JUNE 17, 2022

FAMILY GUY - PORTRAITS OF FATHERHOOD

Diverse perspectives on what it means to be a dad and to forge an irreplaceable bond with one's children.

Father figures appear in many forms throughout our lives, whether as parents, spiritual guides, or distant ancestors. To show our appreciation for the numerous roles that dads play, this Father's Day we've selected ten Canadian works that explore paternal themes, ranging from touching tributes to more complicated dynamics. Paintings by nineteenth-century artist-apple farmer Ozias Leduc and twentieth-century Anishinaabe artist-shaman Norval Morrisseau explore the role of the spiritual father as provider and protector. Curtis Talwst Santiago imagines happy moments with his future son, while conceptual artist Micah Lexier creates a distinctive portrait of his dad with just three simple words. We hope you enjoy the selections below and more as you honour and celebrate the fathers in your life this weekend.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

MARGARET LANE

by Kim Dorland

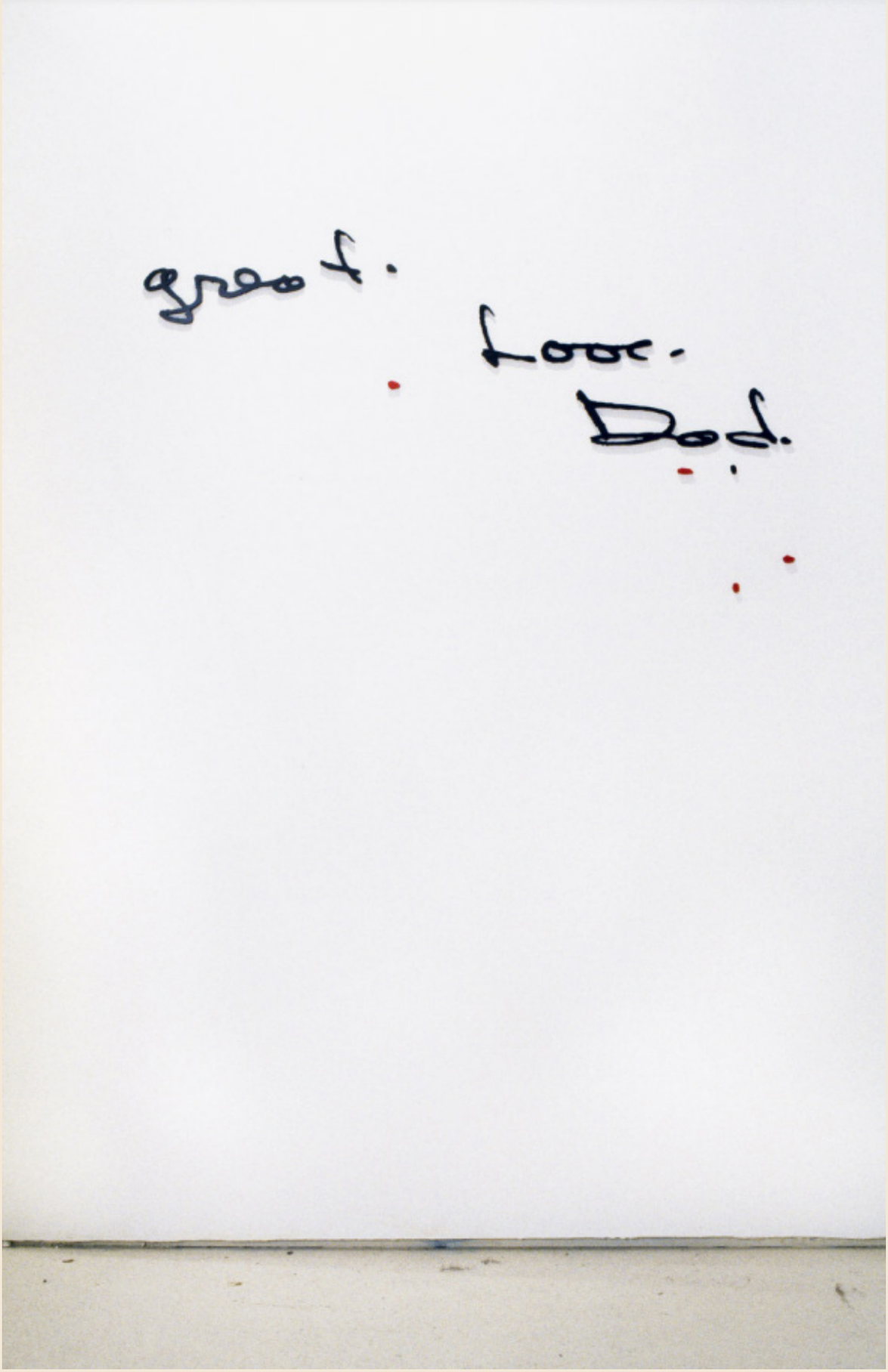
Kim Dorland, *Margaret Lane*, 2014, Courtesy of Kim Dorland.

A father holds the hands of his two children in an urban alleyway, surrounded by mounds of mid-winter slush. The figures' facial features are obscured by thickly applied paint, a signature technique of the Alberta-born painter Kim Dorland (b.1974), who sometimes has to use screws to secure the heavy layers of pigment that he applies to his canvases. Renowned for his use of fluorescent colour—seen here with accents of hot pink that lend warmth to the cold scene—this painter has earned the moniker "Tom Thomson on acid," in reference to the famous early twentieth-century Canadian artist. Dorland started out depicting scenes from his suburban upbringing in Red Deer, including bush parties and fistfights in the woods, and is known for bringing a contemporary edge to the tradition of Canadian landscape painting.

Learn more about Kim Dorland

GREAT LOVE DAD

by Micah Lexier



Micah Lexier, *Great Love Dad*, 2005, Courtesy of Birch Contemporary, Toronto.

The starting point for this wall-mounted installation by Winnipeg-born, Toronto-based artist and curator Micah Lexier (b.1960) was a loving note from his father. Lexier isolated the last word in one of the note's sentences ("great") as well as its closing salutation ("Love, Dad"), then rendered the idiosyncratic loops and distinct marks of his father's handwriting in steel and aluminum. The result is an unconventional and affectionate portrait of an individual and that person's unique characteristics. Lexier has a nearly obsessive interest in collecting, organizing, and cataloguing, often using comparisons, measurements, and strict parameters around creation to arrive at his artistic conclusions. In this work and many others, he takes a simple, everyday item and elevates it into a complex and meaningful artifact.

Learn more about Micah Lexier

DAVIS CHILDREN WITH JOSEPH DAVIS AND ROBERT BROWN

by William Notman

William Notman, *Davis children with Joseph Davis and Robert Brown*, 1865, American Civil War Museum, Richmond.

This nineteenth-century portrait by Montreal artist William Notman (1826–1891), one of Canada's most prominent photographers, shows two men and three children. The children's father, who is not pictured, was Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War and a plantation owner who campaigned for the legality of slavery. Seated in the middle of the picture is Davis's brother, Joseph Emory Davis, and standing behind them is Robert Brown, a formerly enslaved man who became the children's guardian as they travelled to Canada when their father was captured as a prisoner of war. Notman was an innovative, influential, and internationally renowned documentarian whose lively visual archive catalogues Anglo-Canada's early social and cultural history.

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

UKRAINIANS VOTE TO GO THEIR OWN WAY

by Sandra Semchuk and Martin Semchuk

Sandra Semchuk and Martin Semchuk, *Ukrainians Vote to Go Their Own Way*, 1991, Courtesy of Sandra Semchuk.

In collaboration with her father, Martin Semchuk, Ukrainian Canadian artist Sandra Semchuk (b.1948) created this self-portrait including newspaper references to the 1991 referendum in Ukraine, in which an overwhelming majority voted for independence. Focused on the complex relationships that exist among members of families and communities, Semchuk and her father—a socialist and member of legislature who helped bring about Medicare in Saskatchewan—layered text as well as personal reflections on their homeland, placed side by side in the centre of the piece. Semchuk, who has taught at Vancouver's Emily Carr University of Art and Design since 1987, was also engaged in a fifteen-year collaboration with her late husband, Rock Cree artist James Nicholas (1947–2007), that explored connections to the land as well as settler and Indigenous reconciliation.

Learn more about Sandra Semchuk

ATAATA (FATHER)

by Oviloo Tunnillie

Oviloo Tunnillie, *Ataata (Father)*, 2002, Collection of John and Joyce Price.

Nunavut-born Inuk artist Oviloo Tunnillie (1949–2014) was taught how to carve stone by her father, Toonoo (1920–1969), whom she depicts here in the act of making a *qulliq*, a traditional stone lamp that burns rendered animal fat to give light and heat to dwellings. Toonoo was one of the first Inuit artists to sell works to the southern market, and his family members all enjoyed success as artists as well, including his wife Sheokjuke (1928–2012); Oviloo and her brothers Jutai (1959–2015) and Sam Toonoo (1969–2017); and Oviloo's three sons, Tytoosie (b.1974), Noah (b.1976), and Etidloi (b.1982) Tunnillie. For this special work, Oviloo uses a beautifully coloured stone with rose and tan streaks to create an affectionate and tranquil tribute to her father.

Read more in ACI's
Oviloo Tunnillie: Life & Work by Darlene Coward Wight

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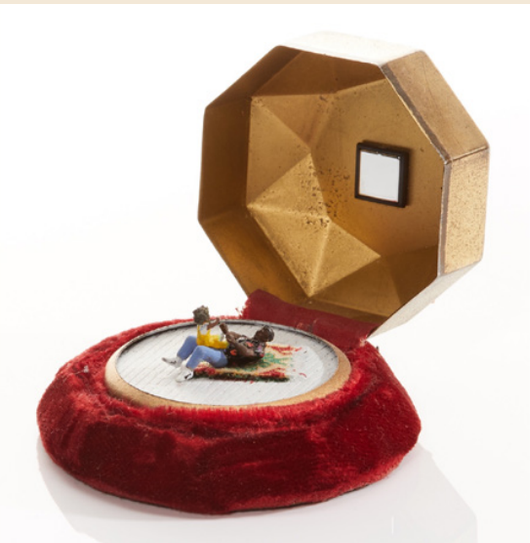
ART ZADDY AND BOOGOO

by Curtis Talwst Santiago



Curtis Talwst Santiago, *Art Zaddy and Boogoo*, 2020, Courtesy of Curtis Talwst Santiago.

Curtis Talwst Santiago (b.1979) is an Edmonton-born, Trinidadian Canadian artist best known for his miniature dioramas that shrink down scenes of newsworthy events or underrepresented histories and contain them within tiny jewellery boxes. This particular tableau includes a man lying on a patterned rug with a boy sitting on his lap, surrounded by plush red velvet. Santiago created this "manifestation piece" when he and his partner were thinking of having a child. He explains, "It is a dream of mine to have a beautiful studio with hardwood floors painted white with area rugs, old New York loft inspiration, and he is there, old enough to hang out and play in it."

Learn more about Curtis Talwst Santiago

SHAMAN AND DISCIPLES

by Norval Morrisseau

Norval Morrisseau, *Shaman and Disciples*, 1979, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg.

Considered by many as the grandfather of contemporary Indigenous art in Canada, Norval Morrisseau (1931–2007) identified the central figure in this painting, a shaman surrounded by two disciples, as a self-portrait. Deeply spiritual, Morrisseau considered his art practice an intermediary channel between the human and supernatural realms. He drew most directly from the stories and visual culture of his Anishinaabe elders. In this work and many others, bold black "power lines" link all elements of the image, creating interrelated loops that contain the artist's signature pigments of copper, yellow, and turquoise. As part of a group called the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc., labelled the Indian Group of Seven by the press, Morrisseau was instrumental in promoting Indigenous art in the mainstream in Canada from the 1970s onward.

Read more in ACI's
Norval Morrisseau: Life & Work by Carmen Robertson

THE CHRYSANTHEMUM HAS OPENED TWELVE TIMES

by Karen Tam

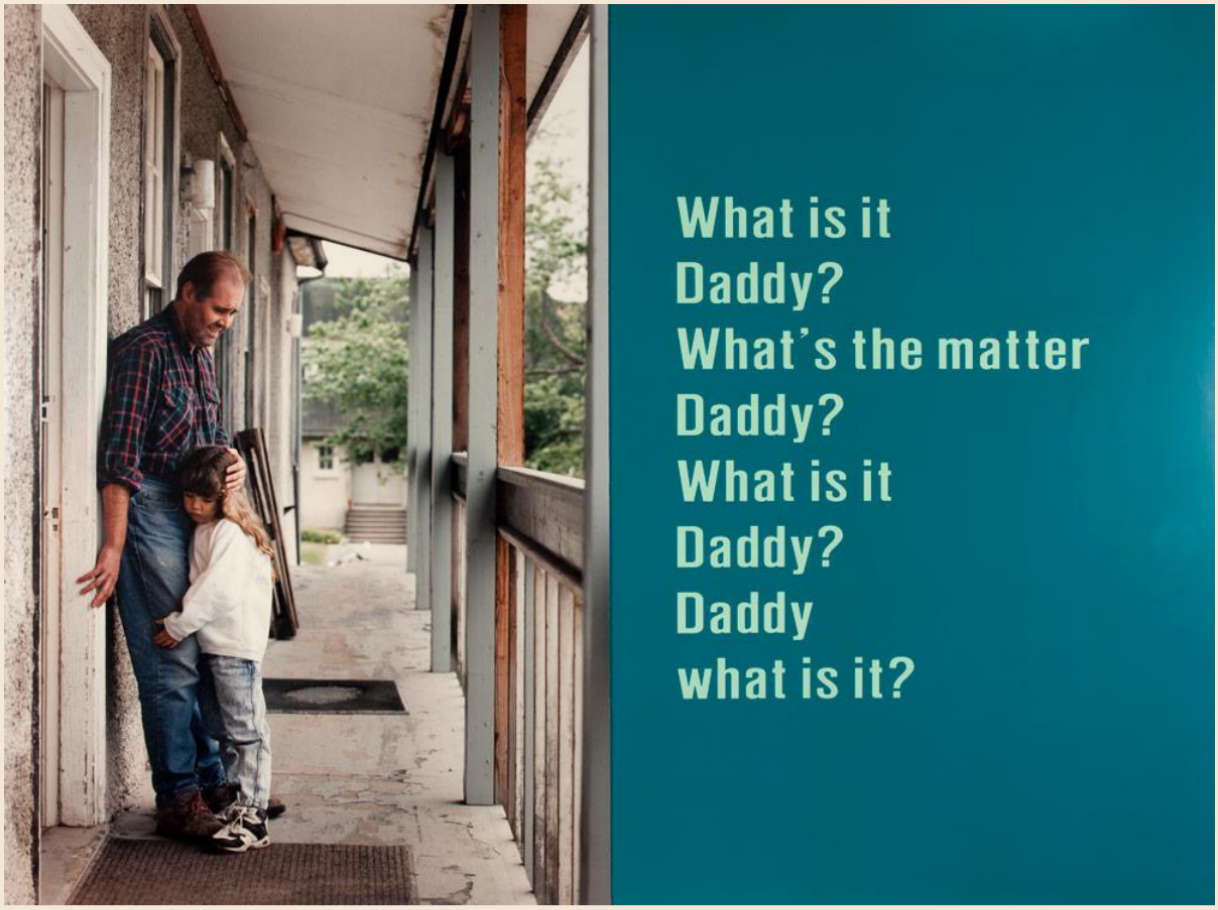
Karen Tam, installation view of the exhibition *the chrysanthemum has opened twelve times* at the Koffler Centre of the Arts, Toronto, 2020, photograph by Toni Hafkenscheid.

A photograph of Karen Tam's (b.1977) Chinese-born, San Francisco-based great-grandfather, Wong, inspired the Montreal artist to develop a series of immersive installations recreating the spaces of early Chinese Canadian portrait studios. The works were first publicly displayed in the exhibition *the chrysanthemum has opened twelve times* (2020) at Toronto's Koffler Centre of the Arts. This installation view of the entrance shows a large vintage camera belonging to Tam's father situated across from a large-scale reproduction of the aforementioned portrait of Wong. Displayed together, these objects not only pay homage to the artist's father and great-grandfather, but also call attention to the important history of Chinese self-representation in Canada.

Learn more about Karen Tam

WHAT IS IT DADDY?

by Ken Lum



Ken Lum, *What is it Daddy?*, 1994, Oakville Galleries.

Vancouver-born conceptual artist Ken Lum (b.1956) creates a role reversal between parent and child in this work, where a little girl protectively clutches her vulnerable father's legs in a run-down housing complex. He wears a pained expression, gripping a doorframe with one hand and cradling the back of his daughter's head with the other. The accompanying words evoke feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. The juxtaposition of elements in this work conjures a narrative that is incongruous with its billboard-like visual presentation. *What is it Daddy?*, 1994, is part of a series in which Lum pairs large-format images with short graphic texts that read as uncertain, anxious, or simply mundane, to create an uneasy tension often related to issues such as class, race, social value, or self-worth.

Learn more about Ken Lum

THE OLD MAN WITH APPLES

by Ozias Leduc

Ozias Leduc, *The Old Man with Apples*, 1938, private collection.

As an apple grower, Quebec artist Ozias Leduc (1864–1955) frequently included the fruit as a subject in his paintings. Leduc inherited the family orchard of 300 trees after his father's passing, and this portrait is a tribute to him. Wearing a brown hat, stern expression, and long grey beard, the old man—who could be seen to represent both the artist's biological and spiritual father—is surrounded by an abundance of ripe, round apples, and holds a basket aloft as if offering it to the viewer. Leduc learned the value of careful, meticulous work from his father, who worked tirelessly as a carpenter, cabinetmaker, and farmer. This image exhibits the literal fruits produced by his hard labour.

Read more in ACI's
Ozias Leduc: Life & Work by Laurier Lacroix

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PAST NEWSLETTERS

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Image Credits: **[1]** Kim Dorland, *Margaret Lane*, 2014, oil, acrylic, and screws on canvas over wood panel, 121.92 x 152.4 com. Courtesy of Kim Dorland. **[2]** Micah Lexier, *Great Love Dad*, 2005, laser-cut steel, waterjet-cut aluminum, enamel paint, 45.7 x 114.3 x 25 cm. Courtesy of Birch Contemporary, Toronto. **[3]** William Notman, *Davis children with Joseph Davis and Robert Brown*, 1865, ambrotype. Collection of the Civil War Museum, Richmond, FIC2013.01300. Courtesy of Google Arts & Culture. **[4]** Sandra Semchuk and Martin Semchuk, *Ukrainians Vote to Go Their Own Way*, 1991. Courtesy of Sandra Semchuk. **[5]** Oviloo Tunnillie, *Ataata (Father)*, 2002, Serpentinite (source unknown), 40.4 x 22.4 x 29.6 cm. Collection of John and Joyce Price. Courtesy of the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Photo credit: Ernest Mayer. © Dorset Fine Arts. **[6]** Curtis Talwst Santiago, *Art Zaddy and Boogoo*, 2020. Courtesy of Curtis Talwst Santiago. **[7]** Norval Morrisseau, *Shaman and Disciples*, 1979, acrylic on canvas, 180.5 x 211.5 cm. Collection of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg (1979.34.7). **[8]** Karen Tam, installation view of *the exhibition the chrysanthemum has opened twelve times* at the Koffler Centre of the Arts, Toronto, 2020. Courtesy of Koffler Centre of the Arts. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid. **[9]** Ken Lum, *What is it Daddy?*, 1994, colour print, lacquer and enamel on Sintra and aluminum, 182.9 cm x 243.8 cm x 5.1 cm. Collection of Oakville Galleries. Courtesy of Ken Lum. **[10]** Ozias Leduc, *The Old Man with Apples*, 1938, oil on board, 28.8 x 19.5 cm. Private collection. Photo credit: Paul Litherland. © Ozias Leduc Estate / SODRAC.