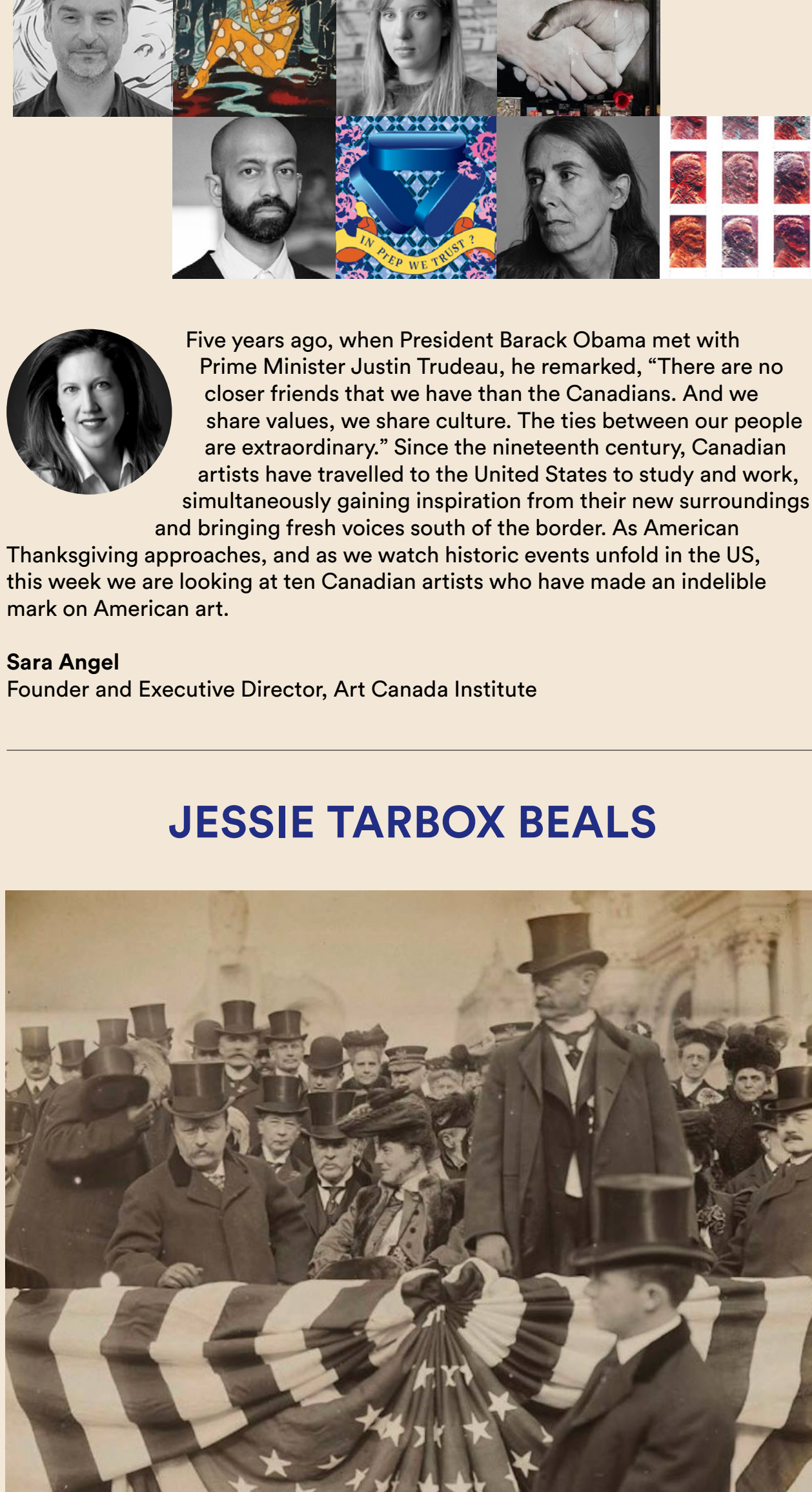


# AMERICAN BEAUTY CANADIAN ARTISTS IN THE USA

*As American Thanksgiving approaches, and as we watch historic events unfold south of the border, this week we are looking at ten Canadian artists who have made an indelible mark on American art with work that transcends geographical borders.*

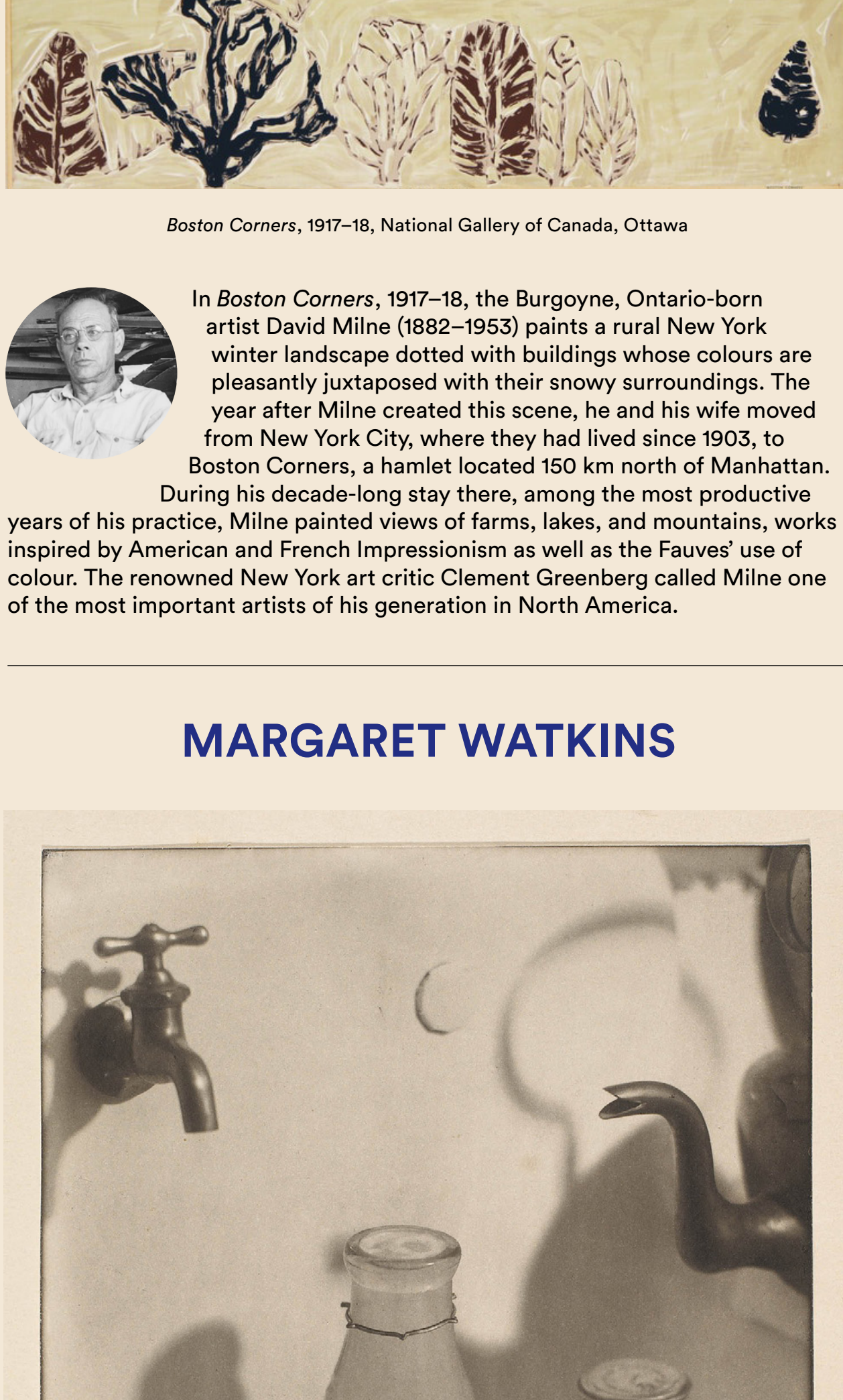


Five years ago, when President Barack Obama met with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, he remarked, "There are no closer friends that we have than the Canadians. And we share values, we share culture. The ties between our people are extraordinary." Since the nineteenth century, Canadian artists have travelled to the United States to study and work, simultaneously gaining inspiration from their new surroundings and bringing fresh voices south of the border. As American Thanksgiving approaches, and as we watch historic events unfold in the US, this week we are looking at ten Canadian artists who have made an indelible mark on American art.

**Sara Angel**

Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

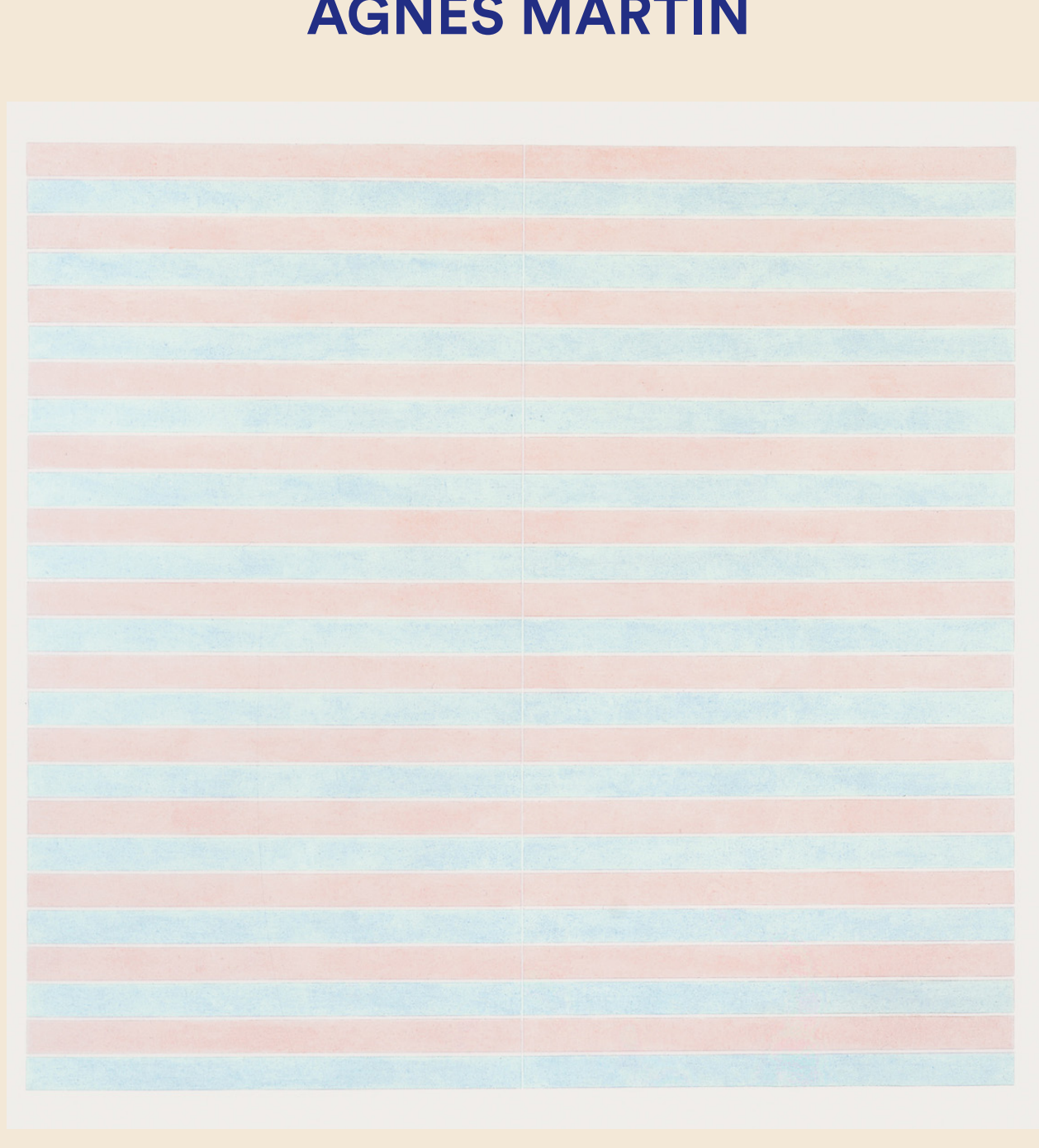
## JESSIE TARBOX BEALS



President Theodore Roosevelt, Edith Kermit Carow Roosevelt, and David Rowland Francis, 1904, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC

Hamilton, Ontario-born Jessie Tarbox Beals took this candid picture of President Theodore Roosevelt and his wife at an exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Three years earlier, after being hired by *The Buffalo Inquirer*, Tarbox Beals became the first female news photographer to get a byline. Not long after she took this shot, Tarbox Beals established herself in New York, where she became known for her self-described "ability to hustle" and her talent in documenting a wide range of subjects including news, portraits, interiors, street scenes, and garden and house pictures. She was a magazine photographer for *Vogue*, *Town and Country*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Harper's Bazaar*.

## DAVID MILNE



*Boston Corners*, 1917–18, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

In *Boston Corners*, 1917–18, the Burgoyne, Ontario-born artist David Milne (1882–1953) paints a rural New York winter landscape dotted with buildings whose colours are pleasantly juxtaposed with their snowy surroundings. The year after Milne created this scene, he and his wife moved from New York City, where they had lived since 1903, to Boston Corners, a hamlet located 150 km north of Manhattan. During his decade-long stay there, among the most productive years of his practice, Milne painted views of farms, lakes, and mountains, works inspired by American and French Impressionism as well as the Fauves' use of colour. The renowned New York art critic Clement Greenberg called Milne one of the most important artists of his generation in North America.

## MARGARET WATKINS



*The Kitchen Sink*, c.1919, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

In this photograph, Margaret Watkins (1884–1969) transforms kitchen clutter into a graceful and surprisingly evocative composition of light, shadow, and curvilinear forms. The work can also be read as a social commentary on the expectations placed on women to maintain a spotless household—something that Watkins, who left her hometown of Hamilton, Ontario, for New York in 1915, rebelled against. In Manhattan she became one of the first women advertising photographers while serving as publisher of *Pictorial Photography in America*. Her remarkable career was cut short when familial responsibilities took her to Glasgow, Scotland, in 1928 to care for ailing relatives. In 2012 the [National Gallery of Canada showed a retrospective of Watkins' photographs](#). The following year, Canada Post honoured *The Kitchen Sink* on a stamp.

## AGNES MARTIN



*Untitled*, 1974, Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

This subdued abstract work of soft pink and blue marks a pivotal point in the career of Macklin, Saskatchewan-born, internationally revered artist [Agnes Martin](#) (1912–2004). Martin created this work in New Mexico, where she lived from 1974 until her death, after a long hiatus from painting. She had already achieved a significant reputation in her art to Van Gogh, her home from 1957 to 1967. While in Manhattan, Martin developed grid paintings in her pursuit of a non-representational method of expressing emotional states. As seen in *Untitled*, 1974, in New Mexico Martin abandoned the grid format in favour of horizontal bands of alternating colours on a square canvas, a subject she continued to experiment with for the next thirty years.

## MATTHEW WONG



*The Realm of Appearances*, 2018, private collection

Last month the Edmonton-raised self-taught painter Matthew Wong (1984–2019) made headlines when his paintings sold at auction for millions of dollars. After earning a bachelor's degree in cultural anthropology at the University of Michigan, Wong had his first solo show at the New York gallery *Karma* in 2018, where *The Realm of Appearances* drew rave reviews and comparisons of his art to Van Gogh, Milton Avery, and the Post-Impressionist artists. Wong's brightly coloured canvases often express an underlying melancholy, a reflection of the mental health challenges faced by the gifted artist, which led to his death by suicide in October 2019.

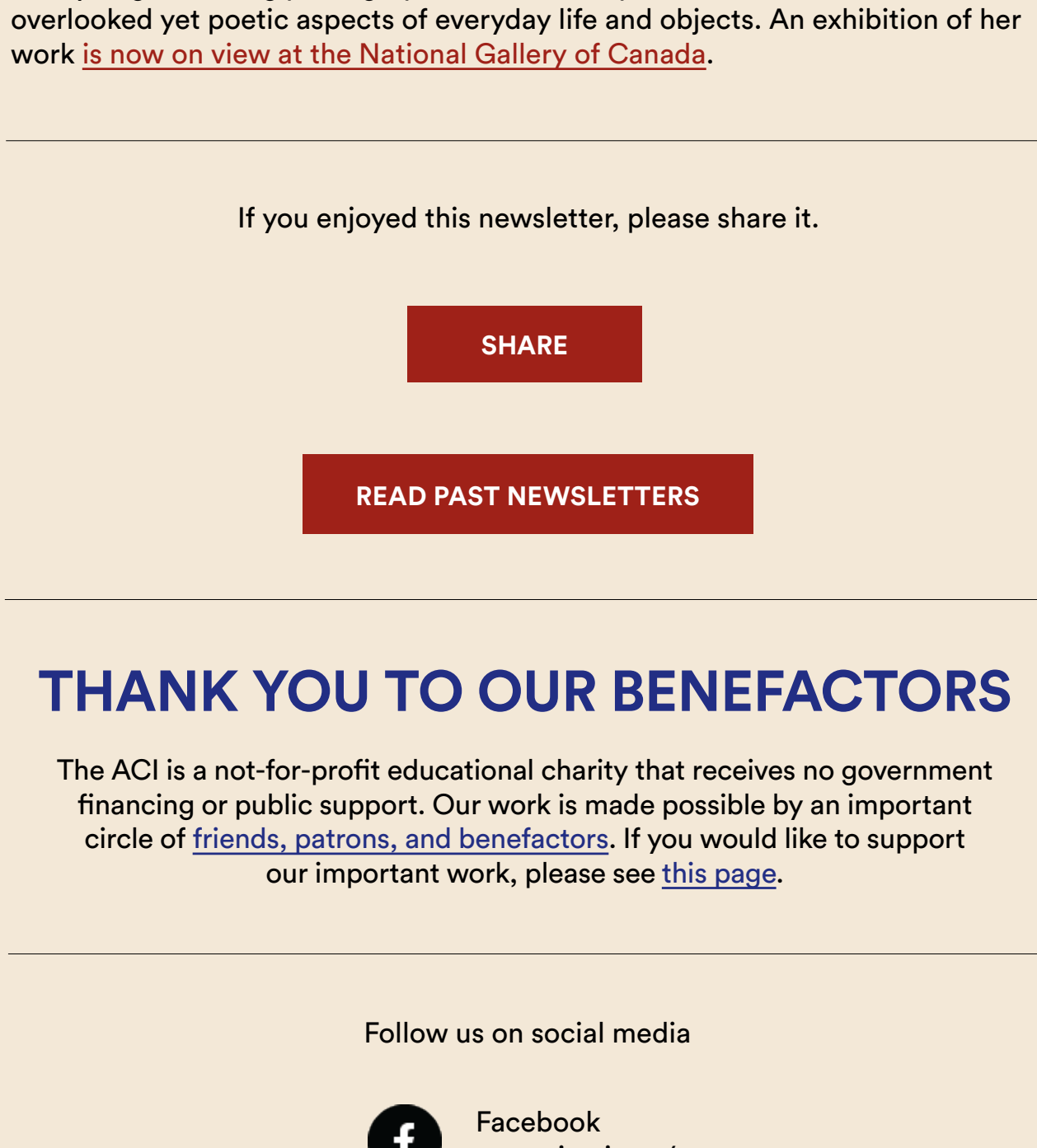
## MARIA HUPFIELD



*Jingle Spiral*, 2015, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

*Jingle Spiral*, 2015, by the Anishinaabe artist Maria Hupfield (b.1975) is a circular piece of grey industrial felt embellished with tin cones that is also an object of clothing. Its ornaments, which produce sounds as the wearer moves their body, were first created by eighteenth-century Indigenous people using tobacco can lids. Hupfield incorporates her handmade felt creations, such as *Jingle Spiral*, into live performances that reference Anishinaabeg oral history and feminism. Before returning to Ontario to teach at the University of Toronto, the transdisciplinary artist lived in Brooklyn for nine years. As a member of the Indigenous Women Collective in New York, Hupfield participated in a public action at last year's Whitney Biennial calling for the removal of the museum board member Warren Kanders, whose company produces tear gas.

## MARCEL DZAMA



*A New Age Baptized in Pepper Spray*, 2020, David Zwirner

In this tense scene by Winnipeg-born artist Marcel Dzama (b.1974), a young Black woman seated on the ground is being pepper sprayed by a group of police officers in riot gear. Against her surrounding chaos, she is a symbol of peace and releases a white dove holding an olive branch in its foot. Since moving to New York City from Manitoba in 2004, Dzama has achieved international renown for his work in multiple disciplines—including drawing, painting, sculpture, collage, and film—to bring his cast of human figures, animals, and imaginary hybrids to life. Of his current, more politicized work Dzama recently commented, "What's driving my drawings is a lot of just reading the newspaper or listening to the news." He adds, "It feels like we've hit ... the gutter now ... and hopefully we are gonna rise out of it ... Either we perish, or we reform."

## SARA Cwynar



*Three Hands*, 2016, Minneapolis Institute of Art

The diptych *Three Hands*, 2016, by Vancouver-born artist Sara Cwynar (b.1985) centres on an image of three clasped hands which represent a multinational business transaction. The Brooklyn-based artist, who is [on the short-list for the 2020 Sobey Award](#), explains that these pictures "were taken in South Korea, in the 1970s.... In this period of rapid industrialization, a visiting Kenyan businessman is passing through a new factory under construction." *Three Hands* is commentary on the misunderstandings between people and different places, the position of a woman in a male-dominated realm, and the nature of the workplace. Surrounding the clasped hands, Cwynar layered in found images of objects, people, and ephemera to contextualize the work within the wide span of world history and, more specifically, the emergence of late capitalism. Cwynar's art is in the permanent collection of numerous museums internationally.

## BRENDAN FERNANDES



*In PrEP We Trust?*, 2016, public installation, New York City

In this poster by the Kenyan-born Canadian artist Brendan Fernandes (b.1969), the words "In PrEP We Trust?" appear on a gold banner beneath three enlarged blue pills forming a downward pointing triangle—a symbol originally used to identify LGBT individuals in Nazi Germany and since reclaimed by the global LGBTQ+ community. With this work, the Chicago-based Fernandes questions both the rising faith in PrEP—a new type of drug that reduces the risk of HIV transmission—and its increasing costs. Referencing the official motto of the United States, "In God We Trust," Fernandes responds to the price increase of the drug issued by Gilead Sciences in 2016 and its pursuit of profit at the expense of an at-risk community. The poster was part of a public installation organized by the NYC AIDS Memorial in April of 2019.

## MOYRA DAVEY



*Copperhead Grid*, 1990, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

This work by the Toronto-born, New York-based artist Moyra Davey (b.1958) is comprised of one hundred close-up shots of Abraham Lincoln's face on American pennies. The former American president's face remains the central recurring motif, but the surface of each penny is markedly different from the next, in acknowledgement of the countless different hands and places that the coins have passed through. After receiving her fine arts education in California and New York, Davey began making photographs, videos, and publications dedicated to the overlooked yet poetic aspects of everyday life and objects. An exhibition of her work is [now on view at the National Gallery of Canada](#).

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