ART CANADA INSTITUTE | INSTITUT DE L'ART CANADIEN

JULY 30, 2021

SIGHTS OF SUMMER
TWELVE CANADIAN WORKS

As the country reopens, the season feels especially ripe. These works of art from across Canada celebrate the brightest time of the year.

Mary Pratt, *Cut Watermelon,* 1997, Courtesy of Equinox Gallery, Vancouver.

Accustomed to enduring long winters, Canadians never take summer for granted—yet this one feels particularly hard-won after spending the past several months more indoors and in one place than ever before. As provinces reopen, we're looking forward to enjoying the weeks ahead with friends and family, taking in our favourite sights and pastimes of the season—many of which are vibrantly depicted in this week's selections. From Victor Cicansky's dazzling display of vegetable preserves in *Flat Paraire Pantry,* n.d., to Oscar Cahén's playful beach scene for the cover of *Magazine Digest,* c.1946, to Ruth Qaulluaryuk's colourful representation of diverse flora in *Summer on the Tundra*, n.d., these works showcase the exuberant atmosphere of carefree times, long days, warm weather, and vivid natural beauty.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

SUMMER ON THE TUNDRA

by Ruth Qaulluaryuk

Ruth Qaulluaryuk, *Summer on the Tundra,* n.d., Collection of Stephanie Comer and Rob Craigie.

Bursting with life, Nunavut-born Ruth Qaulluaryuk's (b.1932) *Summer on the Tundra,* n.d., evokes the colourful vista of her childhood summers in Qamanittuaq (Baker Lake). Surprisingly and incongruously, the artist uses melton cloth—a type of thick wool—to depict the warmest season of the year. Qaulluaryuk's textile art and wall hangings often reference the Arctic landscape and animals of her home. As she explains, "When I was a child growing up, I used to really like it when the flowers would grow on the tundra. [They] are beautiful, in my memory." With careful and intricate consideration in every stitch, Qaulluaryuk's love of summer is visibly woven into this tactile work.

Read more about Ruth Qaulluaryuk

SUNFLOWERS

by Stephen Waddell

Stephen Waddell, *Sunflowers,* 2018, Courtesy of the artist and Monte Clark Gallery, Vancouver.

The Vancouver-based artist Stephen Waddell (b.1968), who won the 2019 Scotiabank Photography Award, is internationally recognized for his large-scale images of urban life in Canada and Europe, including this photograph of a woman watering a breathtaking array of summer flowers. The image, which captures a moment just before sunset when the light is distinctly yellow/orange, reflects Waddell's interest in the continuity of painting traditions—particularly nineteenth-century French Realism—within contemporary photography. Rather than attempting to capture a spontaneous encounter, the artist follows his unknowing subjects and photographs them at a precise moment, so much so that his scenes might be mistaken for ones that are staged. As in many of Waddell's works, the woman in *Sunflowers,* 2018, has her back turned to the viewer, which reveals his interest in making art that is more about the human condition than individual identity.

Read more about Stephen Waddell

BOYS DIPPING CAPLIN

by Christopher Pratt

Christopher Pratt, *Boys Dipping Caplin,* 1965, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
Courtesy of Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.

In *Boys Dipping Caplin,* 1965, the revered Newfoundland-based painter Christopher Pratt (b.1935) conjures the feel of Maritime summers, time spent in the ocean with loved ones, and fishing—a favourite pastime. In the early 1960s, Pratt moved with his family—his four children and his wife Mary, a painter in her own right (see below)—to the remote town of St. Mary's, close to the banks of the Salmonier River. While this transition marked an intense challenge for Mary, who was balancing professional goals with caring for her family, for Christopher the mid-1960s were a time of productivity. He flourished artistically, creating scenes such as this one that he described as a "response to my life", depictions of iconic and evocative everyday moments on the Newfoundland coast.

Read more about Christopher Pratt

SUMMER AFTERNOON, THE PRAIRIE

by Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald

Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald, *Summer Afternoon, The Prairie,* 1921, Winnipeg Art Gallery.

Summer in the prairies is made luminous in this splendid work by Winnipeg-born painter Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald (1890–1956), who was invited by the Group of Seven to be its only Western-Canada-based member. The artist's mastery of the Impressionist style is visible here—juxtaposing seemingly endless dabs of colour, the visual effect conjures the glistening heat suspended in the vast sky and low, billowing horizon of prairie land. While FitzGerald felt that documenting the Manitoba environment posed challenges, including, as he explained, capturing "its intense light and the feeling of great space," the painter excelled at his practise, bringing his beloved landscapes to life, even in the unrelenting heat of summer.

Read more in ACI's
Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald: Life & Work by Michael Parke-Taylor

*This book was made possible thanks to the
Title Sponsorship of the Sabourin Family Foundation.*

COMICS

by Joan Latchford

Joan Latchford, *Comics,* 1972, Courtesy of
The Joan Latchford Estate and the Cardinal Gallery, Toronto.

The heat and languor of summer's dog days are visible in this view of three boys enjoying comics by Joan Latchford (1926–2017). Beginning in the 1960s, the National Film Board of Canada Stills Division commissioned her to create photographs documenting Toronto's diaspora communities, with a particular focus on children and middle-class life. A former nun and mother of eight (six of her children were adopted), Latchford excelled at capturing intimate moments between friends and families. Dedicated to dispelling stereotypes and to photographing people "as they live their lives, at play, at home, on the street", Latchford attended Howard University to study Afro-American culture and anthropology, to gain a better understanding of the perspectives of five of her adoptive children who are Black.

Read more about Joan Latchford

YOU'LL GO BLIND LOOKING FOR IT

by Chloe Wise

Chloe Wise, *You'll go blind looking for it,* 2017, Courtesy of the artist. © Chloe Wise / SOCAN (2021).

You'll go blind looking for it, 2017, is part of a series of large-scale paintings by Montreal-born, New York City-based artist Chloe Wise (b.1990) depicting young women posing with food within a summer landscape, replete with lush fields and clear blue skies. In this work, a model-like Black woman poses with a flower and a basket filled with lettuce, while lying on the grass in the foreground is a *La vache qui*

rit cheese, famed for its laughing cow mascot. Drawing on the language of advertising and historical European paintings of milkmaids, Wise's series explores the dairy industry and the role that advertising plays in influencing our perceptions of healthy eating. She explains how brands promote "wholesome milk symbols, even though in reality these are very far removed from the products that end up on the shelves."

Read more about Chloe Wise

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CYCLIST AND CROW

by Alex Colville

Alex Colville, *Cyclist and Crow,* 1981, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Despite the carefree feel of this work, something ominous

haunts the atmosphere of *Cyclist and Crow,* 1981, painted by storied Nova Scotia-based artist Alex Colville (1920–2013). Though the female rider embodies summer's delight, the slight lead of her opponent drifting just above her sightline introduces an element of unease into an otherwise blissful afternoon. Known for his elevation of the everyday and his skilled suspension of time in expansive works, Colville often leaves viewers with more questions than answers. Taking inspiration from existentialist philosophy and a profound exploration of the human condition, the understated agitation of this seemingly idyllic summer scene is characteristic of the painter at the height of his powers.

Read more in ACI's
Alex Colville: Life & Work by Ray Cronin

This book was made possible thanks to the Title Sponsorship of Kiki & Ian Delaney.

LIGHT NIGHT

by Rick Leong

Rick Leong, *Light Night,* 2020, Courtesy of the artist and Bradley Ertaskiran, Montreal.

A popular way to light up the night during the summer months, the burning embers of a campfire are front and centre in Victoria-based artist Rick Leong's (b.1973) *Light Night,* 2020. This fiery work belongs to a series of paintings inspired by the old growth forest of Carmanah, located in the ancestral territory of the Ditidaht First Nation, on Vancouver Island. Leong's unique visual language encompasses myriad associations—from Chinese landscape painting to woodblock printing to the Group of Seven—to de-centralize concepts of nationhood, landscape, and identity that have dominated narratives of Canadian modernism. Incorporating references to a protected ecosystem alongside the faded, droopy foliage in the background, the works in his Carmanah series explore the vastness of this protected environment on an individual basis, cultivating personal connections to the natural world.

Read more about Rick Leong

Read a review of Leong's recent solo exhibition *Carmanah* at Bradley Ertaskiran Gallery

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MAGAZINE DIGEST COVER

by Oscar Cahén

Oscar Cahén, *Magazine Digest* cover design, c.1946, The Cahén Archives, Toronto.

This cheerful cover designed by Toronto-based artist Oscar Cahén (1916–1956) for *Magazine Digest* presents a partially submerged beach-goer settling in for a good read—with the playful addition of a small, pinching crab sneaking up from behind. Cahén made a successful career for himself as a commercial illustrator after being interned as an enemy alien in a camp near Sherbrooke, Quebec, for two years during the Second World War. In 1944, Cahén moved to Toronto to take up a post as the art director for *Magazine Digest,* where he produced covers, cartoons, and visual essays that would establish his reputation as a graphic artist while he simultaneously became famed for his abstract expressionist painting style and his role in founding Painters Eleven, a group of Canadian artists who exhibited together between 1953 to 1960.

Read more in ACI's
Oscar Cahén: Life & Work by Jaleen Grove

This book was made possible thanks to the Title Sponsorship of K. James Harrison. We are also grateful to our institutional partner, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

FLAT PARAIRE PANTRY

by Victor Cicansky

Victor Cicansky, *Flat Paraire Pantry,* n.d., private collection.

Born and raised in Regina, Victor Cicansky (b.1935) is celebrated for his whimsical ceramics and bronze sculptures of fruits and vegetables, such as the large-scale *Flat Paraire Pantry,* n.d., which depict summer's bounty. In this work freshly picked produce lines the lower shelves, while the upper ledges hold a colourful collection of mason jars filled with vegetables. Cicansky first noticed the "gem-like beauty" of preserve jars as a young child when his mother and grandmother would prepare them. As an adult, his fascination with them was revived when he observed his wife, Fran, making vegetable preserves from their home garden in Craven, Saskatchewan. He picked up a quart jar of mixed pickles and said, "This is beautiful. I should make something like this in clay."

Read more about Victor Cicansky

CLOUD CHASMS AND COASTAL SPECTRUM

by Anna Binta Diallo

Anna Binta Diallo, *Cloud Chasms,* 2014,
Courtesy of the artist and Towards Gallery.

Anna Binta Diallo, *Coastal Spectrum,* 2014,
Courtesy of the artist and Towards Gallery.

Born in Senegal and raised in Winnipeg, Montreal-based artist Anna Binta Diallo (b.1983) creates works that engage with "blended identities," integrating allusions to histories and personal origins and often evoking a sense of memory and nostalgia that is present in these otherworldly summer scenes from her series Clouding the Sky, 2014. Here the artist combines elements of photography, painting, and collage to present hints of the season: figures clad in summer clothing and looking out at a shared view, and an inflatable beach ball with its instantly recognizable colour wheel. While these elements are seemingly grounded in recognizable summer scenes, Diallo upends our immediate frame of reference, introducing dream-like elements through her luminous yet clouded skies.

Read more about Anna Binta Diallo

Listen to an interview with the artist on
CBC's "The Bridge with Nantali Indongo."

CUT WATERMELON

by Mary Pratt

Mary Pratt, *Cut Watermelon,* 1997, Courtesy of Equinox Gallery, Vancouver.

The sweet taste and subtle crunch of watermelon, a favourite summer fruit, is vividly rendered in this painting by Mary Pratt (1935–2018), whose embrace of the everyday-made-extraordinary continues to resonate. A trailblazing, if reluctant, feminist icon in Canadian art, Pratt's hyperrealist representations of foods—from cracked eggs to sliced fruit and her iconic glistening jam jars—reveal a masterful eye for precision and detail and an intuition for the sensual world that is central to her practice. As she stated, "I think the world comes to me through my senses, and that's why I get this charge… I don't have to look for it—I just don't. It just comes to me; it bombards me."

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

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