ART CANADA INSTITUTE | INSTITUT DE L'ART CANADIEN

OCTOBER 22, 2021

LOOKING AT THE OVERLOOKED
ANNOUNCING ACI'S NEW
CANADIAN ART HISTORY FELLOWSHIPS
APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

The history of Canadian art exhibited in museums, taught in schools, and written in books has been dominated by white male artists. Through the annual funding of five transformative scholarships—each valued at $30,000—that spotlight artists who have long been marginalized, ACI's Redefining Canadian Art History Fellowships will change how we understand this country's cultural narrative.

How many Black, Asian, or Indigenous artists in Canadian art history can you name? In June 2020, we asked ourselves this question at the Art Canada Institute—an organization run by art historians—and came up with far too few answers. *Why?* Although the history of art in Canada is filled with beautiful, powerful, and inspiring works, there are also many gaps and omissions. Women and artists who were Indigenous, Black, or People of Colour have been routinely overlooked and excluded from canonical accounts of art history in Canada, which do not reflect the country's diversity or the nation's multicultural heritage. At ACI, we set out to change this oversight. This spring we will award $150,000—$30,000 each to five groundbreaking scholars—to support studies on Canadian and Indigenous artists whose lives and works are underrepresented. Applications for the program are now open. To give a window into why the conversation about the country's cultural inheritance needs to change, expand, and evolve, this week we're featuring nine artists. Their extraordinary stories, and countless others, deserve greater attention and underscore why we need to re-think and re-visit how we document what we call Canadian art history.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

MOON MESSENGERS

by Naoko Matsubara

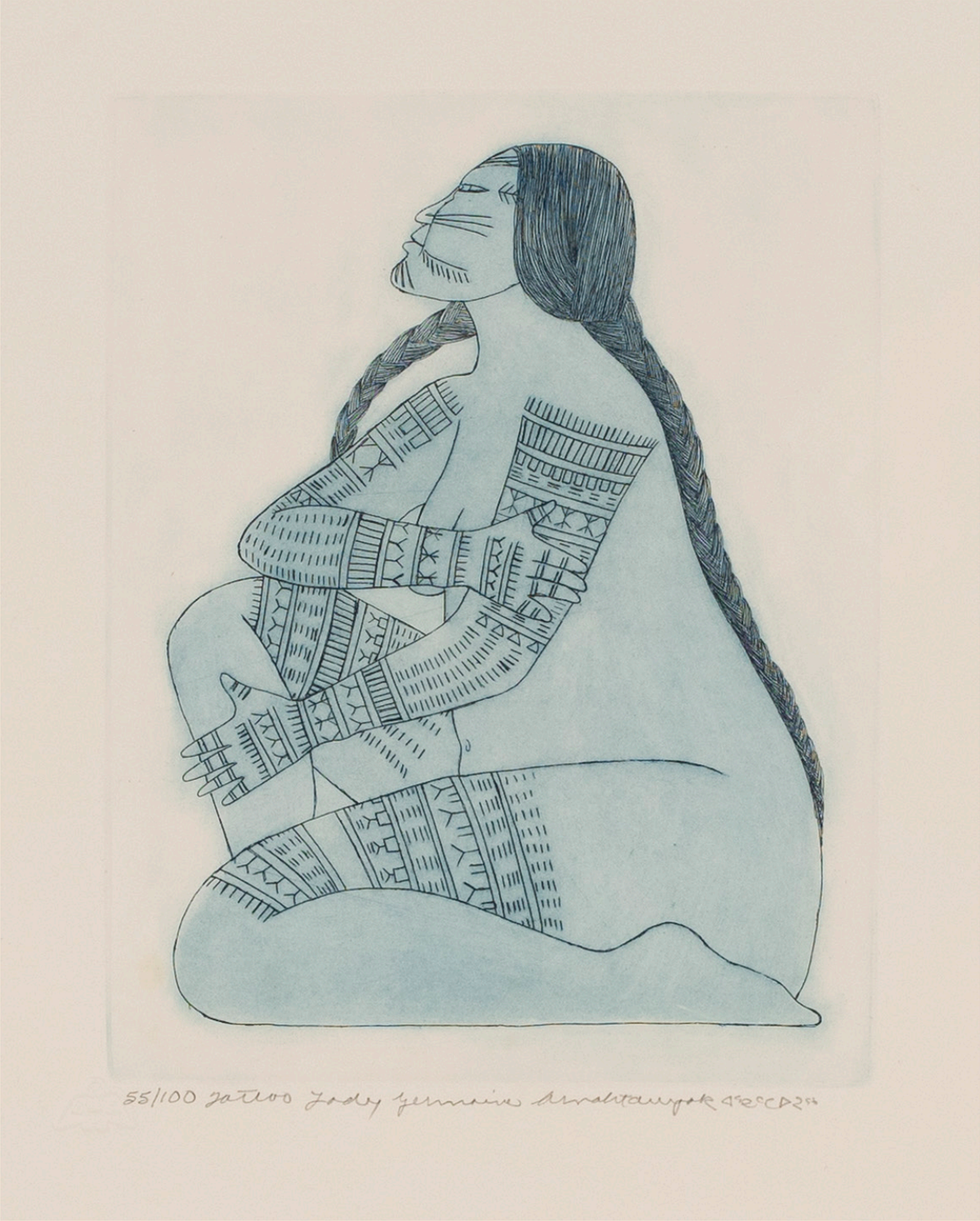
Naoko Matsubara, *Moon Messengers*, 1965, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.

Born on Shikoku Island in Japan, Oakville, Ontario-based artist Naoko Matsubara (b.1937) has dedicated the past sixty years to mastering woodblock printing. Her work has entered very few Canadian art collections, though she has received international awards, exhibitions, and publications. Her otherworldly *Moon Messengers*, 1965, appears in the illustrated book *The Tale of the Shining Princess* (1966), which she produced with her sister, Hisako Matsubara. In this spectacular scene, a chariot carrying five celestial beings is "descending on the golden beams of the moon," according to the story. The group are on a mission to bring the earthbound titular princess back to the moon so that she can be reunited with her people. In the introduction, the author writes that she and her sister "have tried to present our story in a way that would bring out vividly the contemporary Japanese imagery, while still preserving the world of ancient Oriental fairy tales."

Learn more about Naoko Matsubara

TATTOO LADY

by Germaine Arnaktauyok



Germaine Arnaktauyok, *Tattoo Lady*, c.2003, Government of Nunavut Fine Art Collection; On long-term loan to the Winnipeg Art Gallery (NPM1).

Yellow Knife-based Germaine Arnaktauyok (b.1946) is one of the most important Inuk artists in the country, but until recently her art has often been overshadowed by that of the iconic work being done in Kinngait (Cape Dorset). This year Arnaktauyok received the Governor General's Award in the Visual and Media Arts. *Tattoo Lady*, c.2003, is a powerful celebration of the long history of Inuit tattooing and its revival today. A vital expression of individual and cultural identity, tattooing dates back thousands of years but was suppressed along with other Inuit practices by Christian missionaries beginning in the nineteenth century. Arnaktauyok's work presents a nude woman seated in profile, proudly displaying traditional tattoos on her face, arms, and thighs. Overlaid with a soft blue wash, the linear composition is a striking portrait of a self-assured Inuk person.

Learn more about Germaine Arnaktauyok

VIEW OF LAKE OKANAGAN, BRITISH COLUMBIA

by Grafton Tyler Brown

Grafton Tyler Brown, *View of Lake Okanagan, British Columbia*, 1882, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC.

The first Black professional artist to exhibit his work in Victoria, British Columbia, was the painter and lithographer Grafton Tyler Brown (1841–1918), yet his art was virtually forgotten until University of Victoria professor John Lutz rediscovered it about a decade ago. In 1883, twenty-two of Brown's paintings—including *View of Lake Okanagan, British Columbia*, 1882—were displayed at the *Daily British Colonist*'s building. This body of work was based on sketches he had made the previous year when he joined a geological survey exploring remote regions of the province, and it reveals his remarkable gifts with landscape.

Learn more about Grafton Tyler Brown

IMAGE INDIA #53

by Panchal Mansaram

P.Mansaram, *Image India #53*, 1994, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

Burlington, Ontario-based artist Panchal Mansaram (1934–2020) moved to Canada in 1966, where he became one of the earliest artists of the South Asian Diaspora. Although Mansaram enjoyed a five-decade career, it is only in the last few years that his work has begun to receive wider acclaim—Deepali Dewan, Dan Mishra Curator of South Asian Art & Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum, argues he "is receiving recognition now not because he has finally caught up to the art world, but because we have finally caught up with him." In mixed media collages such as *Image India #53*, 1994, Mansaram explores themes of migration, cultural identity, spirituality, and the everyday. This piece belongs to his series Image India, in which photographs he took during annual trips to his native country became the basis of vibrant collage works that explore his experiences there.

Learn more about Panchal Mansaram

GROUP

by Suzanne Duquet

Suzanne Duquet, *Group*, 1941, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

Painted while Suzanne Duquet (1916–2000) was still a student at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal, this psychologically complex group portrait presents the artist as an androgynous figure in front of an easel, surrounded by her three conventionally feminine sisters. Very few of Duquet's works can be found in public collections, yet the talented young artist was "a feminist ahead of her time [who] endeavour[ed] to portray the inspiring women of the era," writes Anne-Marie Bouchard, Curator of Modern Art at Musée nationale des beaux-arts du Québec in the exhibition catalogue *Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment*. Later in her career, Duquet continued to innovate by exploring the nascent field of digital art—another area of her practice that has not received the attention it deserves.

Learn more about Suzanne Duquet

Share this newsletter with friends who love Canada's art, or invite them to sign up here for our weekly dispatch.

SPRUCE ROOT HAT

by Kwii.aang (Isabella Edenshaw)
and Da.axiigang (Charles Edenshaw)

Kwii.aang (Isabella Edenshaw) and Da.axiigang (Charles Edenshaw), Spruce root hat, c.1900, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

This exquisite hat was woven by Haida basket weaver Kwii.aang (Isabella Edenshaw) (1858–1926) and painted by her husband, Da.axiigang (Charles Edenshaw) (c.1839–1920). Today regarded as the foremost Haida artist of the nineteenth century, Da.axiigang was the subject of a retrospective at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2013, but Kwii.aang's creations—which also include baskets and mats—have only recently become the subject of study. The couple, who lived in Haida Gwaii, spent their winters making and selling painted hats to Indigenous locals and European and American tourists. Kwii.aang was not only highly experienced in gathering the spruce roots and preparing them, but she was also skilled in constructing the shapes of her hats and their intricate woven patterns. Da.axiigang created a black and red Raven design for this hat, along with his signature star motif on the top.

Learn more about Da.axiigang (Charles Edenshaw) and Kwii.aang (Isabella Edenshaw)

MAN HOLDING TWO BABIES

C.D. Hoy, Man Holding Two Babies, c.1910, Barkerville Historic Town Archives.

Chinese-born Chow Dong Hoy (1883–1973) was one of the first Asian Canadian professional photographers in British Columbia in the early twentieth century, but after his death in the early 1970s his work was largely forgotten until it was rediscovered by curator Faith Moosang over twenty years later. In the town of Quesnel Hoy documented Indigenous, Chinese, and Caucasian communities, including this man proudly posing with two babies on his lap, all three outfitted for the occasion. The sitter's hair is carefully coiffed and he has a scarf wrapped around his neck, while the babies are wearing long white dresses and jewellery. Hoy photographed his subjects in a variety of settings, including outdoor makeshift studios and homes, farms, and ranches.

Learn more in ACI's online exhibition
Through the Lens of C.D. Hoy

TUILIK (WOMAN'S PARKA) PANEL

by Attatsiaq

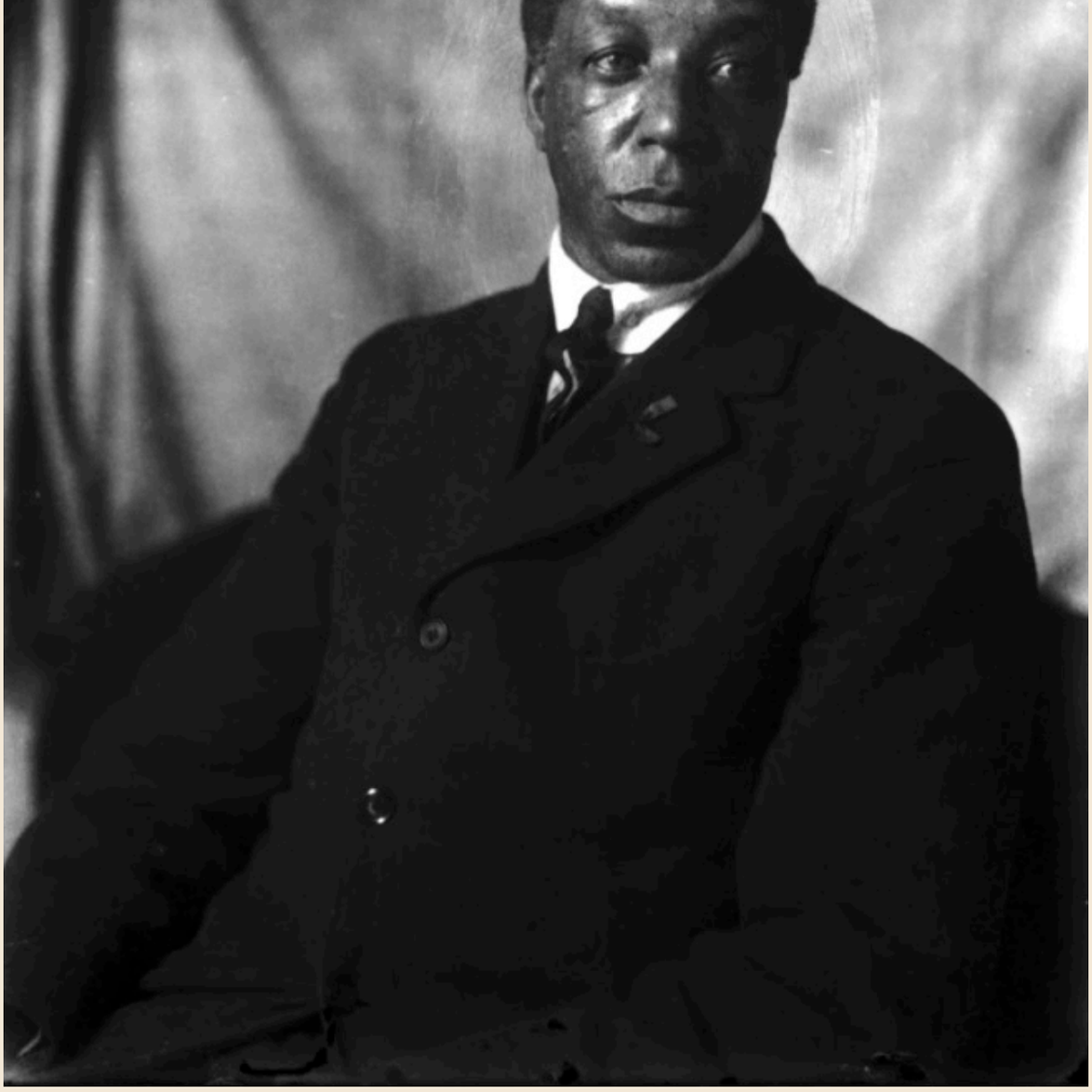
Attatsiaq, Tuilik (woman's parka) panel, 1926–37, Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg.

Created by Attatsiaq (1910–c.1955), a Padlirmiut Inuit expert beader and seamstress from the region west of Hudson Bay, this extraordinary panel was formerly sewn onto a tuilik (woman's parka). It is only in recent years that art galleries in Canada have begun to perceive Indigenous beadwork as a fine art form; this piece is currently on view in the exhibition *Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment* at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. Attatsiaq made clothing to keep her family warm, but she also took pleasure in designing beadwork that transformed the garments into beautiful and unique creations. This panel is composed of white and coloured beads she purchased from the Hudson's Bay Company post that she and her family visited each spring in the 1930s to trade fox furs. Despite the time and effort Attatsiaq put into her beadwork, she was known to take apart her designs so that she could create new ones.

Learn more about Attatsiaq

SELF-PORTRAIT, BIG WOODY DISTRICT, SWAN RIVER, MANITOBA

by William S.A. Beal



William S.A. Beal, *Self-portrait, Big Woody District, Swan River, Manitoba*, c.1918.
Courtesy of Robert Barrow.

This self-portrait depicts William S.A. Beal (1874–1968), one of the first Black Canadian photographers. Born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, and a sawmill engineer by trade, Beal arrived in Canada in 1906 in search of a more prosperous life. From 1915 to 1925 he documented his homesteading community in Swan River in western Manitoba. In this photograph, Beal presents himself as a refined and introspective gentleman in a suit and tie in front of a simple curtain backdrop. Created at a time when "popular images of Black people that circulated in Canada were primarily racist and dehumanizing…[Beal] presents a counter-image, in which he is dignified and poised—a pointed act of resistance to the mainstream misrepresentations," writes Alyssa Fearon, Director/Curator at the Dunlop Art Gallery in Regina. Beal's work has never been the subject of a major museum exhibition.

Learn more about William S.A. Beal

WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE BENEFACTORS OF THE

REDEFINING CANADIAN ART HISTORY FELLOWSHIPS

LEAD FELLOWSHIP BENEFACTOR
Anonymous

FELLOWSHIP SPONSORS
Anonymous
Grant and Alice Burton
Kiki and Ian Delaney
Nancy McCain and Bill Morneau

The ACI is a not-for-profit educational charity that receives no government financing or public support. Our work is made possible by an important circle of friends, patrons, and benefactors.

If you would like to support our important work, please see this page.

Our entire collection of newsletters can be found on the ACI website, for you to read, share, and enjoy.

PAST NEWSLETTERS

Follow us on social media

Facebook
artcaninstitute/

Instagram
@artcaninstitute

Twitter
@artcaninstitute

Visit us at aci-iac.ca for more content on Canadian art and artists

Canadian Online Art Book Project

Purchase Available Print Books

Canadian Schools Art Education Program

Art Lecture Videos

Image Credits: **[1]** Naoko Matsubara, *Moon Messengers*, 1965, woodcut on paper, 22.86 × 45.72 cm. Collection of the Carnegie Museum of Art (89.28.1007.1) © Naoko Matsubara. By permission. **[2]** Germaine Arnaktauyok, *Tattoo Lady*, c.2003, etching on paper, 36.8 x 28.6 cm. Government of Nunavut Fine Art Collection; On long-term loan to the Winnipeg Art Gallery (NPM1). **[3]** Grafton Tyler Brown, *View of Lake Okanagan, British Columbia*, 1882. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Curtis E. Ransom in memory of Julia Turner Ransom. **[4]** Panchal Mansaram, *Image India #53*, 1994, paper, ink, 28 x 43 cm. Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (2015.78.60). Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, © ROM. **[5]** Suzanne Duquet, *Group*, 1941, oil on canvas, 127 x 149.8 cm. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, gift of the artist, 1996.94. Photo credit: MNBAQ, Jean-Guy Kerouac. © Estate of Suzanne Duquet. **[6]** Kwii.aang (Isabella Edenshaw) and Da.axiigang (Charles Edenshaw), spruce-root hat, c.1900, cedar bark, spruce root, paint, 21 x 43 cm. Collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, E. M. Brodhurst Collection, 19/6110. **[7]** C.D. Hoy, Man Holding Two Babies, c.1910, printed 1998, photograph. Collection of the Barkerville Historic Town Archives, P1710. **[8]** Attatsiaq, Tuilik (woman's parka) panel, 1926–37, 65 x 38.5 cm. Collection of the Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg, Collection of Winifred Petchey Marsh and Bishop Donald Marsh, H5-21-290. Photo: Craig Boyko. **[9]** William S.A. Beal, *Self-portrait, Big Woody District, Swan River, Manitoba*, c.1918. Courtesy of Robert Barrow.