence in 2002 that her earlier experiences with lithography and serigraphy had been unsatisfactory.[2] She found the experience of working with Arikushi humbling: "Not at all like my experience with lithographers who were 'arty' and so impressed with their own craft that they tried to tell me mine."[3]

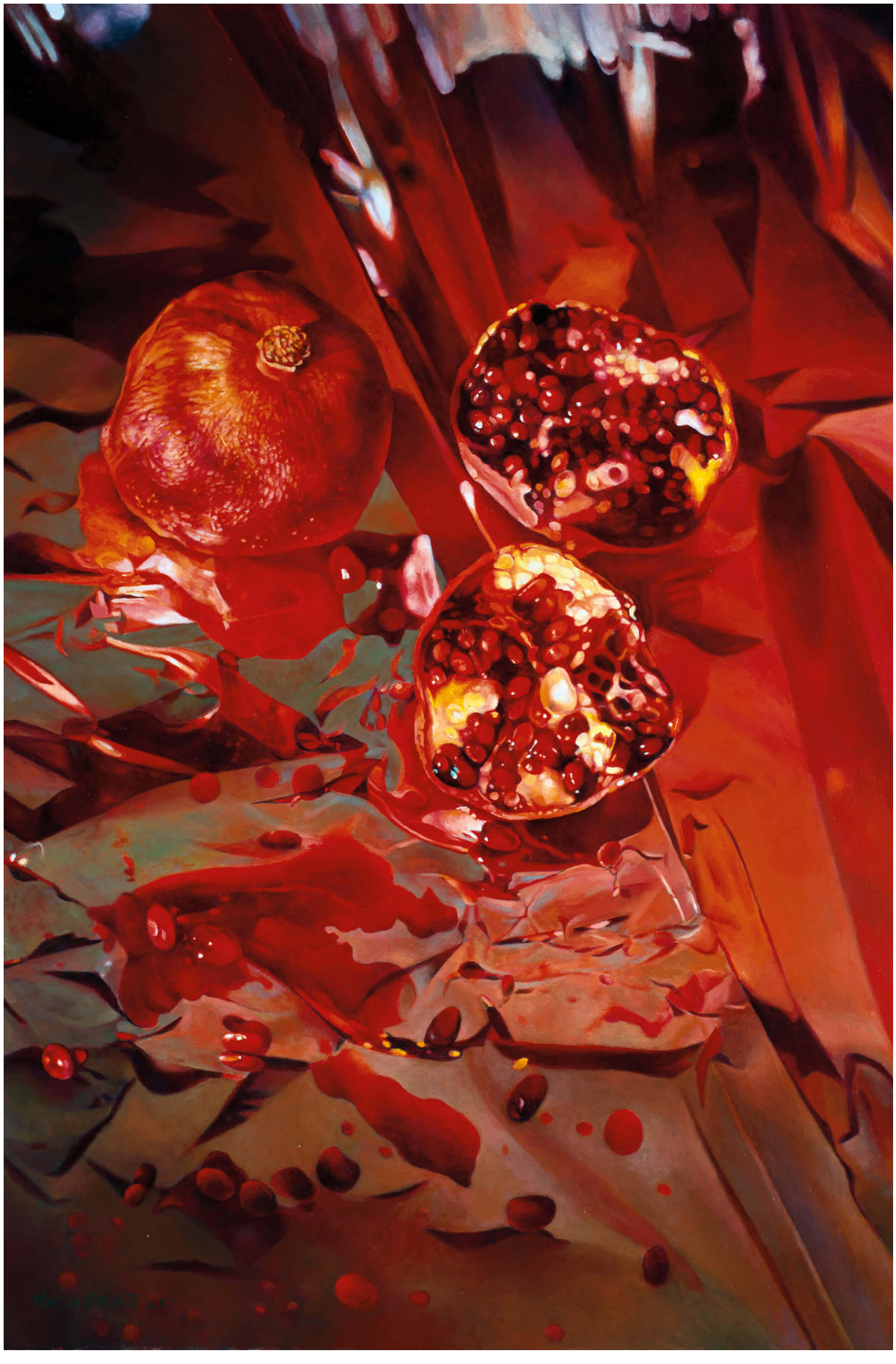
Katsushika Hokusai, *Rooster, Hen and Chicken with Spiderwort*, c.1830–33, polychrome woodblock print; ink and color on paper, 22.9 x 29.2 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

For most of the process she was living in St. John's while Arikushi was in Vancouver. Original works by Pratt were supplied to Arikushi by Pratt's Vancouver dealer, Andy Sylvester of Equinox Gallery, and tracings of proofs were sent back to Pratt to make comments and colour notes with coloured pencil.

For Pratt, who worked directly from photographs, and often ones that she did not take, the process of making these prints was daunting, and she had her misgivings: "Maybe it could be argued that I could just send him some of the photography I work from and he could take it from there."[4] Certainly, there was more to this collaboration than that, something Pratt also realized: "I do, however, break up the image after I've isolated it. I do make drawings for him, too, of course, and correct colours, and so no, I guess he does need me—but not much."[5]

In the end, Pratt described each work as a "two-hundred percent print": "I do my hundred percent, and so does Masato."[6]

THREADS OF SCARLET, PIECES OF POMEGRANATE 2005



Mary Pratt, *Threads of Scarlet, Pieces of Pomegranate*, 2005
Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 61 cm
Private collection

MARY PRATT

Life & Work by Ray Cronin

Of all the fruit Mary Pratt chose as subjects over the years—bananas, cherries, oranges, grapes, and apples—she most consistently returned to pomegranates. The pulpy fruit, with its vibrant red seeds, has a charged sexual connotation notable throughout art and culture and proved irresistible to her. Her 1993 painting *Pomegranates in Glass on Glass*, for instance, shows the fruit torn open and dripping pulp and seeds. There is something of a ritual killing in the work, as if the torn asunder fruit were a sacrifice.

This work from 2005 makes the allusion more extreme, and was completed just after the artist's divorce from Christopher Pratt became final in 2004. (They had lived separately for twelve years.) In an interview about her final retrospective, Mary said of the painting, "It seems to almost drip with blood. I did it unconsciously, really, I didn't remember doing it or seeing it."[1]

The pomegranate pulp and seeds read almost as flesh, reminiscent of a painting of a raw piece of meat, such as *Sunday Dinner*, 1996. As with *Sunday Dinner*, the pomegranates are presented on a reflective silver surface—tinfoil rather than a formal platter. The play of reflected light unsettles the surface, agitates it, heightening the unease and sense of violence that the painting conveys.

Mary Pratt, *Pomegranates in Glass on Glass*, 1993, oil on panel, 40.6 x 58.4 cm, private collection.

Over her last productive decade of work Mary Pratt often revisited previous themes and tended to focus on still lifes such as this one. The treatment of *Threads of Scarlet, Pieces of Pomegranate* is more dramatic than much of her earlier work, with the pomegranate juice spattering the tinfoil. It is a technically challenging piece, with its multiple reflections and translucent juice, and conveys Pratt's distinctive interest in contained violence. In writing of another pomegranate painting of Pratt's, Robin Laurence points out that the pomegranate seed has long been a symbol of fertility, "[falling] along a continuum of passion, conception, nurturance, and death."[2]

The powerful "erotic charge" Pratt saw almost forty years earlier in the red, rumpled chenille bedspread of *The Bed*, 1968, remains in play here. Pratt herself has said, "Red isn't just a colour, it's an emotion."[3] In an interview with curator Jonathan Shaughnessy, she elaborated:

> There's no doubt that I came from a house that was riddled with red. Red carpets and a belief in red somehow or another. My mother used to be a painter, and of course a cook and so on. And she said, "Isn't it always so wonderful to put a cherry on at the end, because it's so beautiful?" And it makes the point: it's red, it's beautiful. And, of course, the jelly that we had was usually red, and it would sit in place of honour at the table at Thanksgiving and at Christmas. My mother said it was best to leave the red till last, leave the best till last—red is the best, but don't start with it.[4]

SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

Mary Pratt monumentalized the small details of domestic life, finding eroticism, violence, and mortality in the raw materials of seemingly benign things like family meals. How a woman lives through and resists her social roles—as daughter, lover, wife, and mother—is the ultimate subject of Pratt's iconic work. A whole world emerges through Pratt's virtuoso realist paintings, bounded by strict limits, surface calm, and frequent beauty—but with something unpleasant always lurking, and where occasions such as dinnertime and parties always seem to call for some kind of sacrifice.

A RELUCTANT FEMINIST ICON

From the mid-1970s—when the second wave of the North American feminist movement was reaching the height of its popularity and influence—Mary Pratt was held up as an example. As Sandra Gwyn notes, "Reproductions of [Pratt's] work had started turning up in study kits assembled for the new women's studies programs in universities and high schools."[1]

Pratt was ambivalent about this positioning. In 1975 she said, "I have quite strong feelings about the women's movement, without really being part of it."[2] That same year, for her first major group exhibition, *Some Canadian Women Artists* at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Pratt provided an artist statement that seemed to deflect a political reading of her work: "I simply copy this superficial coating because I like the look of it."[3]

Mary Pratt at the opening of *Some Canadian Women Artists* at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1975, photographer unknown.

Perhaps Pratt was being coy, for even though she never officially admitted to social commentary, one cannot look at her work without seeing a focused and thoughtful interrogation of the domestic: from the quotidian hurly-burly of meals, laundry, cleaning, and child care, to the myriad elements that come with the gendered social constructs of family and the home. Earlier female artists, such as the French painter Berthe Morisot, make domestic life their subject, but Pratt was doing this at a time when female artists, and female labour, were being increasingly discussed and politicized. Nonetheless, Pratt still felt the need to downplay the intellectual content of her work.

Yet the "superficial coating" of Pratt's world has unmistakable depth. Her insistence on and struggle with taking on multiple roles of wife, mother, homemaker, and artist speaks to something important for her generation of women. U.S. writer Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, a landmark text of second-wave feminism that questioned ways in which society had expected women to find fulfillment and happiness. Many women wanted to expand the roles available to them, and Pratt echoed this sentiment when she told a newspaper, remembering her feelings from decades earlier, "I intend to have children and to have food on the table, and I intend to do the ironing, but I will have time to paint."[4]

Mary Pratt, *The Dining Room with a Red Rug*, 1995, oil on linen, 91.4 x 137.2 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton.

In 1976, writing for the catalogue of her first solo exhibition in Toronto, Robert Fulford called Mary Pratt "the visual poet of the kitchen."[5] Tom Smart later deemed this phrase "derogatory, patronizing, and simplistic,"[6] despite acknowledging that it provided a convenient hook on which curators and critics could hang their interpretations, and actually enhanced Pratt's growing reputation. It was nevertheless unfortunate, suggesting that Pratt's concerns were not cerebral or consequential. Pratt herself never fully escaped thinking of herself in this manner, returning often to the coy stance of her statements in the National Gallery catalogue.

In actual fact, Pratt was not a born housekeeper. "I came to domesticity with great difficulty," she told one interviewer. "My mother did not instruct in the art of the domestic; she was a very half-hearted housekeeper."[7] Moving to Salmonier, and having four small children and a husband to care for, Pratt had little choice but to buckle down and master this "art of the domestic." It was what was expected of her, and also what she expected of herself. But her "difficulty" with such work might have added to her sharp, detached perspective in such paintings as *Salmon on Saran*, 1974, and *Supper Table*, 1969.

LEFT: Mary Pratt, *Romancing the Casserole*, 1985, oil on Masonite, 50.8 x 71.1 cm, Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Roast Beef*, 1977, oil on Masonite, 42 x 57.2 cm, Museum London.

Almost forty years after Fulford's statement, Sarah Milroy visited Mary Pratt at her home in St. John's and wrote something similar: "It's the view from the kitchen counter that she has brought vividly to life. The rubber gloves lie just beyond the picture frame."[8] The difference here is, of course, time: later in her life, Pratt was celebrated by certain female critics and curators, who found in her work a depiction of femininity and motherhood reflective of if not always their own experiences, then those of their mothers and grandmothers.

Increasingly, Mary Pratt's work is seen as being influential for its subject matter. As Mireille Eagan writes, "Pratt's art is regularly positioned with the feminist movement which operated under the umbrella of politics rather than aesthetics."[9] Initially, in the 1970s, Pratt was seen as a woman succeeding in a man's world, overcoming the challenges of having a career and raising a family. Paradoxically, her subject matter was seen as an exemplar of the oppression of women: the housework, the laundry, the unbalanced sharing of the domestic burden. Martha Rosler's (b.1943) video *The Semiotics of the Kitchen*, 1975, for instance, adopted a more openly critical stance to the kitchen as a confining, gendered place for women. Fulford's description of Pratt as "the visual poet of the kitchen" came only one year after Rosler's video. Pratt was making more personal statements—her kitchen, food for her family, her wedding presents, her preserves, and so on. Rosler was treating the kitchen as if she were an anthropologist, while Pratt was implicating herself, using the kitchen as the centre of the creation of a home. Where Rosler was questioning gender roles, Pratt was, however uncomfortably, living them.

Still from Martha Rosler, *The Semiotics of the Kitchen*, 1975, single-channel digital video, transferred from videotape, black-and-white, sound, 6 min, 9 sec, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

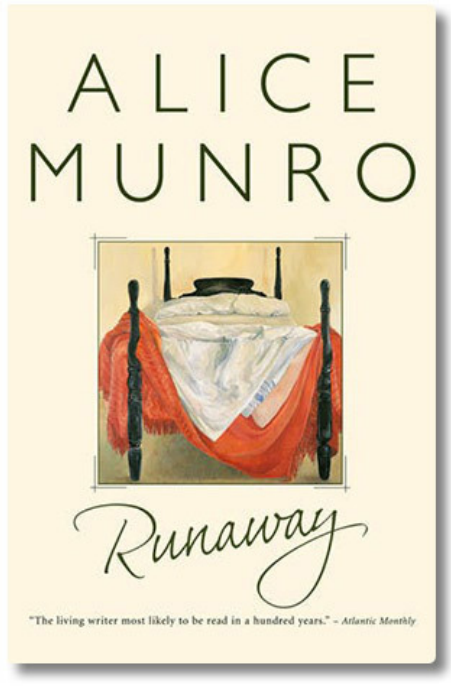
But Pratt's kitchen scenes become sites for resistance in more recent criticism. Even if Pratt's politics were largely private, or understated, she was not shy in underlining that the balancing act of being an artist and making a home was difficult, and a cause of strain in her marriage. "There was a terrible war going on in my head," she told Sandra Gwyn. As Catharine Mastin writes, "[Pratt] would make the family home and kitchen in Salmonier no silent place of oppression but an active location from which to establish a voice of sexual difference."[10]

Mary Pratt, *Pyrex on Gas Flame*, 1977, oil on Masonite, 30.5 x 33.5 cm, private collection.

THE SENSUAL WORLD

Despite perceiving her reputation as being "sweet and lovely and full of maternal concern,"[11] Mary Pratt painted pictures that foregrounded flesh, sex, and death, paintings such as *Service Station*, 1978, *The Bed*, 1968, and *Eggs in an Egg Crate*, 1975. As she said for decades in interviews and public talks: "Unless something gave me a sort of erotic charge, I wasn't interested. Eroticism and sensuality—and I'm not laying this on; this is true!—without that, then I felt it wouldn't be worth bothering."[12]

"Erotic" is a highly subjective term, suggesting that which triggers arousal and desire. For Pratt this clearly involves a visceral reaction to the play of light over everyday objects, which, in her paintings, "glisten and quiver, ripe and ready to be savoured."[13] Light is literally revelatory; in Pratt's hands it is transformative. "As soon as I had that gut reaction," she said, "I knew that it had to be a sensuous thing, an erotic thing with me. It was no good to intellectualize."[14]



LEFT: Cover of Alice Munro's book of short stories *Runaway*, 2004, featuring Mary Pratt's painting *The Bed*, 1968. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Bedroom*, 1987, oil on Masonite, 121.9 x 88.2 cm, Collection of the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson.

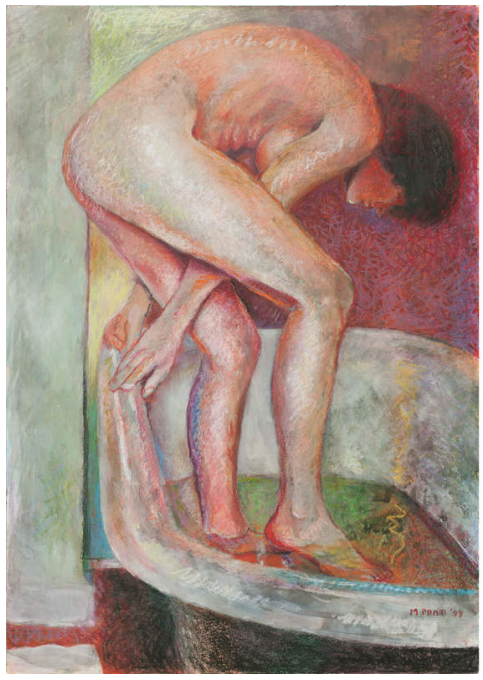
Recalling short-story writers like Alice Munro, whose *Runaway* featured Pratt's *The Bed* on its cover, and Flannery O'Connor, Mary Pratt repeatedly described her paintings as "epiphanies"—a sudden revelation with both biblical and sexual overtones. "It's difficult to talk about," Pratt said, "but I do get this erotic charge from vision. I think the world comes to me through my senses, and that's why I get this charge. The world doesn't come to me through my eyes exactly; it comes to me through every bit of me, and I think that I'm very lucky from that point of view. I don't have to look for it —I just don't. It just comes to me; it bombards me."[15]

Pratt talked easily about the erotic potential of light through glass, of the glistening scales of fish, and of the raw fleshiness of meat. Fruit, whole and cut, eggs, intact and cracked, and more: the day-to-day brought a seemingly endless parade of sensual pleasure. Though the majority of Pratt's painting falls within the still-life genre—which for centuries, in the West, portrayed animate and inanimate objects with varying degrees of sensuality—it is notable for being done by a woman, during a time in which abstraction was *au courant*, and in which such detailed scenes of domestic life were rare. This lends the work its own, unique intimacy, which arguably adds to its eroticism.

Mary Pratt, *Cut Watermelon*, 1997, woodcut, 41.9 x 61 cm, Equinox Gallery, Vancouver.

FEMALE FIGURE, FEMALE GAZE

With her paintings of Donna, Pratt began to immerse herself in figure painting. This was a charged subject for her, one that she had avoided, saying, "You ought to feel some erotic response to whatever you're painting, but I don't have an erotic response to women. I didn't want to ask women to take their clothes off. I thought it was terribly invasive."[16] Still, Pratt began painting women because her husband Christopher Pratt gave her a set of slides of Donna Meaney that he had taken several years earlier. He was going to throw these slides away but thought maybe Mary would find something in them. She did.



LEFT: Mary Pratt, *Donna Stepping into a Tub*, 1999, watercolour and chalk on paper, Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Blue Bath Water*, 1983, oil on Masonite, 170.2 x 115.6 cm, Collection of Jennifer Wells Schenkman.

Christopher and Donna had a sexual relationship that, while never explicitly acknowledged by Mary,[17] certainly had an impact on her decision to paint figures. This adds a level of emotional tension to the series of works that is palpable. One slide of Meaney in a wicker chair seemed, in Mary's words, "too perfect to throw away."[18] The work is very formal, with the lines of the body in contrast with the curves of the wicker chair. Donna looks straight at the camera, with a direct, yet somehow unreadable, gaze. That painting ended up on the cover of *Saturday Night* magazine in 1978 and was perceived by some readers as pornographic. "All kinds of people stopped their subscriptions because it was a dirty picture," Pratt recalled. "In fact, [Donna] was wearing a red bathing suit. I felt that it was a one off."[19]

It was not. Mary went on to paint many pictures of Donna Meaney, some from slides taken by Christopher, including photographs taken at Mary's suggestion, as well as from photographs she took herself. The paintings based on Christopher's photographs, such as *This Is Donna*, 1987, have an inescapable and complicated emotional impact—showing Meaney as an object through Christopher's eyes while simultaneously revealing Meaney's own conflicted subjectivity.

The paintings based on photos Mary took of Donna Meaney are more reflective of Donna as a person. Christopher's shots are formal and staged, with ambiguous or dramatic lighting and Meaney's stiff model's pose and ambiguous gaze. The paintings from Mary's photos, in contrast, have little pretence, just presence. *Donna with Powder Puff*, 1986, for instance, shows a nude Meaney applying powder to her stomach, seemingly oblivious to being photographed. In *Cold Cream*, 1983, Meaney, wearing a terry-cloth robe, looks directly at the viewer as if into a mirror, her hair wrapped in a red towel, her face slathered in cold cream.

Mary Pratt, *Cold Cream*, 1983, pencil and oil on Masonite, 48.3 x 41.3 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton.

Though Mary's paintings of Meaney based on Christopher's slides have received the most critical attention, Mary's paintings based on her own photos are just as important, and telling. Figuration was not as deliberately central to Pratt's oeuvre as it was to near-contemporaries such as Alice Neel (1900–1984), Sylvia Sleigh (1916–2010), or Marion Wagschal (b.1943), but with the Donna paintings it became, however consequentially, a key part of her practice.

A SENSE OF PLACE

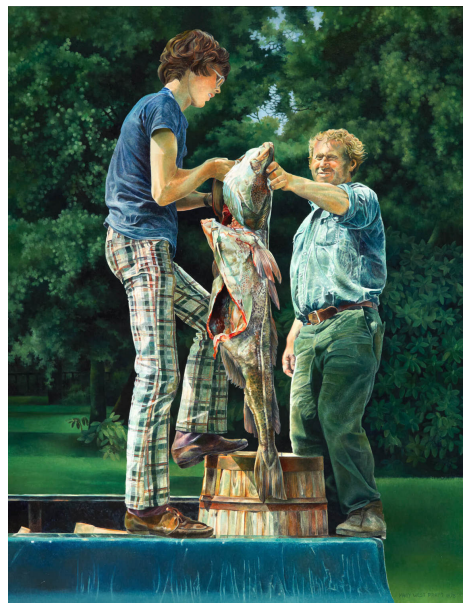
Despite her increasing visibility in Newfoundland, Pratt's first experience of the area was isolation. "I felt like I was forgotten," she said of her move there from New Brunswick in 1956. "I felt that I'd been cut off from my childhood and from everything that I had ever known."[20] But it was there, in the isolation of her home in Salmonier, that she grew into an artist. "This is an abrupt, dramatic, light-and-dark kind of society," she recalled to Sandra Gwyn. "You're richer, you're poorer, you're wildly happy, or you're really depressed. The soft, romantic, Goodridge Roberts approach that came naturally to me in the beginning doesn't apply here at all."[21]

LEFT: Goodridge Roberts, *Still-Life*, c.1948, oil on canvas, 33.1 x 41 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Vase with Silk Flowers*, 1960, watercolour and pastel on paper, 86.4 x 111.8 cm, private collection.

As she told one graduating class decades later, "The first picture of Newfoundland I ever saw was a tiny, colourless engraving of fish sheds perched above the rocks and surf of the North Atlantic. It was a bleak representation of a difficult life. When I actually came here in 1955, what I found was a society that had created a vibrant culture for itself. A culture which has survived and which brings us forward."[22] Her use of "us" makes clear how much she came to identify with her adopted home.

Mary Pratt was not a painter of the Newfoundland landscape, or of an idea of Newfoundland, in the manner of her peer and husband Christopher Pratt. Nonetheless, aspects of Newfoundland—its isolation, its often harsh weather, its relative scarcity in comparison with her native New Brunswick—pervade her work. Her focus on domestic interiors, on foodstuffs gathered from the land—salmon, moose, game birds, trout, and more—all point to Newfoundland as a context for, rather than subject of, her painting. The moose in *Service Station*, 1978, and *Dick Marrie's Moose*, 1973, were things she saw in her immediate environment, as was the salmon in *Another Province of Canada*, 1978.

Pratt also maintained that she couldn't have painted the way she did anywhere else. Newfoundland was a place that fuelled her: "Newfoundland has given me a great deal—one of its most illustrious sons for a husband, a family tradition in both business and the arts for my children to consider and a generous society in which to satisfy an ambition developed years ago in New Brunswick. What luck to have landed here, dreaming and unaware though I was."[23]



Mary Pratt, *Another Province of Canada*, 1978, oil on Masonite, 91.4 x 69.8 cm, Memorial University of Newfoundland Collection, The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's.

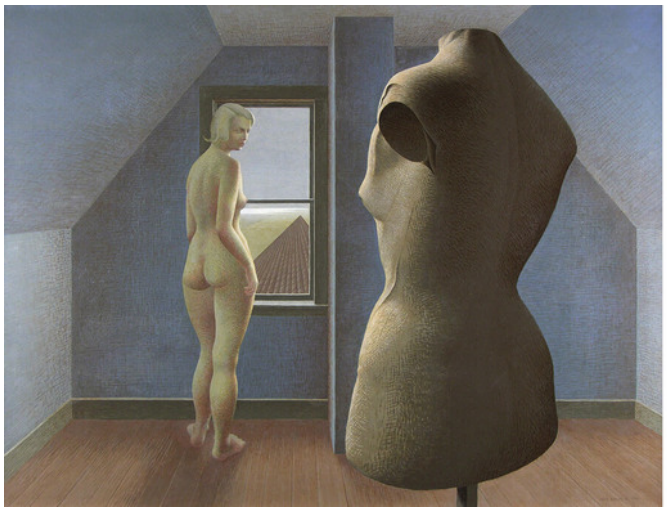
Pratt told a class at another convocation that in a world of new technologies and endless possibilities, "we must not be blinded to Newfoundland itself."[24] She never was, as Mireille Eagan notes: "Pratt is talking not only about a location—Newfoundland—but also about lived experience grounded in a specific place. What she describes is a layered location abounding with histories and memories, as broad as they are deep."[25] Pratt's work, then, is profoundly about place—about lived experience over time.

Art historian Catharine Mastin sees Pratt's sense of place as tied up in a generalized understanding of gender norms and societal expectations that were part of the world Mary Pratt inherited. She writes, "She had not chosen Salmonier. Rather, it was chosen for her in accordance with prevailing gender norms in marriage."[26] Nevertheless, as work after work makes clear, Mary Pratt came to choose Newfoundland.

Mary Pratt in her garden, c.1980, photographer unknown.

REALISM, ATLANTIC OR OTHERWISE

Atlantic Realism is a somewhat ambiguous term, most often applied to Alex Colville (1920–2013) and some of his students, usually Tom Forrestall (b.1936) and Christopher and Mary Pratt. In the 1950s Colville was compared to painters such as Edward Hopper (1882–1967) and Andrew Wyeth (1917–2009), but was mostly identified with the New York school of magic realism, which included Paul Cadmus (1904–1999) and George Tooker (1920–2011). This was a fair comparison given the symbolic content of his work and its surreal qualities, as evinced by works such as *Nude and Dummy*, 1950, or *Horse and Train*, 1954. However, Colville was never fully part of any school or movement.



LEFT: Alex Colville, *Nude and Dummy*, 1950, gum arabic emulsion overpainted with stand oil and damar varnishes on gessoed Masonite, 76 x 99 cm, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John. RIGHT: Andrew Wyeth, *Christina's World*, 1948, tempera on panel, 81.9 x 121.3 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Estate of Andrew Wyeth / SOCAN (2020).

Similarly, Mary Pratt was not much of a joiner. She was undoubtedly a realist painter, in that she strove to paint objects so that they were immediately recognizable, but she never claimed to be part of any self-identified group of so-called realists. Tom Smart sees Pratt as part of the Photorealist or New Realist traditions, which emerged in the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This group of painters, including Chuck Close (b.1940), Philip Pearlstein (b.1924), Malcolm Morley (1931–2018), Robert Bechtle (b.1932), and others, showed the world in sharp detail, a view often informed by commercial culture and the wide dissemination of the photographic image. As Tom Smart writes, "To the New Realists and to Mary Pratt, . . . a work of art gave witness to a perception of the world."[27]

As a result, realism must be seen as an approach, not as a school. As Mireille Eagan points out, "Pratt herself makes little or no association with any school, label, or category—and rightly so. Her works are not about a political attitude or about complicating what is seen. The complications come later."[28]

Mary Pratt, *Artifacts on Astroturf*, 1982, oil on Masonite, 68.6 x 81.3 cm, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax.

Pratt's realism, Atlantic or otherwise, never varied. Once she had arrived at her mature style, she always worked from photographs, striving to convey the way that the camera recorded the world, and how that tool captured the moments that she found compelling. Her commercial success, however, and her insistence on depicting the immediate surroundings of her life seemed to lead many critics and curators to decide that her work lacked substance. Despite the inclusion of her work in most public collections in the country, she still felt as if she was being treated as second-rate, Pratt told an audience in Fredericton on the opening of her touring exhibition *The Substance of Light*—that in being a realist she was alienated "from the main stream of contemporary art."[29] She also mentioned that while she felt great confidence in her ability as a painter, she had little confidence in the art world, where she had "always felt very tenuous and excluded."[30]

CRITICAL RECEPTION AND RECONSIDERATION

While commercially successful and popularly known, Mary Pratt's work was never fully embraced by the critics and curators who made up the art-world establishment. As was noted in an article in the *Globe and Mail* when *Mary Pratt*, the 2013 touring exhibition, opened in St. John's, the artist, and the organizing galleries, had hopes that the retrospective would travel to Canada's largest art galleries: the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, and the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa–both galleries that had mounted retrospectives of Christopher Pratt's painting. The institutions declined. "I guess they don't like the work," Pratt told the *Globe and Mail* in 2013. "I feel terrible about that. Because Christopher's work always goes to those places and I just can't get in. I obviously haven't shown them what's it's about."[31]

Mary Pratt, *Anne in My Garden*, 1986, oil on board, 76.2 x 66 cm, Collection of Charlotte Wall.

The critical resistance to Mary Pratt's work, perhaps stemming from, at least in part, the attitude summed up by Robert Fulford's characterization of her in the 1970s as "the visual poet of the kitchen," is slowly breaking down. As Catharine Mastin told the National Gallery of Canada's magazine, discussing the retrospective *Mary Pratt*, "We're only starting to understand who she is. Her voice is about seeing and living the experience of being in a remote community by herself as the only female artist in the vicinity, and working alongside a much more well-known artist at the time: her husband Christopher Pratt. She made those conditions of her life into an economic enterprise, and I think that's a really powerful story that this exhibition tells."[32]

Pratt's realism was anecdotal, in that it portrayed quotidian moments of a life that, through the telling, take on a symbolic weight. It is a realism akin to the impulse expressed by U.S. Imagist poet William Carlos Williams in "The Red Wheelbarrow":

> So much depends
> upon
> a red wheel
> barrow
> glazed with rain
> water
> beside the white
> chickens.[33]

For Pratt, that "so much" is almost a sacrament, a sense of grace that she imparts in a straightforward depiction of the everyday. "Even to imagine a god we must ourselves be open to pleasure," Pratt wrote.[34]

Mary Pratt, *Christmas Turkey*, 1980, oil on Masonite, 45.8 x 59.9 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.

STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Mary Pratt was a Photorealist painter, using meticulous detail inspired by the precision of lens-based images to represent light and surfaces. She worked from photographs, often tracing her compositions straight from slides projected onto canvas or paper. She strove to reproduce the photographic image accurately, for it served to capture the play of light that sparked her interest in the first place. Often, years would pass between the photograph being taken and Pratt's selection of it as her subject. In her later career Pratt began to work more in mixed media, combining chalk, pastels, and watercolour into large-format works on paper. She completed just one printmaking series in her career.

MARY PRATT

Life & Work by Ray Cronin

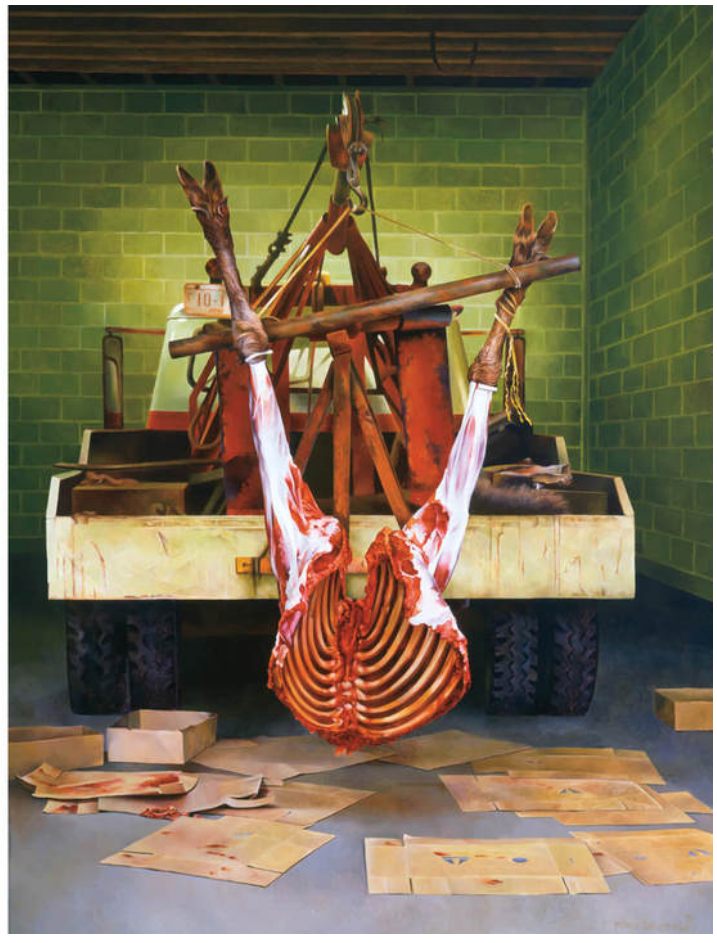
PAINTING THE PHOTOGRAPH

Mary Pratt's style was based in the careful reproduction of her source materials, which since the late 1960s were invariably photographs. And her subject, despite the parade of household tools, wedding presents, and foodstuffs, was actually light. Her realism was less about depicting things than about emotions, physical reactions, or states of mind: a flash of beauty, repulsion. "So I was cooking and cleaning and ironing, and doing what you do. But the world came to me. It just popped at me," said Pratt. "I figured that I wasn't going to paint anything that didn't affect me personally and physically."[1]

Mary Pratt, *Green Grapes and Wedding Presents with Half a Cantaloupe*, 1993, oil on canvas, 61 x 91.4 cm, RBC Art Collection, Toronto.

Pratt painted in oils, after sketching in the bare bones of her composition. Often she would project the image onto her canvas and trace the image directly. She used small sable brushes, intended for watercolour painting, and worked in a series of cross-hatched, tiny strokes, laying down colour from a top corner of the panel to the bottom, working in as many layers as needed to get the lifelike quality she was seeking. This careful buildup of thin layers meant that there were no brush strokes visible in her paintings.

She worked with a slide viewer next to her easel, its large screen showing the image she was working on. That illuminated image was what she painted. This was not an unknown practice, of course; artists had been using photographs as references since the invention of photography, and the *camera obscura*, a rudimentary means of projecting light onto canvas, had been available to artists since the Renaissance. Unlike Pratt's most famous teacher, Alex Colville (1920–2013), she did not create a geometric underpinning for her paintings, choosing to do most of her composition, with the exception of some editing, in the camera itself. "Measuring, a creation of space, doesn't really interest me at all," Pratt wrote in 1993. "When I have to use grids, etc., I haven't understood it, and it never seemed important to me at all."[2]



LEFT: Mary Pratt working on *Service Station* in her studio in Salmonier, c.1978, photograph by Christopher Pratt. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Service Station*, 1978, oil on Masonite, 101.6 x 76.2 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

"To me, the surface is the given reality," said Pratt, "the thin skin that shapes and holds those objects which we recognize as symbols."[3] Reality, of course, is both a concrete and mutable subject. No two people see the world similarly, and the instant one starts to explain or define reality as a fixed thing, one is on unsure ground.

THE TECHNIQUE OF REALISM

Twentieth-century art largely put realism in the conservative camp, a reactionary response to more abstract, avant-garde approaches to image making. In his 1959 book *Painting and Reality*, the French-born philosopher Étienne Gilson dismissed all forms of painting except for abstraction as hopelessly retrograde–and, echoing the modernist preference for subjectivity and psychology, not sufficiently real. Gilson claimed that there was a difference between the "real" and the "visible." Yet Gilson, writing in the heyday of Abstract Expressionism, creates a false duality between "imitative" and "creative."[4] Sixty years later this does not ring true. We know that representational art is not just imitation.

Mary Pratt, *Emmenthal Cheese in Saran*, 1993, oil on linen, 71.1 x 81.3 cm, Collection of Kathleen L. Mitchell.

Realism in fine art is perpetually fraught with existential contradictions. As art historian Linda Nochlin writes: "A basic cause bedevilling the notion of Realism is its ambiguous relationship to the highly problematical concept of reality."[5] But nevertheless, that ambiguity, and that problematic concept, are central to the art of Mary Pratt. Perhaps the problem with realism is actually one of language—that a supposed realist painting is no more or less real than an abstract one. That is, this problematic concept begins not with Mary Pratt, but with us.

MARY PRATT

Life & Work by Ray Cronin

Gustave Courbet, *The Stone Breakers*, 1849, oil on canvas, 170 x 240 cm, destroyed in the Second World War.

The idea that realism presents the world as it supposedly is has roots in the first realist movement that swept the Western art world, led in the nineteenth century by French painter Gustave Courbet (1819–1877). Before that, representational painting certainly existed, but it was not labelled as "realism." And so Courbet's realism was not about style (for in nineteenth-century France most artists were realists to modern eyes) but about showing things as Courbet felt they really were—an aspiration that was social and political. Courbet painted subjects, such as poor peasants and, famously, female genitalia in *The Origin of the World*,1866, that the bourgeois art world of France found hard to look at. In this way, Courbet used his realism for a radicalized purpose.

In nineteenth-century academic painting there were strict hierarchies among genres, with Courbet's chosen mode—history painting—at the pinnacle. Women, who were not allowed by the academies to draw from the nude male model, tended to be relegated to what were considered lesser genres, such as still life. That gender-based differentiation survived well into the twentieth century, when the male painters of early modernism leading on into Abstract Expressionism were ascribed heroic and often macho characteristics.

Women were at the periphery of these movements, approaching a semblance of equal treatment only with the advent of feminism and its political approach to artmaking. In painting representationally, Pratt (notwithstanding the example of her male teachers who were realists) was doing what was expected of a young female artist in the mid-twentieth century, certainly in Canada. But she was also making visible a marginalized reality. Mary Pratt's focus on the goriness of domesticity, and on the life of a woman at home caring for her children and her husband, surrounded by the trappings of a middle-class upbringing, can be read as realist social commentary. Like Courbet, Pratt wanted to show the world, or at least her world, warts and all.

Mary Pratt, *Split Grilse*, 1979, oil on Masonite, 56.1 x 64 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario.

FROM PROJECTION TO PAINTING

Mary Pratt's observation of her subjects unfolded over time. She recounted that her process evolved in stages: "I see something that grabs me, and I do the photography–that's the first thing. It gets sent off to Toronto or wherever to be processed, and then when all of these slides come back, I've forgotten that first jab, that first jab of enthusiasm."[6]

Slides are developed from photographs, printed diapositively on a transparent base and placed in cardboard or plastic mounts, and placed into a carousel for projection. In the mid-twentieth century, slides were affordable to produce and widely used by artists, art historians, and designers, as in their 35mm format they allowed for high-resolution reproduction and projection.

Once Mary Pratt had her slides back from the processor, she would spread them out on a light table to look at them with new eyes, "to see if there's anything there that I remember."[7] The element of discovery that this approach brought with it was important to her. "I have the opportunity again to decide what to do with this whole thing. And that's kind of exciting, because you can only hope that the slides you've taken will remind you of that moment when you thought the whole thing was going to be worthwhile, and that you were going to do something wonderful."[8]

Mary Pratt's dining room table, c.2000, photographer unknown.

In works such as *Salmon on Saran*, 1974, *Red Currant Jelly*, 1972, and *Cod Fillets on Tin Foil*, 1974, Pratt pushed her technical abilities to their absolute limits, mastering the ability to convey complex visual information. The Saran wrap, for instance, is actually rendered with a series of fine white or grey lines, its transparency completed by the viewer's optical experience, in a kind of *trompe l'oeil*, or trick of the eye. The tinfoil on which the jars of jelly or the cod fillets sit is made up of rich greys, purples, whites, and blacks—a remarkable, almost liquid-seeming surface that, through the perceiving eye, snaps into the crisp, reflective surface of the metal foil. As Pratt says of making these works, "I had to forget what they were—I need to think about them as just shapes and volumes."[9]

Many of Pratt's paintings had a long gestation period. Sometimes years elapsed between the photograph being taken and the painting being made. That elapsed time, the shift in focus from the immediately observed to the carefully studied, is in many ways as important a moment in Pratt's evolution as her initial decision to paint from slides. What began as a desire to still time, to capture the fleeting moments to which she was responding with such a strong visceral feeling, became an entire way of seeing the world.

Mary Pratt, *Glassy Apples*, 1994, oil on canvas, 46 x 61 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton.

It is important to remember that photography was far from instant in the late 1960s. For Pratt, it could take weeks or more for the developed slides to be available. First the roll of film had to be used up in the camera; then the exposed roll was dropped off somewhere in St. John's to be developed, and then, a few weeks later, picked up again. Pratt had to learn how to look at the slides as images in themselves, to see if she could remember what it was that was so striking about that picture that she felt she had to capture it.

Sometimes the image seemed as fresh as the moment Pratt saw it in real life. Others felt flat. Over Pratt's career increasing piles of slides accumulated, waiting to be used. Most never would be, remaining in boxes in her studio storage, or discarded.

LEFT: Mary Pratt, *Two Stone Birds in the Spring*, 2002, oil on Masonite, 40.6 x 45.7 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *The Doll's House*, 1995, oil on linen, 45.7 x 61 cm, private collection.

CAPTURING LIGHT

"Photography stills everything, so you can look at things, and see how they work."[10] Struck by the light coming through the jars of jelly that her mother would put up in the kitchen, and trying to recreate the experience for herself, a young Mary Pratt would fill jars with water that she had tinted with food colouring. These would sit on her windowsill, reflecting coloured light into her room (*Jelly Shelf*, 1999). Pratt also revelled in the light from the stained glass windows at Wilmot United Church, which illuminated her childhood Sundays. The challenge, always, was to capture those moments touched by light. Pratt needed a way to slow time, and slides did just that.

Pratt initially resisted using photographs, finding that it felt like cheating, and that it ran counter to her training. Yet why not take advantage of such a useful tool? As painter David Hockney (b.1937) has persuasively argued, optical instruments such as the *camera obscura* were available even to the Old Masters, and painters have used photography-like aids as source and research materials for centuries. Still, Pratt had to deal with her work being downplayed as mere documentation—what one critic called "an earnest mirroring evolved from commercial art school exercises in product illustration."[11]

"As Mary works on her paintings, she can look out on the Salmonier River," 1990s, photograph by John Reeves.

Pratt has indeed admitted to an interest in commercial imagery. Like so many North Americans of her generation, Pratt grew up in a city that didn't have an art museum. (The Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, opened in 1959, when Pratt was twenty-four, married, and living in Newfoundland.) It was through the mass media of her day—magazines in particular—that Pratt first saw painted imagery. She responded to its colour, luxury, and glossiness. There were no brush strokes evident in these works, and they had an overt sensuality to which she responded.

Pratt's own slide-based approach allowed her to recreate this effect to her own ends, rather than commercial ones. Though Pratt felt that she had crossed some sort of line through the use of photography, her physical isolation in Salmonier and her intellectual, and self-imposed, isolation from the art world meant that she didn't know much about Pop art, Photorealist painting, and the many ways that photographs were changing modern and contemporary art.

Mary Pratt, *Ginger Ale and Tomato Sandwich No. 1*, 1999, watercolour on paper, 66.7 x 43.8 cm, private collection.

It is the use of photographs that gives Pratt's work its critical edge. As art historian Gerta Moray has argued, Pratt's painting addresses the key twentieth-century (and twenty-first-century) challenge of painting in the face of mass media: "Mary Pratt's pictures are paintings done after the death of painting," Moray writes.[12] Of course, reports of painting's death have been, to follow Mark Twain, greatly exaggerated. The use of photographs, the evocation of commercial imagery, the depiction of banal objects—all are strategies that have been followed by diverse artists, particularly by the Pop artists exemplified by Andy Warhol (1928–1987), himself a former commercial artist, and also by less easily categorized artists such as Gerhard Richter (b.1932).

"One of the things about using photography," said Pratt, "is that I didn't have to face the real thing—it separated me a little bit from reality and allowed me to think about them as shapes and volumes and colours. If I tried to do the real thing I'd sit and cry!"[13]

Unlike Christopher Pratt and Alex Colville, Mary Pratt did not use the photograph as a model from which to paint. Instead, she directly translated the photograph to painting. She tried to recreate the light that the camera recorded. Equally importantly, she imitated the way that the image was captured—the focus, the depth of field—that reflected the mechanical lens of the camera rather than the human eye. Blurriness or unnatural sharpness—these

things and more are depicted by Pratt as they are in the photograph. "Well, I'm working with a camera," she said, "and that is what it has given me."[14]

The use of photographs as source material freed Pratt to concentrate on the subject that was dearest to her heart–things bathed in light. Pratt remembered her first physical response to light: "One time when I was a child, my mother knit me a lovely red sweater. I slung it over my chair back by my bed, and when I woke up, the sun was shining through the red sweater and I loved it. I raced home to see it again and somebody had put the sweater away. I felt robbed."[15] The adult Pratt turned to photography to right this wrong–that "the light wouldn't stand still long enough for me to catch it."[16]

Mary Pratt, *Basting the Turkey*, 2003, oil on canvas, 40.6 x 43.2 cm, Collection of Michael and Inna O'Brian.

SCALE

Mary Pratt's process was so detailed that, in her oils, she tended to work on a small scale, her domestic subjects rendered at humble sizes. Many of the works in her Donna series, however, and several of the mixed-media drawings that she made throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, are exceptions.

In Pratt's Donna series she increased the scale of her work: both *Girl in My Dressing Gown*, 1981, and *This Is Donna*, 1987, are approximately two-thirds life-size, greatly heightening the confrontational quality of the works. With Pratt's Fires series, such as *Burning the Rhododendron*, 1990, she found that by using pastels and coloured chalk she was able to work at a scale far beyond anything she had attempted in oils. This change in media was driven in part by physical constraints due to old age and ill health.

LEFT: Mary Pratt, *Dishcloth on Line #3,* 1997, mixed media on paper, 57.2 x 76.2 cm, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Collection, The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's. RIGHT: Mary Pratt, *Self-portrait*, 2002, watercolour and chalk on paper, 57.8 x 76.5 cm, Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville.

The drawings began in a similar way to the paintings–projecting an image onto paper and then tracing in the outlines. Pratt worked in oil and chalk pastels and finished up with watercolour. She wrote about the process of making one of these, *Big Spray at Lumsden*, 1996, in her journal:

> I began by establishing all the white with oil pastel–the froth and foam and spray and dots of spray, the falling shine, the light. Then I "drew" the detail with watercolour. Then I took some white chalk pastel and filled in the parts of the wave that really were blurs of foam. Next, I started again with the oil pastels to "generalize" the background sea, land and sky. I think I'll go over that with watercolour today to tie it together and make it richer and simpler.[17]

Mary Pratt, *Big Spray at Lumsden*, 1996, mixed media on paper, 103.5 x 151.8 cm, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.

Pratt's series of woodblock prints made in the Japanese *ukiyo-e* process in collaboration with master printer Masato Arikushi (b.1947) was her only sustained foray into the medium. The ten prints in the Transformations series, made between 1995 and 2002, were each produced in an edition of seventy-five and were based on existing works–oils or watercolours. Pratt would correct the colour of the proofs, and make drawings that showed ways of adapting the original image. It was a very different approach for her as an artist, as she began to find Arikushi's sensibility being reflected in the works. "Gradually his own ideas melded with my original images, and I detected his own imagery inserting itself into my own. I liked that. It all fit."[18]

By 2013 Mary Pratt had stopped painting. Her health issues, among them arthritis, autoimmune disease, and deteriorating vision, just made it too hard. When put on antidepressants, Pratt told her doctor that under the medication's influence she wouldn't be able to paint. He assured that she would be able to paint better than ever. "Well, he was wrong and I was right," she said in 2014. She found her last retrospective, which toured from 2013 to 2015, bittersweet. "I worry that it's sort of over," she said.[19]

Mary Pratt, *Pears on a Green Glass Plate*, 1998, colour woodcut on heavy japan paper, 41.6 x 61 cm, Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville.

WHERE TO SEE

Mary Pratt's works can be found in numerous public and private collections across Canada. Her work is well represented in the collections of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax; the Owens Art Gallery, Sackville; The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's; and the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. The artist's papers are housed at the Mount Allison University Archives, and the Owens Art Gallery has a large collection of her preparatory works on paper. Although the works listed below are held by the following institutions, they may not always be on view.

ART GALLERY OF NOVA SCOTIA

1723 Hollis Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
902-424-5280
artgalleryofnovascotia.ca

Mary Pratt, *Artifacts on Astroturf*, 1982
Oil on Masonite
68.6 x 81.3 cm

Mary Pratt, *Sunday Dinner*, 1996
Oil on canvas
91.4 x 121.9 cm

ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

317 Dundas Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
1-877-225-4246 or 416-979-6648
ago.ca

Mary Pratt, *Service Station*, 1978
Oil on Masonite
101.6 x 76.2 cm

BEAVERBROOK ART GALLERY

703 Queen Street
Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada
506-458-2028
beaverbrookartgallery.org

Mary Pratt, *Cold Cream*, 1983
Pencil and oil on Masonite
48.3 x 41.3 cm

Mary Pratt, *This Is Donna*, 1987
Oil on canvas
185.4 x 106.7 cm

Mary Pratt, *Glassy Apples*, 1994
Oil on canvas
46 x 61 cm

Mary Pratt, *The Dining Room with a Red Rug*, 1995
Oil on linen
91.4 x 137.2 cm

BLACKWOOD GALLERY

University of Toronto, Mississauga
3359 Mississauga Road
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada
905-828-3789
blackwoodgallery.ca

Mary Pratt, *Dick Marrie's Moose*, 1973
Oil on Masonite
91.4 x 61 cm

MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION

10365 Islington Avenue
Kleinburg, Ontario, Canada
905-893-1121
mcmichael.com

Mary Pratt, *Split Grilse*, 1979
Oil on Masonite
56.1 x 64 cm

MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

185, rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest
Montréal, Québec, Canada
514-847-6226
macm.org

Mary Pratt, *Christmas Fire*, 1981
Oil on Masonite
76.2 x 59.7 cm

MUSEUM LONDON

421 Ridout Street North
London, Ontario, Canada
519-661-0333
museumlondon.ca

Mary Pratt, *Roast Beef*, 1977
Oil on Masonite
42 x 57.2 cm

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

380 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
613-990-1985
gallery.ca

Mary Pratt, *Red Currant Jelly*, 1972
Oil on Masonite
45.9 x 45.6 cm

OWENS ART GALLERY

Mount Allison University
61 York Street
Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada
506-364-2574
mta.ca/owens

Mary Pratt, *Table Setting*, 1984
Ink on paper

Mary Pratt, *Romancing the Casserole*, 1985
Oil on Masonite
50.8 x 71.1 cm

Mary Pratt, *Mangoes on a Brass Plate*, 1995
Colour woodblock print
40.8 x 61.3 cm

Mary Pratt, *Pears on a Green Glass Plate*, 1998
Colour woodblock print
42.3 x 61 cm

Mary Pratt, *Donna Stepping into a Tub*, 1999
Watercolour and chalk on paper

Mary Pratt, *Cherries Ripe*, 2000
Colour woodblock print
42 x 61 cm

Mary Pratt, *Self-portrait*, 2002
Watercolour and chalk on paper
57.8 x 76.5 cm

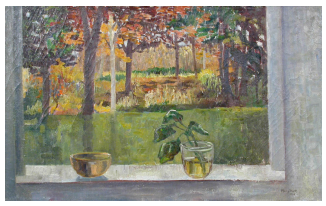
THE ROBERT MCLAUGHLIN GALLERY

72 Queen Street
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada
905-576-3000
rmg.on.ca

Mary Pratt, *Christmas Turkey*, 1980
Oil on Masonite
45.8 x 59.9 cm

THE ROOMS PROVINCIAL ART GALLERY

9 Bonaventure Avenue
St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada
709-757-8000
therooms.ca



Mary Pratt, *October Window*, 1966
Oil on canvas
40.5 x 66 cm

Mary Pratt, *The Back Porch*, 1966
Oil on canvas board
50.8 x 40.6 cm

Mary Pratt, *Eviscerated Chickens*, 1971
Oil on Masonite
45.7 x 54 cm

Mary Pratt, *Eggs in an Egg Crate*, 1975
Oil on Masonite
50.8 x 61 cm

Mary Pratt, *Another Province of Canada*, 1978
Oil on Masonite
91.4 x 69.8 cm

Mary Pratt, *Donna*, 1986
Oil on Masonite
90.2 x 69.9 cm

Mary Pratt, *Dishcloth on Line #3*, 1997
Mixed media on paper
57.2 x 76.2 cm

NOTES

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3. Sandra Gwyn, "Introduction," in Sandra Gwyn and Gerta Moray, *Mary Pratt* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1989), 7.

4. Tom Smart, *The Art of Mary Pratt: The Substance of Light* (Fredericton: The Beaverbrook Art Gallery and Goose Lane Editions, 1995), 26.

5. Conversation with the author, June 2, 2017, St. John's.

6. Mary Pratt, quoted in Milroy, "Woman's Life," 76.

7. Mary Pratt, *A Personal Calligraphy* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2000), 139.

8. Mary Pratt, quoted in Robin Laurence, "The Radiant Way," *Canadian Art* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 29.

9. Mary Pratt, quoted in Laurence, "Radiant Way," 29.

10. Smart, *Art of Mary Pratt*, 29.

11. Mary Pratt, quoted in interview with Murray Whyte, "Mary Pratt: A World of Small Things," *Toronto Star*, January 17, 2014.

12. Conversation with the author, June 1, 2017, St. John's.

13. Smart, *Art of Mary Pratt*, 30.

14. Pratt, *Personal Calligraphy*, 21.

15. Carol Bishop-Gwyn, *Art and Rivalry: The Marriage of Mary and Christopher Pratt* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2019), 2–7.

16. Conversation with the author, June 1, 2017, St. John's.

17. Mary Pratt, quoted in interview with Elissa Barnard, "The Life and Art of Painter Mary Pratt."

18. Smart, *Art of Mary Pratt*, 45.

19. Laurence, "Radiant Way," 29.

20. Mary Pratt, quoted in Laurence, “Radiant Way,” 29–30.

21. Mary Pratt, quoted in interview with Murray Whyte, “Mary Pratt: A World of Small Things.”

22. Mary Pratt, quoted in Laurence, “Radiant Way,” 30.

23. Mary Pratt, quoted in Gwyn, “Introduction,” 10.

24. Mary Pratt, quoted in Gwyn, “Introduction,” 11.

25. Gwyn, “Introduction,” 9.

26. Mary Pratt, quoted in Gwyn, “Introduction,” 9.

27. Conversation with the author, June 2, 2017, St. John’s.

28. Mary Pratt, quoted in Smart, *Art of Mary Pratt*, 52.

29. Laurence, “Radiant Way,” 30.

30. Mary Pratt, quoted in Laurence, “Radiant Way,” 33.

31. Gwyn, “Introduction,” 13.

32. Laurence, “Radiant Way,” 35.

33. Mary Pratt, quoted in Gwyn, “Introduction,” 13.

34. Bishop-Gwyn, *Art and Rivalry*, 110.

35. Mary Pratt, quoted in Gwyn, “Introduction,” 17.

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40. “Decorating and Design” section, *House and Home*, February 13, 2014.

41. Pratt, *Personal Calligraphy*, 128.

42. Mary Pratt, quoted in interview with Elissa Barnard, “The Life and Art of Painter Mary Pratt.”

43. Adrienne Clarkson, "Portrait of a Friendship: Former Governor-general Adrienne Clarkson Recalls Her Long, Close Acquaintance with the Brilliant Painter, Whose Artistic Vision Combined Beauty and Pain," *Globe and Mail*, September 4, 2018.

44. Mireille Eagan, "Mary Pratt: 1935–2018," *Canadian Art*, August 15, 2018, canadianart.ca/features/mary-pratt-1935-2018/.

45. Pratt, *Personal Calligraphy*, 143.

46. Clarkson, "Portrait of a Friendship."

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1. Mary Pratt, quoted in Sandra Gwyn and Gerta Moray, *Mary Pratt* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1989), 52.

2. Mary Pratt, quoted in Gwyn and Moray, *Mary Pratt*, 52.

KEY WORKS: SALMON ON SARAN

1. Tom Smart, *The Art of Mary Pratt: The Substance of Light* (Fredericton: The Beaverbrook Art Gallery and Goose Lane Editions, 1995), 72.

2. Smart, *Art of Mary Pratt*, 72.

3. Mary Pratt, quoted in Sandra Gwyn and Gerta Moray, *Mary Pratt* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1989), 62.

KEY WORKS: EGGS IN AN EGG CRATE

1. Sarah Milroy, "A Woman's Life," in *Mary Pratt*, rev. ed., eds. Mireille Eagan and Sarah Fillmore (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2013), 73.

2. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenon of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), viii.

3. Mary Pratt, quoted in Sandra Gwyn and Gerta Moray, *Mary Pratt* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1989), 70.

KEY WORKS: SERVICE STATION

1. Sarah Milroy, "A Woman's Life," in *Mary Pratt*, rev. ed., eds. Mireille Eagan and Sarah Fillmore (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2013), 85.

2. Mary Pratt, quoted in Sandra Gwyn and Gerta Moray, *Mary Pratt* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1989), 94.

3. Milroy, "Woman's Life," 85.

KEY WORKS: CHILD WITH TWO ADULTS

1. Mary Pratt, quoted in "Decorating and Design" section, *House and Home*, February 13, 2014.

2. Robin Laurence, "The Radiant Way," *Canadian Art* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 35.

3. Mary Pratt, quoted in interview with Karen Pinchin, "Retrospective Celebrates the Subversive Vision of Painter Mary Pratt," *Globe and Mail*, July 16, 2013.

4. Sarah Fillmore, quoted in Elissa Barnard, "The Life and Art of Painter Mary Pratt," *Chronicle Herald* (Halifax, NS), December 7, 2014.

KEY WORKS: THIS IS DONNA

1. Mary Pratt, *A Personal Calligraphy* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2000), 29.

2. Pratt, *Personal Calligraphy*, 30–31.

3. Mary Pratt, quoted in Sandra Gwyn and Gerta Moray, *Mary Pratt* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1989), 96.

4. Carol Bishop-Gwyn, *Art and Rivalry: The Marriage of Mary and Christopher Pratt* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2019), 117.

5. Tom Smart, *The Art of Mary Pratt: The Substance of Light* (Fredericton: The Beaverbrook Art Gallery and Goose Lane Editions, 1995), 90.

6. Mary Pratt, quoted in interview with Elissa Barnard, "The Life and Art of Painter Mary Pratt," *Chronicle Herald* (Halifax, NS), December 7, 2014.

7. Mary Pratt, quoted in Gwyn and Moray, *Mary Pratt*, 120.

8. Mary Pratt, quoted in interview with Elissa Barnard, "The Life and Art of Painter Mary Pratt."

KEY WORKS: BURNING THE RHODODENDRON

1. Tom Smart, *The Art of Mary Pratt: The Substance of Light* (Fredericton: The Beaverbrook Art Gallery and Goose Lane Editions, 1995), 123.

2. Mary Pratt, quoted in Smart, *Art of Mary Pratt*, 124.

3. Mary Pratt, quoted in Sandra Gwyn and Gerta Moray, *Mary Pratt* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1989), 174.

4. Mary Pratt, quoted in Gwyn and Moray, *Mary Pratt*, 174.

5. Smart, *Art of Mary Pratt*, 123.

KEY WORKS: DINNER FOR ONE

1. Mary Pratt, quoted in Robin Laurence, "The Radiant Way," *Canadian Art* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 35.

2. Mary Pratt, quoted in Laurence, "Radiant Way," 26.

KEY WORKS: SUNDAY DINNER

1. Robin Laurence, "The Radiant Way," *Canadian Art* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 35.

2. Mary Pratt, quoted in interview with Elissa Barnard, "The Life and Art of Painter Mary Pratt," *Chronicle Herald* (Halifax, NS), December 7, 2014.

KEY WORKS: JELLY SHELF

1. Mary Pratt, *A Personal Calligraphy* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2000), 134.

2. Mary Pratt, *Personal Calligraphy*, 140.

3. Patricia Deadman and Robin Laurence, *Simple Bliss: The Paintings and Prints of Mary Pratt* (Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2004), 26.

KEY WORKS: CHERRIES RIPE

1. Patricia Deadman and Robin Laurence, *Simple Bliss: The Paintings and Prints of Mary Pratt* (Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2004), 35.

2. Deadman and Laurence, *Simple Bliss*, 33.

3. Mary Pratt, *A Personal Calligraphy* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2000), 115.

4. Pratt, *Personal Calligraphy*, 115.

5. Pratt, *Personal Calligraphy*, 115.

6. Pratt, *Personal Calligraphy*, 115.

KEY WORKS: THREADS OF SCARLET, PIECES OF POMEGRANATE

1. Mary Pratt, quoted in "Decorating and Design" section, *House and Home*, February 13, 2014.

2. Patricia Deadman and Robin Laurence, *Simple Bliss: The Paintings and Prints of Mary Pratt* (Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2004), 33.

3. Mary Pratt, quoted in interview with Peter Simpson, "The 'Erotic' Jellies of Mary Pratt," *Ottawa Citizen*, April 4, 2015.

4. Mary Pratt, quoted in interview with Jonathan Shaughnessy, "Mary Pratt: A Love Affair with Vision," *National Gallery of Canada Magazine*, April 1, 2015, https://www.gallery.ca/magazine/exhibitions/mary-pratt-a-love-affair-with-vision.

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3. Mary Pratt, quoted in Mayo Graham, *Some Canadian Women Artists* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975), 55.

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27. Smart, *Art of Mary Pratt*, 65.

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29. Pratt, *Personal Calligraphy*, 128.

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16. Mary Pratt, quoted in Sandra Gwyn, “Introduction,” in Sandra Gwyn and Gerta Moray, *Mary Pratt* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1989), 12.

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GLOSSARY

Abstract Expressionism
A style that flourished in New York in the 1940s and 1950s, Abstract Expressionism is defined by its combination of formal abstraction and self-conscious expression. The term describes a wide variety of work; among the most famous Abstract Expressionists are Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Willem de Kooning.

Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)
Founded in 1900 as the Art Museum of Toronto, later the Art Gallery of Toronto, the Art Gallery of Ontario is a major collecting institution in Toronto, Ontario, holding close to 95,000 works by Canadian and international artists.

Atlantic Realism
Realism was embraced by several important artists from Canada's Atlantic Provinces in the mid- and late twentieth century, including Miller Brittain, Christopher Pratt, Mary Pratt, Alex Colville, and Tom Forrestall. It remains an important variety of Canadian art.

Bechtle, Robert (American, b.1932)
A painter and leading figure of Photorealism. The stunning realism, seemingly benign subject matter (cars, houses, families), and haphazard composition of his paintings all indicate his use of photographic source material, an important part of his process since the 1960s. A major retrospective of his work was held at SFMOMA in 2005 and travelled to other major art institutions.

Borduas, Paul-Émile (Canadian, 1905–1960)
The leader of the avant-garde Automatistes and one of Canada's most important modern artists. Borduas was also an influential advocate for reform in Quebec, calling for liberation from religious and narrow nationalist values in the 1948 manifesto *Refus global*. (See *Paul-Émile Borduas: Life & Work* by François-Marc Gagnon.)

Brandtner, Fritz (German, 1896–1969)
A prolific and influential visual artist in Canada, Brandtner immigrated to this country in 1928 and quickly established himself as a commercial artist and set designer; he also mounted a solo exhibition soon after his arrival. German Expressionism influenced his artistic output, as did his interest in social justice. He was an active teacher, and with Norman Bethune established the Children's Art Centre, a Montreal arts school for poor children.

Bush, Jack (Canadian, 1909–1977)
A member of Painters Eleven, formed in 1953, Bush found his real voice only after critic Clement Greenberg visited his studio in 1957 and focused on his watercolours. Out of these Bush developed the shapes and broad colour planes that would come to characterize a personal colour-field style, parallel to the work of Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland. With them, Bush participated in Greenberg's 1964 exhibition *Post Painterly Abstraction*.

Cadmus, Paul (American, 1904–1999)
Working in egg tempera, Cadmus produced detailed realist paintings that satirized and eroticized American culture. After working in commercial art and spending several years in Europe with fellow artist and romantic partner Jared French in the 1930s, Cadmus began his career with commissions for the WPA's Public Works of Art Project in New York City. He gained public notoriety when his painting of sailors carousing with male and female partners attracted an admiral's ire, igniting a scandal around his "unflattering" depiction of the Navy.

camera obscura
From the Latin for "dark chamber," a *camera obscura* is an early photographic device. Originally small, dark rooms to which light was admitted by a single small hole, they have been used since antiquity to view solar eclipses without damaging the eyes: the hole allows an inverted image of the outside scene to be projected onto the opposite wall. By the sixteenth century, the smaller, portable *camera obscura* was being used as a drawing aid, projecting an image that an artist could trace.

Cassatt, Mary (American, 1844–1926)
Cassatt painted figurative work, often featuring women and children. Her paintings were shown regularly at the Salon in Paris. She was the only American painter officially associated with the French Impressionists.

Chardin, Jean-Baptiste Siméon (French, 1699–1779)
A French painter renowned for his genre scenes and still lifes. His lowly subject matter was at odds with the Rococo style that prevailed in the Paris of his day, yet he was a star of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture and his works were in high demand around Europe. Chardin never left Paris; his knowledge of art derived solely from what he was able to see in his city.

Close, Chuck (American, b.1940)
An artist widely renowned for his enormous Photorealist portraits, created through a painstaking process that involves breaking up his subject into gridded increments and then methodically recreating it on canvas. In addition to painting he has mastered an array of printmaking and photographic techniques.

Colville, Alex (Canadian, 1920–2013)
A painter, muralist, draftsman, and engraver whose highly representational images verge on the surreal. Colville's paintings typically depict everyday scenes of rural Canadian life imbued with an uneasy quality. Since his process was meticulous–the paint applied dot by dot–he produced only three or four paintings or serigraphs per year. (See *Alex Colville: Life & Work* by Ray Cronin.)

Courbet, Gustave (French, 1819–1877)
A critical figure in nineteenth-century art, Courbet helped establish the Realist movement, with paintings such as *Burial at Ornans*, 1849–50, and *The Painter's Studio*, 1855, and paved the way for later artists, including the Impressionists, to abandon classical subjects for those they encountered in their daily lives.

feminism
Encompassing a wide range of historical and contemporary philosophical and political perspectives, feminism can be broadly understood as the belief that men and women should be socially, politically, and economically equal. In the West, a small number of women writers first began to question women's inferior social status, particularly in matters of marriage and education, in the Renaissance. By the nineteenth century, prominent feminists in Britain, the United States, and Canada were championing the idea of women's suffrage. The twentieth century has seen an expansion of feminist thinking to consider how race, class, work, sexuality, and a broader understanding of gender impact how different women experience inequality and shape the social justice goals of feminist movements around the world.

Gilson, Étienne (French, 1884–1978)
Founder of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies at the University of Toronto, Gilson was a philosopher and specialist in French medieval thought. Although he initially focused on René Descartes, Gilson became deeply engaged with the work of St. Thomas Aquinas, which shaped his philosophical outlook from the 1920s until the end of his life. Elected to the Académie française in 1946, Gilson was known for his writing as much as for his scholarship.

Graham, Mayo
A curator specializing in modern and contemporary art, Graham became the first director/curator of the Ottawa Art Gallery in 1989. She also held positions at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa (1970s–1980s and 2000s) and at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1990s). Her last position, prior to her retirement, was director of outreach and international relations at the National Gallery.

Group of Seven
A progressive and nationalistic school of landscape painting in Canada, the Group of Seven was active between 1920 (the year of the group's first exhibition, at the Art Gallery of Toronto, now the Art Gallery of Ontario) and 1933. Founding members were the artists Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varley.

Harris, Lawren P. (Canadian, 1910–1994)
The eldest son of Lawren S. Harris of the Group of Seven, Lawren P. Harris was best known as a landscape and, later, abstract painter. As an official war artist during the Second World War he documented the Italian front. From 1946 to 1975 he was the director of the School of Fine and Applied Arts at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, where he worked to popularize modern art in the Maritimes.

Harris, Lawren S. (Canadian, 1885–1970)
A founding member of the Group of Seven in Toronto in 1920, Harris was widely considered its unofficial leader. Unlike other members of the group, Harris moved away from painting representational landscapes, first to

abstracted landscapes and then to pure abstraction. The Group of Seven broke up in 1933, and when the Canadian Group of Painters was formed in 1933, Harris was elected its first president.

Hockney, David (British, b.1937)
Hockney gained renown for his paintings of Southern California swimming pools, which depict a life of leisure in the Los Angeles of the 1960s. He uses a stylized form of realism and bright, clear colours in portraits and other figurative work, much of it autobiographical. Although he has experimented with other media, including photomontage, video, drawing, and digital painting, Hockney remains best known as a painter. He has lived primarily in Los Angeles since 1978, though he announced his intention to move to Normandy, France, in 2019.

Hopper, Edward (American, 1882–1967)
Though he was a commercial illustrator in his early career, Hopper is widely and best known as a realist painter of American scenes, those that conveyed a palpable sense of solitude, even isolation, with motionless figures in indoor or outdoor settings. Among his most iconic works are *Nighthawks*, 1942, and *Early Sunday Morning*, 1930.

Imagism
Rooted in the ideas of the early twentieth-century English philosopher and poet T.E. Hulme and related to French Symbolism, Imagism is a movement in American poetry that rejected Victorian and Romantic aesthetics in favour of simplicity, clarity, and the use of precise imagery. Ezra Pound formalized the definition of the Imagist poem in 1912 alongside fellow poets Hilda Doolittle, Richard Aldington, and F.S. Flint; the first anthology also included work by James Joyce and William Carlos Williams, among others. It was absorbed into a more general modernist movement around 1917.

Impressionism
A highly influential art movement that originated in France in the 1860s, Impressionism is associated with the emergence of modern urban European society. Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and other Impressionists rejected the subjects and formal rigours of academic art in favour of scenes of nature and daily life and the careful rendering of atmospheric effects. They often painted outdoors.

Jarvis, Lucy (Canadian, 1896–1985)
Born in Toronto, Jarvis was a painter whose portraits of children, landscapes, and figure studies drew on Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. With Pegi Nicol MacLeod she established the Observatory Art Centre at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton in 1941, the city's first art gallery, and from 1946 to 1960 she served as the director of the university's art department. In 1961 Jarvis moved to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, with fellow artist Helen Weld and established a studio where she painted and taught until her death in 1985.

lithograph
A type of print invented in 1798 in Germany by Aloys Senefelder. Like other planographic methods of image reproduction, lithography relies on the fact

that grease and water do not mix. Placed in a press, the moistened and inked lithographic stone will print only those areas previously designed with greasy lithographic ink.

magic realism

A term used for artistic or literary productions in which dreamlike, irrational, or supernatural elements appear in a realistic setting. This fusion of the real and the fantastic is found in the work of writers such as Gabriel García Márquez and painters such as Giorgio de Chirico, André Derain, and the Dadaists.

memento mori

A Latin phrase meaning "remember you will die," in art a *memento mori* is a work, often a painting, that contains a reference to death. This may be a skull, hourglass, rotten fruit, or other symbol of decay or the passage of time. Along with the related genre of the *vanitas* still life, the *memento mori* became popular in Western art in the seventeenth century, when it often carried religious overtones. More recent artists have used the form to explore the relationship between life and death in various contexts.

Methodism

Founded by John Wesley in England in the eighteenth century, Methodism is a Christian Protestant denomination that draws on the traditions and doctrines of the Church of England. Characterized by evangelical fervour and commitment to study and practice (method), Wesley's style of observance arrived in Newfoundland in 1766 and Nova Scotia in the 1770s; following the American Revolution, many Loyalist Methodists settled in Upper Canada. Methodism had a strong influence on nationalist politics in Canada in the nineteenth century: Methodists established schools and universities from New Brunswick to Alberta and sent evangelical missions westward in an effort to create religious cohesion as the country expanded following Confederation. Most Canadian Methodist congregations entered the United Church of Canada in 1925.

modernism

A movement extending from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century in all the arts, modernism rejected academic traditions in favour of innovative styles developed in response to contemporary industrialized society. Modernist movements in the visual arts have included Gustave Courbet's Realism, and later Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism and on to abstraction. By the 1960s, anti-authoritarian postmodernist styles such as Pop art, Conceptual art, and Neo-Expressionism blurred the distinction between high art and mass culture.

Morisot, Berthe (French, 1841–1895)

A painter and printmaker, Morisot found success at the Paris Salons before becoming involved with the fledgling Impressionist movement in the late 1860s. She became one of its most significant figures, best known for paintings of domestic life.

Morley, Malcolm (British/American, 1931–2018)
After a troubled childhood that landed him in prison for robbery at age eighteen, Morley became a well-known figure in the New York City art scene in the 1960s and the recipient of the inaugural Turner Prize—awarded annually to a British artist—in 1984. One of the progenitors of the Photorealist style of painting, by the 1970s he had begun to move on to a looser, Neo-Expressionist style. Ships, trains, and motorcycles as well as surreal images of war and military figures (Second World War airplanes, nineteenth-century generals, medieval knights) recur frequently in Morley's work.

Munro, Alice (Canadian, b.1931)
Born in Huron County, Ontario, Munro is a short-story writer whose depictions of small-town life draw heavily on her family history and her own experiences. Her work is noted for its fine-grained realism and its attention to mystery and ambiguity in lives of ordinary people as well as the intimacies and tensions of small communities. In 2013, Munro became the first Canadian to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

National Gallery of Canada
Established in 1880, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa holds the most extensive collection of Canadian art in the country as well as works by prominent international artists. Spearheaded by the governor general, the Marquis of Lorne, the gallery was created to strengthen a specifically Canadian brand of artistic culture and identity and to build a national collection of art that would match the level of other British Empire institutions. Since 1988 the gallery has been located on Sussex Drive in a building designed by Moshe Safdie.

Neel, Alice (American, 1900–1984)
Primarily a portrait painter, Neel created expressionistic and vulnerable images of her romantic partners, friends, and neighbours in Spanish Harlem beginning in the 1930s; she later completed portraits of many important figures in the New York art scene of the 1960s. She was concerned with poverty and social issues, and completed a number of works documenting the residents of Greenwich Village for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Great Depression. Many of her paintings depicted families or mothers and children, and she completed a number of nudes, including portraits of friends at various stages of their pregnancies and a self-portrait at the age of 81.

Nochlin, Linda (American, 1931–2017)
A feminist art historian famous for her 1971 essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," Linda Nochlin addressed in her work the absence of women from art-historical contexts by examining their access to training and their place in society, opening the door to new frameworks for art-historical research and curatorial practice.

Northern Renaissance
Flourishing in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Renaissance in Northern Europe was characterized by the rise of Humanism, by an engagement with Italy and the classical world, and by the impact of the Protestant Reformation. Advances in artistic techniques, notably the development of oil paint and printmaking, saw various art forms generated with a high level of invention, detail, and skill. Hieronymus Bosch, Albrecht Dürer, and Hans Holbein are key figures.

Nouveau réalisme (New Realism)
An avant-garde movement founded in 1960 by the art critic Pierre Restany and the painter Yves Klein. Influenced by Dada, the New Realists often used collage and assemblage, incorporating objects into their works.

O'Connor, Flannery (American, 1925–1964)
A novelist and short-story writer, O'Connor was born in Savannah, Georgia, later moving to rural Milledgeville. The American South served as the background for her tales of hubris and degradation in which deeply flawed, grotesque characters find redemption, often through events that are violent as well as transformative. O'Connor was a devout Catholic, and her darkly comic works had strong religious overtones, though she avoided didacticism. She also wrote book reviews and essays that dealt with her own faith and beliefs.

Paris Salon
Beginning in 1667, the Paris Salon was a juried annual or biennial exhibition held at the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture (later the Académie des beaux-arts). It became the major marker of prominence for artists, especially between 1748 and 1890, and was known for its crammed display of paintings, covering the walls from floor to ceiling. Through exposure and the connections to patrons and commissions, artists' careers could be made by their inclusion in the Salon.

Pearlstein, Philip (American, b.1924)
A figurative painter known for his use of nude models rendered objectively and in oblique perspective as part of complex interior scenes that include various props. Pearlstein studied at the Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) in the 1940s and began painting from life in the 1960s. His models often appear disinterested and take ungainly poses that emphasize the way the painter renders their bodies as form rather than flesh.

Photorealism
An art style that reached its peak in the United States in the 1970s, in which paintings—often large-format acrylics—imitate or even duplicate photographs. Also called Hyperrealism and Superrealism, Photorealism has been most famously practised by Chuck Close, Malcolm Morley, and Richard Estes.

Pinsky, Alfred (Canadian, 1921–1999)
An artist and art educator, Pinsky was an influential force for art pedagogy and education in Canada in the latter half of the twentieth century. With Leah Sherman, he founded the Department of Fine Arts at Sir George Williams

College (now Concordia University) in Montreal in 1960, eventually serving as Dean of Fine Arts from 1975 to 1980. He was the founder of the Child Art Council and chair of the Canadian Society for Education through Art. Primarily a painter, Pinsky taught classes at Concordia, Saskatoon Teachers' College, and the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, and wrote essays and art criticism.

Pollock, Jackson (American, 1912–1956)
Leader of the Abstract Expressionist movement, best known for his drip paintings of the 1940s and 1950s. Pollock is also closely associated with action painting, in which the act of painting is gestural and the artist approaches the canvas with little notion of what he or she will create.

Pop art
A movement of the late 1950s to early 1970s in Britain and the United States, Pop art adopted imagery from commercial design, television, and cinema. Pop art's most recognized proponents are Richard Hamilton, David Hockney, Andy Warhol, and Roy Lichtenstein.

Pratt, Christopher (Canadian, b.1935)
A renowned Newfoundland painter and printmaker whose work is characterized by precision, flatness, intense focus on a single subject, and an almost artificial sense of light. His pictures of ordinary local scenes and figures have an otherworldly quality. He designed the provincial flag of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1980.

Pulford, Ted (Canadian, 1914–1994)
Primarily a watercolour painter, Pulford was an influential faculty member at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, from 1949 until 1980. Originally from Saskatoon, he began teaching after graduating from Fine Arts at Mount Allison, his classes focusing on drawing and technique. His students, among them Mary Pratt and Christopher Pratt, brought attention to realist art in the Maritimes.

Richter, Gerhard (German, b.1932)
One of the most important German artists of his generation, Richter creates photorealist and abstract paintings, as well as photographs and glass pieces. His paintings involve borrowing images from newspapers, magazines, and personal photographs. Some he renders in soft focus; with others, he creates abstracts using squeegees to drag layers of oil paint across the canvas, distorting the image. Personal and national history are common themes in Richter's work.

Riopelle, Jean Paul (Canadian, 1923–2002)
A towering figure in Québécois modern art who, like the other members of the Automatistes, was interested in Surrealism and abstract art. Riopelle moved to Paris in 1947, where he participated in the last major exhibition of the Parisian Surrealists, organized by Marcel Duchamp and André Breton. (See *Jean Paul Riopelle: Life & Work* by François-Marc Gagnon.)

Roberts, Goodridge (Canadian, 1904–1974)
A painter and influential teacher from New Brunswick, whose modernist sensibility developed in the late 1920s when he attended the Art Students League of New York. Roberts settled in Montreal in 1939 and within ten years was celebrated nationally for his careful but intense approach to figure painting, still life, and landscape.

Ronald, William (Canadian, 1926–1998)
An Abstract Expressionist and member of Painters Eleven, which sprang from the Toronto group exhibition that he organized in 1953, *Abstracts at Home*. Ronald lived in New York from 1955 to 1965. His work is held both by New York institutions—including the Whitney Museum of American Art, Guggenheim Museum, and Museum of Modern Art—and by numerous Canadian museums.

Rosler, Martha (American, b.1943)
Employing a range of media, Rosler creates art that engages with political and social issues, in particular as they relate to women. Her photomontages concerning the Vietnam War placed images of soldiers and warfare in domestic spaces as depicted in magazines, revealing connections between foreign conflict and consumer culture at home. Many of Rosler's other works address the politics of housing and ownership. She was born in Brooklyn, where she lives and works.

serigraphy
A name for what is now typically described as "screen printing." It was advanced in 1940 by a group of American artists working in the silkscreen process who wished to distinguish their work from commercial prints made by the same method.

Sleigh, Sylvia (British/American, 1916–2010)
The British-born Sleigh gained recognition as a painter in the United States in the 1970s, after moving to New York City in 1961. She painted nudes that were inspired by Western art history but that presented men in traditionally female poses, such as a reclining Venus or odalisque. Sleigh showed scenes of men and women, both unclothed, with friends, including her husband, the art critic Lawrence Alloway, serving as models. A founding member of the all-women artist-run gallery SoHo20, Sleigh was active in New York's feminist art scene, which she documented in a series of group portraits.

still life
The still life is an important genre in Western art and includes depictions of both natural and manufactured objects. Often used to emphasize the ephemerality of human life in the *vanitas* and *memento mori* paintings of the seventeenth century, the still life was at the bottom of the hierarchy of styles established by the French Academy.

Surrealism
An early twentieth-century literary and artistic movement that began in Paris, Surrealism aimed to express the workings of the unconscious, free of

convention and reason, and was characterized by fantastic images and incongruous juxtapositions. The movement spread globally, influencing film, theatre, and music.

Tooker, George (American, 1920–2011)
A painter whose mysterious images of twentieth-century urban life brim with anxiety and foreboding. Committed to figurative art during a time when American modernism was defined by abstraction, Tooker existed at the margins of the art world for much of his career. Paul Cadmus and Jared French were important early influences on his style and artistic sensibility.

Town, Harold (Canadian, 1924–1990)
Town was a founding member of Painters Eleven and a leader in Toronto's art scene in the 1950s and 1960s. An internationally recognized abstract artist, he created paintings, collages, sculptures, and prints with brilliant effect and developed a unique form of monotype, "single autographic prints." (See *Harold Town: Life & Work* by Gerta Moray.)

trompe l'oeil
French for "deceives the eye," *trompe l'oeil* refers to visual illusion in art, especially images and painted objects that appear to exist in three dimensions and even aim to trick the viewer into thinking that they are real. Common examples are the painted insects that appear to sit on the surface of Renaissance paintings, and murals that make flat walls appear to open into spaces beyond.

ukiyo-e
A Japanese style of art, *ukiyo-e* means "images of the floating world" and became popular during the Edo period (1615–1868). Hand-painted screens and scrolls depicted everyday life in the pleasure quarters, including visits to courtesans and Kabuki theatres. By the late seventeenth century, *ukiyo-e* had become so popular among merchants and craftspeople that the prints were mass-produced using carved wooden blocks. Two of the best-known practitioners of this art are Utagawa Hiroshige and Katsushika Hokusai.

van Rijn, Rembrandt (Dutch, 1606–1669)
One of the most famous artists of his time, Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (referred to as Rembrandt) painted portraits, self-portraits, and dramatic scenes, and created drawings and etchings that conveyed the personality of his subjects. Throughout, Rembrandt developed the interplay between light and shadow in his work, heightening contrast and using a narrow range of colours to generate a spotlight effect in his earlier work, and working with impasto (thick application of paint) and composition to create the radiance that characterizes paintings in his late style.

Vermeer, Johannes (Dutch, 1632–1675)
A major figure in seventeenth-century Dutch art, whose technically masterful and evocative paintings are among the most celebrated in Western art history. He is best known for genre scenes—such as *Young Woman with a Water Pitcher*—that display meticulous construction and attention to light.

Wagschal, Marion (Trinidadian/Canadian, b.1943)
Born in Trinidad to German parents, Wagschal is a Montreal-based painter and faculty member at Concordia University. Her figurative paintings feature portraits that carry allegorical meanings and reveal the influence of nineteenth-century artists including Delacroix, Goya, and Manet. Working in a realist style, Wagschal often depicts families and everyday scenes, avoiding idealizing the bodies of her subjects and imbuing ordinary life with references that include the Holocaust and Jewish history.

Warhol, Andy (American, 1928–1987)
One of the most important artists of the twentieth century and a central figure in Pop art. With his serial screen prints of commercial items like Campbell's Soup cans and portraits of Marilyn Monroe and Elvis, Warhol defied the notion of the artwork as a singular, handcrafted object.

Williams, William Carlos (American, 1883–1963)
A doctor as well as a poet, Williams experimented with form as he sought to write in a distinctly American idiom that would allow him to represent a domestic world in precise detail. The friends who surrounded him while he was a student at the University of Pennsylvania, especially fellow poet Ezra Pound, had a profound influence on his style and he became absorbed into the Imagist movement. Later, Williams was rediscovered by the postwar Beat Generation of writers, who appreciated the directness and plain language of his poems. In addition to poetry, Williams wrote and published three novels, a trilogy that followed the life of an American family based on his wife's.

woodcut
A relief method of printing that involves carving a design into a block of wood, which is then inked and printed, using either a press or simple hand pressure. This technique was invented in China and spread to the West in the thirteenth century.

Wyeth, Andrew (American, 1917–2009)
A painter who conveyed the people and pastoral landscapes of his rural Pennsylvania community in spare, poetic images. Though he received high critical praise for some paintings, including his famous *Christina's World*, 1948, his realist, regionalist work was considered out of step with contemporary art for much of his career.

SOURCES & RESOURCES

Mary Pratt first came to public attention as an artist in the early 1970s, and she remained there for the rest of her career. She was the subject of numerous solo exhibitions—including two nationally touring retrospectives—and of many books and articles. Pratt was also a frequent subject of interviews. She kept journals and wrote occasional pieces for the media or public presentations, excerpts from which were selected in 2000 for her one self-authored book, *A Personal Calligraphy*. What follows is an introduction to the sources and resources available for this important Canadian artist.

MAJOR EXHIBITIONS

Installation view of *Mary Pratt* exhibition at The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's, May to September 2013, photographer unknown.

1961	*Atlantic Awards Exhibit*, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax. First professional exhibition.
1967	*Paintings by Mary Pratt*, Memorial University Art Gallery, St. John's. First solo exhibition.
1969	Morrison Gallery, Saint John. First exhibition in a commercial art gallery. *Canadian Graphics*. Nationally touring exhibition.
1971	*Newfoundland Painters*, Picture Loan Gallery, Toronto.
1973	*Mary Pratt: Paintings*, Erindale College, University of Toronto (now University of Toronto Mississauga). *Mary Pratt: A Partial Retrospective*, Memorial University of Newfoundland Art Gallery, St. John's. Travelling exhibition.
1974	*SCAN (Survey of Canadian Art Now)*, Vancouver Art Gallery. *9 of 10: A Survey of Contemporary Canadian Art*, Art Gallery of Hamilton.
1975	*Some Canadian Women Artists*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
1978	*Mary Pratt: New Paintings and Drawings*, Aggregation Gallery, Toronto. First solo commercial exhibition in Toronto.

1981	*Mary Pratt*, Museum London. Nationally touring solo exhibition.
1985	*Mary Pratt*, Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto. First exhibition at Godard, where Pratt would exhibit until her death.
1986	*Aspects of a Ceremony*, Equinox Gallery, Vancouver.
1995	*The Art of Mary Pratt: The Substance of Light*, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton. Nationally touring solo exhibition.
2004	*Simple Bliss: The Paintings and Prints of Mary Pratt*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina. Nationally touring solo exhibition.
2007	*Mary Pratt: Allusions*, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario.
2013	*Mary Pratt*, The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery and Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, St. John's and Halifax. Nationally touring solo exhibition.

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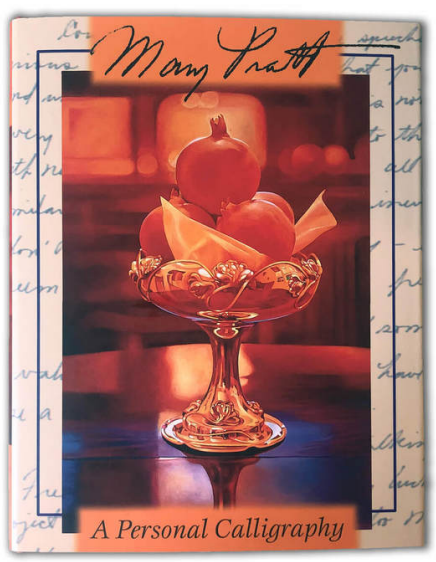

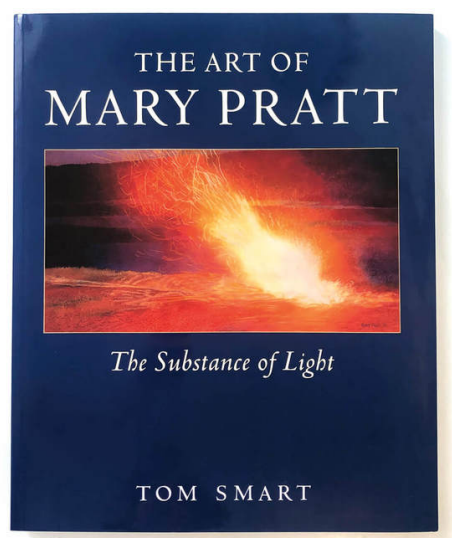

LEFT: Cover of Mary Pratt's book *A Personal Calligraphy*, 2000. RIGHT: Cover of *The Art of Mary Pratt: The Substance of Light*, 1995, by Tom Smart.

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Mary Pratt at work on *Girl in Wicker Chair*, 1978, photograph by Christopher Pratt.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RAY CRONIN

Ray Cronin is an author and curator who lives in Nova Scotia. He is a graduate of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (Bachelor of Fine Arts) and the University of Windsor (Master of Fine Arts). Cronin moved to Fredericton in 1993 where he worked in literary publishing, eventually becoming a full-time writer, including as arts columnist for the *Daily Gleaner* (Fredericton) and *Here* (Saint John), as well as being an artist and freelance curator. In 2001 he moved to Halifax as Curator of Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, and eventually Senior Curator. From 2007 to 2015, he was Director and CEO of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

He is the founding curator of the Sobey Art Award, Canada's premiere award for the visual arts, and the author of numerous catalogue essays and articles for Canadian and American art magazines, including *Canadian Art*, *Border Crossings*, *Sculpture*, and *Espace art actuel*. Cronin is now the visual arts blogger for *Halifax Magazine* and the editor of *Billie: Visual · Culture · Atlantic*.

He has curated numerous exhibitions, including the nationally touring *Arena: The Art of Hockey*; *Nancy Edell: Selected Works 1980–2004*; *Thierry Delva*; and *Graeme Patterson: Woodrow*. In 2019, he was named curator of the 2021 Windsor-Essex Triennial of Contemporary Art.

His e-book, *Alex Colville: Life & Work*, was published by the Art Canada Institute in 2017, and he is the author of six books of non-fiction, including *Our Maud: The Life, Art and Legacy of Maud Lewis*; *Alex Colville: A Rebellious Mind*, *Mary Pratt: Still Light*; and *Gerald Ferguson: Thinking of Painting*. He has contributed essays to over a dozen books on artists including Mary Pratt, John Greer, David Askevold, Graeme Patterson, Colleen Wolstenholme, Ned Pratt, and Garry Neill Kennedy, among others. In 2020, Nimbus Publishing will publish his book *Nova Scotia Folk Art: An Illustrated Guide*.

"Mary Pratt was an extraordinary artist and person. I was lucky to know her, and remain surprised and proud that she trusted me to write about her on so many occasions. Mary was the first artist I encountered who had a legion of dedicated fans—"my people" she would say—who loved her art and through it loved her. Count me among them."

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From the Author

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Key Works: Mary Pratt, *Child with Two Adults*, 1983. Private collection. (See below for details.)

Significance & Critical Issues: Mary Pratt, *Glassy Apples*, 1994. Collection of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton. (See below for details.)

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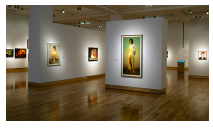

Where to See: Installation view of *Mary Pratt* exhibition at The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's, May to September 2013. Courtesy of The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery.

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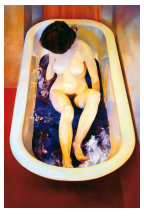

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Breakfast Last Summer, 1994. Private collection, Vancouver. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt and Mount Allison University Archives, Sackville, New Brunswick. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Burning the Rhododendron, 1990. Collection of Sun Life Assurance Company, Toronto. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt and Mount Allison University Archives, Sackville, New Brunswick. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Cherries Ripe, 2000. Collection of the Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville, Gift of Christopher Pratt (2006.64). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

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Classical Still Life with Pheasant, 1995. Collection of Patrick and Lorin Kinsella. Courtesy of Waddington's Auctioneers & Appraisers, Toronto. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

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Dick Marrie's Moose, 1973. Collection of Blackwood Gallery, University of Toronto Mississauga (PC.P.0121). Courtesy of Blackwood Gallery. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

The Dining Room with a Red Rug, 1995. Collection of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, Gift of Mary Pratt (2003.02). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

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Emmenthal Cheese in Saran, 1993. Collection of Kathleen L. Mitchell. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt and Mount Allison University Archives, Sackville, New Brunswick. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

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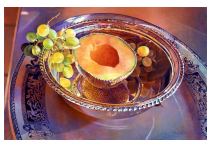
Ginger Ale and Tomato Sandwich No. 1, 1999. Private collection. Courtesy of Heffel Fine Art Auction House, Toronto. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Girl in My Dressing Gown, 1981. Private collection. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Girl in Wicker Chair, 1978. Private collection. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

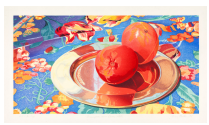
Glassy Apples, 1994. Collection of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, Bequest of Harrison McCain, C.C. (2004.40). © Estate of Mary Pratt.



Green Grapes and Wedding Presents with Half a Cantaloupe, 1993. Collection of the Royal Bank of Canada. Courtesy of The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

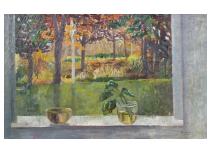
Jello on Silver Platter, 2001. Collection of Fox Harb'r Golf Resort & Spa, Wallace, Nova Scotia. Courtesy of The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Jelly Shelf, 1999. Private collection. Courtesy of The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's. © Estate of Mary Pratt. Photo credit: Ned Pratt.



Mangoes on a Brass Plate, 1995. Collection of the Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville, Gift of Christopher Pratt (2006.59). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

My Parents' Bedroom, 1995. Private collection. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt and Mount Allison University Archives, Sackville, New Brunswick. © Estate of Mary Pratt.



October Window, 1966. Collection of The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Pears on a Green Glass Plate, 1998. Collection of the Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville, Gift of Christopher Pratt (2006.63). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Pomegranates in Glass on Glass, 1993. Private collection. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt and Mount Allison University Archives, Sackville, New Brunswick. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Pyrex on Gas Flame, 1977. Private collection. Courtesy of The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's. © Estate of Mary Pratt. Photo credit: John Dean.

Red Currant Jelly, 1972. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1976 (18526). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Roast Beef, 1977. Collection of Museum London, Art Fund, 1977 (77.A.17). © Estate of Mary Pratt. Photo credit: Museum London.

Romancing the Casserole, 1985. Collection of the Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville, West Collection, Gift of the Artist (1993.29). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Salmon on Saran, 1974. Collection of Angus and Jean Bruneau. Courtesy of The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Self-portrait, 2002. Collection of the Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville, West Collection, Gift of the Artist (2006.22). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Service Station, 1978. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of C. David Weyman, 1993 (93/23). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Silver Fish on Crimson Foil, 1987. Collection of Brendan and Renee Paddick. Courtesy of The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Split Grilse, 1979. Collection of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Gift of ICI Canada Inc. (1995.19.44). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Stove, 1969. Collection of Brendan and Renee Paddick. Courtesy of Heffel Fine Art Auction House, Toronto. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Sunday Dinner, 1996. Collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Gift of the Artist, St. John's, Newfoundland, 1997 (1997.82). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Supper Table, 1969. Collection of the Family of Mary Pratt. Courtesy of The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Table Setting, 1984. Collection of the Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville, West Collection, Gift of the Artist (2001.69). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

This Is Donna, 1987. Collection of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, Gift of Jim Coutts in memory of Marion McCain (1997.07). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Threads of Scarlet, Pieces of Pomegranate, 2005. Private collection. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Two Stone Birds in the Spring, 2002. Private collection. Courtesy of Hodgins Art Auctions Ltd., Calgary. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Vase with Silk Flowers, 1960. Private collection. Courtesy of Sotheby's, Toronto. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Vegetable Marrow, 1966. Collection of Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Waterloo Row–Fredericton, 1972. Private collection. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt.
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Credits for Photographs and Works by Other Artists

"As Mary works on her paintings, she can look out on the Salmonier River," 1990s, photograph by John Reeves. John Reeves Fonds, Media Commons, University of Toronto Libraries (Series 4, 2009.010). © Estate of John Reeves.

Boys Dipping Caplin, 1965, by Christopher Pratt. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Gift of Mira Godard, Toronto, 2004 (41492). Courtesy of Christopher Pratt and Mira Godard Gallery.
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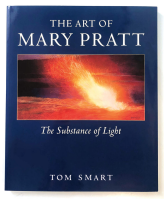
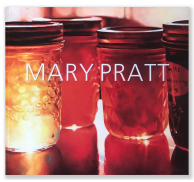
The Child's Bath, 1893, by Mary Cassatt. Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, Robert A. Waller Fund (1910.2). CC0 Public Domain Designation.

Christina's World, 1948, by Andrew Wyeth. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase, 1949 (16.1949). © Estate of Andrew Wyeth / SOCAN (2020).



Cover of *The Art of Mary Pratt: The Substance of Light*, 1995, by Tom Smart. © Goose Lane Editions.



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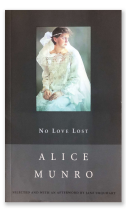
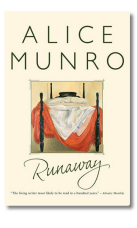


Cover of *No Love Lost*, 2003, by Alice Munro, featuring the painting *Barby in the Dress She Made Herself*, 1986, by Mary Pratt. © New Canadian Library.

Cover of *A Personal Calligraphy*, 2000, by Mary Pratt. © Goose Lane Editions.



Cover of *Runaway*, 2004, by Alice Munro, featuring the painting *The Bed*, 1968, by Mary Pratt. © McClelland & Stewart.

Edward B. Pulford, Alex Colville, A.Y. Jackson, and Lawren P. Harris at the Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville, c.1951–52, photographer unknown. Mount Allison University Archives Picture Collection (2007.07/520).

Exterior view of Mary Pratt's studio, 1990s, photograph by John Reeves. John Reeves Fonds, Media Commons, University of Toronto Libraries (Series 4, 2009.010). © Estate of John Reeves.

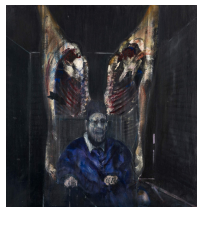


Figure with Meat, 1954, by Francis Bacon. Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, Harriott A. Fox Fund (1956.1201). © Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved. DACS / SOCAN (2020). Photo credit: Art Resource, New York.

Installation view of *Mary Pratt* exhibition at The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's, May to September 2013. Courtesy of The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery.

Installation view of *Mary Pratt* exhibition at The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's, May to September 2013. Courtesy of The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery.

Mary and Christopher Pratt on their wedding day, 1957, photograph by Harvey Studios, Fredericton, New Brunswick. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Mary Pratt and Christopher Pratt at their graduation from Mount Allison University, May 16, 1961, photographer unknown. Mount Allison University Archives Picture Collection (2007.07/1680). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Mary Pratt at the dining table in her home in Salmonier, Newfoundland, 1968, photograph by Christopher Pratt. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Mary Pratt with her children, John, Ned, Barby, and Anne, 1964, photograph by John Kerr Pratt. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Mary Pratt in her garden, c.1980, photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Mary Pratt with her painting *Chocolate Birthday Cake*, 1997, photograph by Greg Locke.

Mary Pratt in her studio, 1990s, photograph by John Reeves. Mary Pratt fonds, Mount Allison University Archives, Sackville (2003.35/8/5/1).

Mary Pratt at the opening of *Some Canadian Women Artists* at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1975, photographer unknown. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives.

Mary Pratt standing beside her painting *Girl in Wicker Chair* shown at Aggregation Gallery, Toronto, 1978, photograph by Graham Bezant. Toronto Star Photo Archive, Toronto Reference Library (tspa_0074553f).

Mary Pratt at work on *Girl in Wicker Chair*, 1978, photograph by Christopher Pratt. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Mary Pratt working on *Service Station* in her studio in Salmonier, c.1978, photograph by Christopher Pratt. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Mary Pratt's dining room table, c.2000. Mary Pratt fonds, Mount Allison University Archives, Sackville (2003.35/8/2/1). © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Mary Pratt's mother, Katherine Eleanor West (née McMurray), c.1933, photograph by Harvey Studios, Fredericton, New Brunswick. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Mary West and her father, William J. West, Fredericton, 1946, photograph by Katherine West. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Mary West with her sister, Barbara West, in Cavendish, P.E.I., c.1940, photograph by Myrtle Moffat. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Mary West in Newfoundland, 1950s, photograph by Christopher Pratt. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Mary West as a toddler, c.1938, photograph hand-coloured by Katherine West. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

The Milkmaid, c.1660, by Johannes Vermeer. Collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Purchase 1908 (SK-A-2344).

Nude and Dummy, 1950, by Alex Colville. Collection of the New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, purchased from the artist, 1951 (A51-42). © A.C. Fine Art Inc. Photo credit: © Art Gallery of Ontario.

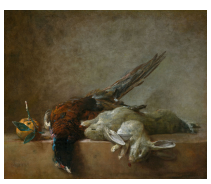
Ray Cronin, photograph by Steve Farmer. Courtesy of the author.

Rooster, Hen and Chicken with Spiderwort, c.1830–33, by Katsushika Hokusai. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Francis Lathrop Collection, Purchase, Frederick C. Hewitt Fund, 1911 (JP745).

Slaughtered Ox, 1655, by Rembrandt van Rijn. Collection of the Louvre, Paris, Purchase, 1857 (MI 169).

Still from *The Semiotics of the Kitchen*, 1975, by Martha Rosler. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Henry Nias Foundation Inc., Gift, 2010 (2010.245). Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York. © Martha Rosler (2020).

Still-Life, c.1948, by Goodridge Roberts. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1961 (9646). © The Estate of Goodridge Roberts.



Still Life with Game, probably 1750s, by Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin. Collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1952 (1952.5.36).

Still Life with Lobster and Fruit, probably early 1650s, by Abraham van Beyeren. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Edith Neuman de Végvár, in honor of her husband, Charles Neuman de Végvár, 1971 (1971.254).

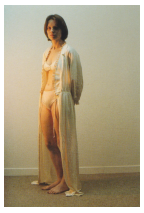
Still Life with Peacock Pie, 1627, by Pieter Claesz. Collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., The Lee and Juliet Folger Fund, 2013 (2013.141.1).

Still Life with a Rib of Beef, 1739, by Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin. Collection of the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, R. T. Miller Jr. Fund, 1945 (1945.32).

The Stone Breakers, 1849, by Gustave Courbet. Destroyed. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.

Summer art workshop at the Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville, 1956, photographer unknown. Mount Allison University Archives Picture Collection (2007.07/566).

35mm slide used as a source for *Eviscerated Chickens*, 1971, by Mary Pratt, photograph by Mary Pratt. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt and Mount Allison University Archives, Sackville, New Brunswick. © Estate of Mary Pratt.



35mm slide used as a source for *Girl in My Dressing Gown*, 1981, by Mary Pratt, photograph by Christopher Pratt. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt and Mount Allison University Archives, Sackville, New Brunswick. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

35mm slide used as the source for *Supper Table*, 1969, by Mary Pratt, photograph by Christopher Pratt. Courtesy of the Family of Mary Pratt and Mount Allison University Archives, Sackville, New Brunswick. © Estate of Mary Pratt.

Woman at a Dresser, 1964, by Christopher Pratt. Collection of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Gift of ICI Canada Inc. (1995.19.43). © McMichael Canadian Art Collection.

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