

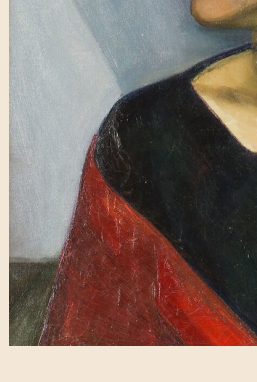
JUNE 9, 2023

ANNOUNCING THE WINNERS OF THE 2023 GREAT CANADIAN ART INSPIRATION STUDENT CHALLENGE

We asked secondary school students to create works based on the examples of Canadian art and its history for this competition, the only one of its kind in the country. Here's what they came up with.



Grade 10 student Shayla Shawongonabe, of Greater Sudbury, Ontario, holding her work, *Mijjim*, inspired by the art of Daphne Odjig (see the final entry of this newsletter).



Today we proudly celebrate the outstanding entries from ACI's 2023 [Canadian Art Inspiration Student Challenge](#). This competition began three years ago, when we wondered how we could encourage this country's emerging talents to discover and engage with the contemporary and historical artists who have defined our cultural landscape. Our solution: [we shared a booklet featuring the work of 10 artists](#) with Grade 7 to 12 teachers across the country. In turn, they prompted their pupils to produce original creations inspired by those examples. For this year's challenge, one of the questions we asked was "how can we find beauty in the everyday?" Above, Grade 10 student Shayla Shawongonabe holds her work, *Mijjim*, which was inspired by the distinctive style of artist Daphne Odjig (1919–2016) and explores food traditions in Ojibwe culture (see the final entry of this newsletter for Shawongonabe's artist statement). Later this month, launching on June 22, ACI will host an online exhibition of all the winning student entries. In today's newsletter, we're previewing a selection of the finalists' works. Their range of visual responses to those who have come before is a reminder of the creative riches found in Canadian art history—and the vital role of the past in shaping future generations of artistic visionaries.

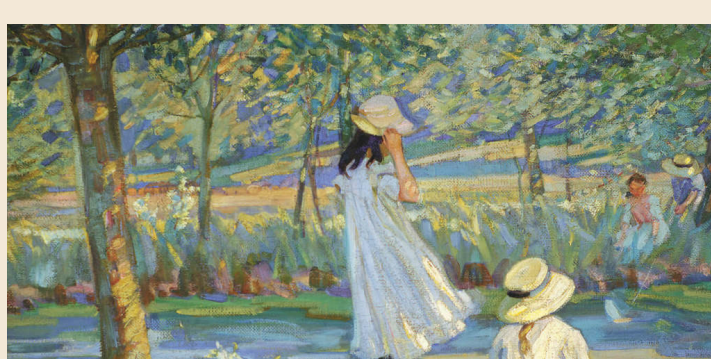
Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

First Place Winner, Grades 7–9

DIASPORA

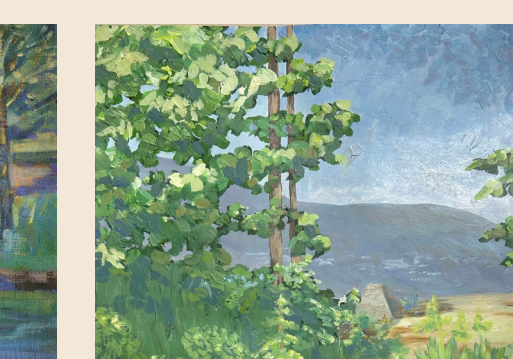
by Chantel Mei

Inspiration



Prudence Heward, *The Emigrants*, c.1928, oil on canvas, 66 x 66 cm, private collection.

Student Artwork



Chantel Mei, *Diaspora*, mixed media on paper, 45.5 x 60.1 cm.

"[...] When viewing Prudence Heward's painting, you can see the emotion and sentimentality she manages to capture in [her subject's] faces. I've always admired her ability to paint women with such complexity in their portraits despite the public's disapproval of her depictions. This is why I wanted to communicate the same message with Ukrainian mothers and women seeking refuge in Canada due to the recent war in their homeland. Especially as mothers, the traumatic complexities of war are far more overwhelming. Both paintings show the struggles women face during times of migration."

—Chantel Mei (Grade 9, Webber Academy, Calgary, Alberta)

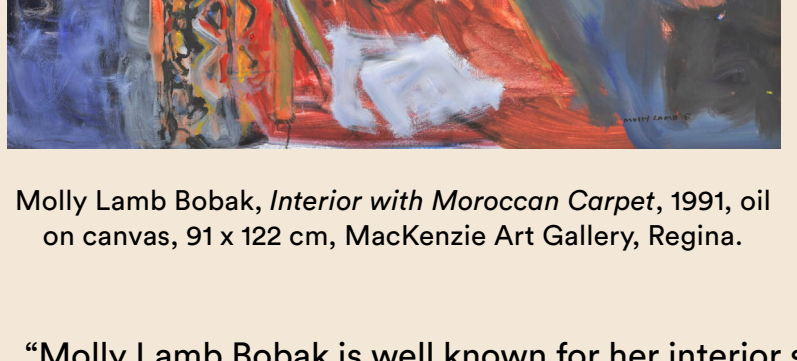
Prudence Heward (1896–1947) was a central figure in the Montreal art world during the inter-war years. Celebrated for her expressionistic use of colour and her unique sculptural forms, Heward's portraits of defiant modern women are unparalleled.

Honourable Mention, Grades 7–9

INTO THE MOMENT

by Chaelyn Han

Inspiration



Helen McNicoll, *Watching the Boat*, c.1912, oil on canvas, 64.1 x 76.8 cm, private collection.

Student Artwork



Chaelyn Han, *Into the Moment*, acrylic on paper, 47 x 32.5 cm.

"Helen McNicoll, a Canadian artist well known for her outstanding sunny Impressionist landscape paintings, inspired me to interact with my memories through art. The first time I discovered her art, I was amazed by her use of colour to create a quiet ambience that invited me to engage with the paintings through more than just visual senses. [...] I painted my mother and myself walking in Stanley Park because it is still one of my favourite memories. I wanted to cherish the moment by creating it in a painting in McNicoll's style, allowing me to invite anyone who views it to engage with the artwork, just like how McNicoll's work inspired me."

—Chaelyn Han (Grade 9, Lord Byng Secondary School, Vancouver, British Columbia)

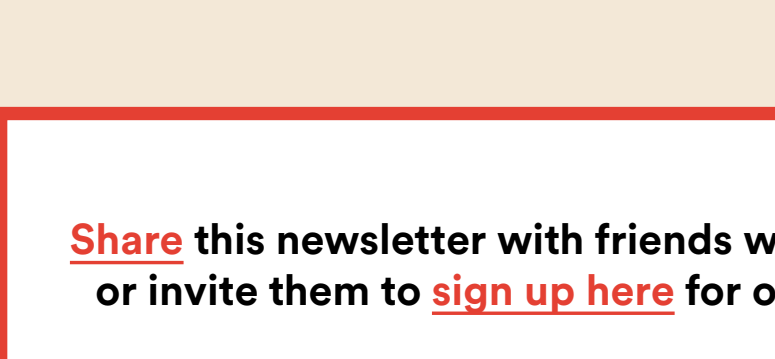
One of the nation's most prolific female artists, Helen McNicoll (1879–1915) garnered acclaim for her bright and sunny representations of rural landscapes, child subjects, and modern female figures—works that helped to popularize Impressionism in Canada.

First Place Winner, Grades 10–12

LE RASSEMBLEMENT

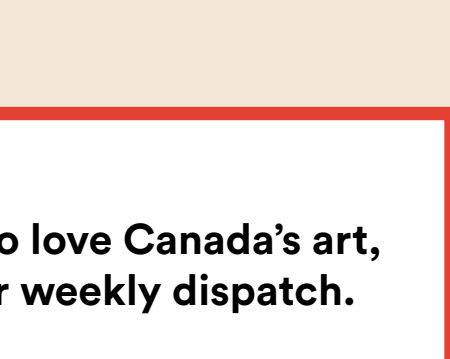
by Maya Padlewskia

Inspiration



Molly Lamb Bobak, *Interior with Moroccan Carpet*, 1991, oil on canvas, 91 x 122 cm, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina.

Student Artwork



Maya Padlewskia, *Le Rassemblement*, acrylic on canvas, 61 x 91.4 cm.

"Molly Lamb Bobak is well known for her interior scenes and still-life paintings, which fascinate me the most within her body of work. The [...] colours and motifs in *Interior with Moroccan Carpet* [was] hugely inspiring to me in the creation of my work. Bobak's distortions equally evoke the work of Paul Cézanne, who has always been a big source of inspiration for me. *Le rassemblement* represents the simplicity of daily routine that has always captivated me, particularly meal times. They demand to be observed and listened to, and I wanted to reflect the way in which food has the potential to assemble a group of people."

—Maya Padlewskia (Grade 12, École secondaire publique De La Salle, Ottawa, Ontario)

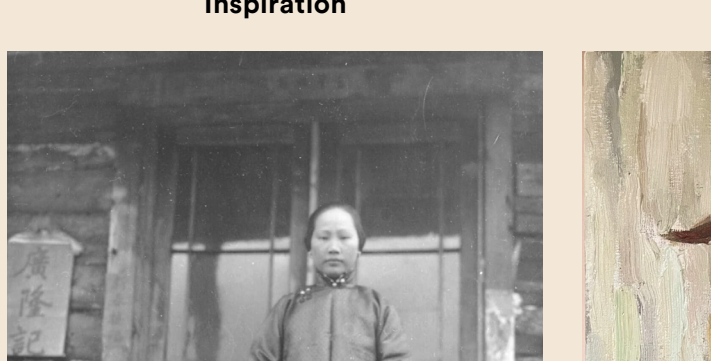
Though Vancouver-born Molly Lamb Bobak (1920–2014) was the first Canadian woman appointed as an official war artist, she is revered as a painter of modern life, producing vibrant cityscapes, scenes of domestic interiors, and still-life paintings of flowers with an instinctive use of colour.

Honourable Mention, Grades 10–12

AU CHALET

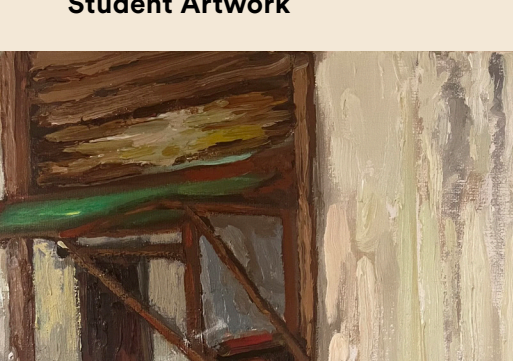
by Wafa Amrouche

Inspiration



Anne Savage, *Lake Wonish*, c.1931, oil on panel, 40.6 x 45.7 cm, Courtesy of Mayberry Fine Art Toronto.

Student Artwork



Wafa Amrouche, *Au chalet*, acrylic on canvas, 45.7 x 61 cm.

"Anne Douglas Savage always appreciated the beauty of the living and the harmony that can be found in nature—in its movements and rest. She refined the atmosphere of her works, rendering them a little mysterious, like a story with indeterminate adventures. Savage managed to capture the free and rhythmic movement of water, and it is her representation of this life source that inspired me to explore the notion of memory and its restitution. [...] In my work, we can see my little brother in the midst of undulating in the water, a moment altered by colour like a memory is being altered by my subconscious. This painting is a reflection of my gratitude towards this ephemeral moment transformed into a remnant of happiness."

—Wafa Amrouche (Grade 12, École publique secondaire De La Salle, Ottawa, Ontario)

Associated with Montreal's Beaver Hall Group and a founding member of the Canadian Group of Painters, Anne Savage's (1896–1971) landscape paintings reveal her romantic vision of the harmony between humans and the natural world.

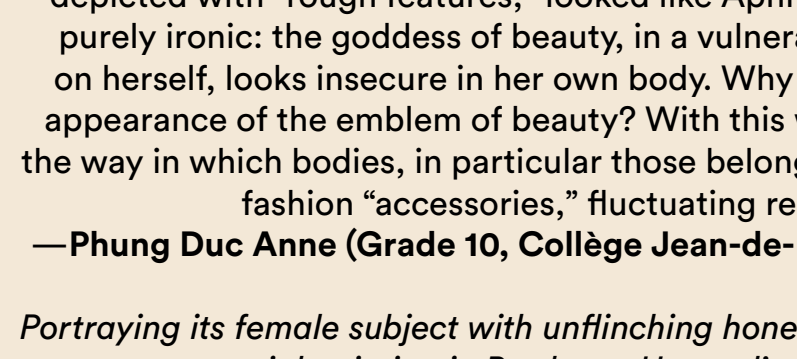
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Honourable Mention, Grades 10–12

BROCCOLI FLORETS AT SWIM PRACTICE

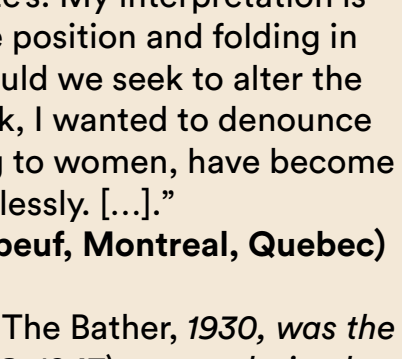
by Jamie Li

Inspiration



Annie Pootoogook, *Composition (Plucking the Grey Hair)*, 2004–5, coloured pencil and ink on paper, 66.6 x 101.8 cm, Collection of Stephanie Comer and Rob Craigie.

Student Artwork



Jamie Li, *Broccoli Florets at Swim Practice*, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 cm.

"In the artwork *Composition (Plucking the Grey Hair)* by Annie Pootoogook, a man sprawls over the crossed legs of a woman as she plucks his grey hairs with tweezers. [...] I feel an undeniable connection to the tenderness of this pencil drawing; the situation is mundane, yet the love is evident. My mother once told me a story about her experience as a new Chinese Canadian immigrant. While raising me and my brother, she would drop me off at home, and rush my brother to swim practice, illustrating broccoli at the pool to prepare dinner. In this simple action, my mother illustrates the dedication and love she put into raising me and my brother. Similarly to how Pootoogook demonstrates the tender mundanity of plucking grey hairs, I wanted to feature the compassionate normality of my mother cutting broccoli florets."

—Jamie Li (Grade 11, Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School, Markham, Ontario)

In 2006, Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016) became the first Inuk artist to win the prestigious Sobey Art Award. Known for her drawings depicting scenes of everyday life in the North, Pootoogook is unmatched in her ability to render personal experiences with stark honesty and thoughtfulness.

Honourable Mention, Grades 10–12

ACCOMPANY

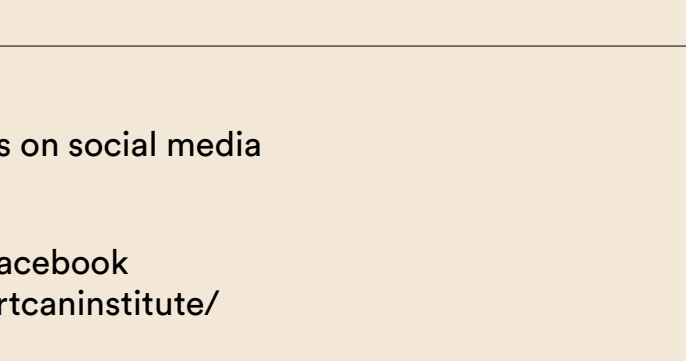
by Yitong Wang

Inspiration



C.D. Hoy, *Mrs. Wan Gar Wong*, 1912, photograph, Barkerville Historic Town Archives (P1978).

Student Artwork



Yitong Wang, *Accompany*, oil paint on canvas, 40.6 x 50.8 cm.

"In the crowded but cozy alleys of Jiangnan, neighbours are close to each other. I once lived in a neighborhood in Jiangnan, a city located in the southern part of China, during a summer vacation when I was little. This oil painting, named *Accompany*, is inspired by an old photograph my father took when we stayed there. The boy and his dog in the picture were our neighbours, and we used to go biking together. I created this painting to reminisce about the harmony between neighbours and my happy childhood. [...] The subtle colors immersed in the white wall and on each object convey the richness of neighbourhood life."

—Yitong Wang (Grade 11, The Study, Montreal, Quebec)

This work was inspired by the photography of C.D. (Chow Dong) Hoy (1883–1973), one of the earliest Chinese Canadian photographers on record. His portraits reflect the many cross-sections of a diverse community in Quesnel, British Columbia, at the turn of the twentieth century.

Honourable Mention, Grades 10–12

BEAUTÉ MODERNE

by Phung Duc Anne

Inspiration

Prudence Heward, *The Bather*, 1930, oil on canvas, 162.1 x 106.3 cm, Art Gallery of Windsor.

Student Artwork

Phung Duc Anne, *Beauté moderne*, lead and marker on paper, 21.7 x 28 cm.

"The painting *The Bather* by Prudence Heward was often critiqued for its representation of the woman's body. For me, I remarked that the body, although depicted with "rough features," looked like Aphrodite's. My interpretation is purely ironic: the goddess of beauty, in a vulnerable position and folding in on herself, looks insecure in her own body. Why should we seek to alter the appearance of the emblem of beauty? With this work, I wanted to denounce the way in which bodies, in particular those belonging to women, have become fashion "accessories," fluctuating relentlessly. [...]"

—Phung Duc Anne (Grade 10, Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, Montreal, Quebec)

Portraying its female subject with unflinching honesty, The Bather, 1930, was the most controversial painting in Prudence Heward's (1896–1947) oeuvre during her lifetime, and remains a touchstone in Canadian art history.

Honourable Mention, Grades 10–12

MIJIM

by Shayla Shawongonabe

Inspiration

Daphne Odjig, *Husking Corn* (from the *Childhood Remembrances Suite*), 1981, serigraph on arches rag paper, 55.5 x 63.5 cm, Art Windsor Essex.

Student Artwork

Shayla Shawongonabe, *Mijjim*, acrylic, watercolour, coloured pencil, and ink, 30.5 x 22.9 cm.

"This artwork reflects the significance of nourishing the spirit through food in Ojibwe culture. In the hands that hold the food are the three vegetables squash, beans, and corn. These vegetables are important [...] because they are the Three Sisters. The Three Sisters depict harmony and cooperation and grow exceptionally well when planted together. The Three Sisters are important to the diet of many Indigenous nations across Turtle Island. In the background, the four colours on the Medicine Wheel can be seen. These four colours, white, yellow, red, and black, represent the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical states of being, respectively, all of which are nourished by food. The inspiration for the illustrations inside of the four colours comes from Daphne Odjig's Woodland style. Overall, this artwork celebrates and emphasizes the connections between the land and food and how each plays a harmonious role in nourishing the spirit."

—Shaylah Shawongonabe (Grade 10, Sudbury Secondary School, Greater Sudbury, Ontario)

Anishinaabe artist Daphne Odjig (1919–2016) brought Indigenous political issues to the forefront of contemporary art and theory through her paintings and prints featuring a distinct style characterized by curving contours, strong outlines, and overlapping colours and shapes.

THANK YOU TO OUR BENEFACTORS

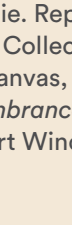
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