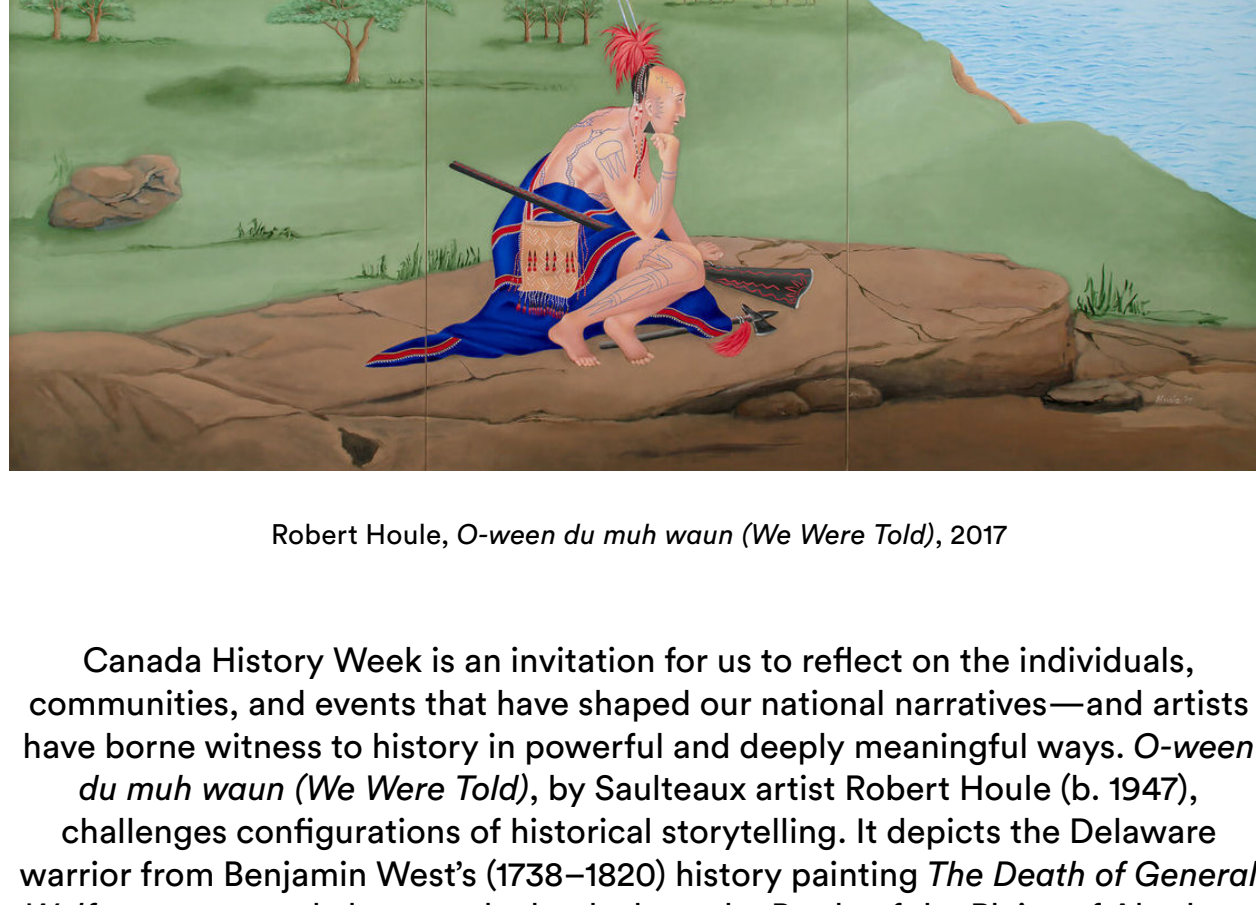


# CANADA HISTORY WEEK 2022

## ARTISTS WHO BEAR WITNESS

5 visionary perspectives on community, resistance, and critical contemplation.



Robert Houle, *O-ween du muh waun (We Were Told)*, 2017

Canada History Week is an invitation for us to reflect on the individuals, communities, and events that have shaped our national narratives—and artists have borne witness to history in powerful and deeply meaningful ways. *O-ween du muh waun (We Were Told)*, by Saulteaux artist Robert Houle (b. 1947), challenges configurations of historical storytelling. It depicts the Delaware warrior from Benjamin West's (1738–1820) history painting *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, and it honours Indigenous perspectives on the event. As the creations we are featuring this week reveal, there are infinite ways of considering the past from the perspective of the present, and we hope these works inspire discussion, engagement, and reflection this Canada History Week.

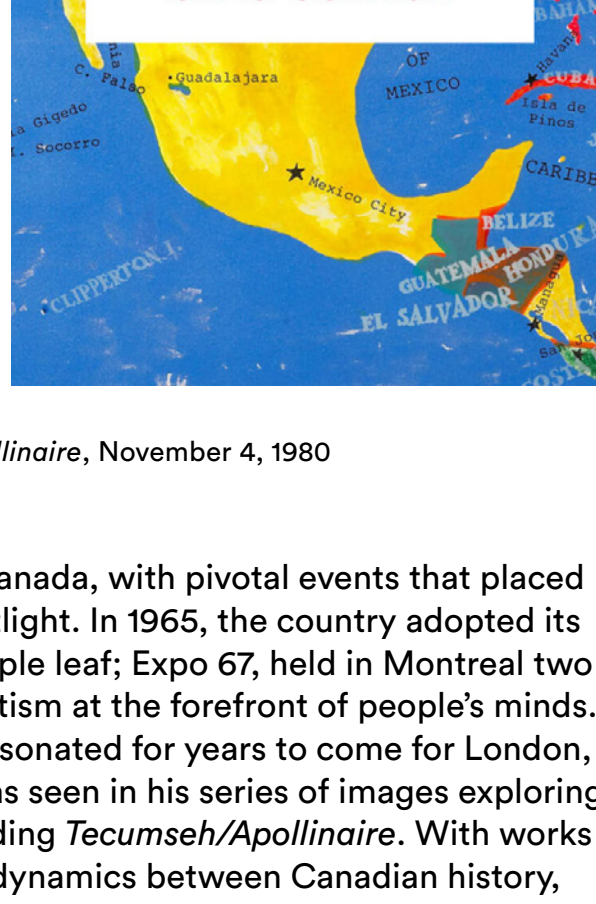
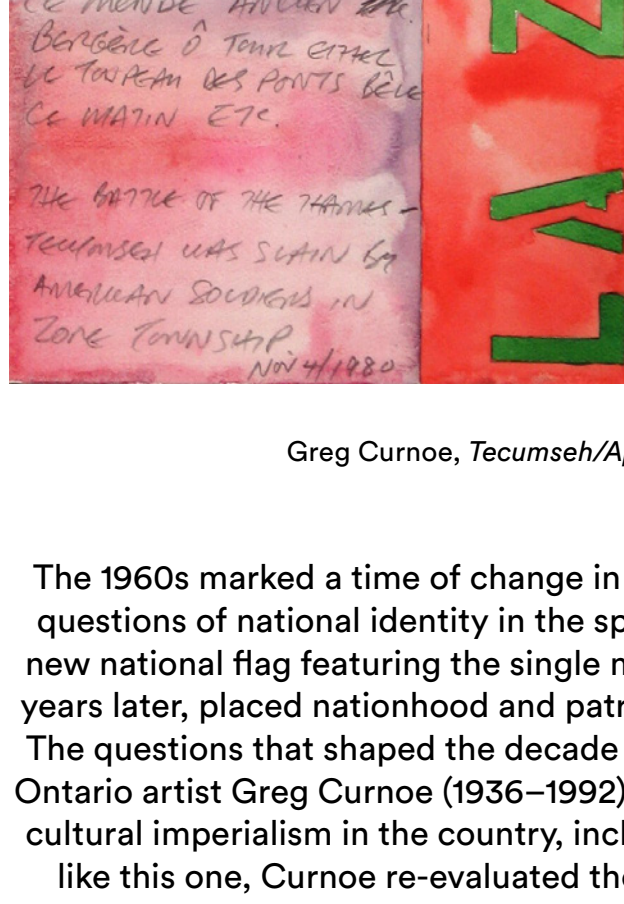
If you are interested in facilitating classroom conversations about decolonization, see our Teacher Resource Guide inspired by the work of Robert Houle [here](#).

Watch a learning video about Robert Houle [here](#).

— The Art Canada Institute Education Team

### AVENUES TO EXPLORE

## Questioning National Identity



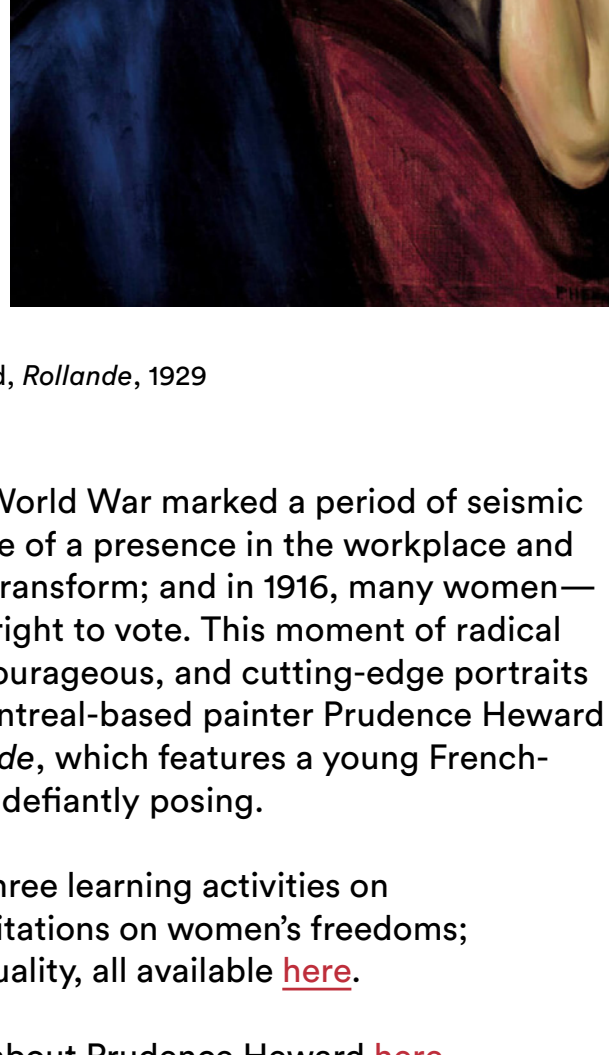
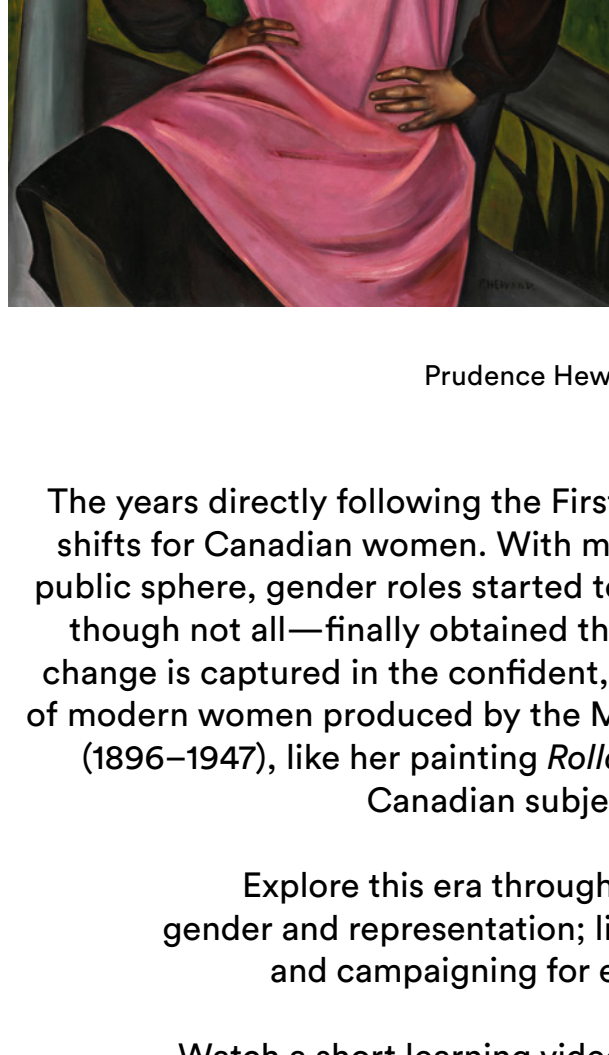
Greg Curnoe, *Tecomseh/Apollinaire*, November 4, 1980

The 1960s marked a time of change in Canada, with pivotal events that placed questions of national identity in the spotlight. In 1965, the country adopted its new national flag featuring the single maple leaf; Expo 67, held in Montreal two years later, placed nationhood and patriotism at the forefront of people's minds. The questions that shaped the decade resonated for years to come for London, Ontario artist Greg Curnoe (1936–1992), as seen in his series of images exploring cultural imperialism in the country, including *Tecomseh/Apollinaire*. With works like this one, Curnoe re-evaluated the dynamics between Canadian history, national identity, and the legacy of colonial presence in Canada.

Download our Teacher Resource Guide on Greg Curnoe and Canadian Identity [here](#).

Watch a short learning video about Greg Curnoe [here](#).

## Celebrating Canadian Women



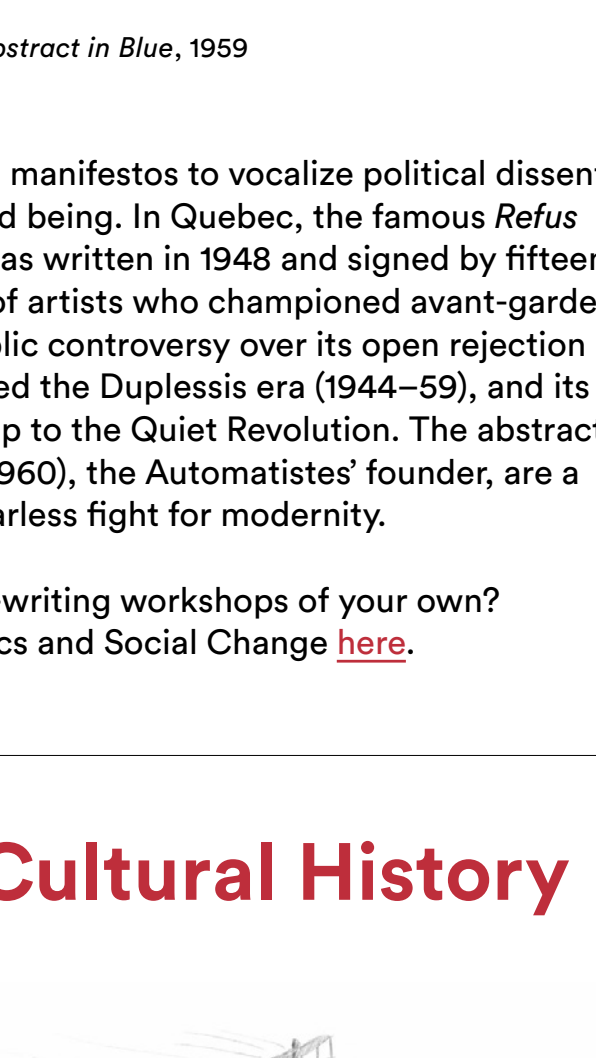
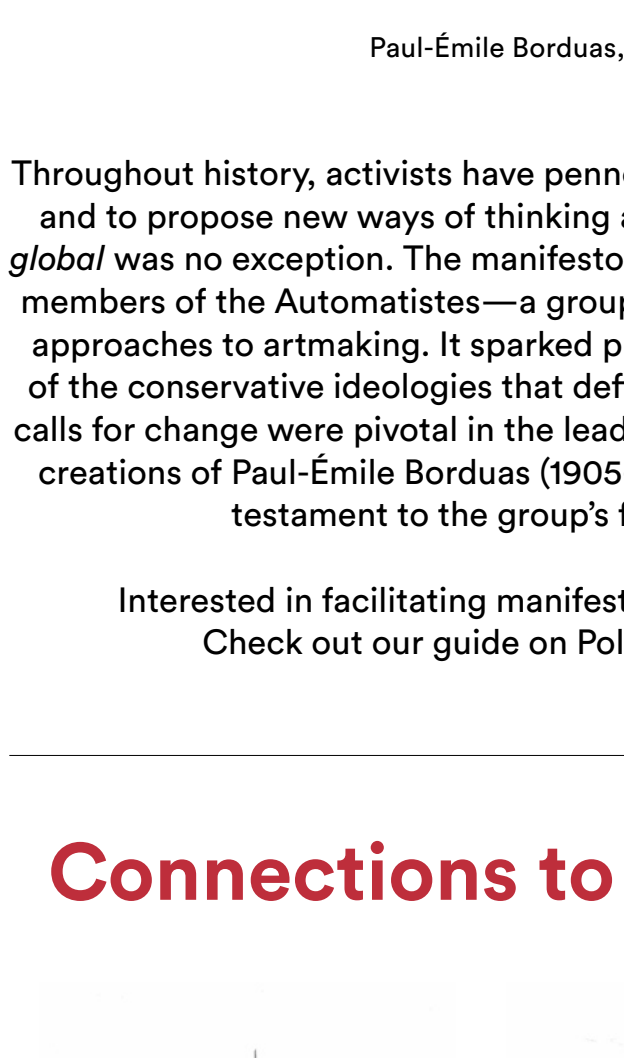
Prudence Heward, *Rollande*, 1929

The years directly following the First World War marked a period of seismic shifts for Canadian women. With more of a presence in the workplace and public sphere, gender roles started to transform; and in 1916, many women—though not all—finally obtained the right to vote. This moment of radical change is captured in the confident, courageous, and cutting-edge portraits of modern women produced by the Montreal-based painter Prudence Heward (1896–1947), like her painting *Rollande*, which features a young French-Canadian subject defiantly posing.

Explore this era through three learning activities on gender and representation; limitations on women's freedoms; and campaigning for equality, all available [here](#).

Watch a short learning video about Prudence Heward [here](#).

## Revolutionary Shifts

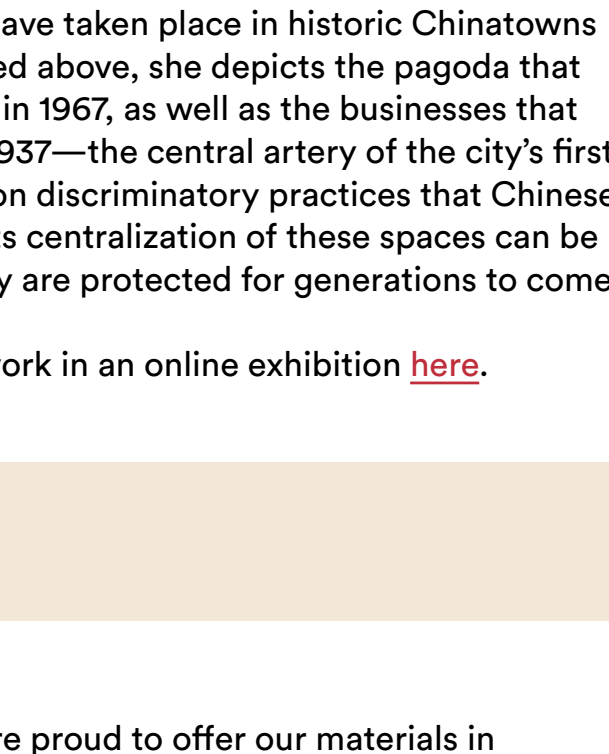
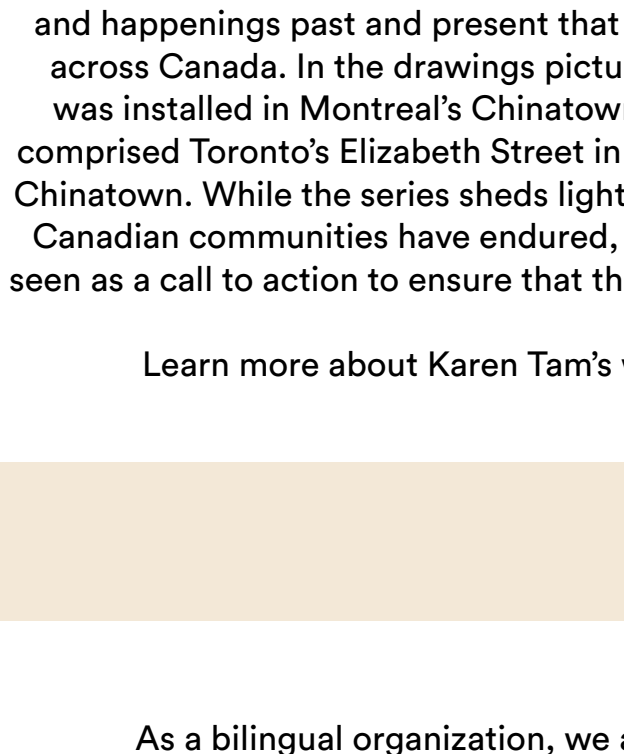


Paul-Émile Borduas, *Abstract in Blue*, 1959

Throughout history, activists have penned manifestos to vocalize political dissent and to propose new ways of thinking and being. In Quebec, the famous *Refus global* was no exception. The manifesto was written in 1948 and signed by fifteen members of the Automatistes—a group of artists who championed avant-garde approaches to artmaking. It sparked public controversy over its open rejection of the conservative ideologies that defined the Duplessis era (1944–59), and its calls for change were pivotal in the lead-up to the Quiet Revolution. The abstract creations of Paul-Émile Borduas (1905–1960), the Automatistes' founder, are a testament to the group's fearless fight for modernity.

Interested in facilitating manifesto-writing workshops of your own? Check out our guide on Politics and Social Change [here](#).

## Connections to Cultural History



Karen Tam, *Le Parc de la Pagode (Montréal)*, 1978, 2020

Karen Tam, *56-58 Elizabeth St., Toronto*, 1937, 2020

“How do we remember, represent, support, and simultaneously deny the erasures of our stories, spaces, and community?” This question guides the work of contemporary artist Karen Tam (b.1977), who investigates moments and happenings past and present that have taken place in historic Chinatowns across Canada. In the drawings pictured above, she depicts the pagoda that was installed in Montreal's Chinatown in 1967, as well as the businesses that comprised Toronto's Elizabeth Street in 1937—the central artery of the city's first Chinatown. While the series sheds light on discriminatory practices that Chinese Canadian communities have endured, its centralization of these spaces can be seen as a call to action to ensure that they are protected for generations to come.

Learn more about Karen Tam's work in an online exhibition [here](#).

As a bilingual organization, we are proud to offer our materials in both French and English, including this newsletter. Use the sign-up links below to receive emails in your preferred language.

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## About the Art Canada Institute

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](#)

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Image Credits: [1] Robert Houle, *O-ween du muh waun (We Were Told)*, 2017, oil on canvas, triptych, 213.4 x 365.8 cm. Collection of the Confederation Centre Art Gallery, Charlottetown, commissioned with the A.G. and Eliza Jane Ramsden Endowment Fund, 2017. Courtesy of the artist. © Robert Houle. [2] Greg Curnoe, *Tecomseh/Apollinaire*, November 4, 1980, watercolour and pencil on paper, 23 x 18 cm. Private collection. Courtesy of Thielsen Gallery, London. © Estate of Greg Curnoe / SODRAC (2016). [3] Prudence Heward, *Rollande*, 1929, oil on canvas, 139.9 x 101.7 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, no. 3709. [4] Paul-Émile Borduas, *Abstract in Blue*, 1959, oil on canvas, 92.1 x 73.4 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, gift of Sam and Ayala Zacks, Toronto, 1961. © Estate of Paul-Émile Borduas / SODRAC (2014). Photo © AGO. [5] Karen Tam, *Le Parc de la Pagode (Montréal)*, 1978, 2020, from the Ruinscape Drawings series, pencil on photocopy paper, 27.9 x 21.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Hugues Charbonneau, Montreal. Photo credit: Karen Tam. [6] Karen Tam, *56-58 Elizabeth St., Toronto*, 1937, 2020, from the Ruinscape Drawings series, pencil on Strathmore, 22.9 x 30.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Hugues Charbonneau, Montreal. Photo credit: Karen Tam.