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GET OUTSIDE
10 ARTFUL REASONS

So long as gathering indoors remains unsafe, we are taking a cue from some of Canada's most revered creators who reveal that heading outside is the way to go.

Scott McFarland, *Sugar Shack, Caledon, Ontario*, 2009, Courtesy of Scott McFarland and CHOI&LAGER, Cologne, Seoul.

As we wait for the pandemic to subside and listen to authorities who remind us that staying out of harm's way means staying outdoors for winter gatherings, Canadian art offers some extraordinary examples of what to love about this season. In 1759, the French philosopher Voltaire described the country that would become Canada as "a few acres of snow." Ever since, the notion of our nation's identity as synonymous with winter has only grown and we have become internationally famous for cold-weather sports, festivals, art, and literature. But, as the images below prove, there is much to embrace about this season of extremes and delights. Here are ten works to inspire us to get outside, to gather, sled, skate, walk, dance, and find an escape just beyond our home's exterior.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

FAMILY OF EIGHT

by Tim Pitsiulak

Tim Pitsiulak, *Family of Eight*, 2008, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Neither cool temperatures nor brisk winds can stop the eight family members piled into a bright red all-terrain vehicle as it barrels across the snow. In this colourful lithograph by Kinngait artist Tim Pitsiulak (1967–2016), winter is a ride in this composition marked by movement, flowing hair, and tire tracks. Each element is balanced against the symmetrical arrangement of the figures—three family members sit in front and three at the rear of the ATV. All are facing the central figure, the matriarch, perhaps, who grips the handlebars and leads the crew with a baby on her back. Pitsiulak was inspired by his aunt, legendary graphic artist Kenojuak Ashevak (1927–2013), to take up drawing and printmaking, and he chronicled his Inuit heritage and the pleasure of daily life in his community.

Learn more about Tim Pitsiulak

GROUP OF SEVEN AWKWARD MOMENTS (EARLY SNOW WITH BOB AND DOUG)

by Diana Thorneycroft

Diana Thorneycroft, *Group of Seven Awkward Moments (Early Snow with Bob and Doug)*, 2005, Courtesy of Diana Thorneycroft.

In this scene, outdoor socializing takes both a humorous and sinister turn as the quintessential Canadian hosers, Bob and Doug McKenzie, don their toques, drink beer, banter, and enjoy themselves so thoroughly that they are oblivious to the pack of wolves that come to partake in their gathering. This scene unfolds with Tom Thomson's (1877–1917) *Early Snow*, 1916–17, as the backdrop. The work is part of a series—

Group of Seven Awkward Moments, 2005—by Winnipeg artist Diana Thorneycroft (b.1956), who photographed toy figurines in front of iconic landscapes by Canada's most famed school of painters. Thorneycroft populates previously tranquil and figureless terrains with comic and surprising encounters as incongruous visions of national identity converge.

Learn more about Diana Thorneycroft

Read more in ACI's
Tom Thomson: Life & Work by David P. Silcox

DANCE IN THE SNOW (DANSE DANS LA NEIGE)

by Françoise Sullivan

Françoise Sullivan, *Dance in the Snow (Danse dans la neige)*, 1948.

In 1947 artist Françoise Sullivan (b.1923) took revelry in the snow to a new level when she returned to Montreal after studying modern dance in New York. She conceived of a cycle of improvised solo performances commemorating each of the four seasons—*Dance in the Snow* (*Danse dans la neige*), 1948, would become the most iconic. During the summer she danced along the St. Lawrence River while her mother recorded Sullivan's intuitive choreography. Fall passed, but when winter arrived she resumed the project with friends and fellow Automatistes Maurice Perron (1924–1999) and Jean Paul Riopelle (1923–2002), who documented the event in photography and film. In Otterburn Park, east of Montreal, Sullivan leapt across icy hills as Perron captured poses that ranged from sombre scenes that Sullivan described as "evocative of northern melancholy" to exuberant expressions of joy.

Read more in ACI's
Françoise Sullivan: Life & Work by Annie Gérin

PREPARATORY SKETCH FOR "QUÉBEC (PROJET DE PEINTURE MURALE)"

by Jean Paul Lemieux

Jean Paul Lemieux, preparatory sketch for "Québec (projet de peinture murale) (detail)," 1949, Collection of her royal majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

No artist offers a better reason to walk urban streets in winter than the painter Jean Paul Lemieux (1904–1990), who would not have chosen to be born anywhere but in Quebec City. He loved the urban centre for its enchanting old walled town, and its busy population, who he depicts here in the winter in this preparatory sketch for "Québec (projet de peinture murale)," 1949, which is packed with skaters, sledders, and amblers moving through snowy streets. Although the artist lamented the disappearance of Quebec's charm as modernization advanced, Lemieux never grew tired of painting his city-muse and city-museum. He spent most of his life either in the city or not far away from it—capturing its activity in all seasons, in particular winter.

Read more in ACI's
Jean Paul Lemieux: Life & Work by Michèle Grandbois

VERNISSAGE

by Kim Dorland

Kim Dorland, *Vernissage*, 2014, Courtesy of Kim Dorland and Angell Gallery, Toronto.

"Vernissage," the title of this painting, is a term for the opening of an art exhibition. Here, the Toronto-based artist Kim Dorland (b.1974) uses it as his work's title and to imbue an everyday cityscape with a feeling of festivity. While the scene seems instantly recognizable as an ice hockey game taking place in a Toronto park, its magenta palette gives the painting a sense of exuberance. The technicolour winter sunset and the blue cast shadows against the ice may seem familiar, but assembled on Dorland's canvas, the vision becomes deliciously dissonant, transporting us to another world. The artist further heightens the work's sensory power with his distinctive and layered application of paint, mimicking the textured surface of the outdoor ice rink, with its scratches, shavings, and accumulations of snow.

Learn more about Kim Dorland

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SUGAR SHACK, CALEDON, ONTARIO

by Scott McFarland

Scott McFarland, *Sugar Shack, Caledon, Ontario*, 2009, Courtesy of Scott McFarland and CHOI&LAGER, Cologne, Seoul.

In *Sugar Shack, Caledon, Ontario*, 2009, by Toronto-based artist Scott McFarland (b.1975), we see an evening winter landscape illuminated by the inner workings of a maple shack. With this work, the artist reminds us that making maple syrup—a precise, transformative, and time-consuming process that yields rich rewards—can be likened to fine art. Although *Sugar Shack, Caledon, Ontario* appears to represent a moment in time, the work is a composite construction. The artist has distilled several negatives into one seamlessly created vision. While McFarland digitally manipulates his images (part of his meticulous practice of *making* rather than *taking* photographs), the labour involved in this work recalls the alchemical magic of both photography and the transformation of sap into a sweet winter delight.

Learn more about Scott McFarland

SKATER

by Alex Colville

Alex Colville, *Skater*, 1964, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Few of us have the technique of the skater in this painting by Alex Colville: she thrusts towards us, her right leg elegantly raised, while simultaneously propelling away into the brilliant white abyss of the snow on the quarry wall and its reflection on the ice. This masterfully foreshortened composition is an homage to lacing up skates, and the Maritime artist had an uncanny ability to combine complexity and simplicity. Notice how the ends of both blades *just* touch the bottom and left edges of the painting. Such precision is typical of Colville's work, but only part of what makes it—and skating—so compelling. His image offers us an opportunity to slip into cinematic perspective, and a restrained, graceful drama.

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

AROUND THE CAMP FIRE

by William Notman

William Notman, *Around the Camp Fire*, Caribou Hunting series, Montreal, 1866, McCord Museum, Montreal.

Anthropological studies reveal that approximately 400,000 years ago, humans developed the tools to control fire—a cultural turning point that both extended the day and allowed for the release of our imaginations to tell stories. With this work, made more than a century ago by Montreal-based photographer William Notman (1826–1891), its creator produced a timeless scene that taps into the age-old magic of gathering outdoors, crouched around an open flame—eyes flickering with reflections of light, faces glowing, wood crackling, talk flowing. What makes the image unique is that Notman, endlessly enterprising and the most successful commercial photographer in Canada throughout the nineteenth century, replicated winter weather and a campfire setting inside his studio. In the days before Photoshop and when cameras weren't advanced enough to capture outdoor scenes like this one, Notman made snow of fluffed lambswool, ice of polished zinc plate, and a magnesium flare to simulate fire light.

Read more in ACI's
William Notman: Life & Work by Sarah Parsons

EARLY EVENING, WINTER

by J.E.H. MacDonald

J.E.H. MacDonald, *Early Evening, Winter*, 1912, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

As tempting as it can be to hibernate inside, *Early Evening, Winter*, 1912, by J.E.H. MacDonald (1873–1932) offers ample reason to head out for a night-time stroll. A founding member of the Group of Seven, MacDonald was sensitively attuned to the profound attraction of a moody winter scene with a glittering moon. The small patches of clouds in the sky and those that form the snow on the hills are ruggedly and rhythmically distributed across the canvas—an effect achieved by the artist through his application of thick swaths of paint with a palette knife rather than a brush. It was images like this one that would make the Canadian novelist Robertson Davies extoll the virtue of being outside and write, “as an admirer of moonlight I resent the bossy insistence of those who want to reduce my time for enjoying it.”

Learn more about J.E.H. MacDonald

CHRISTMAS EVE AT 12 O’CLOCK

by Christopher Pratt

Christopher Pratt, *Christmas Eve at 12 O'clock*, 1995, Courtesy of Christopher Pratt and Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.

A lone figure walks along the snow toward a closed door, illuminating his path with a flashlight. What is he in search of? What will he find? Supremely evocative, *Christmas Eve at 12 O'clock*, 1995, by Newfoundland-based artist Christopher Pratt (b.1935) is suffused with atmospheric blues that make up the snow, sky, and sea in the background of this silkscreen. Pratt was once a pupil of Alex Colville's, and his works demonstrate a similar restraint. He developed a distinctive style characterized by exactitude and a kind of flatness that washes over many of his compositions. His subject matter may appear dreamlike, sometimes haunting, but is firmly rooted in Newfoundland life.

Learn more about Christopher Pratt

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