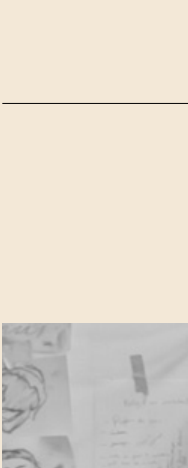


AUGUST 12, 2022

YOUNG AT ART

12 EARLY CREATORS

Today is International Youth Day—commemorated every year on August 12. To mark it, we're looking at accomplished works that established and emerging Canadian artists produced in the early days of their careers.

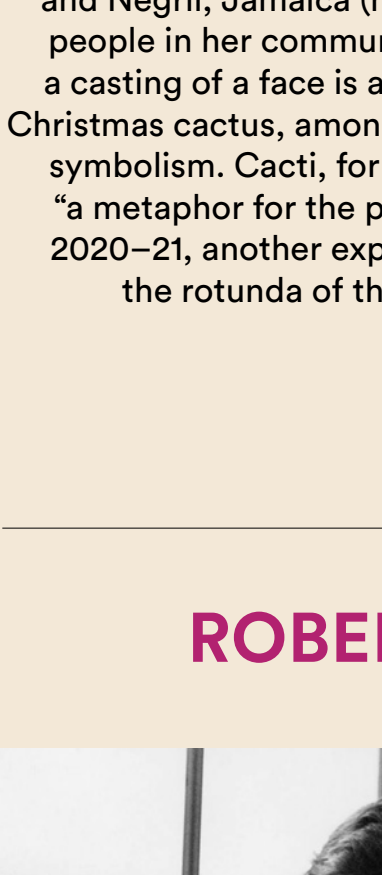
Meryl McMaster, *Anima*, 2012, Courtesy of Meryl McMaster.

In 1999 the General Assembly of the United Nations declared August 12 International Youth Day to celebrate the promise and potential of young people around the world. In keeping with the UN's definition of "youth," this year we're featuring twelve notable works made by Canadian artists when they were between the ages of 15 and 24. These early career pieces highlight the nascent talent of today's rising stars, like Tau Lewis, Darcie Bernhardt, and Anna Weyant, and reveal the first creative achievements of such leading figures as Robert Houle, Kazuo Nakamura, and Joyce Wieland. Not all artists begin as prodigies, but these here demonstrate early affinities for their respective artforms and have collectively made considerable contributions to the Canadian cultural landscape.

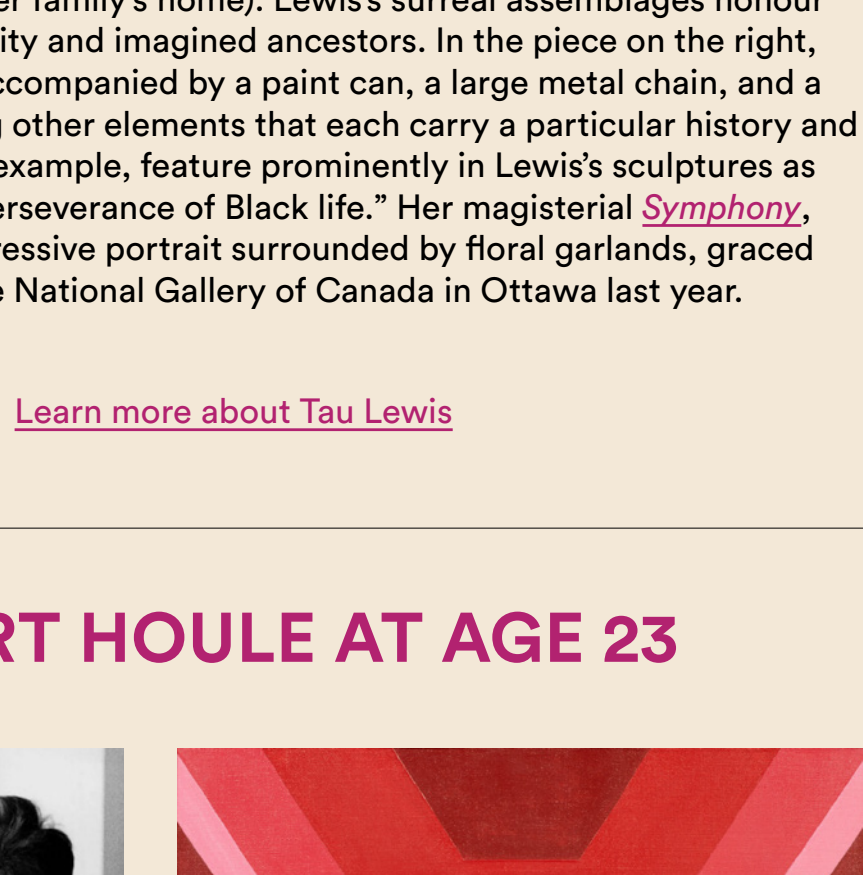
Sara Angel

Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

FRANÇOISE SULLIVAN AT AGE 17



Françoise Sullivan at l'École de danse, Gérard Crevier, 1937, photographer unknown.

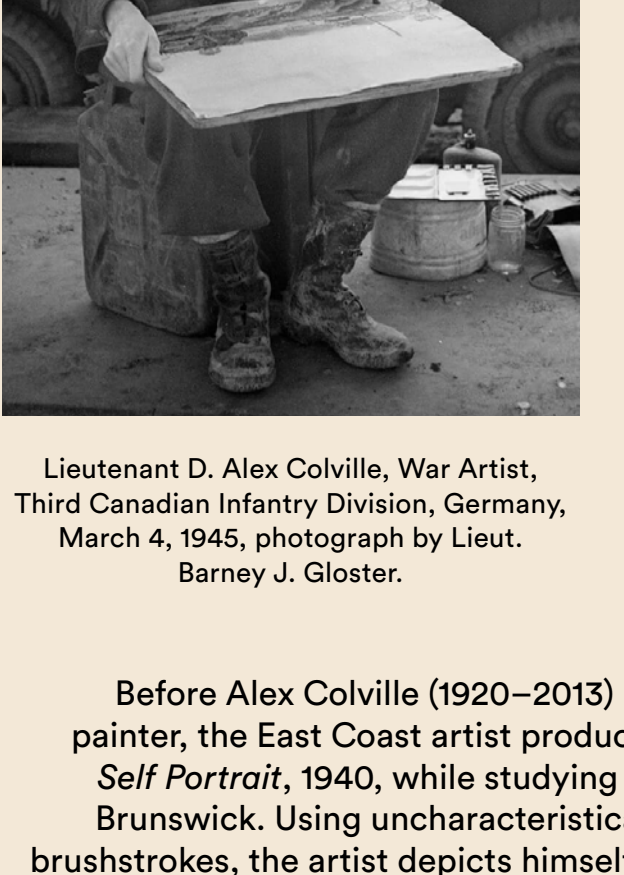
Françoise Sullivan, *Still Life (Nature morte)*, c.1940, Collection of Madeleine Arsour.

When she was only sixteen, the revered artist and dancer Françoise Sullivan (b.1923) enrolled at Montreal's École des Beaux-arts, where few women were students. Producing bold works like the Fauvist-inspired still life on the right, Sullivan won first prize for drawing in 1941, and first prize for painting in 1943. During this period, she separately trained in classical dance, another early passion of hers. By 1945, when Sullivan graduated from the École des Beaux-arts, she was a member of the Automatistes—the avant-garde artists' group led by **Paul-Émile Borduas** (1905–1960)—and had turned her attention to the expressive possibilities of modern dance. Today, at age ninety-nine, she is remembered as a pioneering figure of the artform as well as a renowned sculptor, painter, and photographer.

Read more in ACI's

[Françoise Sullivan: Life & Work](#) by Annie Gérin

TAU LEWIS AT AGE 23



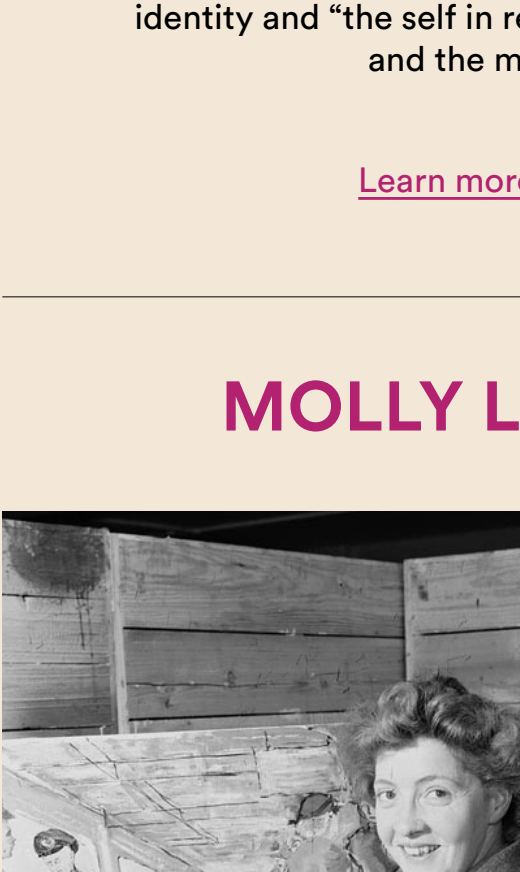
Tau Lewis, 2016, Courtesy of Canadian Art.

Tau Lewis, *Everything Scatter (Army Arrangement)*, 2016, Courtesy of Tau Lewis.

Toronto-born, Brooklyn-based artist Tau Lewis (b.1993), whose work is currently on view at the **Venice Biennale**, first rose to prominence at age twenty-two with a series of sculptures called *foraged*, in 2016. She makes captivating portraits out of found materials from Toronto, New York, and Negri, Jamaica (her family's home). Lewis's surreal assemblages honour people in her community and imagined ancestors. In the piece on the right, a casting of a face is accompanied by a paint can, a large metal chain, and a Christmas cactus, among other elements that each carry a particular history and symbolism. Cacti, for example, feature prominently in Lewis's sculptures as "a metaphor for the perseverance of Black life." Her magisterial *Symphony*, 2020–21, another expressive portrait surrounded by floral garlands, graced the rotunda of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa last year.

Learn more about Tau Lewis

ROBERT HOULE AT AGE 23



Robert Houle, with a work by Alex Janvier, at the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa, 1965, photographer unknown.

Robert Houle, *Red Is Beautiful*, 1970, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau.

When Saulteaux artist Robert Houle (b.1947) was a student at McGill University he created *Red Is Beautiful*, 1970, which is the title of his magisterial retrospective now on at **Contemporary Galleries** and organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario. The vividly coloured painting reveals Houle's distinctive approach to artmaking: combining a ground-breaking synthesis of contemporary art trends and Anishnabe traditions, including the influence of American Abstract Expressionist painters like Frank Stella (b.1936) and Barnett Newman (1905–1970) with geometric designs discovered in Carrie A. Lyford's book *Ojibwa Crafts* (1943). *Red Is Beautiful* was Houle's first work to be acquired by a museum (the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau), marking the beginning of a remarkable five-decade career.

Read more in ACI's

[Robert Houle: Life & Work](#) by Shirley Madill

ALEX COLVILLE AT AGE 20



Lieutenant D. Alex Colville, War Artist, Third Canadian Infantry Division, Germany, March 4, 1945, photograph by Lieut. Barney J. Gloster.

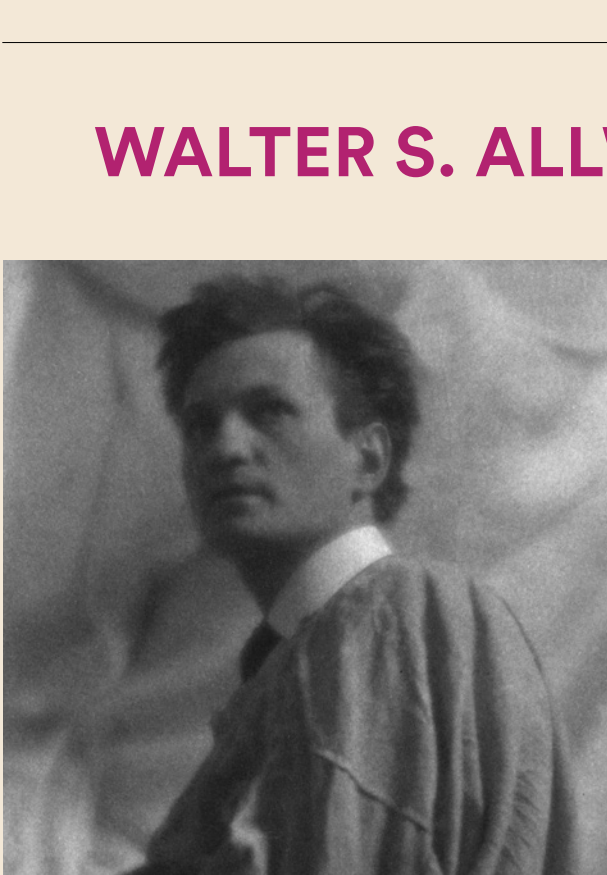
Alex Colville, *Self Portrait*, 1940, private collection.

Before Alex Colville (1920–2013) became Canada's foremost realist painter, the East Coast artist produced such Post-Impressionist works as *Self Portrait*, 1940, while studying at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick. Using uncharacteristically large daubs of paint and visible brushstrokes, the artist depicts himself with confidence and as a monumental figure. The work reveals the influence of the English Post-Impressionist artist Stanley Royle (1888–1961), who helped Colville secure a scholarship to Mount Allison University, where he also became his mentor. In the early 1950s, after serving as an official artist in the Second World War, Colville found his voice and developed the highly accurate, though often uncanny, style of depicting everyday scenes for which he became revered.

Read more in ACI's

[Alex Colville: Life & Work](#) by Ray Cronin

MERYL MCMASTER AT AGE 24



Meryl McMaster, 2012, photograph by Ian Clark.

Meryl McMaster, *Anima*, 2012, Courtesy of Meryl McMaster.

Ottawa-based artist Meryl McMaster (b.1988), a recipient of the 2018 **Scottiabank New Generation Photography Award**, began making probing and poetic photographic works that explore her mixed heritage (Pleins Cree), British, and Dutch ancestry while studying at Toronto's OCAD University. In *Anima*, 2012 (right), the artist's face and body are enveloped by colourful butterflies as she stands with eyes closed in a winter landscape, exemplifying her characteristic practice of using props, makeup, and costumes to construct otherworldly personas. The image is part of the series *In-Between Worlds*, which was the subject of McMaster's first solo exhibition at Harbourfront Centre in 2010. The show lay the foundations for her ongoing explorations of identity and "the self in relation to land, lineage, history, culture, and the more-than-human world."

Learn more about Meryl McMaster

MOLLY LAMB AT AGE 22



Second Lieutenant Molly Lamb of the Canadian Women's Army Corps, 12 July 1945, photograph by Karen Margaret Hermiston.

Molly Lamb, "Sergeant Deane," November 25, 1942, from *WW1278: The Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M., 1942–45*, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

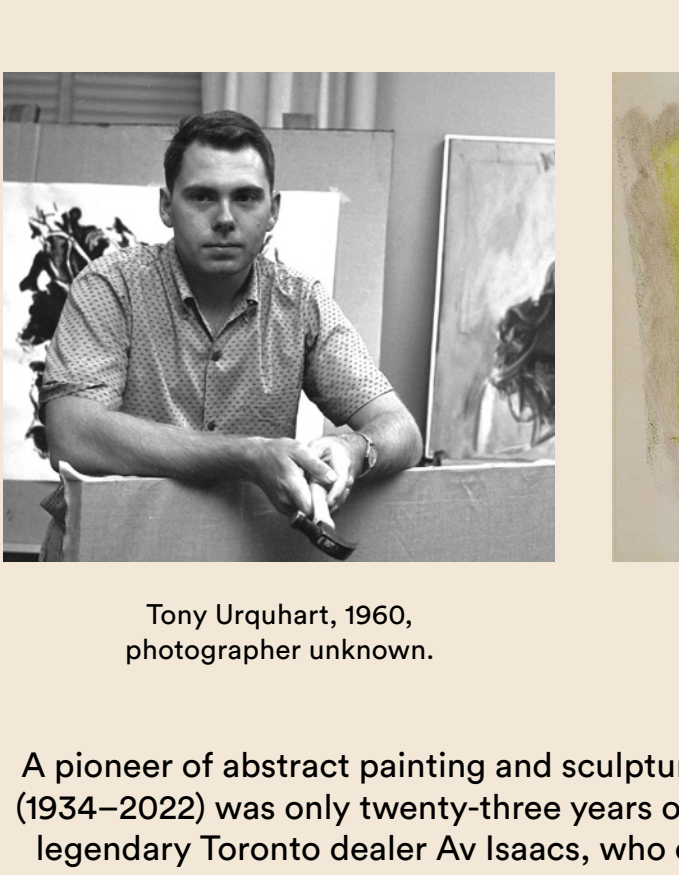
Canada's first official woman war artist, Vancouver-born Molly Lamb Bobak (1920–2014) was surrounded by talented figures in her youth—her father was the photographer and gallerist Harold Mortimer Lamb (1872–1970), and she studied with the painter Jack Shadbolt (1909–1998) at the Vancouver School of Art. In 1942, at twenty-two years of age, the young artist joined the Canadian Women's Army Corps and kept a witty journal (right) chronicling her time in Europe. The artist's work was published in the *Canadian War Artist's* magazine, a newspaper for soldiers, with her illustrations in the editorial, special supplements, and interviews. In this entry she has painted her supervisor, Sergeant Deane, who allowed her to take time off to attend mass—or was it to visit Stanley Park? She would continue to produce vibrant scenes of modern life throughout her long career.

Read more in ACI's

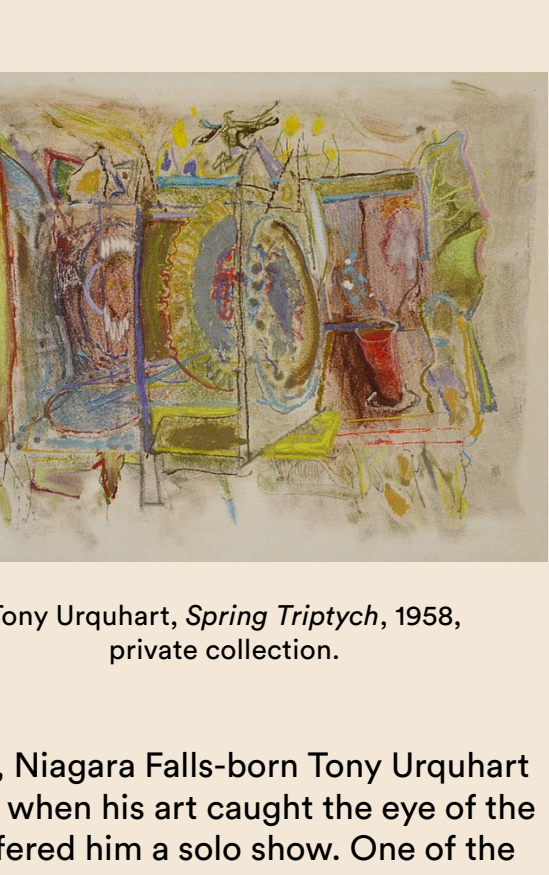
[Molly Lamb Bobak: Life & Work](#) by Michelle Gewurtz

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DARCIE BERNHARDT AT AGE 24



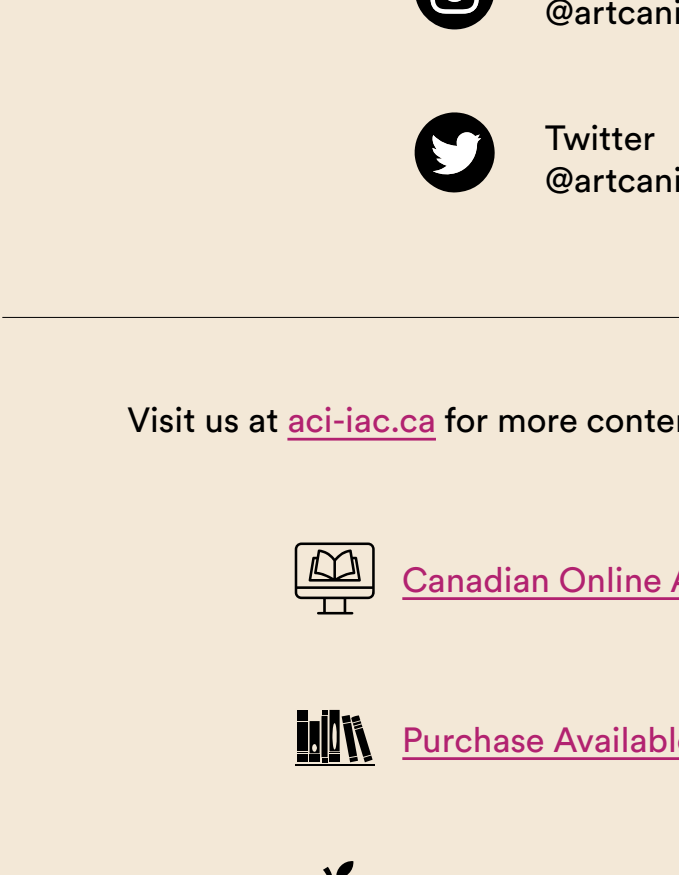
Darcie Bernhardt, n.d., photograph by Lisa Graves.

Darcie Bernhardt, *Daydreaming about Icefishing*, 2018, RBC Art Collection.

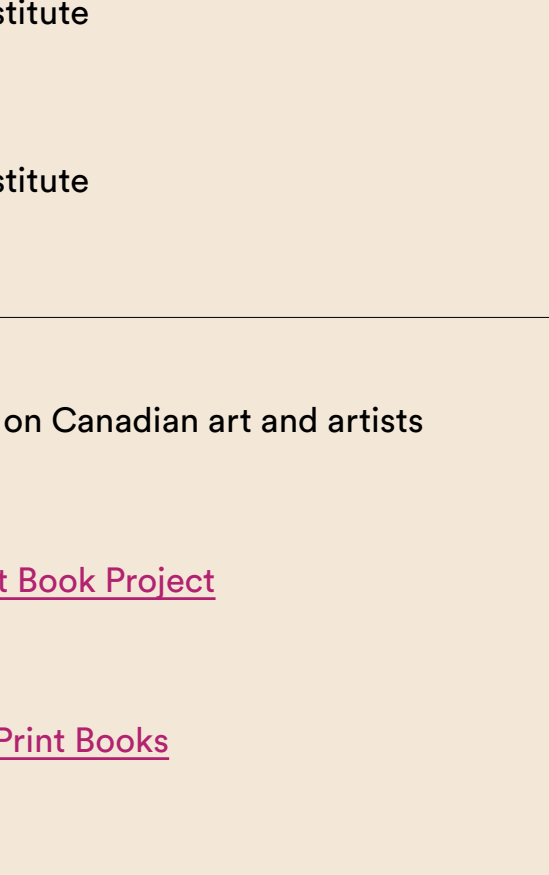
Inuvialuk/Gwich'in artist Darcie "Ouyighasiak" Bernhardt's (b.1993) vivid painting *Daydreaming about Icefishing*, 2018, created when she was a student at NSCAD University in Halifax, reveals how her experiences growing up in Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories, have remained her primary source of creative inspiration since her earliest works. Reflecting on the role of the harsh Arctic landscape in strengthening familial bonds and fostering self-transformation, Bernhardt paints tender narrative scenes from childhood as well as abstract compositions, like *Daydreaming about Icefishing*, that represent recollections of youthful activities through dazzling arrangements of colour, pattern, and line. In 2020, the Halifax-based talent received the Indigenous Artist Recognition Award from Arts Nova Scotia.

Learn more about Darcie Bernhardt

ANNA WEYANT AT AGE 24



Anna Weyant in her New York apartment, 2021, photograph by Charles Caesar.

Anna Weyant, *Maggie*, 2019, Courtesy of Anna Weyant and Gagosian.

Recently described as "a millennial Botticelli" by the **Wall Street Journal**, Calgary-born, New York-based artist Anna Weyant (b.1995) crafts ominous scenes exquisitely rendered in the style of seventeenth-century Dutch masters like Frans Hals (1582–1666) and Judith Leyster (1609–1660). Often featuring young girls engaged in what Weyant has referred to as "low-stakes trauma," the unsettling realism and cinematic quality of paintings such as *Maggie*, 2019, also recall the work of revered Canadian artist Alex Colville (1920–2013) (see above). After studying at the Rhode Island School of Design and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, Weyant quickly rose to fame in the New York art world when her first solo exhibition, *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, at 56 Henry sold out in 2019.

Learn more about Anna Weyant

WALTER S. ALLWARD AT AGE 19

Sidney Carter, *Walter S. Allward*, n.d., Walter S. Allward Collection, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives.

Walter S. Allward, Northwest Rebellion Monument, 1894–96, Queen's Park, Toronto.

The virtuoso sculptor Walter S. Allward (1874–1955), creator of the famous Canadian Vimy Memorial in France, was only nineteen years old when he won a competition to produce a statue of Peace near the newly opened Ontario Legislative Building in Queen's Park, Toronto. With no formal artistic training, he went on to complete the bronze Northwest Rebellion Monument, 1894–96 (right), which features an idealized female allegory holding up an olive branch in one hand and commanding silence with the other. Allward quickly became Toronto's most promising young sculptor. At the turn of the twentieth century Allward's expressive style drew widespread acclaim, leading to numerous commissions for public monuments before he turned his attention to the Vimy Memorial—the most significant and ambitious project of his career.

Read more in ACI's
[Walter S. Allward: Life & Work](#) by Philip Dombowsky

JOYCE WIELAND AT AGE 20

Joyce Wieland, 1950, photograph by Warren Collins.

Joyce Wieland, *Untitled*, 1950, private collection.

Joyce Wieland (1930–1998), the first living woman to earn a retrospective show at the National Gallery of Canada, began her iconic and provocative artistic career as a painter before garnering international renown for her experimental films and mixed-media works. Completed shortly after Wieland graduated from Toronto's Central Technical School, when she was twenty years old, the painting on the right demonstrates her aptitude for composition, her keen sense of colour, and a sophisticated negotiation between figuration and abstraction. The canvas is divided into four flat quadrants but also populated by several figures, a simple dog on a leash, and furniture and architectural elements that suggest depth and perspective. The division of the painting into squares and rectangles anticipates the later quilt work that was among the body of art to bring Wieland significant recognition in the 1960s.

Read more in ACI's
[Joyce Wieland: Life & Work](#) by Johanne Sloan

KAZUO NAKAMURA AT AGE 18

Kazuo Nakamura in the sculpture studio in the original Central Technical School building, c.1950, photographer unknown.

Kazuo Nakamura, *Tashme at Dusk*, July/August 1944, 1944, private collection.

When Painters Eleven member Kazuo Nakamura (1926–2002) was sixteen, he and his family were forced to leave their Vancouver home and relocate to the Tashme internment camp in British Columbia, where they were detained for two years during the Second World War along with thousands of other Japanese Canadians. After his mind-boggling mural of natural and artificial elements, Nakamura turned to art as an escape, making nighttime scenes of his surroundings. *Tashme at Dusk*, July/August 1944 (right) offers a somber view of the camp and is a skillfully rendered landscape by a young artist who would later become an acclaimed creator of abstract compositions inspired by nature, science, and mathematics.

Read more in ACI's
[Kazuo Nakamura: Life & Work](#) by John G. Hatch

TONY URQUHART AT AGE 24

Tony Urquhart, 1960, photographer unknown.

Tony Urquhart, *Spring Triptych*, 1958, private collection.

A pioneer of abstract painting and sculpture, Niagara Falls-born Tony Urquhart (1934–2022) was only twenty-three years old when his art caught the eye of the legendary Toronto dealer Av Isaacs, who offered him a solo show. One of the artist's earliest pieces, *Spring Triptych*, 1958, is a lively composition featuring delicate lines, vibrant colours, and abstract shapes that explode off the page. Urquhart was influenced by the bold experimentation of the American Abstract Expressionists, whom he discovered during his studies at the Albright Art School and the State University of New York, Buffalo. In the mid-1960s, he began creating his signature box sculptures, which invite the viewer to experience painting in the round. The panels suggested in this early triptych seem to almost predict this future direction in the great artist's work.

Learn more about Tony Urquhart

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PAST NEWSLETTERS

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