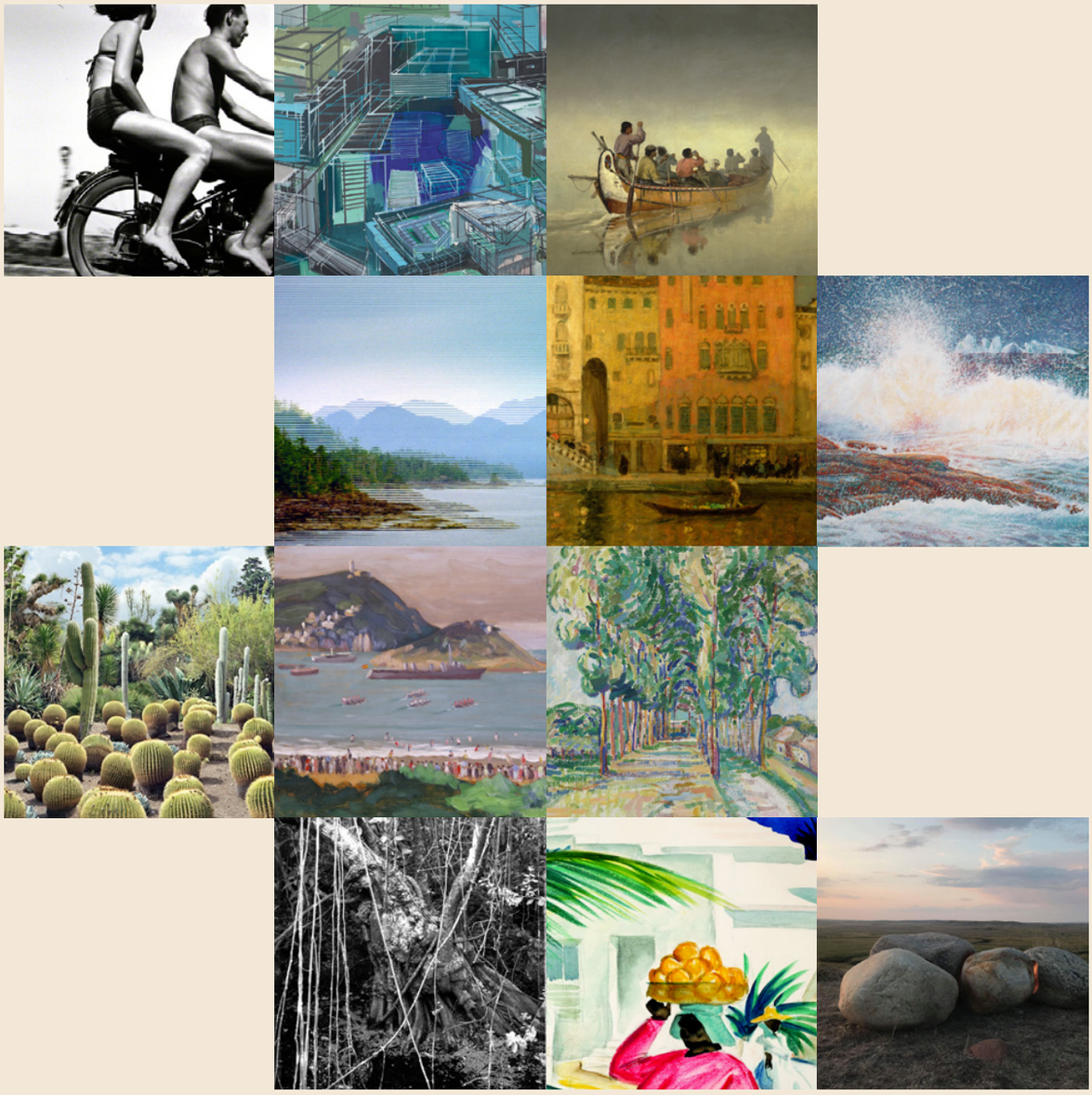
ART CANADA INSTITUTE | INSTITUT DE L'ART CANADIEN

MAY 21, 2021

ARTFUL EXCURSIONS
12 VISUAL GETAWAYS

While we wait to journey outside of our cities, we're looking at twelve artists whose works transport us to captivating locales in Canada and abroad



Wanderlust is at an all-time high as pandemic restrictions have kept us homebound for over a year. With that in mind, we're turning to the power of Canadian creators who are able to take us on a journey through their art. We are sharing a selection of works that explore fascinating locales in Canada and abroad. While depictions like *Venice at the Golden Hour*, c.1901–1902, by James Wilson Morrice reaffirm the splendour of famous destinations, others, like Elaine Ling's 2002 photographs of the Florida wetlands, offer an intriguing glimpse of more remote journeys. We wish you a happy and safe long weekend—and send you into it with this week's travel selections. Like you, we are excited about the promise that the following works conjure for future getaways and adventures.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

Hungary

AT LAKE BALATON, HUNGARY

by Gabor Szilasi

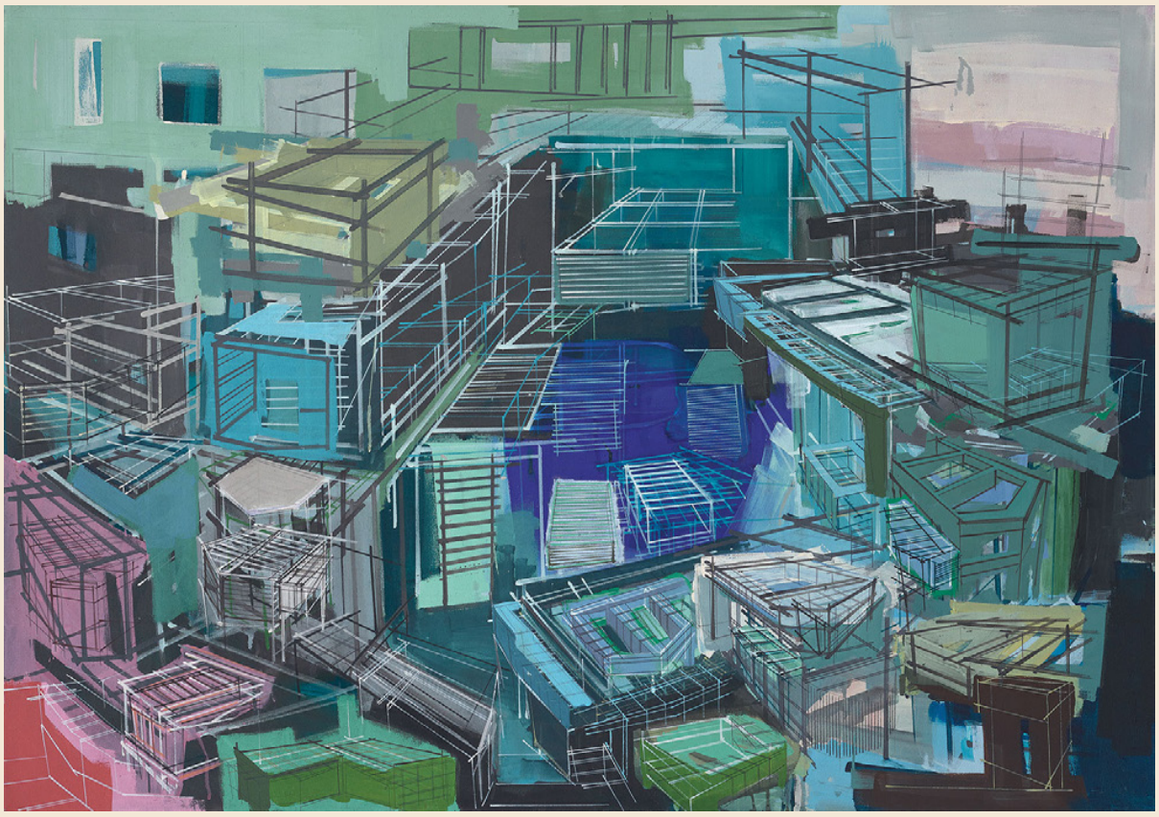
The warmth of a Hungarian summer day by the lake is shared in this work by Budapest-born, Montreal-based Gabor Szilasi (b.1928). Two young people ride a motorcycle, partially cropped out of the frame, while the figures in the background are blurred, giving the photograph a spontaneous quality that also captures the energy of Lake Balaton, one of the most popular tourist destinations in Central Europe. Szilasi took this image within two years of starting his photography practice, describing the moment as "totally unplanned, and totally intuitive and unexpected." Initially dismissive of the photograph—because "the heads were chopped off"—the renowned artist only began to see it as an interesting work over a decade later.

Watch a video of the artist discussing this work

India

EXCAVATIONS: JODHPUR ROOFTOPS

by Denyse Thomasos



A visit to Jodhpur, India, is possible through this semi-abstract painting by Trinidadian Canadian painter Denyse Thomasos (1964–2012). The shape and colour of the houses and the varying shades of blue allude to the indigo walls of buildings in Jodhpur's historic district, which has come to be known as the "Blue City." India held particular significance in Thomasos's work and travels because of its influence on the culture of her native Trinidad. Apart from India, the artist also spent considerable time in Africa, China, and South America. These places strongly informed the colours, lines, and spaces in her paintings as she explored themes of confinement, slavery, and the histories of the African and Asian Diasporas.

Learn more about Denyse Thomasos

Denyse Thomasos: Life & Work by Gaëtane Verna is one of the Art Canada Institute's upcoming titles.

Lake Superior

CANOES IN A FOG, LAKE SUPERIOR

by Frances Anne Hopkins

Frances Anne Hopkins (1836–1919) takes us to Lake Superior and over 150 years back in time with this scene, created in 1869. Occasionally the London-born Hopkins joined her husband, Edward, a Hudson's Bay Company official, on canoe trips to inspect HBC posts, during which she made sketches that formed the basis of captivating paintings such as *Canoes in a Fog, Lake Superior.* The intrepid artist depicts herself sketching at the front of the canoe in the foreground. Two other vessels can be seen in the distance ahead, their details obscured by the heavy fog. The serene, hazy atmosphere reflects Hopkins's Romantic conception of the Canadian wilderness untouched by modern technology.

Learn more about this painting

British Columbia

NUT'KA'

by Stan Douglas

Nu'tka', 1996, is one of the most celebrated works of the famed West Coast artist Stan Douglas (b.1960), who will represent Canada at the 2022 Venice Biennale. Long admired for a practice that interrogates history through thought-provoking photographs and films, Douglas made *Nu'tka'* as a tribute to the extraordinary beauty and rich history in Nootka, British Columbia. To create it, he filmed the scenery there twice, weaving the shots together to show two landscapes at once. The disorienting images are set against a soundtrack with the voices of eighteenth-century sea captains from Spain and Britain, two imperial powers that contested the right to colonize the Pacific Northwest. As the narrative unfolds, both men sound increasingly paranoid, and so we are left with the juxtaposition of the land itself, and the men attempting to seize it.

Read an interview with Stan Douglas

Italy

VENICE AT THE GOLDEN HOUR

by James Wilson Morrice

Looking at this masterpiece by Montreal-born James Wilson Morrice (1865–1924) we instantaneously arrive at Venice's Grand Canal. One of Canada's leading modernist painters, Morrice captured the city at the "golden hour," when the setting sun bathes every surface it touches in a warm glow. The lower portion of the painting, based on sketches made as he sat at a café patio table one evening, is rendered in shadow; a figure standing on a boat moves through the dark water, whose glimmering surface reflects the bright colours of the surrounding architecture. This was one of Morrice's favourite spots in Venice—a city he repeatedly visited in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Read more about Morrice's time in Venice

Newfoundland

BIG SPRAY AT LUMSDEN

by Mary Pratt

In the spectacular *Big Spray at Lumsden*, 1996, Mary Pratt (1935–2018) places us on the Atlantic shores of Lumsden, Newfoundland on the province's east coast, about an hour's drive from Gander, a spot known for its raging seas and sandy beaches. Born in New Brunswick, as a young woman Pratt moved to Newfoundland where she quickly became famed for her signature realist style. To recreate the particularities of light as waves crashed on the coast near her home, Pratt began her paintings by projecting a photograph onto canvas or paper and then tracing the imagery. In her journal, Pratt wrote that she used oil pastel, watercolour, and white chalk pastel to capture "the froth and foam and spray and dots of spray, the falling shine, the light." Her words document the process of creating this large-scale mixed-media drawing—and express her delight in the dramatic beauty of the colliding waves.

Read more about the artist in ACI's
Mary Pratt: Life & Work by Ray Cronin

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California

ECHINOCACTUS GRUSONII

by Scott McFarland

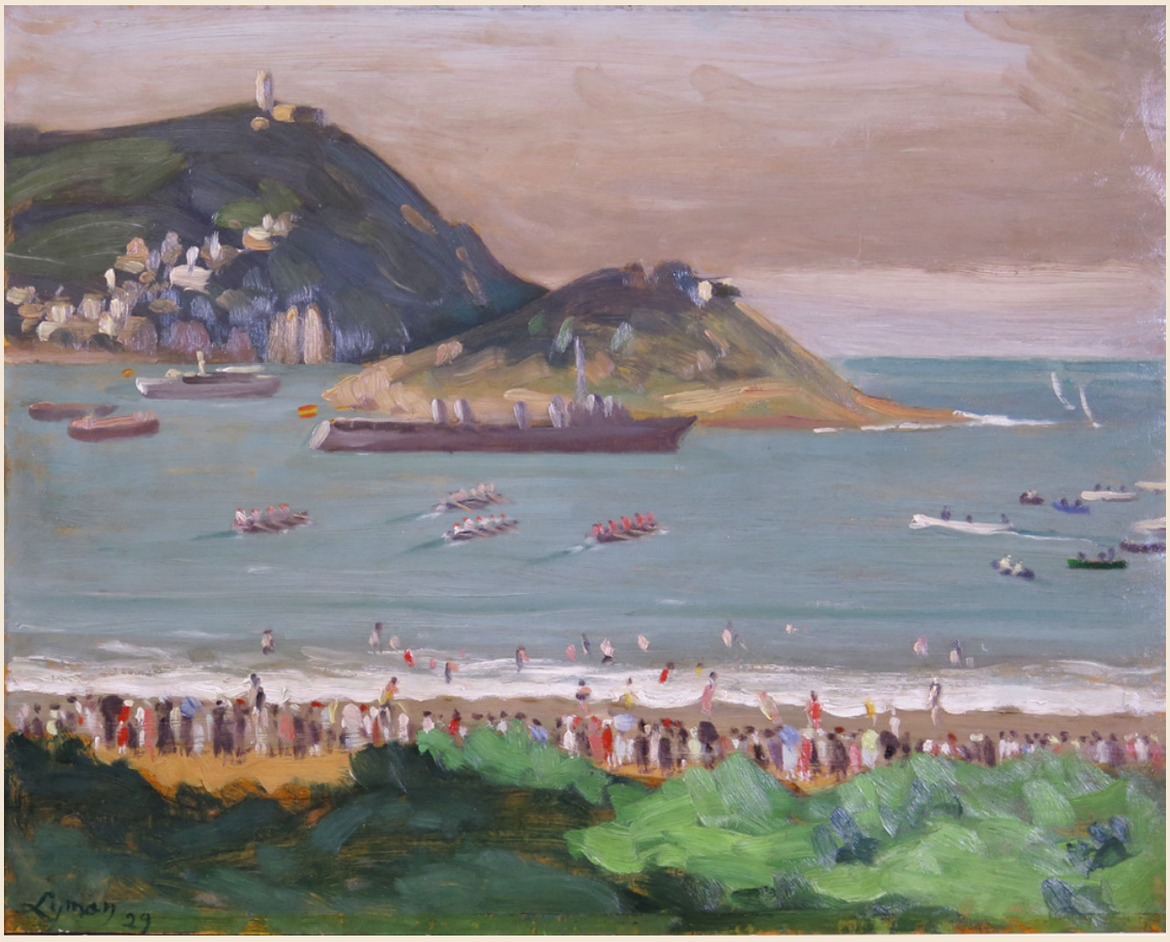
With this 2006 photograph by Scott McFarland (b.1975) we look out into the sunny landscape of the Huntington Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California. The founder, Henry E. Huntington, was a railroad tycoon and art collector who created the gardens in 1919. Named for the golden barrel cactus that fills the image, *Echinocactus grusonii*, 2006, is not a straightforward photograph of the grounds but is comprised of individual exposures digitally arranged into a composite image, challenging the notion of the photograph as a representation of a single moment in time. Trees, plants, and gardens frequently appear in McFarland's work as part of his investigations into the relationships between humans, nature, and representation. *Echinocactus grusonii* is part of his ongoing Empire series started in 2003.

Read more about Scott McFarland

Spain

REGATTA AT SAN SEBASTIAN

by John Lyman



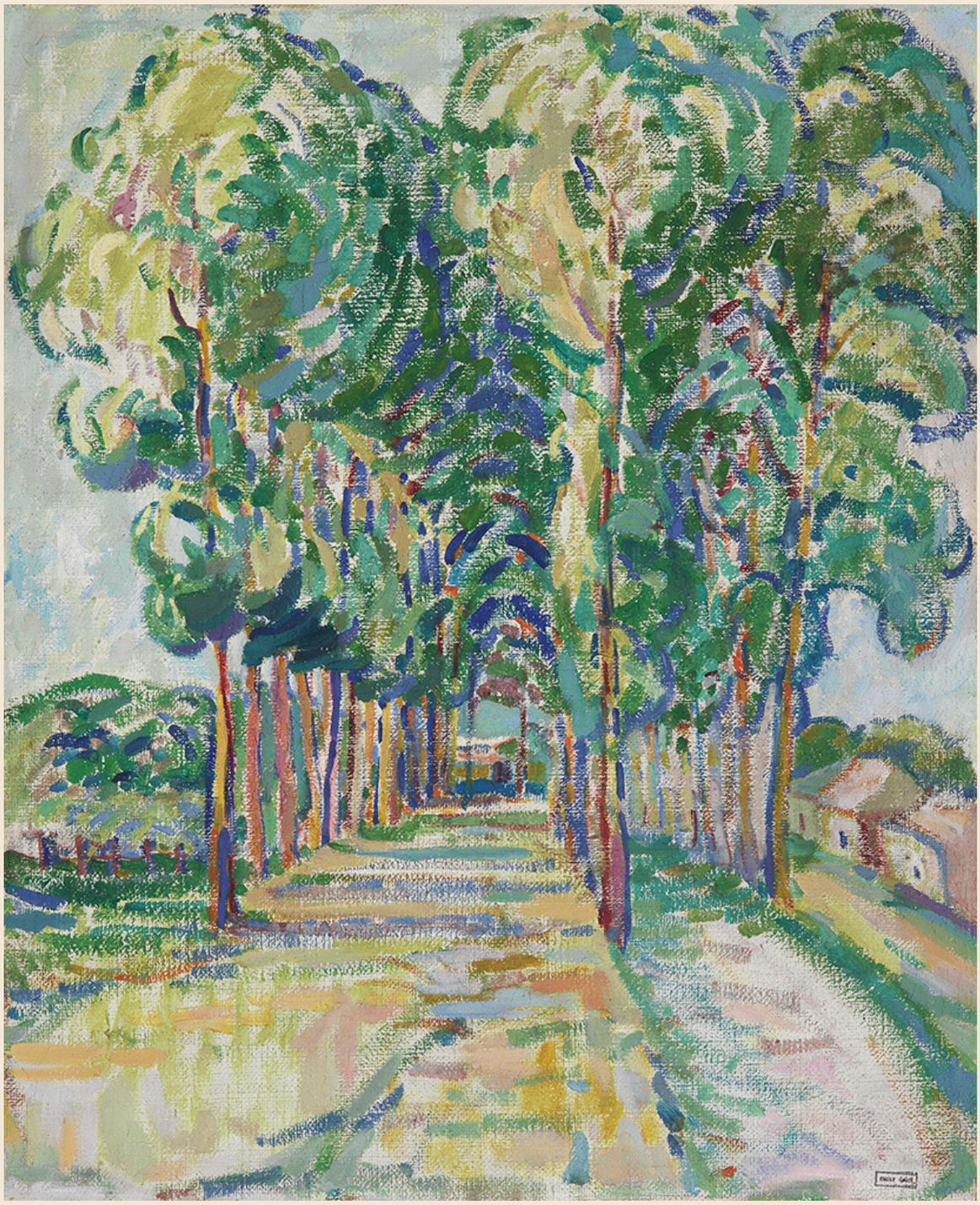
In this lively scene of the famous rowing regatta in the Bay of La Concha in San Sebastián, we take in a coastal city in Spain's Basque Country with the American-born Canadian modernist painter John Lyman (1886–1969). The Post-Impressionist artist attended the rowing regatta the same year that he and his wife, Corinne, moved to a nearby fishing village named La Chaumière in Saint-Jean-De-Luz, France, where they remained for two years before permanently returning to Canada and settling in Montreal. Known for his simplified forms and bold colour palette, Lyman presents spectators lining the beach as they observe four competing vessels that move in parallel across the water. Spots of bright colour in the water represent swimmers seeking relief from the humid weather.

Learn more about John Lyman

France

FRENCH LANDSCAPE

by Emily Carr



France was the country where a life-changing fifteen-month stay changed the career of Victoria native Emily Carr (1871–1945), who became a leading figure in Canadian modern art. In the French countryside she created this enchanting view of neat rows of magnificently tall trees that extend far into the distance, their repeating forms creating a strong sense of rhythm. Carr discovered Fauvism in France, where she began to paint the country's landscape in a more expressive, non-naturalistic manner. "I tramped the country-side, sketch sack on shoulder…." wrote Carr. "The fields were lovely, lying like a spread of gay patchwork against red-gold wheat, cool, pale oats, red-purple of new-turned soil, green, green grass, and orderly, well-trimmed trees."

Read more about the artist in ACI's

Bermuda

ST. GEORGE'S, BERMUDA

by Jack Bush

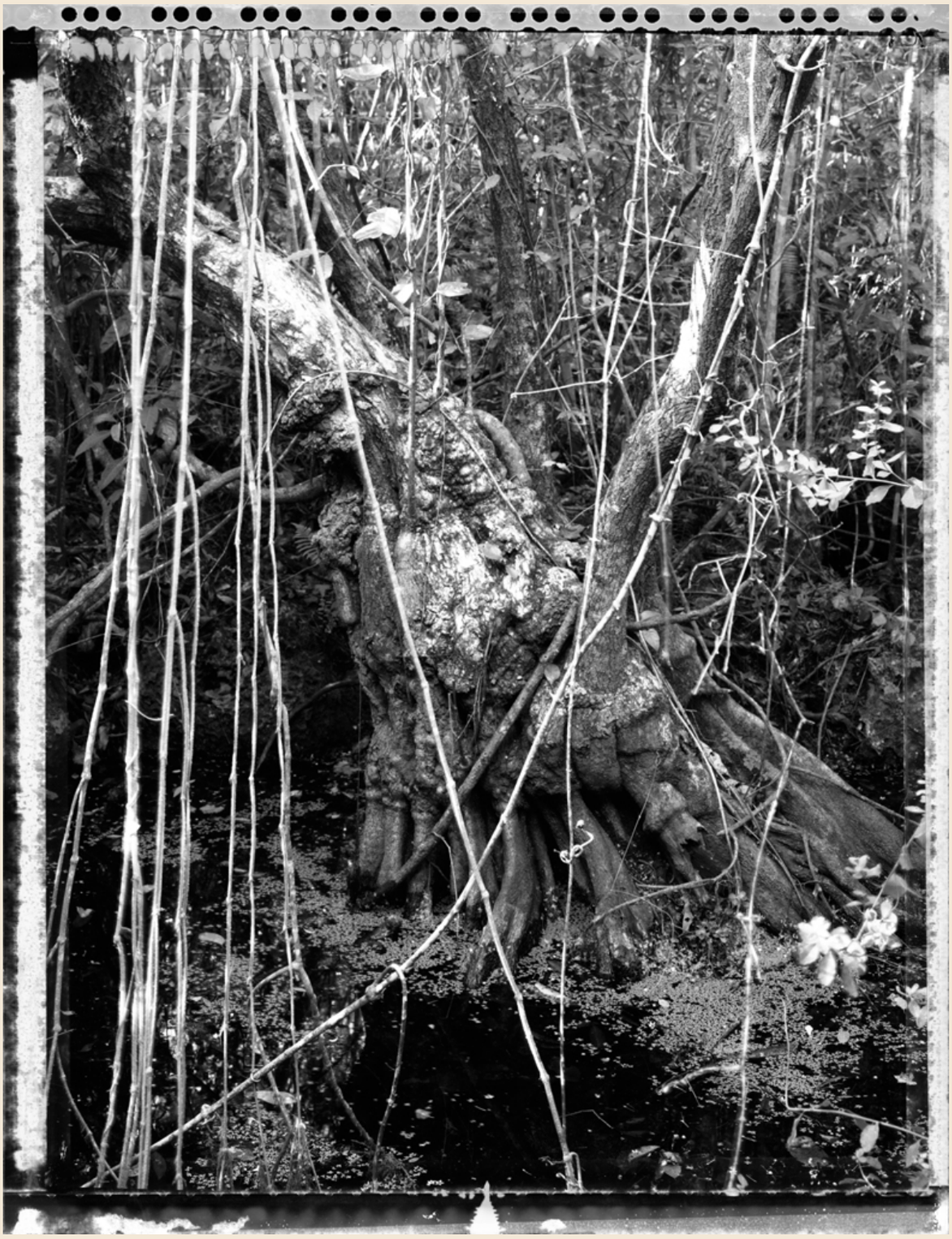
Jack Bush, *St. George's, Bermuda*, 1939. © Estate of Jack Bush / SOCAN (2021)

In this painting the internationally renowned abstract expressionist artist and Painters Eleven member Jack Bush (1909–1977) takes us on a trip to the town of St. George's in Bermuda, where he and his wife Mabel Mills Teakle spent their honeymoon in 1934. In the foreground of this painting, a Bermudian woman dressed in a vivid pink garment carries a basket of fruit on her head. The saturated colours of the figure and the palm tree on the left stand in contrast to the pristine white architecture in the background. Although Bush is best known for his abstract paintings, he produced figurative works until the late 1940s, including this vibrant tropical scene now on view at Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art.

Learn more about Jack Bush

FLORIDA #37

by Elaine Ling



In this close-up view of a contorting tree trunk, Hong-Kong born, Toronto-based photographer Elaine Ling (1946–2016) places her viewer in the Florida wetlands. Exploring the balance between nature and the humanmade, Ling juxtaposes architectural decay, destruction, and detritus with the vitality of the natural landscape, as in *Florida #37*, 2002. A practicing physician and self-taught photographer, she travelled to over forty-nine countries on five continents, creating numerous bodies of documentary work inspired by the solitude of nature and architectural remnants of ancient cultures. *Florida #37* is part of the large-format photography series that Ling produced while serving as Master Artist-in-residence at the Atlantic Center for the Arts in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, in 2002.

Learn more about Elaine Ling

Saskatchewan

COALESCENCE, GRASSLANDS NATIONAL PARK, SASKATCHEWAN

by Michael Belmore

With *Coalescence*, 2017, by Anishinaabe artist Michael Belmore (b.1971), we are able to behold Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan, where a four-part sculpture consists of sixteen stones intended to mark four historically significant locations in Canada related to "ancient shorelines, trade routes and meeting places, sites of annual mass migrations of animals, as well as the forced displacement of peoples," according to Belmore. The stones are fitted together yet positioned slightly apart to reveal inlaid copper on their concave surfaces. Evoking a fire within the stones, the glowing copper will gradually become dull and assume a green hue, a reminder of "how everything comes from the ground and returns to it, and how these processes stretch far beyond human understanding of time."

Learn more about Belmore's project and *LandMarks 2017*

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Image Credits: **[1]** Gabor Szilasi, *Au lac Balaton, Hongrie [At Lake Balaton, Hungary],* 1954, gelatin silver print, 13 x 19 in. Courtesy of Art45. © Gabor Szilasi, Toronto, Ontario. **[2]** Denyse Thomasos, *Excavations: Jodhpur Rooftops,* 2007, acrylic on canvas, 106.7 x 152.4 cm. Collection of Robin & David Young. **[3]** Frances Anne Hopkins, *Canoes in a Fog, Lake Superior,* 1869, oil on canvas, 68.6 x 121.9 cm. Collection of the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta. **[4]** Stan Douglas, *Nut'ka',* 1996, colour video projection installation with sound, 6 min., 50 sec. Courtesy of the artist. **[5]** James Wilson Morrice, *Venice at the Golden Hour,* c.1901–2, oil on canvas, 65.4 x 46.3 cm. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Gwendolen Rutherford Caverhill Bequest (1949.1005). Photo credit: MMFA. **[6]** Mary Pratt, *Big Spray at Lumsden,* 1996, mixed media on paper, 103.5 x 151.8 cm. Collection of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. © Estate of Mary Pratt. **[7]** Scott McFarland, *Echinocactus Grusonii,* 2006, archival inkjet type print, 62.2 x 69.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist. **[8]** John Lyman, *Regatta at San Sebastian,* 1929, oil on panel, 32.4 x 40.6 cm, Collection of the Klinkhoff Gallery, Toronto, Ontario. **[9]** Emily Carr, *French Landscape,* 1911, oil on canvas, 61.1 x 49.6 cm. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, donated by the estate of Anna K. Jetter. Photo credit: Trevor Mills. **[10]** Jack Bush, *St. Georges, Bermuda,* 1939, watercolour and pencil on paper, 46 x 61 cm. Collection of Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art, Bermuda. © Estate of Jack Bush / SOCAN (2021). **[11]** Elaine Ling, *Florida #37,* 2002, photograph. Courtesy of the artist. **[12]** Michael Belmore, *Coalescence, Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan,* 2017, stone and copper. Courtesy of the artist.