

DECEMBER 22, 2023

STORIES TO CELEBRATE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023

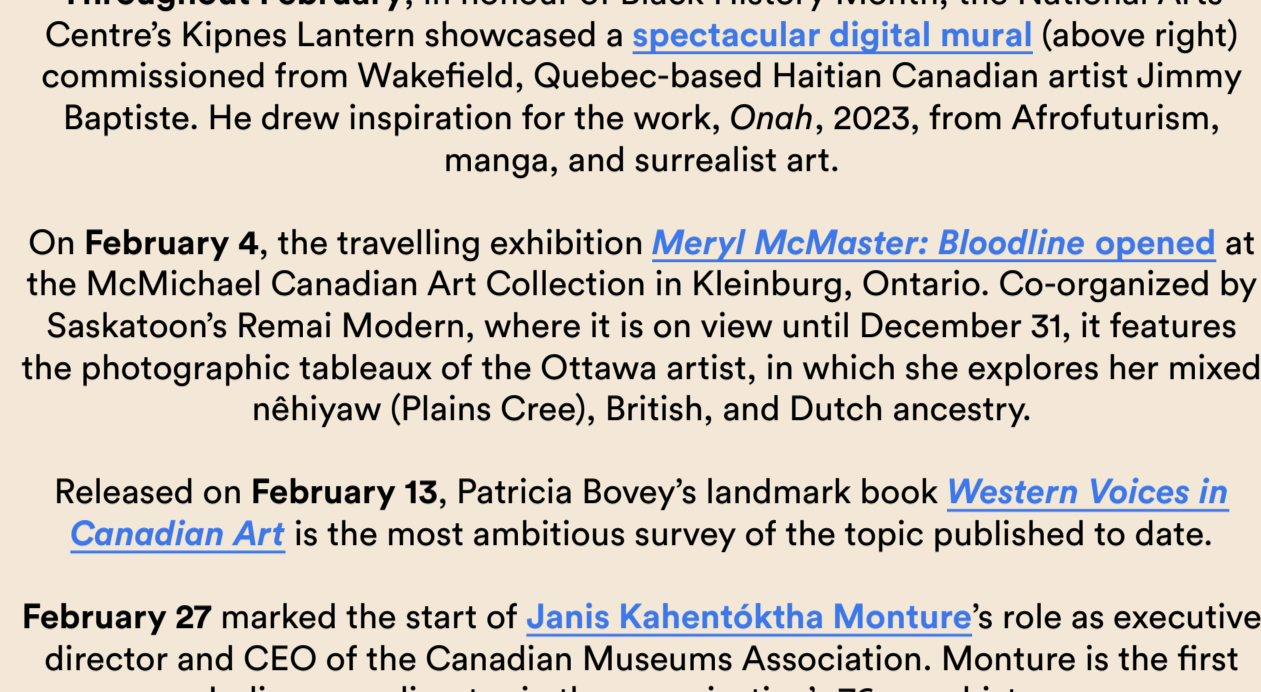
A selection of stories that inspired us.



As December comes to a close, we're looking back at stories that inspired us about the Canadian art world over the past year. The last twelve months have brought compelling exhibitions on contemporary artists to the forefront, as well as thought-provoking tributes to icons of Canadian art history and under-sung voices from decades past. In 2023 we also saw the repatriation of Indigenous art and artifacts to their rightful owners; the rise of cultural sector veterans to new leadership roles at institutions across the country; the presence of renowned artists on the international stage; and the release of must-read books that enrich our understanding of Canadian art and its history. In the final days of the year, we are excited to share these highlights with you.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

JANUARY



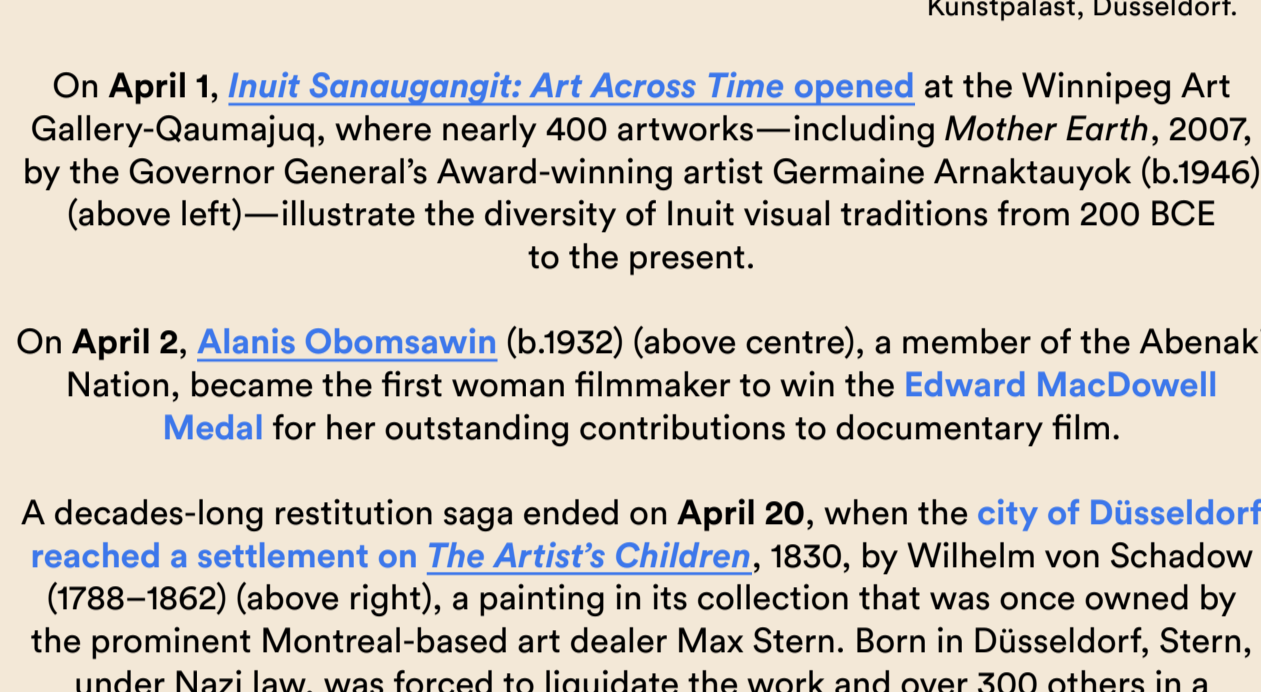
Tim Okamura, *Willie O'Ree*, 2019, courtesy of Tim Okamura. Proposed designs for the \$20 bill, commissioned by the Native Women's Association of Canada, courtesy of the NWAC.

On January 18, Fredericton's **Beaverbrook Art Gallery unveiled its newly acquired portrait** of Canadian sports legend Willie O'Ree (above left)—the first Black hockey player to join the NHL in 1958—by the acclaimed Edmonton-born, New York City-based artist Tim Okamura (b.1968).

At the end of the month, on **January 23**, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) launched its ***Change the Bill campaign and petition*** with the goal of "fostering reconciliation through art" by getting an Indigenous woman featured on the \$20 bill. The NWAC commissioned Indigenous artists to produce designs celebrating a figure of their choice (above right), which were made available for purchase as prints and quickly sold out.

On **January 26**, Hamilton-born, Paris-based artist Kapwani Kiwanga (b.1978) was announced as **Canada's representative for the 60th Venice Biennale** (April 20 to November 24, 2024).

FEBRUARY



A saddlebag of Chief Poundmaker, handout photo by Royal Ontario Museum. Jimmy Baptiste's commissioned mural *Onah* installed in the National Arts Centre's Kipnes Lantern, Ottawa, 2023, photograph by Catherine Wilkie.

In a **repatriation ceremony** on **February 15**, Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum returned a saddlebag (above left) and ceremonial pipe owned by Chief Poundmaker, the nineteenth-century Plains Cree leader, to his descendants.

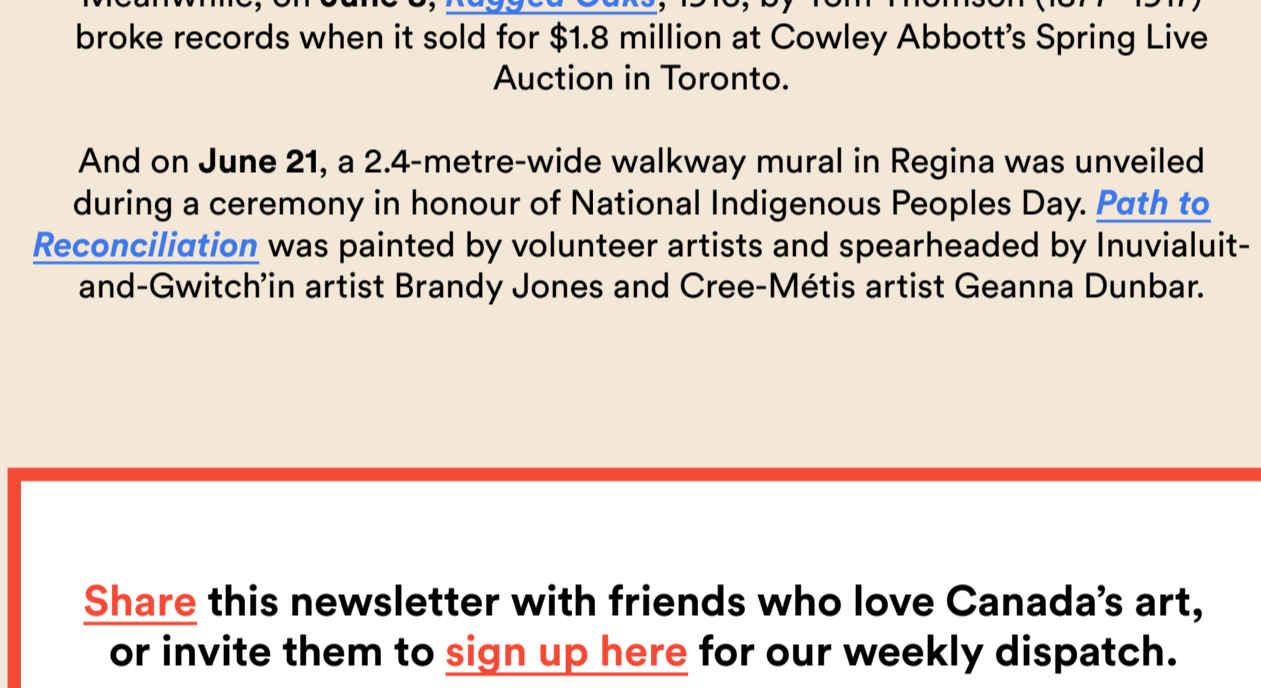
Throughout February, in honour of Black History Month, the National Arts Centre's Kipnes Lantern showcased a **specialized digital mural** (above right) commissioned from Wakefield, Quebec-based Haitian Canadian artist Jimmy Baptiste. He drew inspiration for the work, *Onah*, 2023, from Afrofuturism, manga, and surrealist art.

On **February 4**, the travelling exhibition ***Meryl McMaster: Bloodline*** opened at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario. Co-organized by Saskatoon's Remai Modern, where it is on view until December 31, it features the photographic tableaux of the Ottawa artist, in which she explores her mixed *néhiyaw* (Plains Cree), British, and Dutch ancestry.

Released on **February 13**, Patricia Bovey's landmark book ***Western Voices in Canadian Art*** is the most ambitious survey of the topic published to date.

February 27 marked the start of ***Janis Kahentoktha Monture's*** role as executive director and CEO of the Canadian Museums Association. Monture is the first Indigenous director in the organization's 76-year history.

MARCH



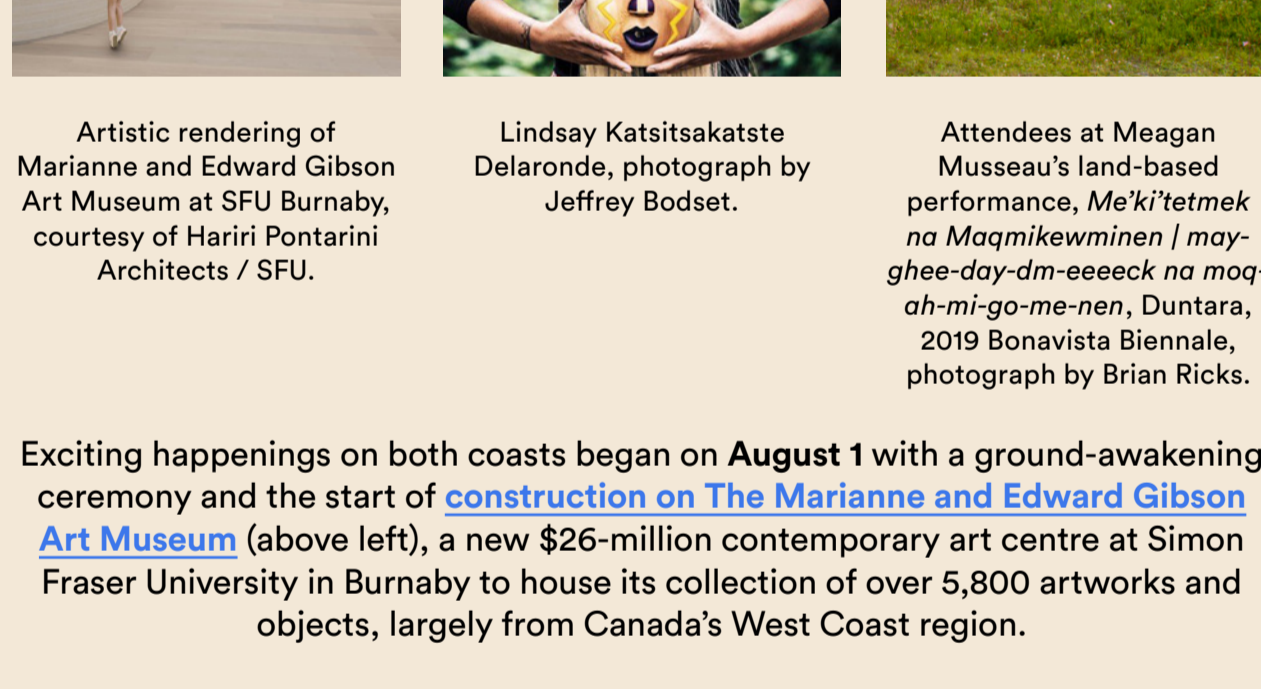
Cover of *Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment*, published by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. Larry Towell, *Dust Storm, Durango Colony*, 1940, from the series *The Mennonites*. © Larry Towell / Magnum Photos. c.1940, Carr, *Survival, Mother Earth*, 2007, ink, coloured pencil on paper. Collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Photo credit: Ernest Meyer. Photograph by Sean Kilpatrick / Museum, Whistler.

This month started with the opening of ***Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment*** (above left) at the National Gallery of Canada, on **March 3**. The groundbreaking touring exhibition (organized by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection) featured the work of more than thirty exceptionally talented yet underrecognized female contemporaries of the Group of Seven.

A colossal win for a beloved Torontonien came on **March 12**, when filmmaker ***Sarah Polley received the Academy Award*** for Best Adapted Screenplay for *Women Talking* (2022). A key influence on the acclaimed film was the work of renowned Canadian photographer Larry Towell (b.1953), notably his black and white images of Mennonites (above centre).

On **March 15**, the Audain Art Museum shared news of an important **acquisition by Emily Carr** (1871–1945), one of Canada's most celebrated historical women artists. Entitled *Survival*, c.1940, the painting represented Canada at the 1952 Venice Biennale, and went on display at the museum for the first time in sixty-four years shortly after it was acquired.

APRIL



Germaine Arnaktauyok, *Mother Earth*, 2007, Wimpey Art Gallery. Alanis Obomsawin for *Montecristo* magazine, Montreal, October 2019, photograph by Ted Belton. Wilhelm von Schadow, *The Artist's Children / Bildnis der Kinder des Künstlers*, 1830, oil on canvas, 142.1 x 113.3 cm. Collection of Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf (M 1977-1). [16] Installation view of *The Secret Codes: African Nova Scotian Quilts* at the Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, 2023, featuring works by Myla Borden (quilt artist) and David Woods (designer): *Meeting At The Well*, 2009 (left); *Ecstasy of Amelinda Colley*, 2007 (centre); and *A Visit from Mommy*, 2011 (right), photograph by Stephen Abbott.

On **April 1**, ***Inuit Sanaugangit: Art Across Time***—opened at the Winnipeg Art Gallery–Guaumajay, where nearly 400 artworks—including *Mother Earth*, 2007, by the Governor General's Award-winning artist Germaine Arnaktauyok (b.1946) (above left)—illustrate the diversity of Inuit visual traditions from 200 BCE to the present.

On **April 2**, **Alanis Obomsawin** (b.1932) (above centre), a member of the Abenaki Nation, became the first woman filmmaker to win the **Edward MacDowell Medal** for her outstanding contributions to documentary film.

A decades-long restitution saga ended on **April 20**, when the **city of Düsseldorf reached a settlement on *The Artist's Children***, 1830, by Wilhelm von Schadow (1788–1862) (above right), a painting in its collection that was once owned by the prominent Montreal-based art dealer Max Stern. Born in Düsseldorf, Stern, under Nazi law, was forced to liquidate the work and over 300 others in a 1937 forced auction.

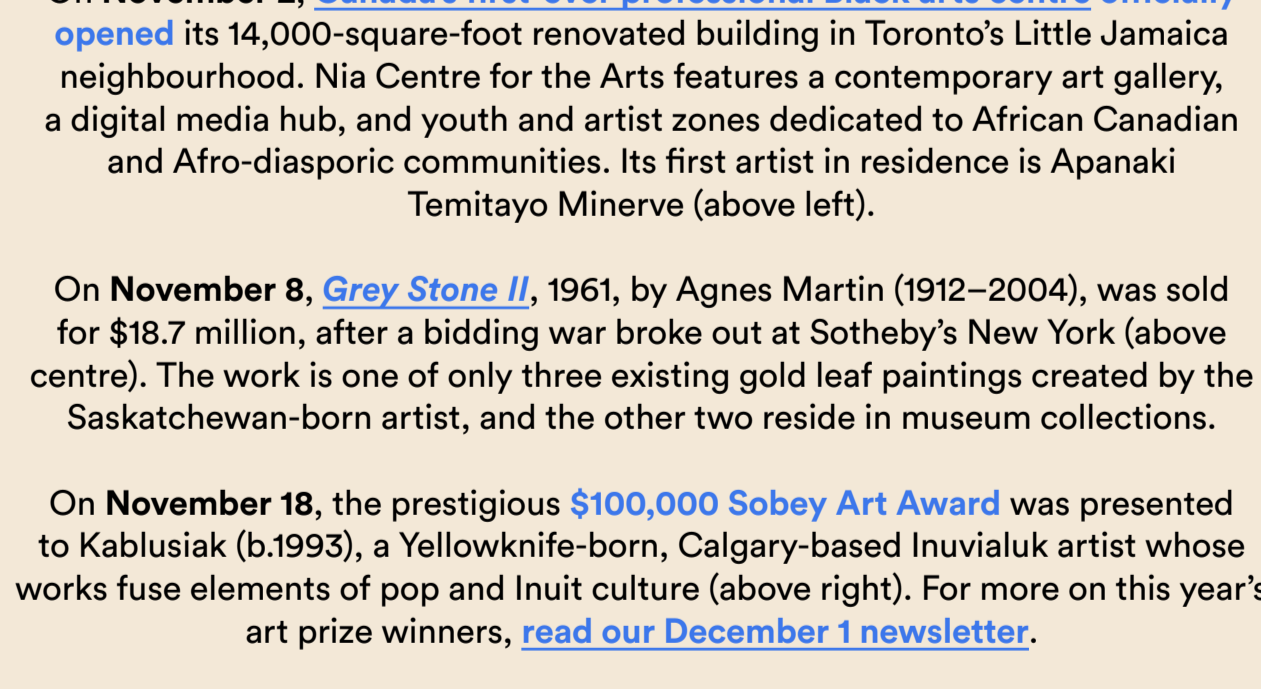
MAY



Installation view of *The Secret Codes: African Nova Scotian Quilts* at the Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, 2023, featuring works by Myla Borden (quilt artist) and David Woods (designer): *Meeting At The Well*, 2009 (left); *Ecstasy of Amelinda Colley*, 2007 (centre); and *A Visit from Mommy*, 2011 (right), photograph by Stephen Abbott. Robert Houle, *O-ween du muh woun (We Were Told)*, 2017, Confederation Centre of the Arts, Charlottetown. Michelle Chawla, *Red is Beautiful*, 2017, the National Museum of the American Indian, featuring such celebrated works as *O-ween du muh woun (We Were Told)*, 2017 (above right), and highlighting fifty years of art by the revered Saulteaux First Nations artist (b.1947).

On **May 8**, **Michelle Chawla was announced as the successor of Simon Bray** as Director and CEO of the Canada Council for the Arts.

JUNE



Françoise Sullivan, photograph by Éric Lajeunesse. © Françoise Sullivan (Copyright Visual Arts-CARCC, 2023). National Indigenous Peoples Day \$2 commemorative circulation coin, 2023, courtesy of the Royal Canadian Mint. James Hart, 2017, courtesy of Simon Fraser University. Pascal St-Onge on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, December 15, 2022, photograph by Sean Kilpatrick / The Canadian Press.

Celebrations abounded this month, beginning on **June 10** with the one hundredth birthday of Quebec artist Françoise Sullivan (b.1923) (above left), a pioneer of modern dance and one of the last surviving members of the Automatistes. To honour this milestone, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts mounted a solo exhibition of her work, ***Françoise Sullivan: "I let rhythms flow,"*** which runs until February 18, 2024.

On **June 21**, to mark National Indigenous Peoples Day, the Royal Canadian Mint issued a **commemorative \$2 coin** (above right) designed by three artists: Megan Currie (English River First Nation), Yvonne Pokiak (Agawaik) (Inuvialuit Settlement Region), and Jennine Krauch (Red River Métis).

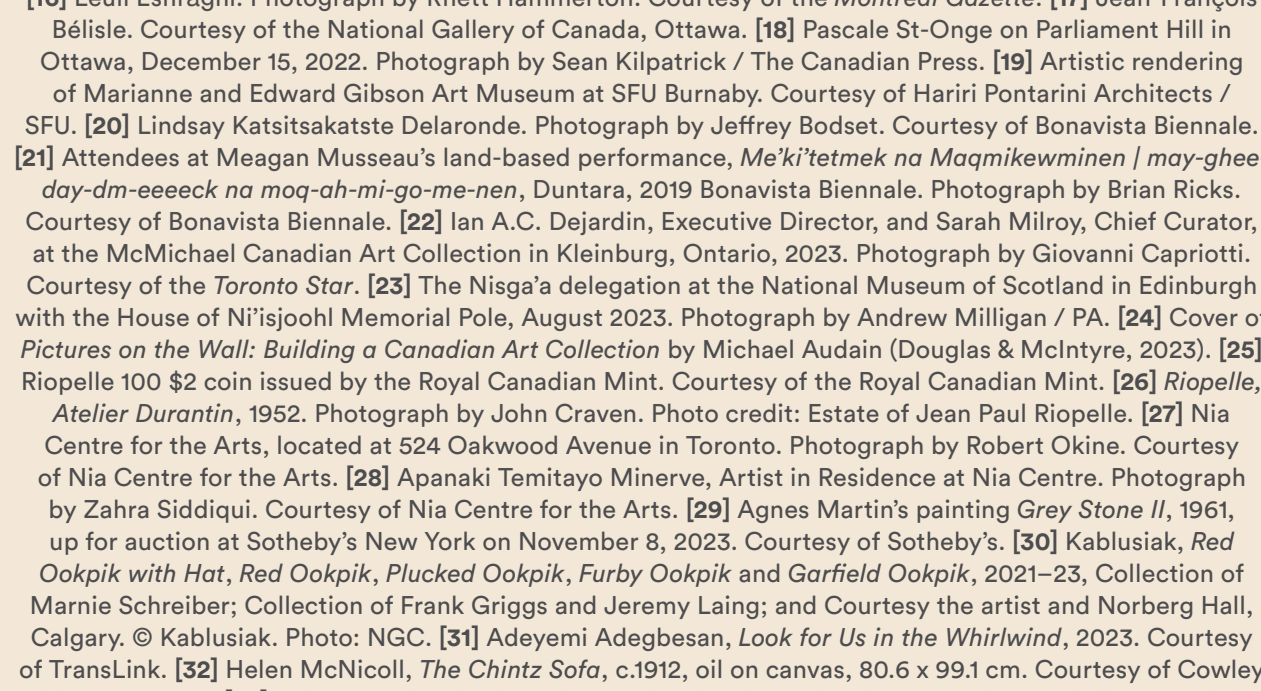
To cap the month off, on **June 30**, Governor General Mary Simon announced **85 appointments to the Order of Canada**, including Haida master carver James Hart (b.1952) (above right) and Cree artist Kent Monkman (b.1965).

Meanwhile, on **June 8**, ***Ragged Oaks***, 1916, by Tom Thomson (1877–1917) broke records when it sold for \$1.8 million at Cowley Abbott's Spring Live Auction in Toronto.

And on **June 21**, a 2.4-metre-wide walkway mural in Regina was **unveiled during a ceremony** in honour of National Indigenous Peoples Day. ***Path to Reconciliation*** was painted by volunteer artists and spearheaded by Inuvialuit- and Gwich'in artist Brandy Jones and Cree-Métis artist Geanna Dunbar.

Share this newsletter with friends who love Canada's art, or invite them to sign up here for our weekly dispatch.

JULY



Léul Eshraghi, photograph by Rhett Hamerton. Jean-François Bélisle. Pascale St-Onge on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, December 15, 2022, photograph by Sean Kilpatrick / The Canadian Press.

On **July 10**, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts announced its **first curator of Indigenous arts, Léul Eshraghi** (above left).

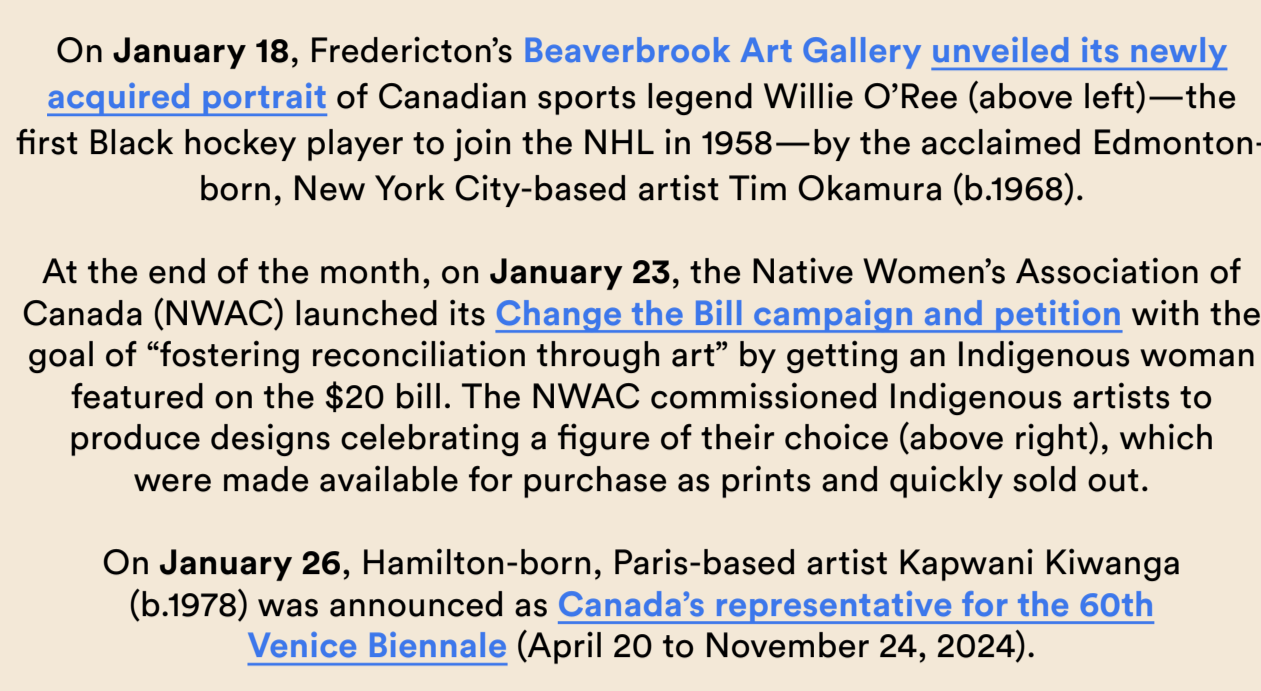
On **July 17**, Jean-François Bélisle (above centre) assumed the position of **Director and CEO of the National Gallery of Canada**, after leading the Musée d'art de Joliette.

In Quebec City, following a cabinet shuffle on **July 26**, Quebec MP and former alternative rock musician **Pascale St-Onge (above right) was appointed as Heritage Minister**.

On **July 1**, the **Chinese Canadian Museum opened in Vancouver**, making it the first permanent exhibition space in the country to focus on Chinese Canadian history and culture. As well, the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., opened ***Reposition***, an exhibition of works by Toronto-based artist Gordon Shadrach that confronts myths and realities about the history of slavery in Canada.

On **July 7**, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection announced that 89,000 Inuit prints housed there since the 1990s, and owned by the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative, were being made available for viewing online, thanks to an **innovative digitization project** led by Toronto photographer Edward Burtynsky (b.1955).

AUGUST

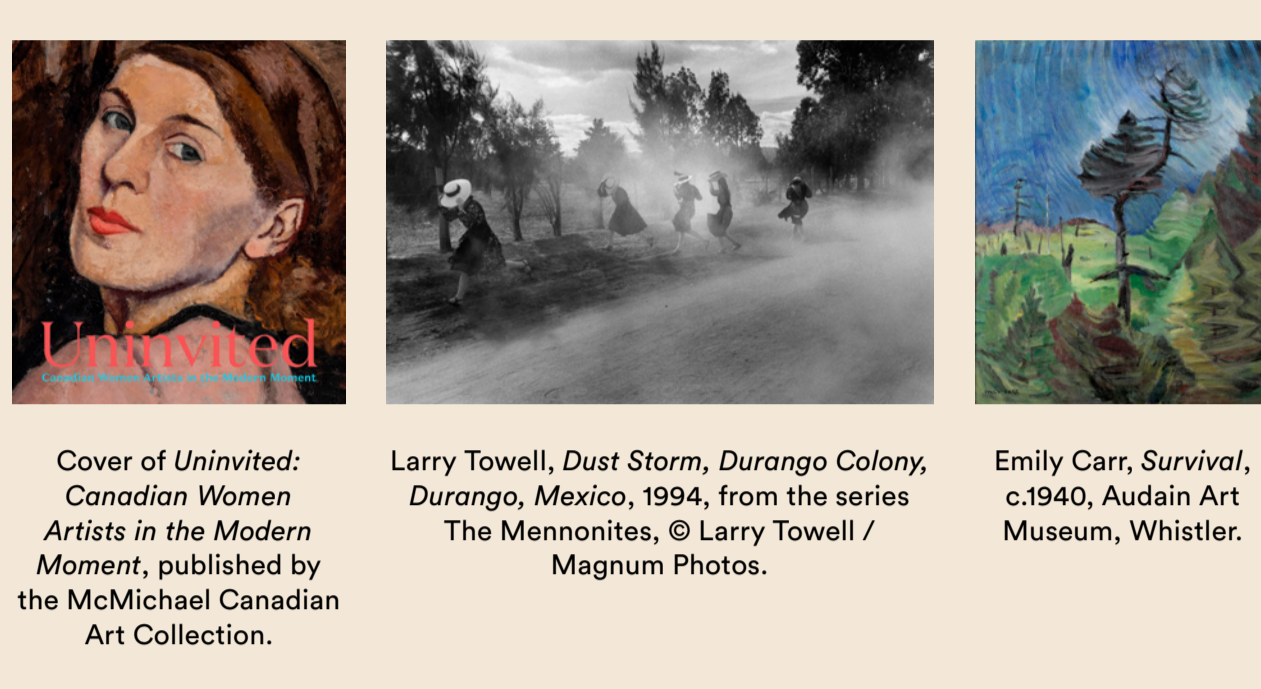


Artistic rendering of Marianne and Edward Gibson Art Museum at SFU Burnaby, courtesy of Harini Portantini Architects / SFU. Lindsay Katsitsakatske Delaronde, photograph by Jeffrey Bodest. Attendees at Meagan Musseaux's land-based performance, *Me'ki'temek na Maqimkwemwin / may-ghe-day-dm-eeek na moq-at-mi-go-me-nen*, Duntara, 2019 Bonavista Biennale, photograph by Brian Ricks.

Exciting happenings on both coasts began on **August 1** with a ground-awakening ceremony and the start of **construction on The Marianne and Edward Gibson Art Museum** (above left), a new \$26-million contemporary art centre at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby to house its collection of over 5,800 artworks and objects, largely from Canada's West Coast region.

From **August 19 to September 17**, the **Bonavista Biennale** took over Newfoundland's Bonavista Peninsula (above right), including a performance by Kanien'ke'haka artist Lindsay Katsitsakatske Delaronde (above centre). This year's theme, *Host*, encouraged attendees to contemplate their relationships with the surrounding lands and waters, as well as Canada's history as a multicultural nation of settlers and uninited guests.

SEPTEMBER



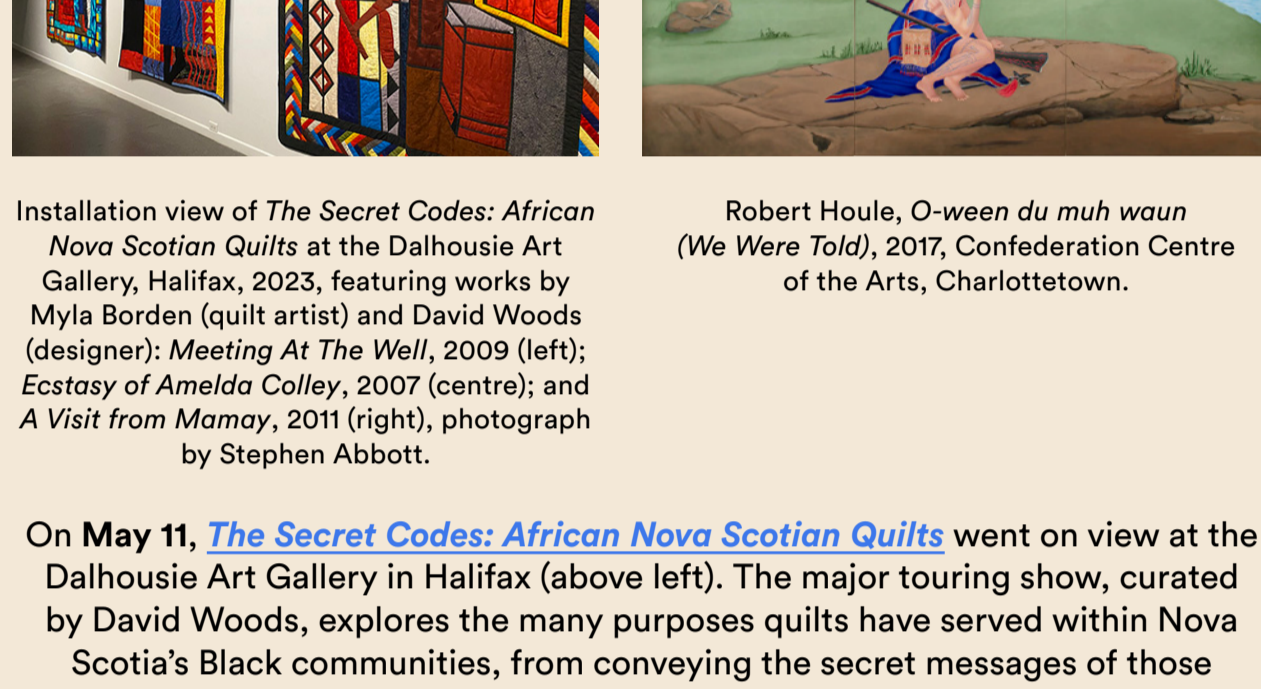
Ian A.C. DeJardin, Executive Director, and Sarah Milroy, Chief Curator, at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario, 2023, photograph by Giovanni Capriotti. The Nisga'a delegation at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh with the House of Ninjishoji Memorial Pole, August 2023, photograph by Andrew Milligan / PA. Cover of *Pictures on the Wall: Building a Canadian Art Collection* by Michael Audain (Douglas & McIntyre, 2023).

On **September 8**, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection announced that **Chief Curator Sarah Milroy (above left) would become executive director** following the retirement of Ian A.C. DeJardin in October. Milroy, who joined the McMichael in 2018, has organized groundbreaking exhibitions including *Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment*.

On **September 29**, at Hii Goothi Wilp-Adokshi Nisga'a (or the Nisga'a Museum), a public ceremony marked the **restitution of the House of Ninjishoji Memorial Pole** (above centre). Created in 1855 by master carver Oyay Tait, the pole spent nearly a century in the collection of the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh before returning to its original home on Nisga'a land in what is now British Columbia's Nass Valley.

On **September 30**, Canada's leading visual arts philanthropist **Michael Audain released *Pictures on the Wall: Building a Canadian Art Collection*** (above right), which shares the story behind 75 significant works that transformed his collection and his relationship with art.

OCTOBER

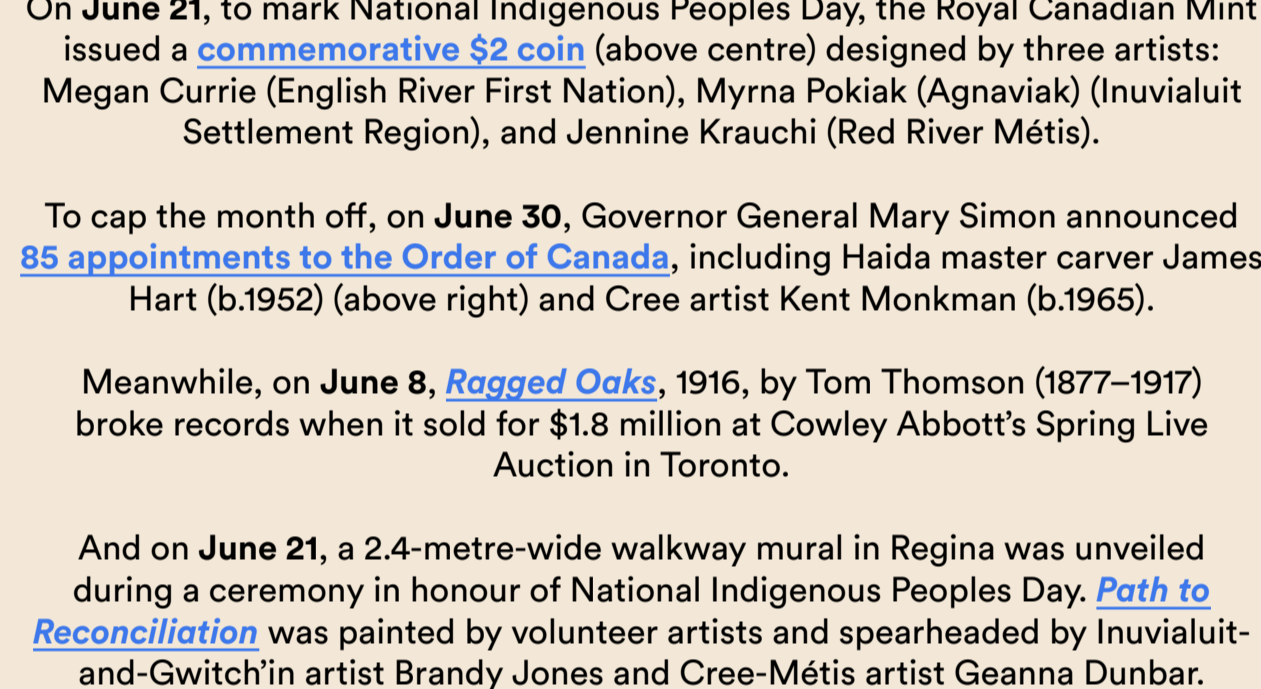


Riopelle 100 \$2 coin issued by the Royal Canadian Mint. Riopelle, *Atelier Durantin*, 1952, photograph by John Craven. Jean Paul Riopelle (1923–2002) (above right) on **October 3**, the Royal Canadian Mint issued a **new \$2 coin** (above left) featuring his work. As well, on **October 27**, the National Gallery of Canada opened the retrospective ***Riopelle: Crossroads in Time***.

Released on **October 3**, a new biography, ***Mary Pratt: A Love Affair with Vision***, by Saskville-based art historian Anne Koval, takes an in-depth look at the iconic painter's rise to fame and her ability to transform ordinary still-life scenes into paintings loaded with pathos and symbolism.

On **October 11**, Wanda Nanibush and Georgiana Uhlyarik won the **2023 Toronto Book Award for *Moving the Museum***.

NOVEMBER



Apanaki Temitayo Minerve, Artist in Residence, at Nia Centre, photograph by Zahra Siddiqui. Agnes Martin's painting *Grey Stone II*, 1961, up for auction at Sotheby's New York on November 8, 2023, courtesy of Sotheby's. Kablusiak, *Red Ookpik with Hat, Red Ookpik, Plucked Ookpik, Furby Ookpik and Garfield Ookpik*, 2021–23, collection of Marlene Schreiber, collection of Frank Griggs and Jeremy Laing; and courtesy the artist and Norberg Hall, Calgary.

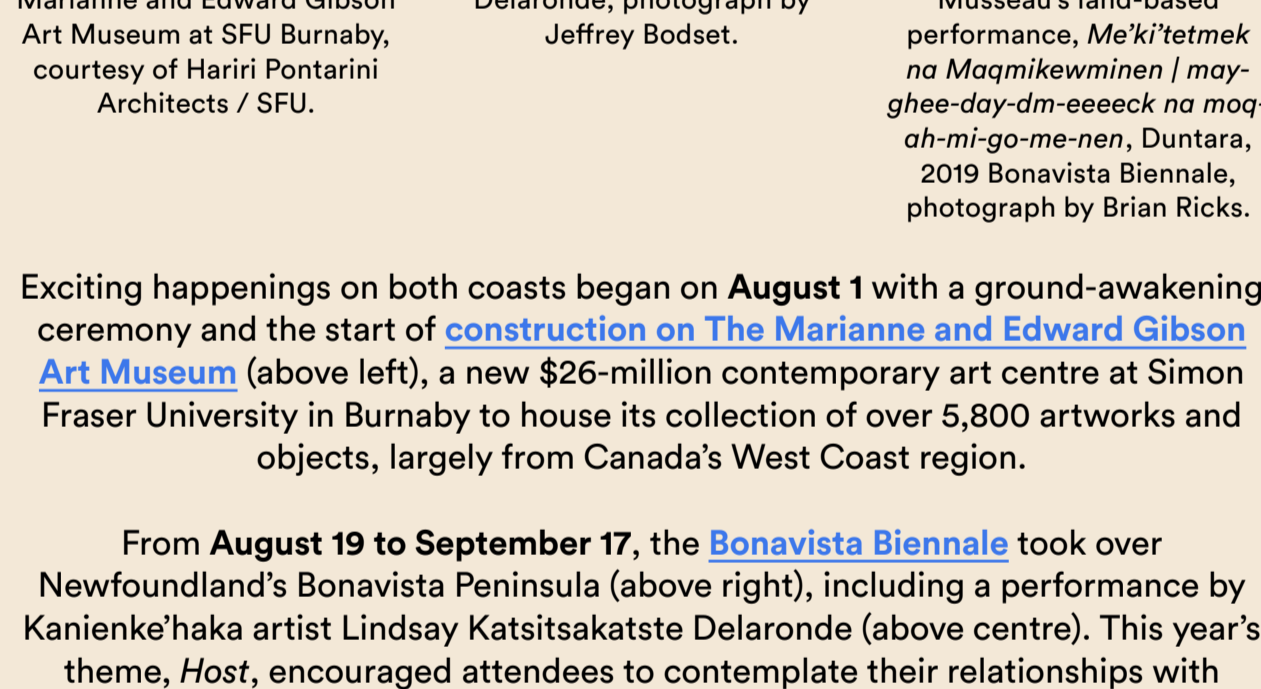
On **November 2**, **Canada's first-ever professional Black arts centre officially opened** its 14,000-square-foot renovated building in Toronto's Little Jamaica neighbourhood. Nia Centre for the Arts features a contemporary art gallery, a digital media hub, and youth and artist zones dedicated to African Canadian and Afro-diasporic communities. Its first artist in residence is Apanaki Temitayo Minerve (above left).

On **November 8**, ***Grey Stone II***, 1961, by Agnes Martin (1912–2004), was sold for \$18.7 million, after a bidding war broke out at Sotheby's New York City auction. The work is one of only three existing gold leaf paintings created by the Saskatchewan-born artist, and the other two reside in museum collections.

On **November 18**, the prestigious **\$100,000 Sobey Art Award** was presented to Kablusiak (b.1993), a Yellowknife-born, Calgary-based Inuvialuit artist whose works fuse elements of pop and Inuit culture (above right). For more on this year's art prize winners, **read our December 1 newsletter**.

On **November 28**, the **Beaverbrook Art Gallery** in Fredericton announced the appointment of the Nova Scotia-based artist, curator, and author **Ray Cronin as the Curator of Canadian Art**.

DECEMBER



Adeyemi Adegbesan, *Look for Us in the Whirlwind*, 2023, courtesy of TransLink. Helen McNicoll, *The Chintz Sofa*, c.1912, courtesy of Cowley Abbott, Toronto. Unknown, sketch after *The Tangled Garden*, n.d., oil on paperboard. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery.

On **December 4**, at four Vancouver SkyTrain stations, **large-scale public art installations by Black Canadian artists** Jan Wade, Natoya Ellis, Nya Lewis, and Adeyemi Adegbesan (above left) were unveiled. Selected by curator Nya Lewis and on view for the next two years as part of her project *Carry It Well*, the works "explore themes of stewardship, lineage, and tradition."

On **December 6**, Cowley Abbott's Fall Live Auction resulted in over 30 artist sale records. Highlights include ***The Chintz Sofa***, c.1912, by Helen McNicoll (1879–1915) (above centre), which sold for \$888,000, well above the auction estimate of \$250,000–\$350,000.

On **December 14**, in a *Globe & Mail* story, the **Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) revealed** that ten painted sketches attributed to the beloved Group of Seven artist J.E.H. MacDonald (1873–1932) are fakes—created by a single artist whose identity remains unknown. On **December 16**, the VAG launched the exhibition ***J.E.H. MacDonald?: A Tangled Garden***, which examines the works acquired by the VAG in 2015 (above right) before doubts of their authenticity arose in the art community.

On **December 8**, the **Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts 2023** exhibition opened at the National Gallery of Canada, featuring the work of this year's eight recipients: Grace Nickel, David Graneau, Evergon, FASTWURMS, Germaine Koh, Shannon Walsh, Tim Whiten, and Nettie Wild. Launched in 1999, the awards recognize the careers of exceptional Canadian artists.

THANK YOU TO OUR BENEFACTORS

The ACI is a not-for-profit educational charity that receives no government financing or public support. Our work is made possible by an important circle of **friends, patrons, and benefactors**.

If you would like to support our important work, please see **this page**.

Follow us on social media

Facebook
artcaninstitute/

Instagram
@artcaninstitute

Twitter
@artcaninstitute

Image Credits: [1] Tim Okamura, *Willie O'Ree*, 2019, oil on canvas, 152.4 x 152.4 cm. Courtesy of Tim Okamura. [2] Proposed designs for the \$20 bill, commissioned by the Native Women's Association of Canada, courtesy of the NWAC. [3] A saddlebag of Chief Poundmaker. Handout photo by Royal Ontario Museum. [4] Jimmy Baptiste's commissioned mural *Onah* installed in the National Arts Centre's Kipnes Lantern, Ottawa, 2023. Photograph by Catherine Wilkie. [5] Cover of *Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment*, published by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. [6] Larry Towell, *Dust Storm, Durango Colony, Durango, Mexico, 1994*, from the series *The Mennonites*. © Larry Towell / Magnum Photos. [7] Emily Carr, *Survival, c.1940*, oil on canvas, 71 x 58.5 cm. Collection of the Audain Art Museum, Whistler, acquired with funds from Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa. [8] Germaine Arnaktauyok, *Mother Earth*, 2007, ink, coloured pencil on paper. Collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Photo credit: Ernest Meyer. Photograph by Ted Belton. [9] Wilhelm von Schadow, *The Artist's Children / Bildnis der Kinder des Künstlers*, 1830, oil on canvas, 142.1 x 113.3 cm. Collection of Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf (M 1977-1). [10] Installation view of *The Secret Codes: African Nova Scotian Quilts* at the Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, 2023, featuring works by Myla Borden (quilt artist) and David Woods (designer): *Meeting At The Well*, 2009 (left); *Ecstasy of Amelinda Colley*, 2007 (centre); and *A Visit from Mommy*, 2011 (right), photograph by Stephen Abbott. Courtesy of Dalhousie University and Black Artists Network of NS (BANNS). [12] Robert Houle, *O-ween du muh woun (We Were Told)*, 2017, oil on canvas, triptych, 213.4 x 365.8 cm. Collection of the Confederation Centre of the Arts, Charlottetown, commissioned with the A.G. and Eliza Jane Ramsden Endowment Fund, 2017. Courtesy of the artist. © Robert Houle. [13] Françoise Sullivan. Photograph by Éric Lajeunesse. © Françoise Sullivan (Copyright Visual Arts-CARCC, 2023). [14] National Indigenous Peoples Day \$2 commemorative circulation coin, 2023, courtesy of the Royal Canadian Mint. [15] James Hart, 2017. Courtesy of Simon Fraser University. [16] Léul Eshraghi. Photograph by Rhett Hamerton. Courtesy of the Montreal Gazette. [17] Jean-François Bélisle. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. [18] Pascale St-Onge on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, December 15, 2022. Photograph by Sean Kilpatrick / The Canadian Press. [19] Artistic rendering of Marianne and Edward Gibson Art Museum at SFU Burnaby. Courtesy of Harini Portantini Architects / SFU. [20] Lindsay Katsitsakatske Delaronde. Photograph by Jeffrey Bodest. Courtesy of Bonavista Biennale. [21] Attendees at Meagan Musseaux's land-based performance, *Me'ki'temek na Maqimkwemwin / may-ghe-day-dm-eeek na moq-at-mi-go-me-nen*, Duntara, 2019 Bonavista Biennale. Photograph by Brian Ricks. Courtesy of Bonavista Biennale. [22] Ian A.C. DeJardin, Executive Director, and Sarah Milroy, Chief Curator, at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario, 2023. Photograph by Giovanni Capriotti. Courtesy of the Toronto Star. [23] The Nisga'a delegation at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh with the House of Ninjishoji Memorial Pole, August 2023. Photograph by Andrew Milligan / PA. [24] Cover of *Pictures on the Wall: Building a Canadian Art Collection* by Michael Audain (Douglas & McIntyre, 2023). [25] Riopelle 100 \$2 coin issued by the Royal Canadian Mint. Courtesy of the Royal Canadian Mint. [26] Riopelle, *Atelier Durantin*, 1952. Photograph by John Craven. Photo credit: Estate of Jean Paul Riopelle. [27] Nia Centre for the Arts, located at 524 Oakwood Avenue in Toronto. Photograph by Robert Okine. Courtesy of Nia Centre for the Arts. [28] Apanaki Temitayo Minerve, Artist in Residence at Nia Centre, photograph by Zahra Siddiqui. [29] Agnes Martin's painting *Grey Stone II*, 1961, up for auction at Sotheby's New York on November 8, 2023. Photograph by Robert Okine. [30] Kablusiak, *Red Ookpik with Hat, Red Ookpik, Plucked Ookpik, Furby Ookpik and Garfield Ookpik*, 2021–23, collection of Marlene Schreiber, collection of Frank Griggs and Jeremy Laing; and courtesy the artist and Norberg Hall, Calgary. [31] Adeyemi Adegbesan, *Look for Us in the Whirlwind*, 2023. Courtesy of TransLink. [32] Helen McNicoll, *The Chintz Sofa*, c.1912, oil on canvas, 80.6 x 99.1 cm. Courtesy of Cowley Abbott, Toronto. [33] Unknown, sketch after *The Tangled Garden*, n.d., oil on paperboard. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery.