

AUGUST 25, 2023

# IN THE KNOW: 11 NOTABLE STORIES ON ART IN CANADA

*Our monthly roundup of the latest developments in the Canadian art world.*



In our monthly news roundup for August, we cover major upcoming exhibitions and public events, the construction and opening of new museums and galleries across the country, and institutional and governmental appointments affecting arts and culture. While it has been a month filled with inaugurations and new beginnings, we're also mourning the passing of Montreal street art legend Zilon, and contemplating Canada's colonial history of displacement in the wake of archaeological excavations in British Columbia that have uncovered ancient Indigenous artifacts. As we near the end of a long, hot summer, we bring you this month's top headlines on art in Canada.

**Sara Angel**  
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

## 1. MATTHEW WONG RETROSPECTIVE OPENS IN BOSTON



Matthew Wong, *See you on the Other Side*, 2019, Matthew Wong Foundation. © 2023 Matthew Wong Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Matthew Wong, *Old Town*, 2017, Green Family Art Foundation. Courtesy of Adam Green Art Advisory. © 2023 Matthew Wong Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

*Matthew Wong: The Realm of Appearances*, showcasing over 40 works by the acclaimed Edmonton-based painter, is drawing crowds at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFABoston). Following the Art Gallery of Ontario's 2021–22 exhibition *Matthew Wong: Blue View*—focusing on the late artist's Blue Series (2017–19)—*The Realm of Appearances* is the first major retrospective and U.S. museum exhibition dedicated to Wong (1984–2019), who passed away at the age of 35 after a lifelong struggle with depression. Running until February 18, 2024, the show traces the stages of Wong's brief but prolific six-year practice, from his earlier, experimental ink-on-paper compositions—created in 2013 when he first started painting in Hong Kong—to the ethereal, semi-surreal, and textured landscapes of later years for which he is best known.

## 2. ALTERNATIVE ROCKER PASCAL ST-ONGE BECOMES NEW MINISTER OF HERITAGE



Pascale St-Onge on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, December 15, 2022, photograph by Sean Kilpatrick / The Canadian Press.

Following a cabinet shuffle on July 26, Quebec MP and former alternative rock musician Pascale St-Onge has been appointed as *Heritage Minister*, succeeding Pablo Rodriguez (MP, Honoré-Mercier). St-Onge, who was first elected in 2021 in the district of Brome-Missisquoi, has previously served as the Minister of Sport and, before entering politics, the president of the Fédération nationale des communications et de la culture, a trade union representing Quebec's arts, media, and culture workers. In her new role, alongside a pledge to uphold Bill C-18 (in the face of backlash from Meta and Google) and protect the Canadian news and media industry, St-Onge will also be overseeing the Canada Council for the Arts and the National Gallery of Canada.

## 3. BONAVISTA BIENNALE OPENS IN NEWFOUNDLAND



Lindsay Katsitsakatske Delaronde, photograph by Jeffrey Bodet. Attendees at Meagan Musseau's land-based performance, *Me'k'tetmek na Maqimikewmin / may-ghee-day-dm-eeeck na moq-oh-mi-go-men-neh*, Dunstara, 2019 Bonavista Biennale, photograph by Brian Rick.

From August 19 to September 17, the *2023 Bonavista Biennale: Host* takes over Newfoundland's Bonavista Peninsula, with installations, exhibitions, and public events held at various locations along a 165-km route on the peninsula. Held every two years, the public art event uniquely brings rural communities and contemporary art and artists together, with a particular focus on the representation of artists from Newfoundland and Labrador—such as L'nu artist Meagan Musseau, whose land-based performance work was featured in the festival's 2019 iteration. This year's theme, *Host*, encourages attendees to contemplate their relationships with the surrounding lands and waters, as well as Canada's history as a multicultural nation of settlers and uninvited guests. Participating artists include well-established figures such as Kaniēn'ke'haka artists Lindsay Katsitsakatske Delaronde and Shelley Niro (b.1954), alongside emerging artists such as Inuk painter Jessica Winters.

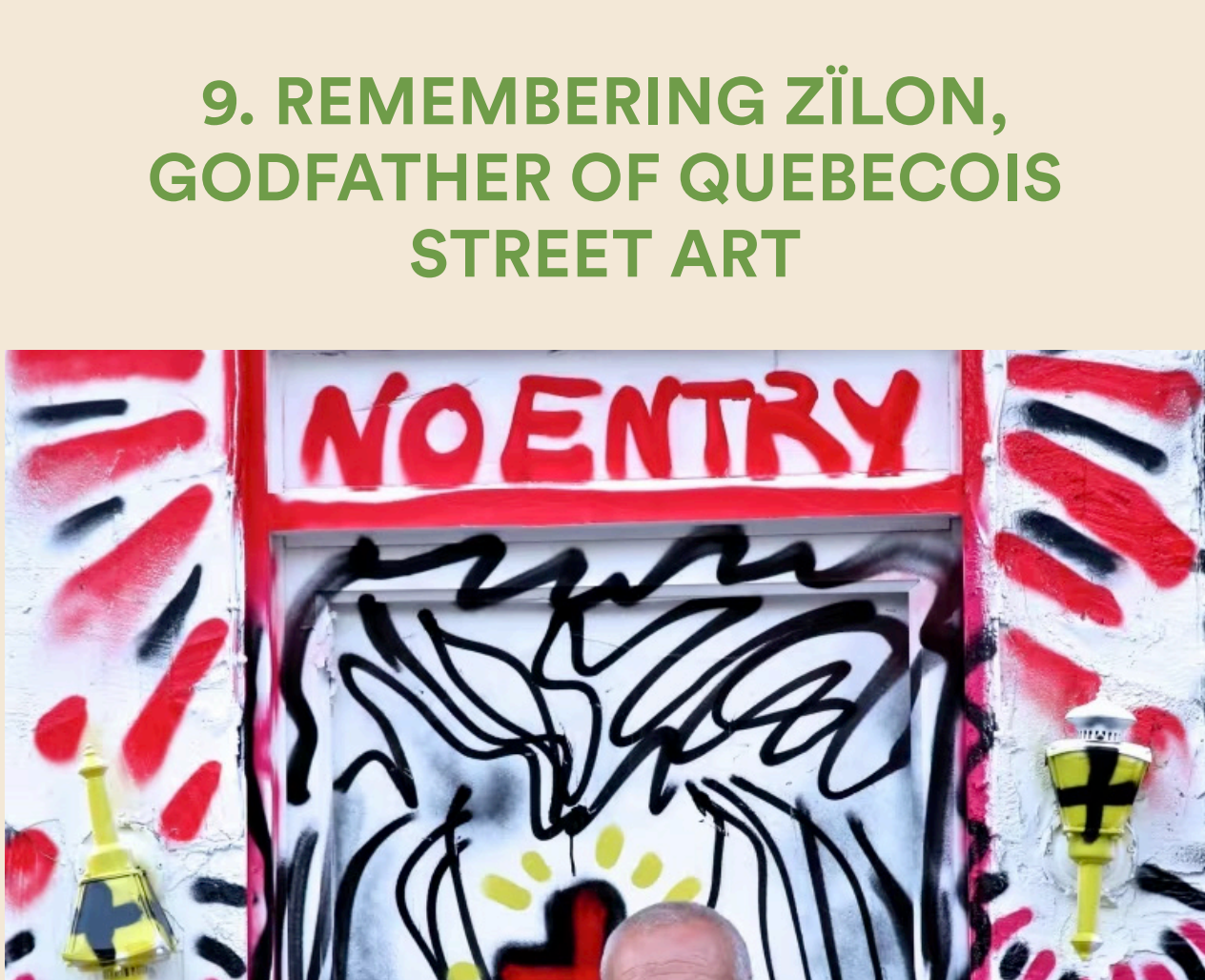
## 4. TOM THOMSON DIGITAL DATABASE



Tom Thomson, *Northern Lights*, c.1915, Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound.

Born on August 5 in Claremont, Ontario, Tom Thomson (1877–1917) changed the face of Canadian art with his gestural, colourful paintings of the Canadian wilderness. Although he passed away in a canoe accident three years before the Group of Seven's official formation, Thomson's unique style and subject matter had an undeniable influence on the group, and he is often recognized as an unofficial member. This year, to celebrate the 146<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birthday, the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound, Ontario—which holds the fourth-largest public collection of Thomson paintings in the world—has announced the launch of an online database on [their website](#) featuring 70 digitized works and related artifacts. The publicly accessible collection includes unique personal effects such as Thomson's baby cup, palette, and shaving mug, alongside oil paintings, drawings, and watercolours.

## 5. ART APPOINTMENTS



Matthew Jocelyn, photograph by Cybelle Young. Eva Respini, photograph by Ian Lefebvre, Vancouver Art Gallery. Tak Pham, photograph by Farimah Shah.

In late July, The Koffler Centre of the Arts in Toronto named [Matthew Jocelyn as its next General Director](#), a position he officially assumes in October. A former Rhodes Scholar, Jocelyn has previously served as the Artistic and General Director of Canadian Stage and, prior to that, the General Director of the Atelier du Rhin in Alsace. In 1982, he co-founded the Théâtre de l'Autre Rive, a performing arts space in Alsace.

The Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) announced the appointment of [Eva Respini as Deputy Director & Director of Curatorial Programs](#). She arrives at her new role with extensive experience, having served as Chief Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston and Curator of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. As well, Respini has taught at major institutions, including Harvard, Yale, and Columbia Universities.

On August 1, Tak Pham began his tenure as [curator at the Ilingworth Kerr Gallery](#) at the Alberta Institute of the Arts in Calgary. Pham, who formerly held the position of associate curator at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina, earned his MFA in Criticism and Curatorial Practice from OCAD University. He has organized exhibitions and public programs at institutions such as the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Confederation Centre Art Gallery in Charlottetown, and Contemporary Calgary.

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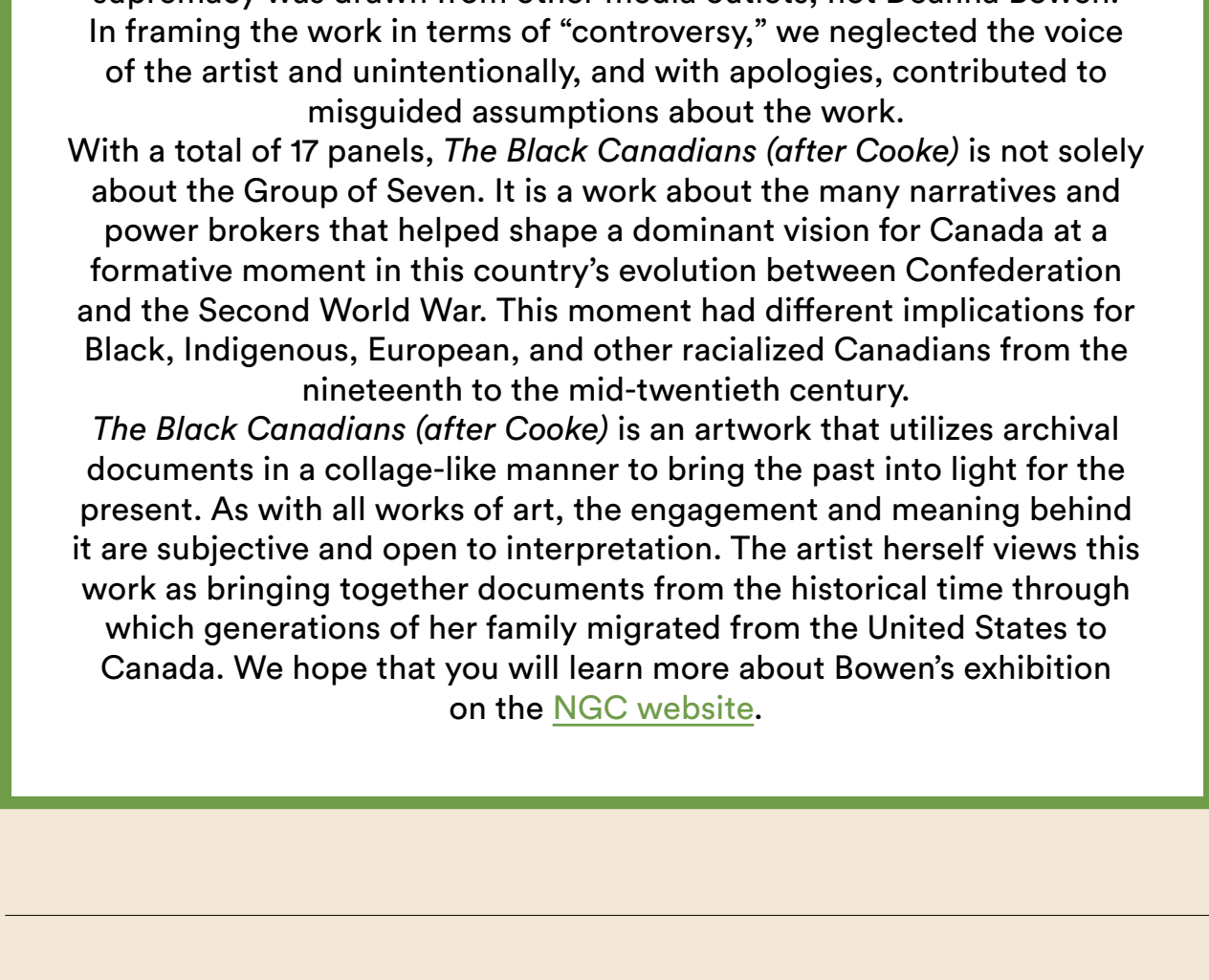
## 6. BC ARTIST CLAIRE WATSON CELEBRATES FAMOUS CANADIAN FEMINIST



New \$1 commemorative circulation coin issued by the Royal Canadian Mint in honour of Elsie MacGill, designed by B.C. artist Claire Watson. Courtesy of Canadian Coin News. [6] Elsie MacGill in a comic book series produced during the Second World War that was dedicated to war heroes, courtesy of Kelly Saxberg / CBC News.

On August 1, the Royal Canadian Mint announced the release of a [new commemorative \\$1 coin](#) to celebrate the life and work of trailblazing aeronautical engineer and Canadian feminist icon Elsie MacGill (1905–1980), designed by the self-trained B.C. artist Claire Watson. Born in Vancouver, MacGill made history as Canada's first female graduate in electrical engineering and the first woman in the world to earn an aeronautical engineering degree. MacGill became the first woman to design an aircraft, the Maple Leaf Trainer II in 1938, and was nicknamed the "Queen of Hurricanes" for her work supervising the production of over 1,400 Hawker Hurricanes during the Second World War. As Watson told *CITY News*, she wanted to honour MacGill as a "confident, strong individual." The coin, which is limited to a mintage of three million, was unveiled at the Hangar Flight Museum in Calgary, which is one of the only museums in the world with a restored Hawker Hurricane in its collection.

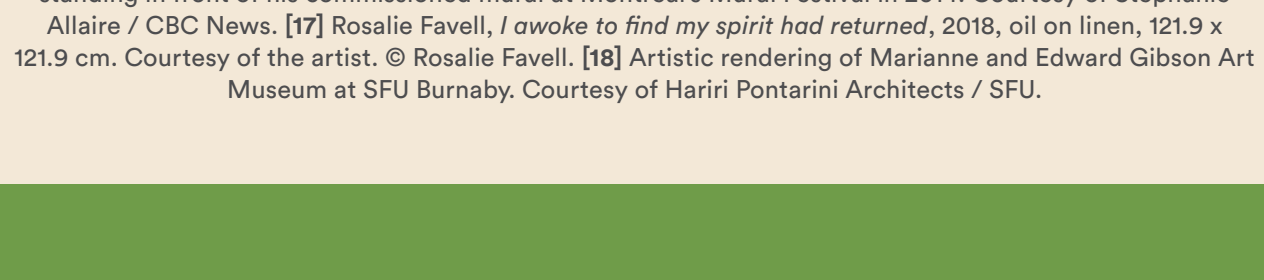
## 7. INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED CANADIAN ARTISTS JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGE BURES MILLER OPEN MUSEUM IN ENDERBY, B.C.



Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, 2012, photograph by Zev Tiefenbach. Exterior of the Cardiff Miller Art Warehouse, courtesy of Janet Cardiff / CBC News.

Since the 1980s, husband-and-wife duo Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller have collaborated on immersive, multimedia installations and artworks, exhibiting to international acclaim at venues such as the 1998 São Paulo Art Biennial, the 2012 edition of Documents in Kassel, Germany, and the 2001 Venice Biennale, where they won the Golden Lion Award. Now, after purchasing an abandoned furniture storage space in Enderby, B.C., where they are based, the iconic couple have launched the [Cardiff Miller Art Warehouse \(CMAW\)](#), a museum dedicated to the permanent display of their large catalogue of works, some of which have never been exhibited before in Canada. CMAW officially opened at the end of July, with plans to develop educational programming as well as a library and café. "We both grew up in small towns... we were influenced by those cultural events that happened in those communities," Miller told CBC. "We're hoping that showing our work here can possibly do the same for young people living here."

## 8. ANCIENT ART - EXCAVATION OF INDIGENOUS VILLAGE IN CORDOVA BAY



A rare barbed serrated bone harpoon point found during archaeological excavations at the TEL JLCCE village site, 2023, photograph by Brian Thom. Tsawout youth and University of Victoria anthropology students excavating at the TEL JLCCE village site, photograph by Brian Thom.

After conducting excavations in Cordova Bay on southern Vancouver Island in July, archaeological students and researchers from the University of Victoria have [discovered the remains of the WSAÑEĆ \(wh-say-nutch\) ancestral village of TEL JLCCE](#) (pronounced Tel-eech), once home to around 250 people. Under the guidance of local Indigenous elders and community members, the dig team has uncovered centuries-old artifacts, objects, and tools such as fish traps and harpoons made of bone, which will be analyzed by the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria. "It can feel that strongly that our people had been then," says Roger Charlie, a spiritual leader from the Tsartlip First Nation who helped the team excavate, identify, and care for the found objects. "It feels like I came home," he tells CBC. The discovery has raised important conversations around repatriation, displacement, and colonial history, as TEL JLCCE was part of the South Saanich Treaty of 1852, which pledged to allow the First Nations settlement during colonial development—a promise that was clearly broken, as the area now serves as a suburban waterfront park.

## 9. REMEMBERING ZILON, GODFATHER OF QUEBECOIS STREET ART



Zilon standing in front of his commissioned mural at Montreal's Mural Festival in 2014, courtesy of Stéphanie Allaire / CBC News.

In Quebec, fans of the [street-art legend Zilon \(1956–2023\)](#) are mourning his passing. Born in Laval, Zilon was known as the "godfather" of Canadian street art and was an iconic figure in Quebecois counterculture and its underground punk scene since the 1970s, having exhibited internationally at venues in London and Paris. Known for his all-encompassing, technical mural works which often featured androgynous figures, and his signature "Z" artist tag, he also worked in a variety of other media, creating paintings and illustrations as well as posters and storyboards for theatre and film projects.

## 10. MARK YOUR CALENDAR: ROSALIE FAVELL PRESENTS MCCREADY LECTURE ON CANADIAN ART



Rosalie Favell, *I awoke to find my spirit had returned*, 2018, oil on linen, 121.9 x 121.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist. © Rosalie Favell.

In conjunction with her solo exhibition, *Rosalie Favell: Portraits of Desire* at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Métis artist [Rosalie Favell \(b.1958\)](#) will be delivering the [annual McCready Lecture on Canadian Art](#) at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) on September 15. During the lecture, which will begin at 7 p.m. at the AGO's Baillie Court, the Winnipeg-born artist will delve into her largely photo-based practices, which often draws on self-portraiture, pop culture, personal experiences, and family history to explore her Indigenous heritage and identity. "I see the photograph as a performance space, where identity is constantly worked and reworked, represented and perhaps hidden," says the [Ottawa-based artist](#). Of particular note, Favell's AGO exhibition includes three oil-on-linen reproductions of previously made photo collages, such as *I awoke to find my spirit had returned*, 2018.

## 11. NEW \$26 MILLION ART MUSEUM AT SFU BURNABY



Artistic rendering of Marianne and Edward Gibson Art Museum at SFU Burnaby, courtesy of Hariri Pontarini Architects/SFU.

At Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Burnaby, B.C., [construction has commenced on the Marianne and Edward Gibson Art Museum](#), a new public art centre focused on research-driven and interdisciplinary contemporary art practices. Designed by [Simak Hariri of Hariri Pontarini Architects](#) as a single-level, [the building](#) (named after donors Marianne and her late husband, Dr. Edward Gibson, who served as the Director of SFU Gallery from 1986 to 1997), will be an interconnected structure and is due to open officially in early 2025. It will house the large and ever-growing SFU Art Collection, which consists of over 5,800 artworks and objects, largely from Canada's West Coast region.

### Editor's Note

In last month's news roundup, "In the Know: 10 Notable Stories on Art in Canada," published on July 28, 2023, the Art Canada Institute featured Deanna Bowen's work *The Black Canadians (after Cooke)*, now on display at the National Gallery of Canada (NGC). Since then, we have continued to reflect on Bowen's installation, which uses the artist's own genealogy as a starting point to examine, as the NGC notes, "the complex history of colonialism, the trade of enslaved peoples, and Black migration."

We recognize that our mention of the Group of Seven and white supremacy was drawn from other media outlets, not Deanna Bowen. In framing the work in terms of "controversy," we neglected the voice of the artist and unintentionally, and with apologies, contributed to misguided assumptions about the work.

With a total of 17 panels, *The Black Canadians (after Cooke)* is not solely about the Group of Seven. It is a work about the many narratives and power brokers that helped shape a dominant vision for Canada at a formative moment in this country's evolution between Confederation and the Second World War. This moment had different implications for Black, Indigenous, European, and other racialized Canadians from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century.

*The Black Canadians (after Cooke)* is an artwork that utilizes archival documents in a collage-like manner to bring the past into light for the present. As with all works of art, the engagement and meaning behind it are subjective and open to interpretation. The artist herself views this work as bringing together documents from the historical time through which generations of her family migrated from the United States to Canada. We hope that you will learn more about Bowen's exhibition on the [NGC website](#).

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