

# CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## SHINING LIGHT ON CANADIAN CREATORS

5 inspiring artworks in celebration of African and Caribbean Canadian art history

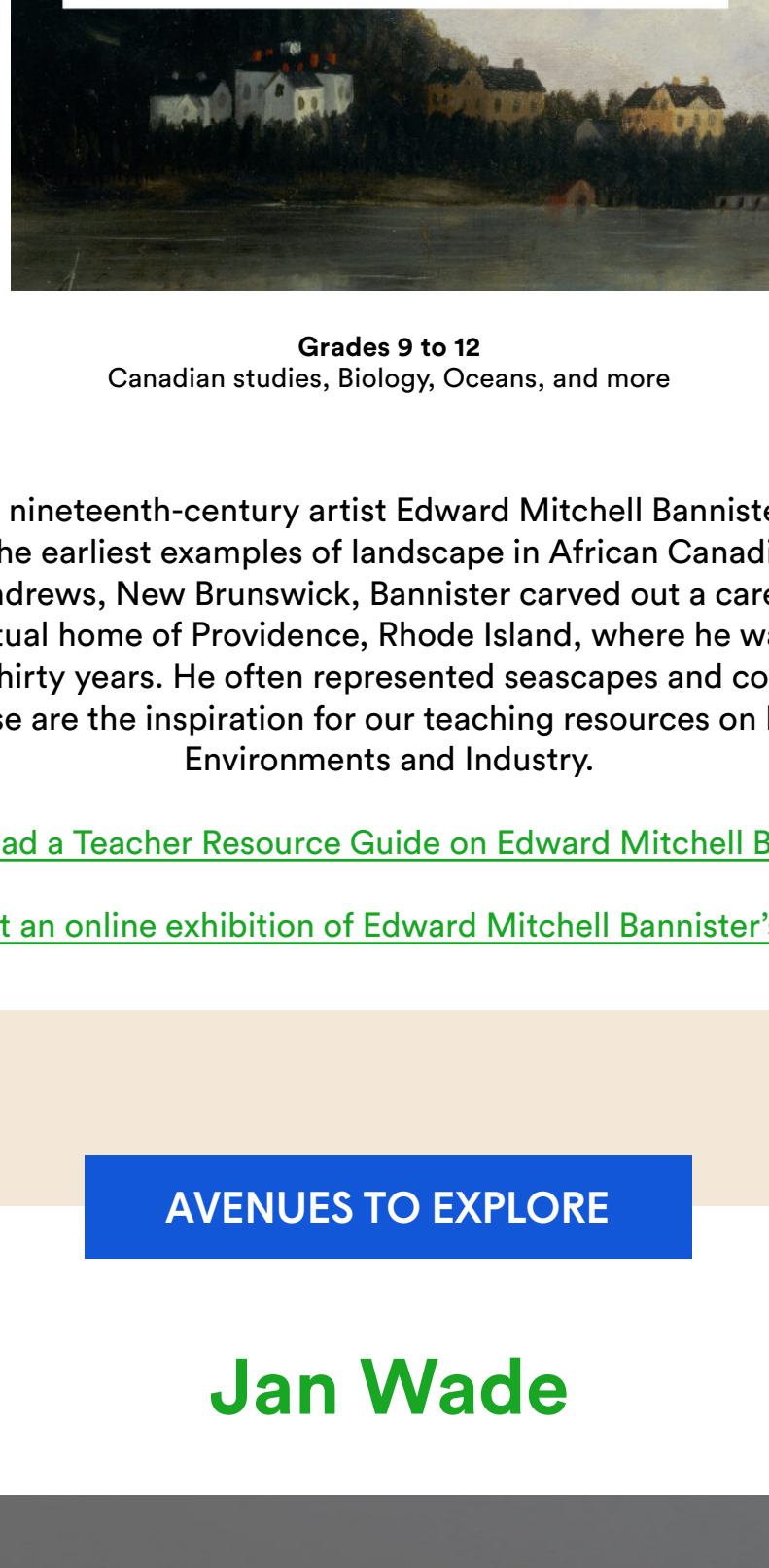


Moriidja Kitege Banza, *Authentique #2*, 2019.

February is Black History Month in Canada, a time to explore the incalculable contributions of Canadians of African and Caribbean descent throughout our nation's history. In the visual arts, Black Canadian creators are integral to the rich tapestry of culture in this country. This striking self-portrait was made by Canadian Congolese artist Moriidja Kitege Banza (b.1980), and it pictures him seated in his garden in Montreal, with one of his pieces hung in the top left-hand corner. While artists like Banza and Haitian Canadian painter Manuel Mathieu (b.1986) mine their heritage in their creations, historical legacies of Black Canadian art are still being explored after decades of being marginalized. This week we are honoured to spotlight the work of contemporary and historical Canadian artists whose works engage with themes connected to African and Caribbean heritage, identities, and cultural practices. We hope these works inspire you.

— The Art Canada Institute Education Team

## Edward Mitchell Bannister



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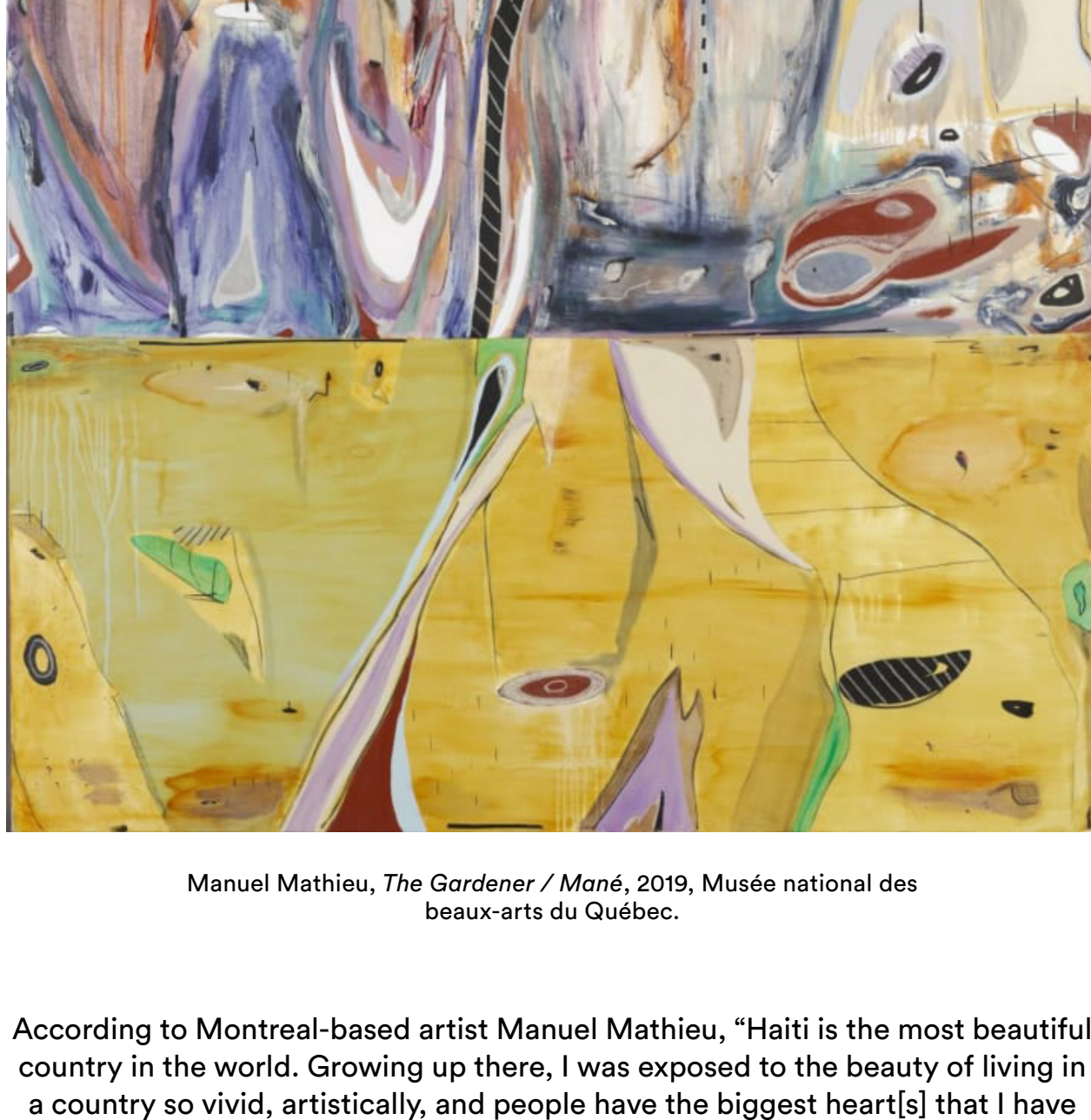
The works of nineteenth-century artist Edward Mitchell Bannister (1828–1901) are some of the earliest examples of landscape in African Canadian art history. Born in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, Bannister carved out a career for himself in his eventual home of Providence, Rhode Island, where he was a leading painter for thirty years. He often represented seascapes and coastal scenes, and these are the inspiration for our teaching resources on Maritime Environments and Industry.

[Download a Teacher Resource Guide on Edward Mitchell Bannister](#)

[Visit an online exhibition of Edward Mitchell Bannister's art](#)

## AVENUES TO EXPLORE

### Jan Wade



Jan Wade, *Breathe* (detail), c.2004–20, Vancouver Art Gallery.

This remarkable textile work was created by Vancouver-based artist Jan Wade (b.1952). *Breathe* was sixteen years in the making, and it is composed of over seventy hand-stitched panels. Community is at the heart of the project: Wade was inspired by the women in her life who worked with handicrafts, and used embroidery to connect with the Black material culture of the American South, along with the spirit of improvisation encapsulated in jazz.

[Listen to a playlist curated by Jan Wade to accompany her exhibition Soul Power](#)

### Manuel Mathieu

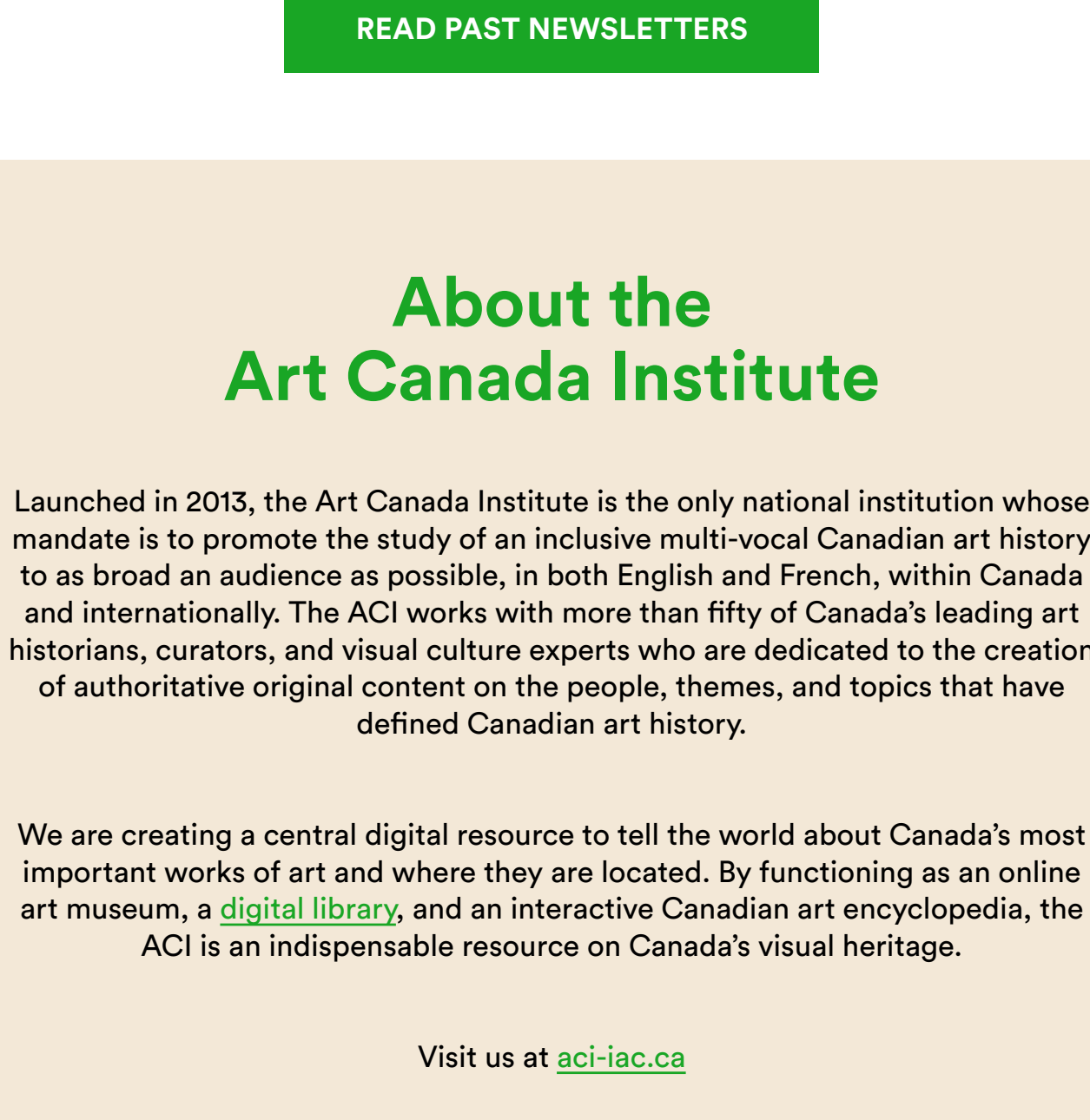


Manuel Mathieu, *The Gardener / Mané*, 2019, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec.

According to Montreal-based artist Manuel Mathieu, "Haiti is the most beautiful country in the world. Growing up there, I was exposed to the beauty of living in a country so vivid, artistically, and people have the biggest heart[s] that I have ever seen." Family and community are central in many of Mathieu's works, like this painting inspired by a man named Mané, who worked as a gardener for his family for many years. With this image, Mathieu brings together his signature combination of abstraction and figuration in this beautiful tribute to a family friend who he claims always has a place in his heart.

[See more of Manuel Mathieu's art](#)

## The Bell-Sloman Archive



Unknown, *Tintype of Young African American Woman Seated at Table*, n.d., Bell-Sloman Collection of the James Gibson Library, Brock University, St. Catharines.

Historical photographs like this one can be understood as an opportunity to travel through time, and to take a deeper look at stories from the past. This portrait is part of an important archive that comprises over 300 images documenting members of the Bell and Sloman families, who are descendants of former enslaved people in the American South. It is a powerful archive for gaining understanding of African Canadian history through the story of two families, enshrining moments from the past that have special resonance in the present and future.

[Create an art project inspired by the Bell-Sloman archive](#)

[See this work in the online exhibition Black Art Matters](#)

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Launched in 2013, the Art Canada Institute is the only national institution whose mandate is to promote the study of an inclusive multi-vocal Canadian art history to as broad an audience as possible, in both English and French, within Canada and internationally. The ACI works with more than fifty of Canada's leading art historians, curators, and visual culture experts who are dedicated to the creation of authoritative original content on the people, themes, and topics that have defined Canadian art history.

We are creating a central digital resource to tell the world about Canada's most important works of art and where they are located. By functioning as an online art museum, a [digital library](#), and an interactive Canadian art encyclopedia, the ACI is an indispensable resource on Canada's visual heritage.

Visit us at [aci-iac.ca](http://aci-iac.ca)

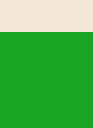
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**Image Credits:** [1] Moriidja Kitege Banza, *Authentique #2*, 2019. Archival digital inkjet print on paper, edition of 5, 86.3 x 61 cm. Image: Galerie Hugues Charbonneau. [2] Jan Wade, *Breathe* (detail), c.2004–20, embroidery on linen. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, General Acquisition Fund, Courtesy of Jan Wade. Photo by Ian Lefebvre, VAG. [3] Manuel Mathieu, *The Gardener / Mané*, 2019. Mixed media on canvas, 229 x 191 cm. Collection Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec. [4] Unknown, *Tintype of Young African American Woman Seated at Table*, n.d. Bell-Sloman Collection of the James Gibson Library, Brock University, St. Catharines.