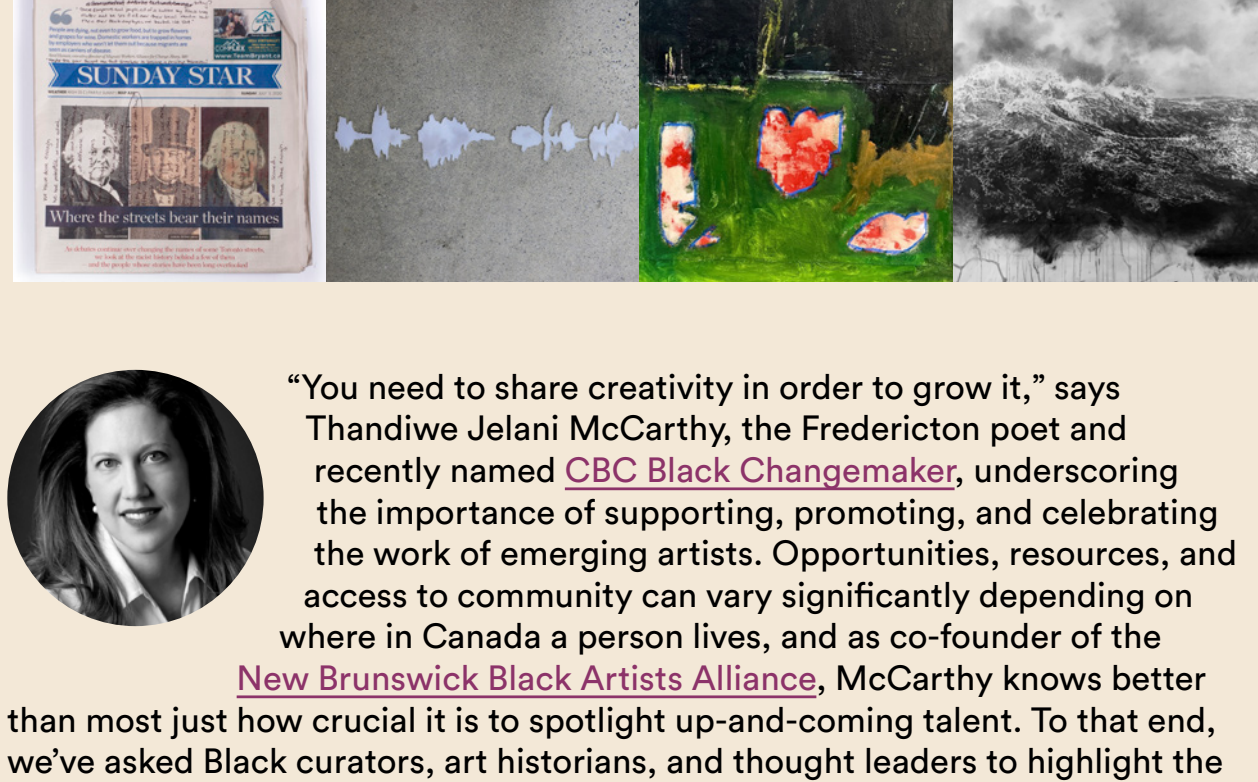


FEBRUARY 24, 2023

RISING UP

7 BLACK ARTISTS TO WATCH

In celebration of Black History Month, we talked to those in the know about rising talents whose careers you want to watch.



"You need to share creativity in order to grow it," says Thandiwe Jelani McCarthy, the Fredericton poet and recently named **CBC Black Changemaker**, underscoring the importance of supporting, promoting, and celebrating the work of emerging artists. Opportunities, resources, and access to community can vary significantly depending on where in Canada a person lives, and as co-founder of the **New Brunswick Black Artists Alliance**, McCarthy knows better than most just how crucial it is to spotlight up-and-coming talent. To that end, we've asked Black curators, art historians, and thought leaders to highlight the work of emerging Black Canadian artists they love.

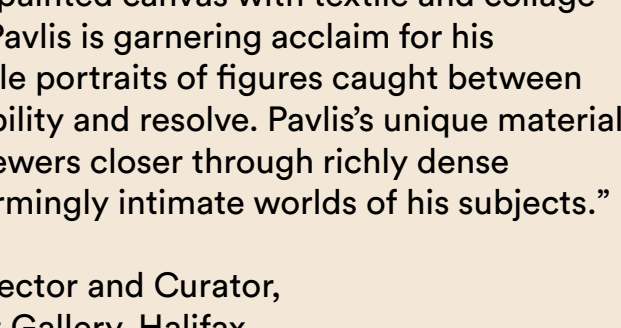
Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

PRESTON PAVLIS

A Halifax-based artist who works with painting, drawing, and textiles



Preston Pavlis, photograph by Michelle Schultz.



Preston Pavlis, *your skin behind the lattice*, 2019, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



"Merging unstretched painted canvas with textile and collage techniques, Preston Pavlis is garnering acclaim for his compelling large-scale portraits of figures caught between moments of vulnerability and resolve. Pavlis's unique material explorations draw viewers closer through richly dense surfaces and the disarmingly intimate worlds of his subjects."

—Pamela Edmonds, Director and Curator, Dalhousie University Art Gallery, Halifax

[Learn more about Preston Pavlis](#)

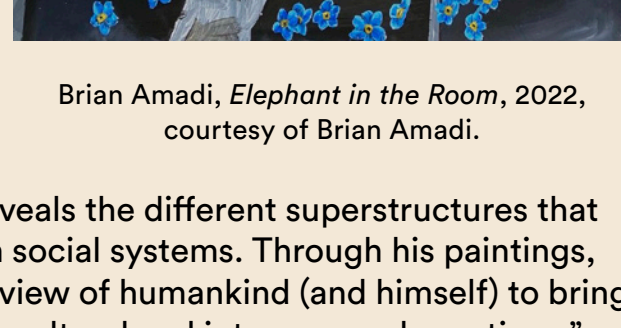
[Learn more about Pamela Edmonds](#)

BRIAN AMADI

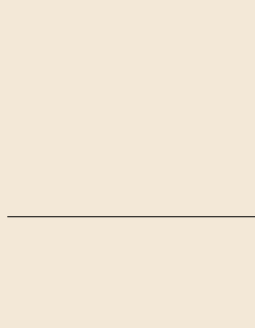
A St. John's-based painter who works in a semi-realistic and Surrealistic style



Brian Amadi, photograph by Brian Amadi.



Brian Amadi, *Elephant in the Room*, 2022, courtesy of Brian Amadi.



"Brian Amadi's work reveals the different superstructures that influence our modern social systems. Through his paintings, he presents a mirror view of humankind (and himself) to bring awareness to diverse cultural and interpersonal practices."

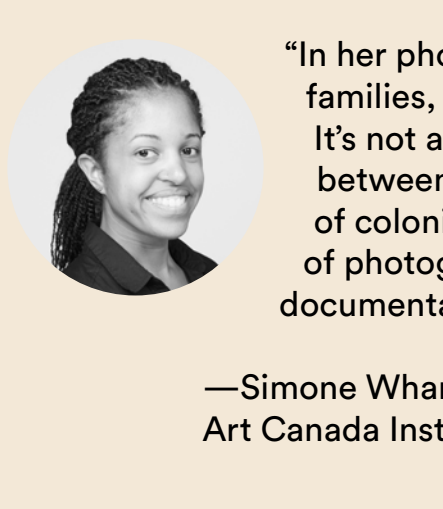
—Rachel Gilbert, Project Lead, The BIPOC Creators Collective of Newfoundland and Labrador

[Learn more about Brian Amadi](#)

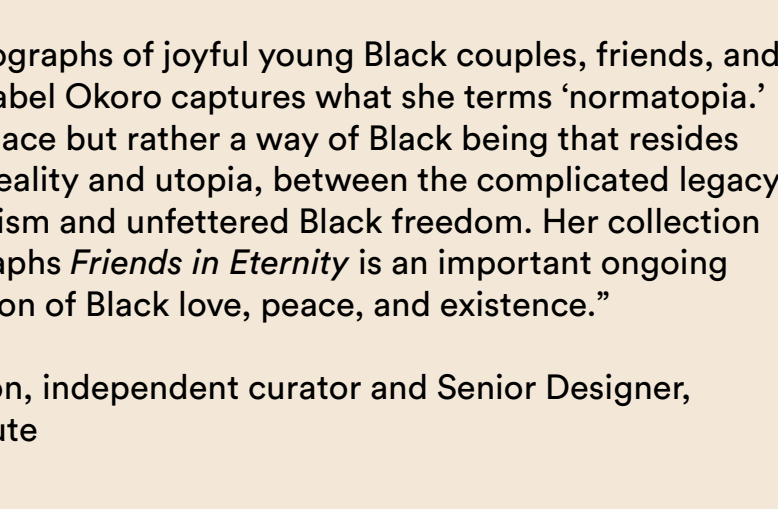
[Learn more about Rachel Gilbert](#)

ISABEL OKORO

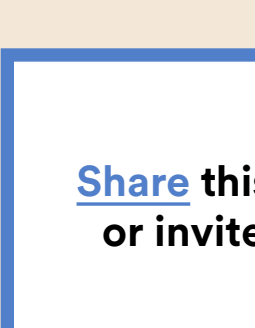
A Nigerian-born, Toronto-based photographer whose work explores the idea of a Black utopia



Isabel Okoro, photograph by Deion Squires.



Normatopia from the book *Friends in Eternity* by Isabel Okoro (Colour and Feel Studio, 2022).



"In her photographs of joyful young Black couples, friends, and families, Isabel Okoro captures what she terms 'normatopia.' It's not a place but rather a way of Black being that resides between reality and utopia, between the complicated legacy of colonialism and unfettered Black freedom. Her collection of photographs *Friends in Eternity* is an important ongoing documentation of Black love, peace, and existence."

—Simone Wharton, independent curator and Senior Designer, Art Canada Institute

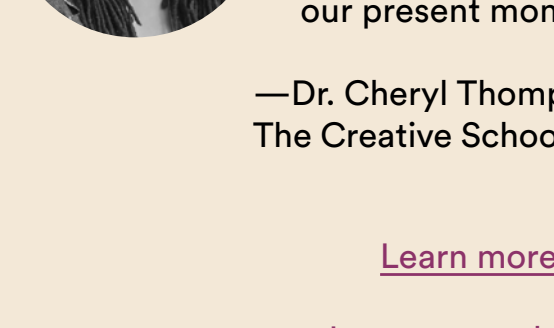
[Learn more about Isabel Okoro](#)

[Learn more about Simone Wharton](#)

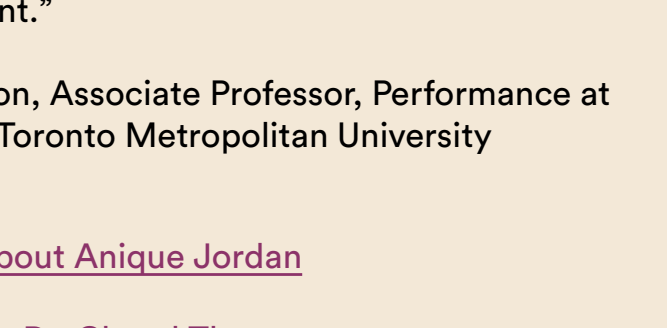
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ANIQUE JORDAN

A Toronto-based artist, curator, and writer who works with performance, social practice, installation, sculpture, and photography



Anique Jordan.



Anique Jordan, *Enough*, 2021, courtesy of Anique Jordan and Patel Brown Gallery, Toronto.



"Anique Jordan challenges historical and dominant narratives, creating what she calls 'impossible images.' In *Nowing: A Political History of the Present*, Jordan uses a method that involves note-taking and newspaper archives to ask viewers to actively reject the urge to look away from our present moment."

—Dr. Cheryl Thompson, Associate Professor, Performance at The Creative School, Toronto Metropolitan University

[Learn more about Anique Jordan](#)

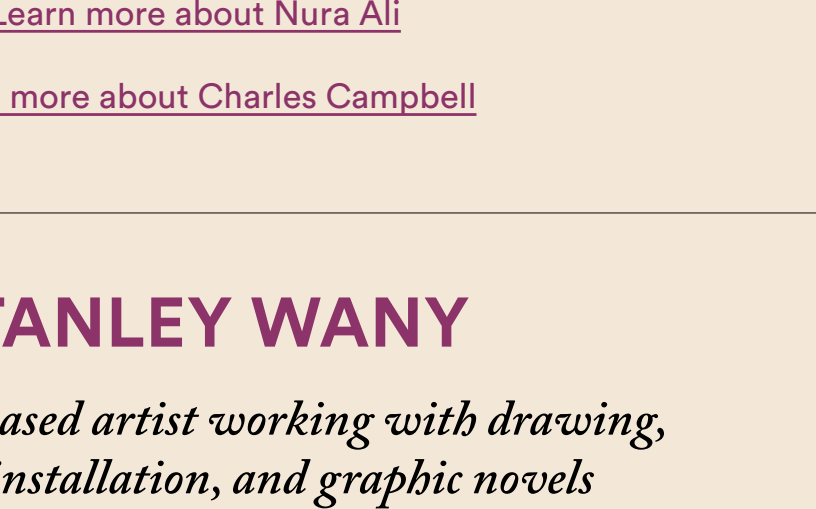
[Learn more about Dr. Cheryl Thompson](#)

NURA ALI

A Calgary-based artist, writer, and curator who explores the nature of language and meaning



Nura Ali.



Nura Ali, *A type of unfinished sound*, 2021, courtesy of Nura Ali.



"Nura Ali's practice is a rigorously playful exploration of the complex interaction between language and the structures ordering how we understand our place in the world. Her work mobilizes entropy, ambiguity, and uncertainty to show us the agency we all have as daily meaning-makers."

—Charles Campbell, artist and independent curator

[Learn more about Nura Ali](#)

[Learn more about Charles Campbell](#)

STANLEY WANY

A Montreal-based artist working with drawing, painting, installation, and graphic novels



Stanley Wany, photograph by Kwasi Kyee.



Stanley Wany, *Ase*, 2022, courtesy of Stanley Wany.



"Wany's work is a celebration and an exploration of the contemporary Black experience. He does not pay attention to the man-made borders of labelling Blackness as it pertains to nations, but how the history informs the culture. He rejects the idea of Blackness being a monolith, [seeing it instead as] many unique stories and experiences that produce community identity. The reality of his work is a blend of intelligent, thoughtful, graceful, and raw."

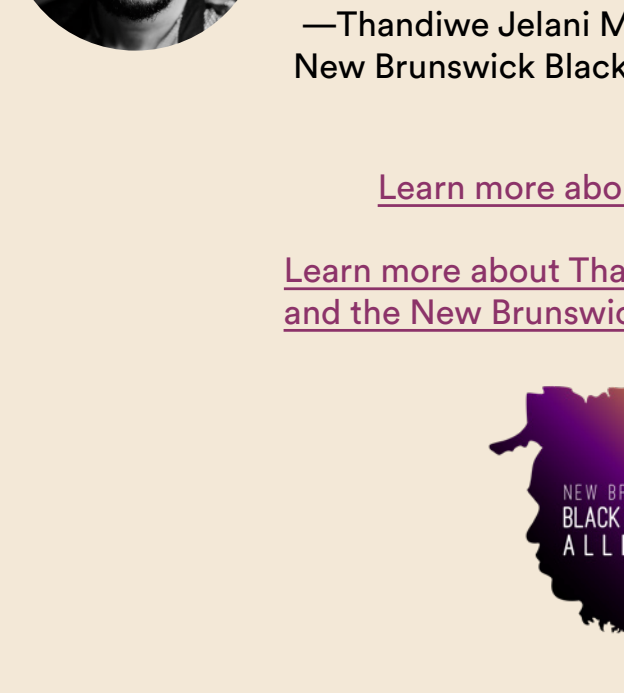
—Allison Yearwood, Executive Director, Plug In ICA, Winnipeg

[Learn more about Stanley Wany](#)

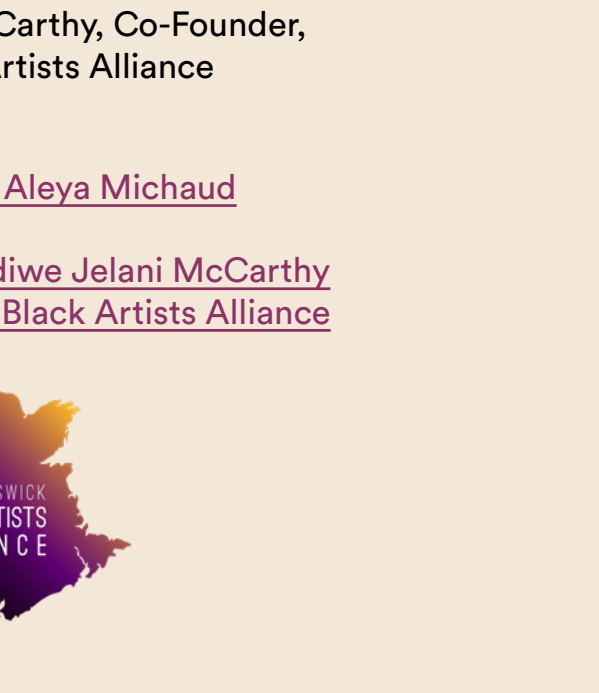
[Learn more about Allison Yearwood](#)

ALEYA MICHAUD

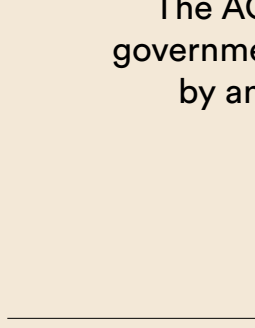
A Moncton-based painter who centres self-discovery and emotional release



Aleya Michaud, photograph by Rhys Copeland.



Aleya Michaud, *(PAIN/T): Where there's paint, there's pain, and when there's pain, there's paint.*, 2022, courtesy of Aleya Michaud.

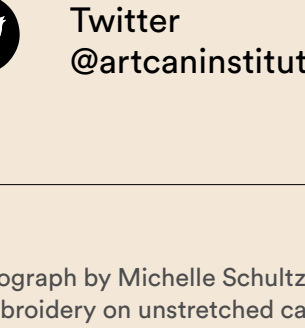


"Aleya Michaud's passion for the visual arts is shouted from every canvas she paints. Through abstraction, she has found a place where labels and stereotypes can't limit her humanity. This is what she paints: a pure expression of self."

—Thandiwe Jelani McCarthy, Co-Founder, New Brunswick Black Artists Alliance

[Learn more about Aleya Michaud](#)

[Learn more about Thandiwe Jelani McCarthy and the New Brunswick Black Artists Alliance](#)



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Image Credits: [1] Preston Pavlis, photograph by Michelle Schultz. [2] Preston Pavlis, *your skin behind the lattice*, 2019, acrylic, oil pastel, and embroidery on unstretched canvas, 175.3 x 167.6 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchase, with funds from Friends of Global Africa and the Diaspora, 2022 (2022/7090). [3] Brian Amadi, photograph by Brian Amadi. [4] Brian Amadi, *Elephant in the Room*, 2022, acrylic on wood panel, 61 x 40.6 cm. Courtesy of Brian Amadi. [5] Isabel Okoro, photograph by Deion Squires. [6] *Normatopia* from the book *Friends in Eternity* by Isabel Okoro (Colour and Feel Studio, 2022). [7] Anique Jordan. Courtesy of Scarborough Arts. [8] Anique Jordan, *Enough*, 2021, Courtesy of Anique Jordan and Patel Brown Gallery, Toronto. [9] Nura Ali. Courtesy of Nura Ali. [10] Nura Ali, *A type of unfinished sound*, 2021, silicone, various sizes. Courtesy of Nura Ali. [11] Stanley Wany, photograph by Kwasi Kyee. [12] Stanley Wany, *Ase*, 2022, ink and charcoal on cotton paper, 152.4 x 213.4 cm. Photo credit: Michel Pinault. Courtesy of Stanley Wany. [13] Aleya Michaud, photograph by Rhys Copeland. [14] Aleya Michaud, *(PAIN/T): Where there's paint, there's pain, and when there's pain, there's paint.*, 2022, mixed media on canvas, 91.4 x 121.9 cm. Courtesy of Aleya Michaud.