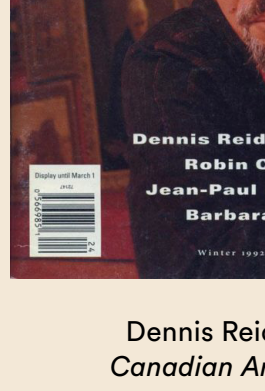


MAY 26, 2023

# IN THE KNOW: 10 NOTABLE STORIES ON ART IN CANADA

Our monthly roundup of news from across the country.



Back in 2020, when the Art Canada Institute newsletter first launched, it offered readers a view of Canadian art through themes like Mother's Day, environmental awareness, and emerging talents. Since then, many of you have answered an increase in news coverage, and we've happily requested the call. In the last week of April, we debuted our inaugural monthly roundup of notable art news from across the country, and we are delighted to share that to date it has been our most popular newsletter. This second installment brings you more Canadian art-world items that should be on your radar. From new hires to auction-block action to the impact of AI, here's our rundown of some of the most noteworthy stories in Canadian art right now.

Sara Angel

Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

## 1. IN REMEMBRANCE DENNIS REID

January 3, 1943–April 27, 2023



Dennis Reid on the cover of Canadian Art magazine, 1992.



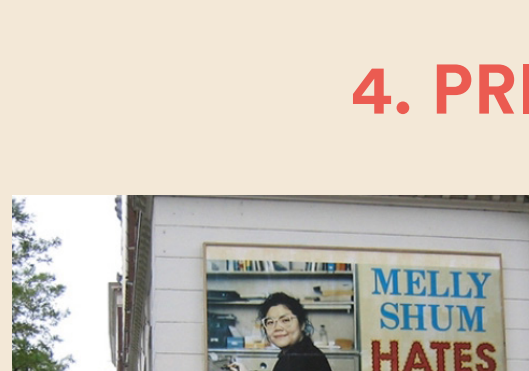
Cover of A Concise History of Canadian Painting (2012), 3rd ed., by Dennis Reid.

On April 27, the world lost Dennis Reid (1943–2023), a curator whose contribution to documenting Canadian art and its history was epic. Long before it was a commonly held belief, Reid passionately maintained that the story of this country's art and artists was worth telling. The author of numerous publications, including *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, Reid documented and curated the work of legendary artists, including Tom Thomson, Greg Curnoe, and Michael Snow, and had a profound impact on many of his fellow scholars and curators. Reid worked at the National Gallery of Canada from 1967 to 1979 before joining the Art Gallery of Ontario, where he served numerous roles including Chief Curator of Research. Reid was also a long-time faculty member at the University of Toronto. Among his numerous accolades, Reid was named a Member of the Order of Canada (1998) and was a recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal (2002) and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal (2012).

[Read More about Dennis Reid](#)

## 2. IN REMEMBRANCE DOROTHY KNOWLES

April 7, 1927–May 16, 2023



Dorothy Knowles working at a canvas, January 30, 1975, photograph by Creative Professional Photographers, courtesy of Local History Room, Saskatoon Public Library.

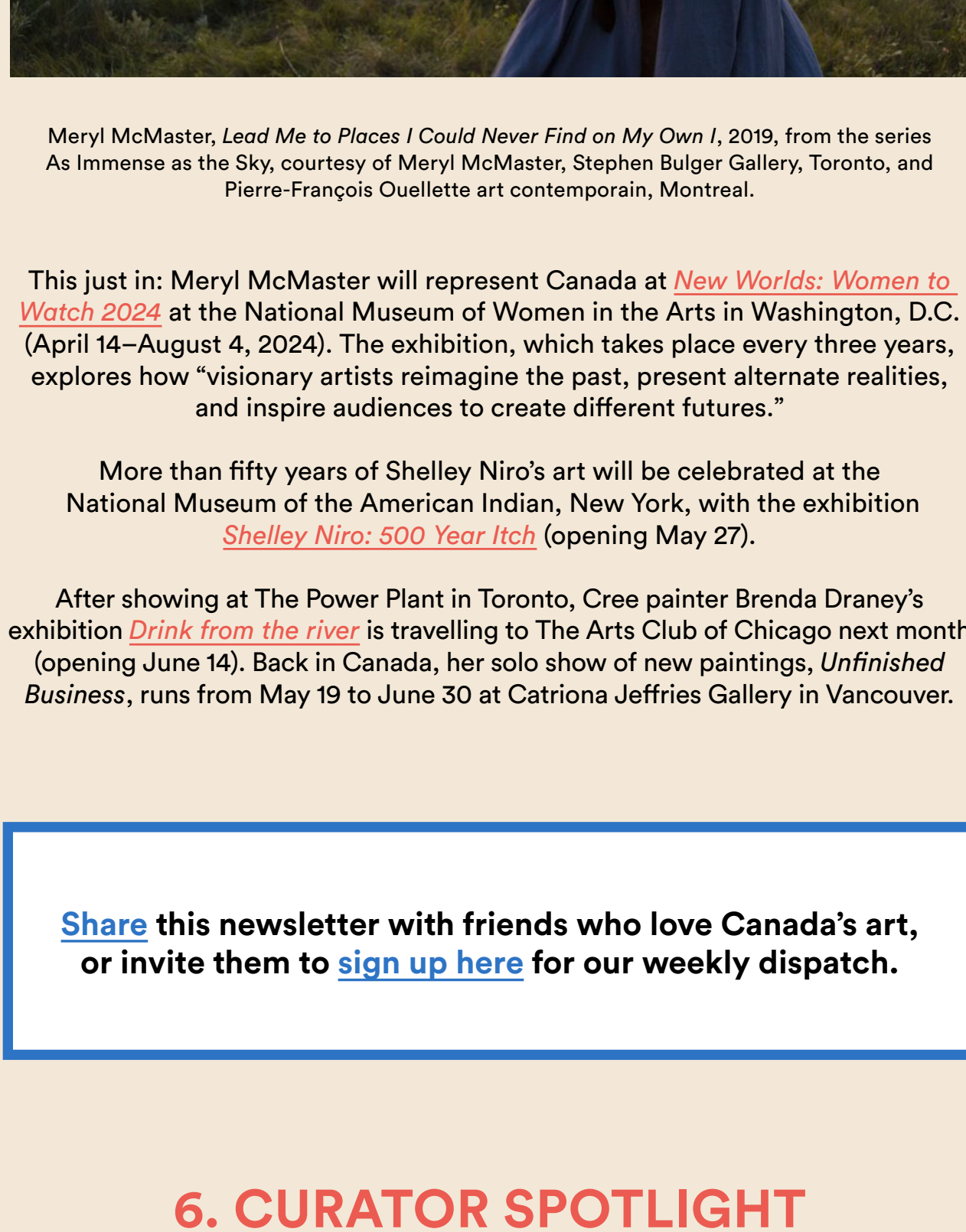


Canada Post, Day of Issue Cover with paintings *The Field of Rapeseed* and *North Saskatchewan River* by Dorothy Knowles, April 7, 2006, courtesy of Canada Post.

Dorothy Elsie Knowles never intended to become an artist; instead, she planned to be a lab technician and studied biology at the University of Saskatchewan. Her life changed in 1948 when a friend persuaded Knowles to take a summer painting course at Emma Lake, north of Prince Albert. Inspired to continue studying painting, she was soon introduced to teachers Clement Greenberg, Jules Olitski, and Kenneth Noland. She also met colour-field artist William Perehudoff, whom she married. Knowles became one of the country's best-known artists, with an impressive seven-decade-long career that would see her work included in the National Gallery of Canada's *7th Biennial Exhibition of Canadian Painting* (1968) and in the Smithsonian's *14 Canadians: A Critic's Choice* (1977). Although the mid-twentieth century art scene favoured abstract art, a turning point in Knowles's career came in 1962 when she decided to pursue painting from nature regardless of contemporary trends. Knowles never looked back as she discovered the importance of celebrating place. As she told the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* in 2018, "I just want to pour that out on the canvases: My love for the landscape, my love for the trees and the sky and the wonderful radiance of the skies." Among her many accolades, Knowles became a Member of the Order of Canada in 2004. Her paintings *The Field of Rapeseed* and *North Saskatchewan River* were featured on postage stamps issued by Canada Post in 2006.

Watch a [video](#) from the Michael Gibson Gallery on Dorothy Knowles

## 3. MARKET WATCH



Norval Morrisseau, *The Great Migration of the Ojibwa People*, 1989, courtesy of the Estate of Norval Morrisseau.

Although Norval Morrisseau's art has been frequently forged in recent years, as Rob Cowley, President of Cowley Abbott [told the Art Canada Institute](#), if a Morrisseau painting "can be traced back to the artist, it is more valuable than ever." That makes Morrisseau's *The Great Migration of the Ojibwa People*, 1989, which just hit the market and will be part of the June auction at [First Arts](#), a work to watch. The eight-foot-long painting is one of the artist's most significant pieces on the Ojibwe, who, around 1,500 years ago, began a centuries-long migration westward from northeastern North America.

[Read more](#) about this work from First Arts

## 4. PRIZE WINNER



Ken Lum, *Melly Shum HATES Her Job*, 1989, installed at the Kunststituut Melly, Rotterdam, courtesy of Ken Lum.



Ken Lum, photograph by Rafal Gerszak / *the Globe and Mail*.

In 2020, Vancouver-born artist Ken Lum made headlines across the art world when the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam re-branded as the Kunststituut Melly. The revered European institution took its new name from Lum's 1989 *Melly Shum Hates Her Job*, a favourite work that adorned the building's exterior. Earlier this month, Lum was in the spotlight again when he won the 2023 Scotiabank Photography Award in recognition of his international contribution to lens-based conceptual and representational art. The annual award, co-funded by Scotiabank and Toronto photographer Edward Burtynsky, includes a \$50,000 cash prize, a solo exhibition at the 2024 Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival, and a book of the artist's work to be published and distributed worldwide by German publisher Steidl.

## 5. INTERNATIONAL STAGE



Meryl McMaster, *Lead Me to Places I Could Never Find on My Own I*, 2019, from the series *As Immense as the Sky*, courtesy of Meryl McMaster, Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto, and Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal.

This just in: Meryl McMaster will represent Canada at [New Worlds: Women to Watch 2024](#) at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. (April 14–August 4, 2024). The exhibition, which takes place every three years, explores how "visionary artists reimagine the past, present alternate realities, and inspire audiences to create different futures."

More than fifty years of Shelley Niro's art will be celebrated at the National Museum of American Indian, New York, with the exhibition [Shelley Niro: 500 Year Itch](#) (opening May 27).

After showing at *The Power Plant in Toronto*, Cree painter Brenda Draney's exhibition [Drink from the river](#) is travelling to The Arts Club of Chicago next month (opening June 14). Back in Canada, her solo show of new paintings, *Unfinished Business*, runs from May 19 to June 30 at Catriona Jeffries Gallery in Vancouver.

## 6. CURATOR SPOTLIGHT



Curator Pamela Edmonds stands in front of a quilt featured in *The Secret Codes: African Nova Scotian Quilts* at the Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax.

Pamela Edmonds, one of the country's most esteemed cultural leaders, is the Director and Curator of the Dalhousie Art Gallery. Edmonds built her career in Ontario but close to a year ago she returned to Halifax, where she was raised. This month marks another key moment for Edmonds with the opening of [The Secret Codes: African Nova Scotian Quilts](#), an exhibition at the Dalhousie Art Gallery featuring artwork she first encountered decades ago while working at NSCAD University's Anna Leonowens Gallery. Edmonds shares her story with [Dal News](#), explaining how it was difficult to break into the exhibition world when she was starting out as an artist in Montreal in the late 1990s. "I became quite politically engaged at that time with artists from the margins," says Edmonds.

"I was very much interested in how we could contribute to more inclusive conversations about what is being seen within our institutions and what is it saying about the stories of our world. There has been a disparity between who comes into the gallery and who is around us every day. For me, it is important to try to create art spaces that are more equitable in terms of representation."

## 7. ART CYBERCRIME



National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, photograph by Alan Solomon / Tribune News Service via Getty Images.

No Canadian art institution has been plagued with more challenges recently than the National Gallery of Canada. (After the NGC fired four staff last November, it has been the subject of heated controversy, with those laid off, including Senior Curator of Indigenous Art Greg Hill, writing to the Minister of Canadian Heritage that the institution is at risk of fading into "[cultural irrelevance](#)." Now the NGC is in the process of recovering from a recent ransomware attack. [The Ottawa Citizen reported](#) that the gallery detected the cyber assault on April 23 after experiencing an IT interruption. The NGC is still working to address the aftermath of the attack.

## 8. BEST IN SHOW



Micmac Indian Craftsman (MIC) "hasti-note" cards, 1963–64, photograph by John Leroux.



Teacups, saucers, creamers, and sugar bowls from the Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People" fine China set, 1964, photograph by John Leroux.

Formed in 1962 in New Brunswick by a group of self-taught Indigenous artists, the Micmac Indian Craftsman (MIC) was committed to making a mark on modern material culture while celebrating Wabanaki stories and visual traditions. Despite their best efforts, MIC has long been overlooked in Canadian art history circles, an oversight addressed by curators John Leroux and Emma Hassencahl-Perley. The pair was recently awarded the prize for [outstanding achievement in research](#) by the Canadian Museum Association for *Wabanaki Modern: The Artistic Legacy of the 1960s "Micmac Indian Craftsman,"* their exhibition at Fredericton's Beaverbrook Art Gallery. Examples of MIC works created between 1962 and 1967 include the silkscreened "hasti-note" cards illustrating Wabanaki legends, and porcelain pieces featuring designs by MIC's Michael Francis, the result of a collaboration between the MIC and the prestigious British manufacturer Royal Tuscan.

## 9. ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES



Michelle Chawla, photograph by Christian Lalonde / Alexander Behne, Radio-Canada.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage has [announced](#) who will succeed Simon Brault as Director and CEO of the Canada Council for the Arts: his long-time colleague Michelle Chawla. Having worked there since 1995 in a variety of strategic and executive positions, she has already demonstrated impressive leadership within and outside of the organization. Of Punjabi and Quebécois descent, and a member of the Sikh community, Chawla is a firm advocate for diversity and believes that all voices should be respected and heard in arts and culture.

## 10. AI AND ART



A work by Sam Yang.



A self-portrait by Sam Yang.

In late 2022, Toronto artist Sam Yang received an email from a stranger asking him to judge a contest of AI-generated images that looked like work he created. Made using fragments of Yang's art harvested online, the pieces were then released to the public and a contest was held by [Civital](#), a platform where people can share and learn from each other's work. While Yang hasn't taken legal action (as copyright does not protect artistic style), [he did speak out in the Toronto Star](#) to draw attention to the issue—one we will likely be hearing much more about as the art ecosystem in Canada and around the world contemplates the consequences of AI-generated art.

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