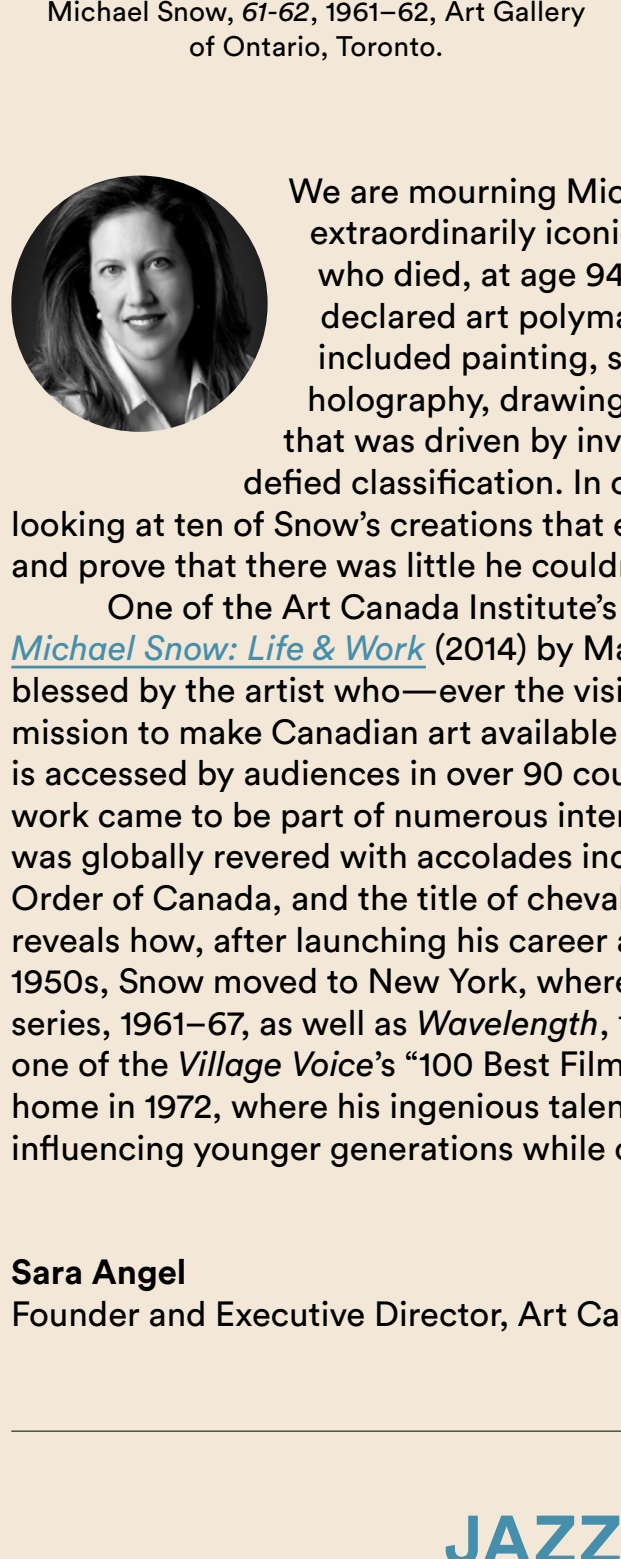


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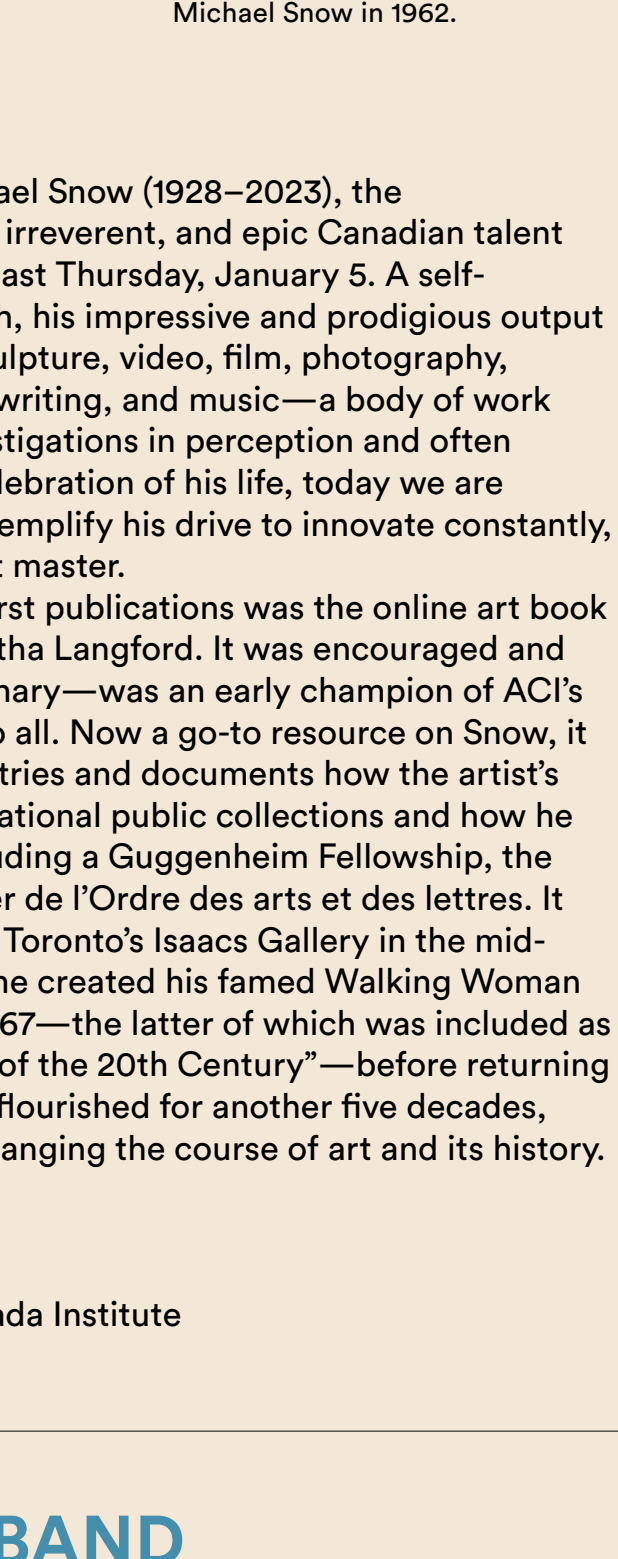
REMEMBERING MICHAEL SNOW
HIS ICONIC, IRREVERENT, AND EPIC TALENT

"My paintings are done by a filmmaker, my sculpture by a musician, my films by a painter, my music by a filmmaker, my paintings by a sculptor, my sculpture by a filmmaker, my films by a musician, my music by a sculptor... who sometimes all work together."

~Michael Snow, 1967



Michael Snow, 61-62, 1961-62, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



Michael Snow in 1962.



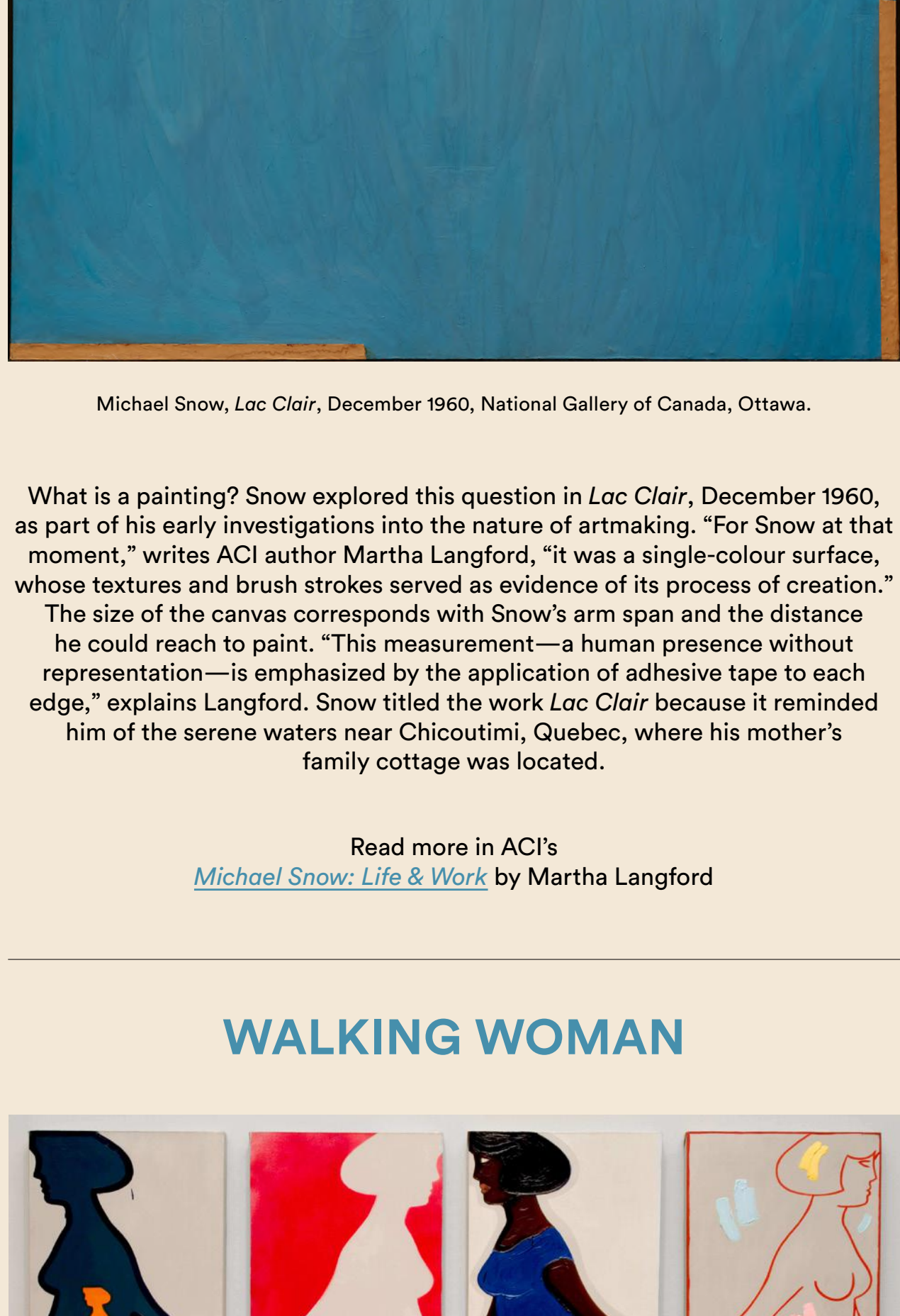
We are mourning Michael Snow (1928–2023), the extraordinarily iconic, irreverent, and epic Canadian talent who died, at age 94, last Thursday, January 5. A self-declared art polymath, his impressive and prodigious output included painting, sculpture, video, film, photography, holography, drawing, writing, and music—a body of work that was driven by investigations in perception and often defied classification. In celebration of his life, today we are looking at ten of Snow's creations that exemplify his drive to innovate constantly, and prove that there was little he couldn't master.

One of the Art Canada Institute's first publications was the online art book *Michael Snow: Life & Work* (2014) by Martha Langford. It was encouraged and blessed by the artist who—ever the visionary—was an early champion of ACI's mission to make Canadian art available to all. Now a go-to resource on Snow, it is accessed by audiences in over 90 countries and documents how the artist's work came to be part of numerous international public collections and how he was globally revered with accolades including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Order of Canada, and the title of chevalier de l'Ordre des arts et des lettres. It reveals how, after launching his career at Toronto's Isaacs Gallery in the mid-1950s, Snow moved to New York, where he created his famed *Walking Woman* series, 1961–67, as well as *Wavelength*, 1966—both of which were included as one of the *Village Voice*'s "100 Best Films of the 20th Century"—before returning home in 1972, where his ingenious talent flourished for another five decades, influencing younger generations while changing the course of art and its history.

Sara Angel

Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

JAZZ BAND



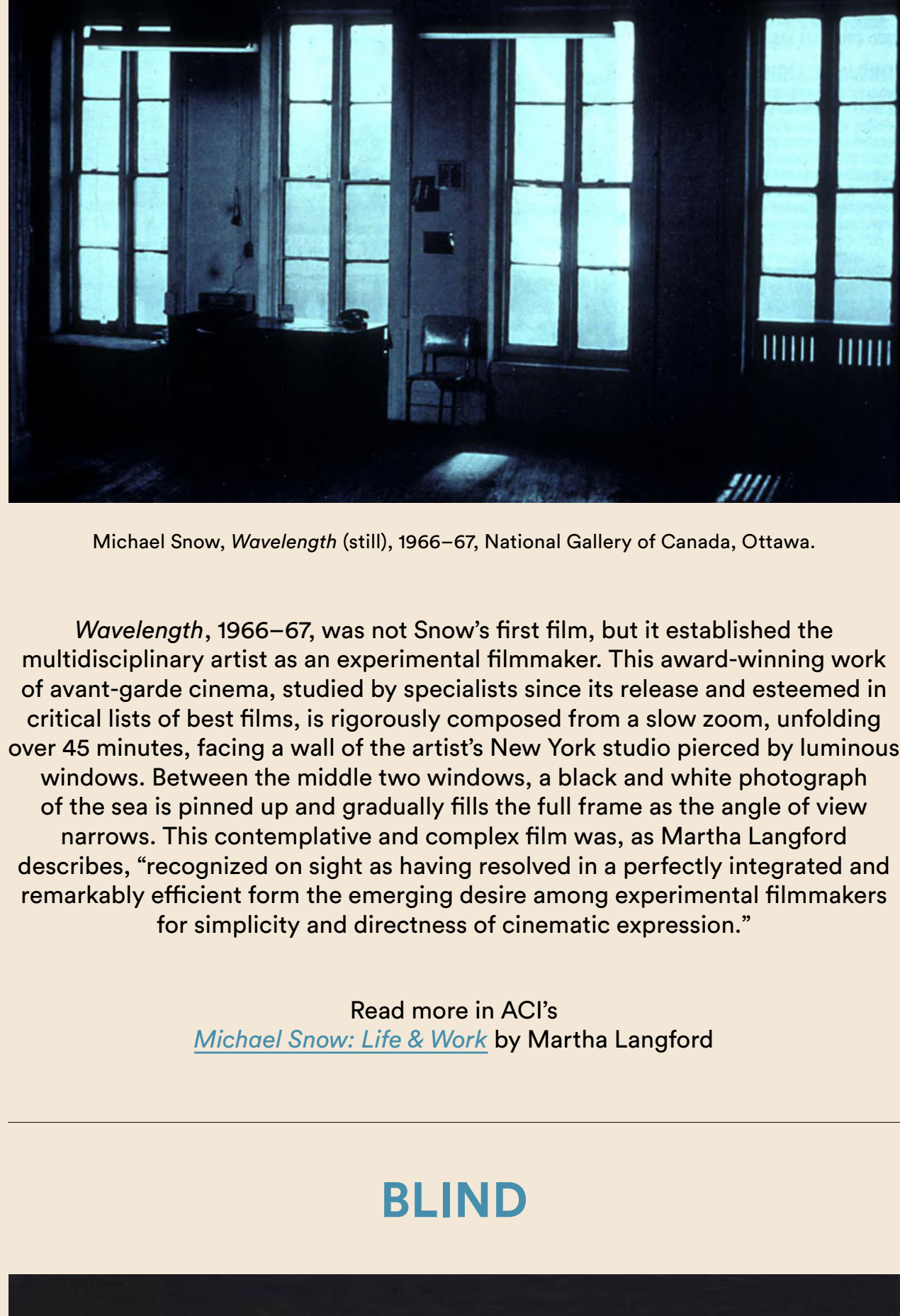
Michael Snow, *Jazz Band*, 1947, Collection of the Estate of Michael Snow.

Music and visual art were of equal importance to Snow, an accomplished pianist whose first surviving work, *Jazz Band*, 1947, captures the vitality of a live performance. The experimental nature of jazz, particularly the freedom it offers to revise and reinvent, is reflected in the Cubist elements of this early painting. In the upper right, Snow deconstructed and reassembled the two musicians' faces to embody multiple viewpoints. Additionally, all the elements in the composition are situated on a single plane so that the figures and instruments overlap. The work's Cubist qualities underscore and echo the collaborative and dynamic performance of the jazz band.

Read more in ACI's

[Early Snow: Michael Snow 1947–1962](#)

LAC CLAIR



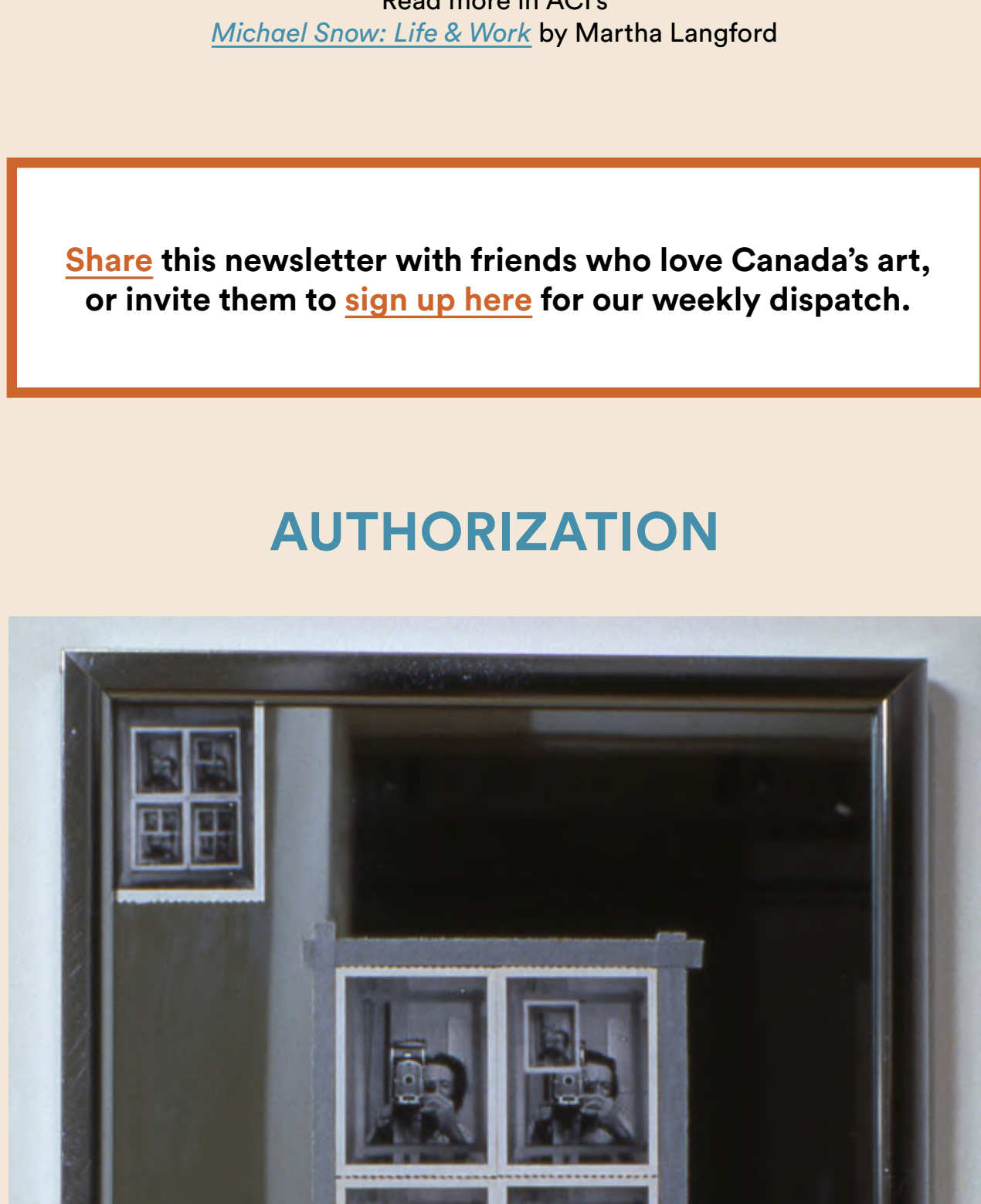
Michael Snow, *Lac Clair*, December 1960, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

What is a painting? Snow explored this question in *Lac Clair*, December 1960, as part of his early investigations into the nature of artmaking. "For Snow at that moment," writes ACI author Martha Langford, "it was a single-colour surface, whose textures and brush strokes served as evidence of its process of creation." The size of the canvas corresponds with Snow's arm span and the distance he could reach to paint. "This measurement—a human presence without representation—is emphasized by the application of adhesive tape to each edge," explains Langford. Snow titled the work *Lac Clair* because it reminded him of the serene waters near Chicoutimi, Quebec, where his mother's family cottage was located.

Read more in ACI's

[Michael Snow: Life & Work](#) by Martha Langford

WALKING WOMAN



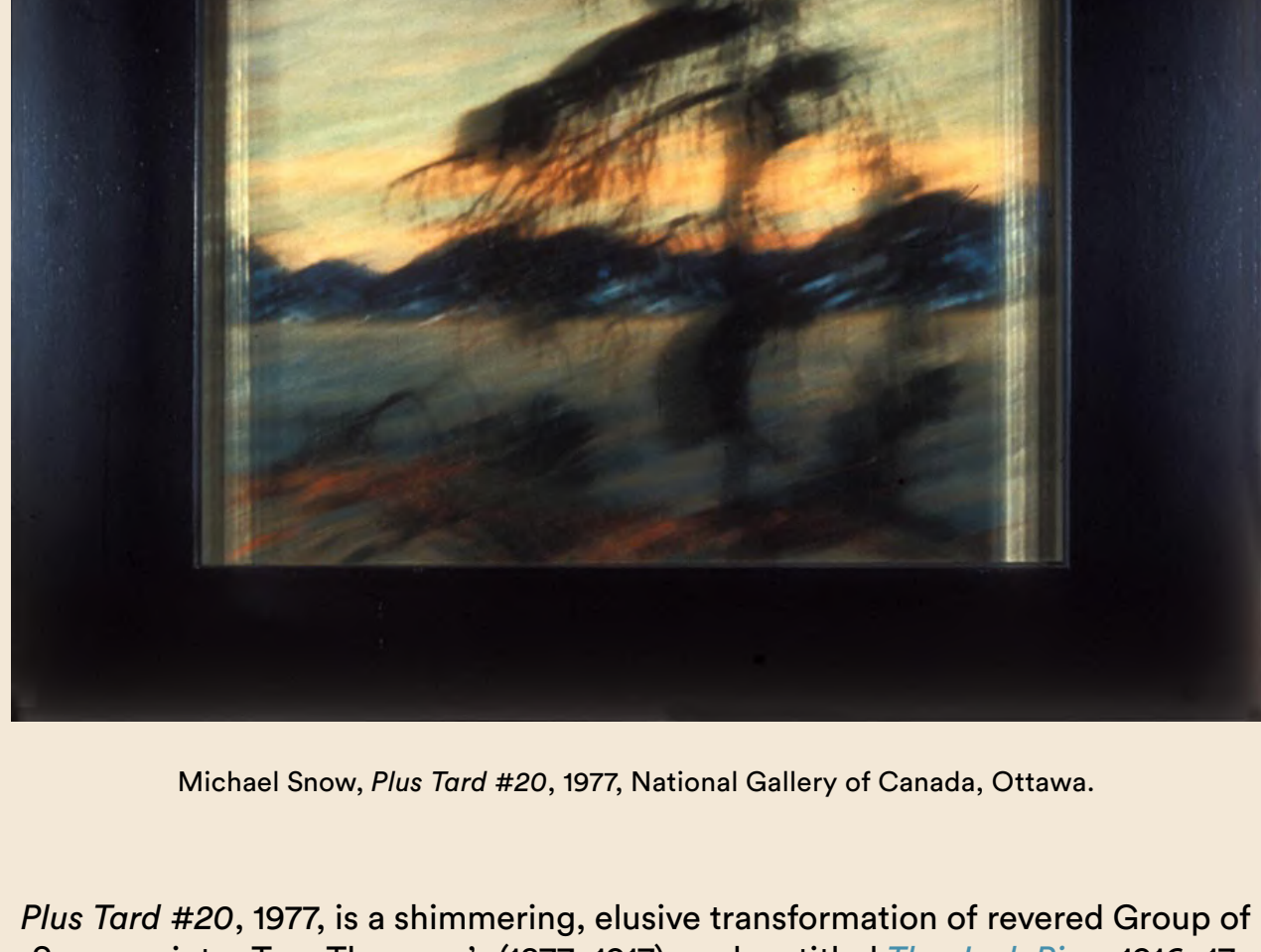
Michael Snow, *Four Grey Panels and Four Figures*, 1963, from the *Walking Woman* series, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Four Grey Panels and Four Figures, 1963, is one of the many expressions of Snow's famed and extensive *Walking Woman* series that began in 1961. Based on the motif of a female silhouette in motion, the form became an emblematic and iconic feature of his work. Like the Pop and Minimalist artists of the time, Snow dialogues with popular culture by creating his own trademark with infinite artistic possibilities. The *Walking Woman* would soon appear in many of Snow's art formats including sculpture, photography, and film. He produced nearly 200 individual works on the theme until 1967, in addition to the 800 ephemeral silhouettes dispersed in the public space that constitute so many now-lost occurrences of this famous icon.

Read more in ACI's

[Michael Snow: Life & Work](#) by Martha Langford

WAVELENGTH



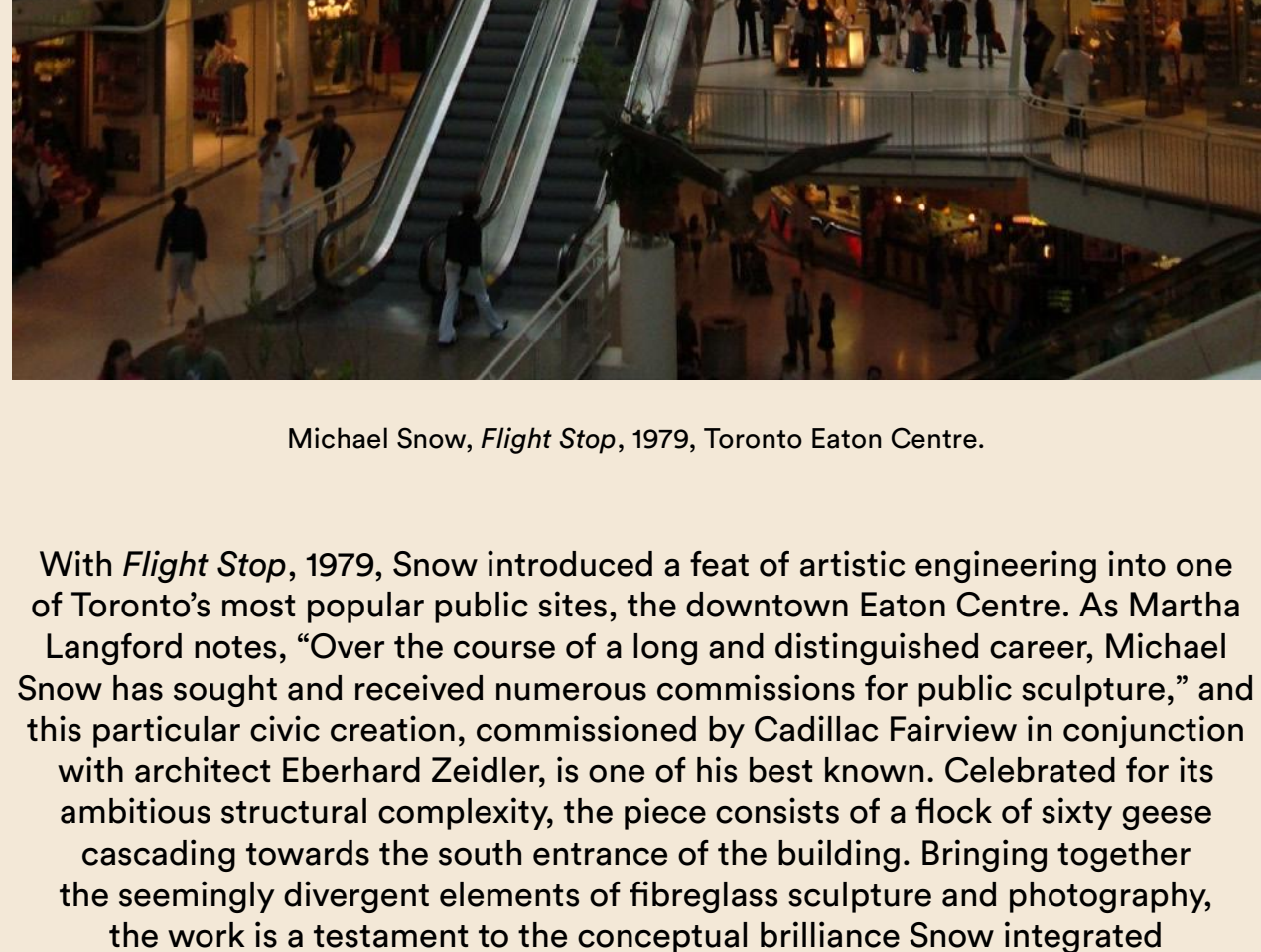
Michael Snow, *Wavelength* (still), 1966–67, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Wavelength, 1966–67, was not Snow's first film, but it established the multidisciplinary artist as an experimental filmmaker. This award-winning work of avant-garde cinema, studied by specialists since its release, unfolded in critical lists of best films, is rigorously composed from a slow zoom, unfolding over 45 minutes, facing a wall of the artist's New York studio pierced by luminous windows. Between the middle two windows, a black and white photograph of the sea is pinned up and gradually fills the full frame as the angle of view narrows. This contemplative and complex film was, as Martha Langford describes, "recognized on sight as having resolved in a perfectly integrated and remarkably efficient form the emerging desire among experimental filmmakers for simplicity and directness of cinematic expression."

Read more in ACI's

[Michael Snow: Life & Work](#) by Martha Langford

BLIND



Michael Snow, *Blind*, 1968, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Snow made a range of sculptures starting in 1956. Among them, *Blind*, 1968, is one of his most famed works. An experiential piece, *Blind* invites the viewers to walk—as though in a maze—between four fence-like mesh panels that comprise the work. Those who stand outside of the structure see the blurred figures of those inside it, an effect Snow compared to looking into an out-of-focus camera. In part, the sculpture's title is a reference to the artist's father, who went blind. But there is more: as Martha Langford writes, "A blind is a shelter for concealing hunts to see. Snow the punster puts all these meanings (and others) into serious play with this performative work of sculpture."

Read more in ACI's

[Michael Snow: Life & Work](#) by Martha Langford

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AUTHORIZATION



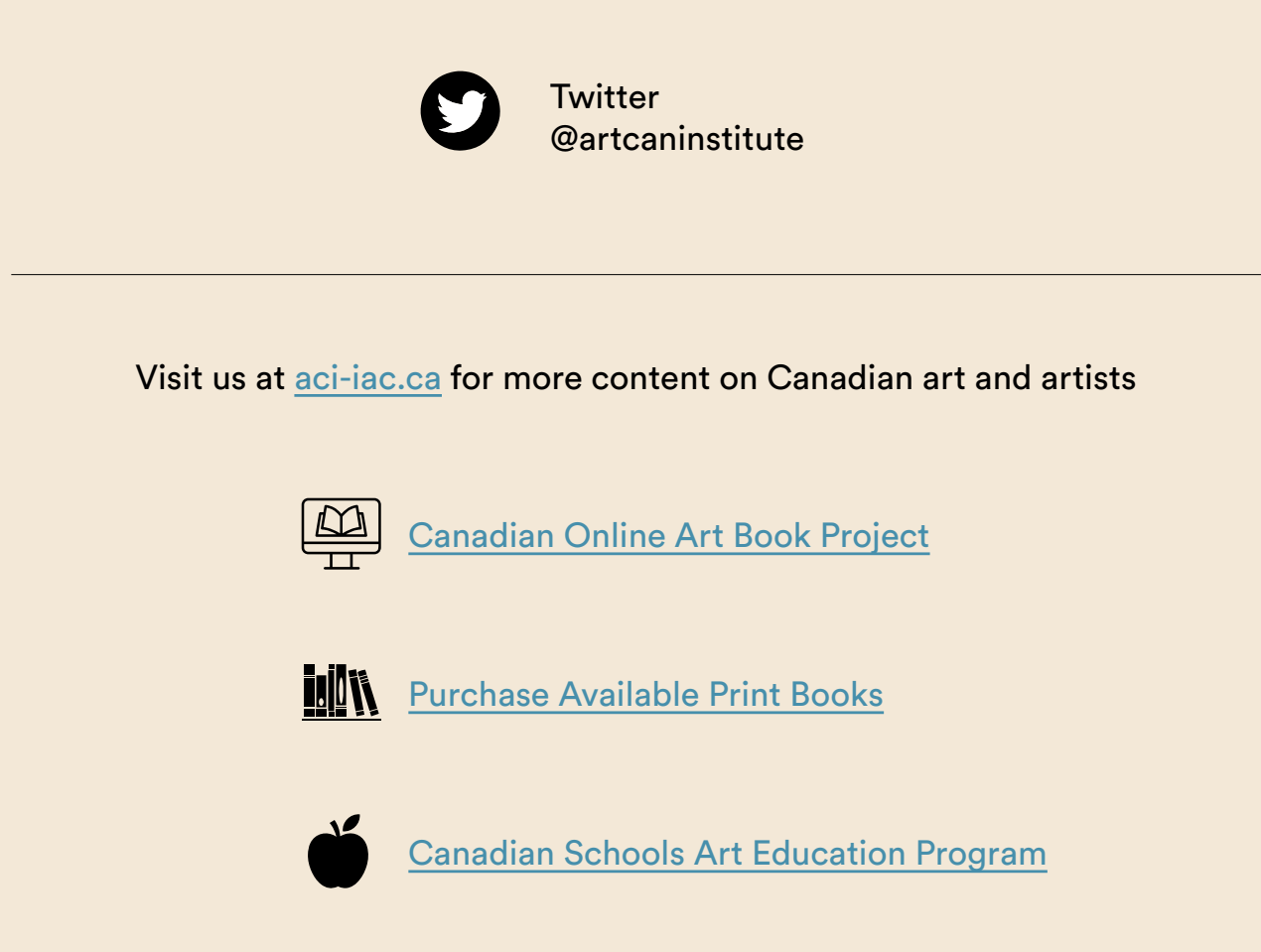
Michael Snow, *Authorization*, 1969, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

While Snow's *Lac Clair*, 1960, is a painting about painting, *Authorization*, 1969, is a photograph that Snow created to comment on the photographic act. Onto the surface of a mirror, he sequentially affixed five Polaroid self-portraits, which captured his own and his camera's reflection in the very same mirror. In this piece, Snow and the apparatus become increasingly obscured as each photograph incorporates an image of the portrait that came before, until the subject is entirely subsumed by its representation. A conceptual tour de force, *Authorization* was the first photographic work acquired by the National Gallery of Canada for its collection of contemporary art.

Read more in ACI's

[Michael Snow: Life & Work](#) by Martha Langford

PLUS TARD #20



Michael Snow, *Plus Tard #20*, 1977, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Plus Tard #20, 1977, is a shimmering, elusive transformation of revered Group of Seven painter Tom Thomson's (1877–1917) work entitled *The Jack Pine*, 1916–17. Snow created the piece as part of a series of photographic adaptations at the National Gallery of Canada, for a room that was dedicated to Thomson and the Group. The pure colours, distinctive brushstrokes, and interesting surfaces of the paintings were intriguing to the artist, who challenged himself to capture these material qualities with a camera rather than brush and canvas.

Read more in ACI's

[Michael Snow: Life & Work](#) by Martha Langford

FLIGHT STOP

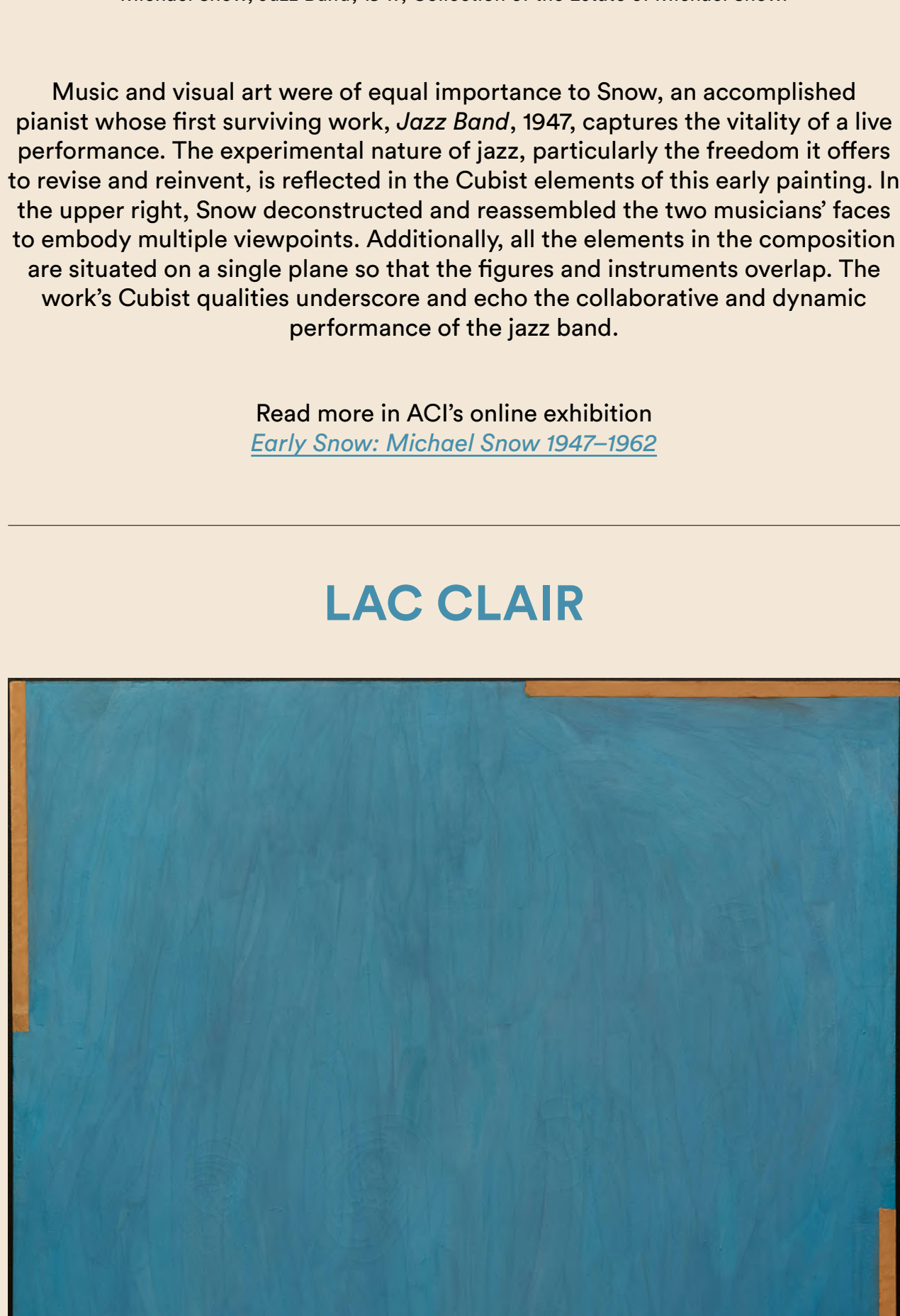
Michael Snow, *Flight Stop*, 1979, Toronto Eaton Centre.

With *Flight Stop*, 1979, Snow introduced a feat of artistic engineering into one of Toronto's most popular public sites, the downtown Eaton Centre. As Martha Langford notes, "Over the course of a long and distinguished career, Michael Snow has sought and received numerous commissions for public sculpture," and this particular civic creation, commissioned by Cadillac Fairview in conjunction with architect Eberhard Zeidler, is one of his best known. Celebrated for its ambitious structural complexity, the piece consists of a flock of sixty geese cascading towards the south entrance of the building. Bringing together the seemingly divergent elements of fiberglass sculpture and photography, the work is a testament to the conceptual brilliance Snow integrated into storied public spaces.

Read more in ACI's

[Michael Snow: Life & Work](#) by Martha Langford

STILL LIFE IN 8 CALLS



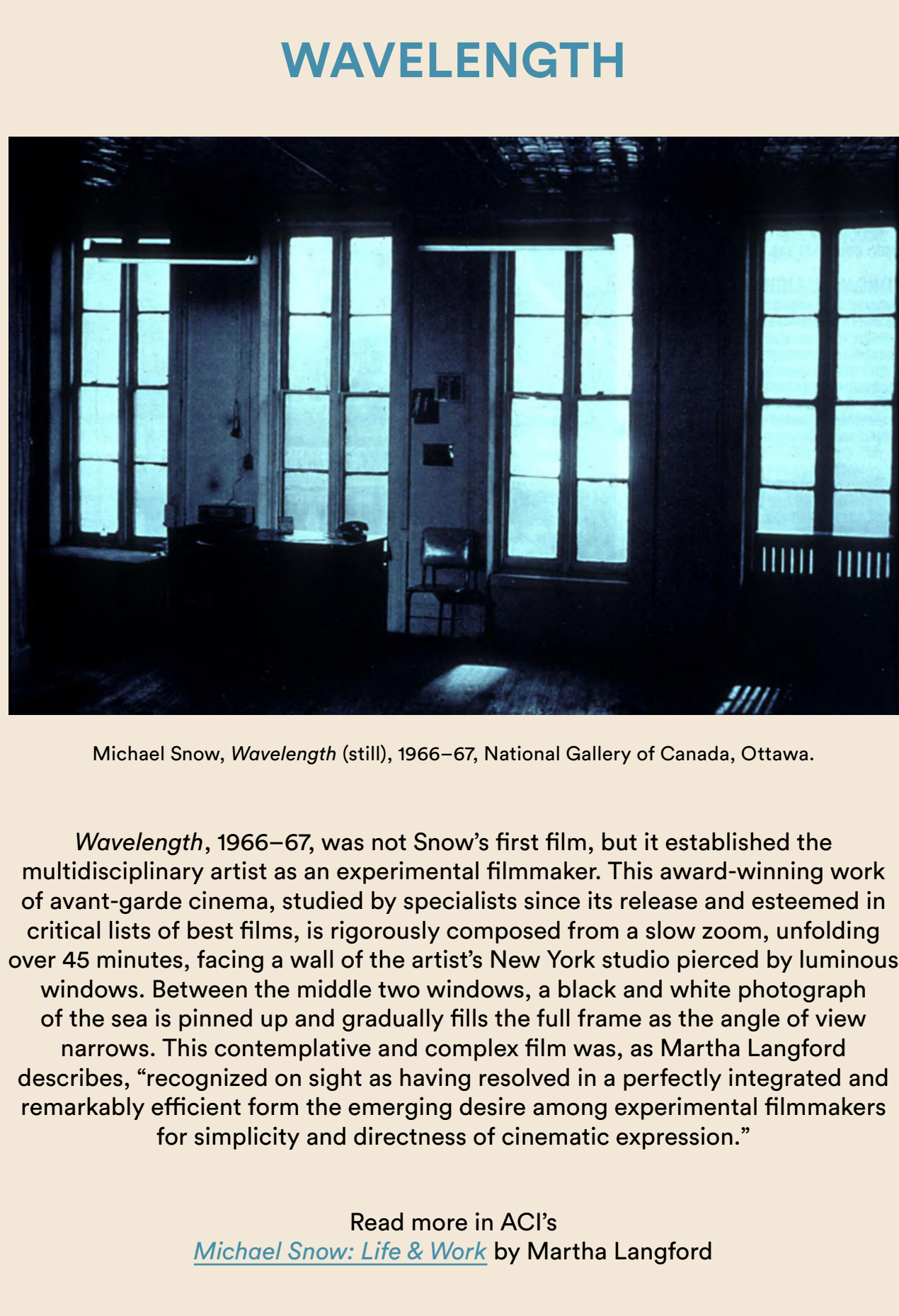
Michael Snow, *Still Life in 8 Calls*, 1985, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

In the mid-1980s Snow began working in holography. The installation *Still Life in 8 Calls*, 1985, combined furniture with a series of eight holographic still lifes, each featuring the same assemblage of everyday objects—including a rotary phone, cup and saucer, and lamp. The scene changes in each successive hologram, with the items portrayed as flying up into the air and breaking apart. Martha Langford describes the subject of this sequential viewing experience as a "traditional still life that becomes enchanted and unruly." Snow was drawn to holography's still balance of "ghostliness" with realism, making it an innovative medium for his explorations of perception and representation.

Read more in ACI's

[Michael Snow: Life & Work](#) by Martha Langford

THE VIEWING OF SIX NEW WORKS



Michael Snow, *The Viewing of Six New Works*, 2012, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

In this 2012 work, six projected colour fields of light stretch, shift, and contract on the gallery wall. The single-colour shapes are reminiscent of Snow's early paintings, including *Lac Clair*, 1960, but the shape-shifting movements of the later work extend his ongoing interest in colour and surface to an exploration of geometry and perception. *The Viewing of Six New Works* was created using 3D animation techniques: Snow imagined looking at images on a wall while touchscreen-capture software recorded his eye movements. With this creative process embedding Snow as a spectator of the work alongside the viewer, the ephemeral, perpetually shifting forms become a dynamic encounter between audience, artist, and artwork.

Read more in ACI's

[Michael Snow: Life & Work](#) by Martha Langford

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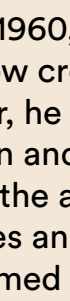
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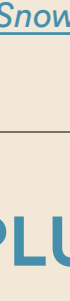
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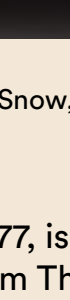


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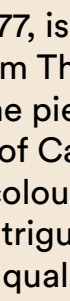


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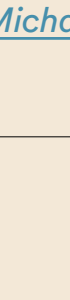
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