ART CANADA INSTITUTE | INSTITUT DE L'ART CANADIEN

JUNE 28, 2024

FACES OF CANADA
150 YEARS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Images of who we are, as drawn from Sarah Bassnett and Sarah Parsons's landmark book Photography in Canada, 1839–1989

Michel Lambeth, *Little girl watching the photographer as the crowd behind her watches the Grey Cup Parade*, 1965, from the series Call Them Canadians, National Film Board of Canada Still Photography Division Archive, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

What does the face of Canada look like? Photographers have been asking this question since 1839 when the camera came into use—a fact documented and discussed by Sarah Bassnett and Sarah Parsons, the authors of *Photography in Canada, 1839–1989: An Illustrated History*, published in print by the Art Canada Institute last month. As their impressive book reveals, faces are among the most significant and salient stimuli of human interactions—central to our social, political, emotional, and environmental encounters. As you move into the long weekend, we hope you enjoy this selection and reflection on the country drawn from the Bassnett and Parsons collaboration. It chronicles both renowned and understudied photographers, including those who had access to the country's major institutions, as well as those who documented marginalized communities, and takes a deep look at the remarkable visage of Canada.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

THE REBEL, 1982/1989

by Shelley Niro

Shelley Niro, *The Rebel*, shot in 1982, shown in 1989, courtesy of Shelley Niro.

Shelley Niro (b.1954) is an artist of the Turtle Clan of the Bay of Quinte Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) Nation who has long used tongue-in-cheek humour and mimicry to critique how Indigenous women are fetishized, dehumanized, and ignored in North American society. Her photograph *The Rebel*, 1982/1989, takes its title from the American car model of the same name. Here, the back half of the car acts as a stage—and "REBEL" the caption—for the figure of her mother, June Chiquita Doxtater, who is lying across the trunk, centrefold-style. Playful and powerful, Niro's body of work was honoured in 2017 with the Scotiabank Photography Award.

Learn more about Shelley Niro's *The Rebel*

KISS-IN AT THE CORNER OF YONGE AND BLOOR, TORONTO, 1976

by Gerald Hannon

Gerald Hannon, *Kiss-in at the corner of Yonge and Bloor, Toronto*, 1976, The ArQuives, Toronto.

Gerald Hannon (1944–2022) was a beloved Toronto activist, writer, educator, and photographer best known for his work with the gay liberation newspaper *The Body Politic* (1971–87). *Kiss-in at the corner of Yonge and Bloor, Toronto*, 1976, documents one of many interventions of the era—here, an all-male public "kiss-in" at the symbolic centre of Canada's biggest city. These political actions brought visibility to same-sex desire and claimed space for LGBTQ communities at a time when they were often smeared by the mainstream press and hounded by the police. Hannon's memoir, *Immoral, Indecent & Scurrilous*, was released just before he passed away in 2022.

Read more in ACI's *Photography in Canada, 1839–1989: An Illustrated History* by Sarah Bassnett and Sarah Parsons

TI-NOIR LAJEUNESSE, THE BLIND FIDDLER, SAINT-JEAN-BAPTISTE DAY, DISRAELI, 1972

by Claire Beaugrand-Champagne

Claire Beaugrand-Champagne, *Ti-Noir Lajeunesse, the blind fiddler, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, Disraeli*, 1972, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

Photographer Claire Beaugrand-Champagne (b.1948) sensitively documents Quebec society through long-term documentary projects like Disraeli, expérience humaine en photographie, 1972–74, which explored rural Quebec life. A photograph from this series, *Ti-Noir Lajeunesse, the blind fiddler, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, Disraeli*, 1972, shows a blind fiddler performing in a field with a barn in the background. Beaugrand-Champagne helped raise awareness of the experiences of Vietnamese refugees in Montreal, the elderly, and people living in poverty. She was one of the few female press photographers in 1970s Quebec and a member of Groupe d'action photographique, a collective of socially engaged documentary photographers. Her work continues apace today.

Read more in ACI's *Photography in Canada, 1839–1989: An Illustrated History* by Sarah Bassnett and Sarah Parsons

LITTLE GIRL WATCHING THE PHOTOGRAPHER AS THE CROWD BEHIND HER WATCHES

THE GREY CUP PARADE, 1965

by Michel Lambeth

Michel Lambeth, *Little girl watching the photographer as the crowd behind her watches the Grey Cup Parade*, 1965, from the series Call them Canadians, National Film Board of Canada Still Photography Division Archive, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Toronto photographer Thomas Henry (Michel) Lambeth (1923–1977) worked as a photojournalist and was deeply engaged in social activism. However, he is best known for his images taken on local streets and in community spaces, providing a highly personal portrait of the city full of unexpected viewpoints and connections. This picture, which appeared in the National Film Board-produced book *Call Them Canadians: A Photographic Point of View* (1968), is a memorable example. The photograph captures a baby girl curiously looking at the photographer from her stroller as a throng of people is turned away to watch that year's Grey Cup Parade celebrating the victory of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

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JEWISH MARKET, TORONTO, 1954

by Lutz Dille

Lutz Dille, *Jewish Market, Toronto*, 1954, courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto.

Leipzig-born Lutz Dille (1922–2008) was a street and documentary photographer, photojournalist, and filmmaker. During the Second World War, Dille worked as a reconnaissance photographer for Germany before relocating to Canada, where he lived from 1951 to 1980. He traveled frequently, working on commission for the CBC and other media outlets, producing lively street photographs like *Jewish Market, Toronto*, 1954—which captures two men mid-conversation, as one perches on a pile of pallets during a smoke break. In 1967, he won the Yousuf Karsh Award and the National Film Board of Canada organized the exhibition *The Many Worlds of Lutz Dille*.

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CLOSE-UP PORTRAIT OF A CHICKADEE TAKING A SUNFLOWER SEED FROM DOROTHY STOTESBURY'S MOUTH. SHILLY SHALLY LODGE, GATINEAU PARK, C.1958

by Rosemary Gilliat Eaton

Rosemary Gilliat Eaton, *Close-up portrait of a chickadee taking a sunflower seed from Dorothy Stotesbury's mouth. Shilly Shally Lodge, Gatineau Park*, c.1958, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

Born in England and raised on her family's tea plantation in Sri Lanka before coming to Canada by herself in 1952, Rosemary Gilliat Eaton (1919–2004) is best known for her photojournalism work. The assignments that she took on enabled her to travel and to document the geographic and social diversity of the country, with a particular attention to the North. The whimsical photograph *Close-up of a chickadee taking a sunflower seed from Dorothy Stotebury's mouth...*, c.1958, however, was taken around Gatineau Park near her home in Ottawa, where she spent countless weekends and took photographs in order to aid in conservation efforts.

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AGGEOK PITSEOLAK WEARING A BEADED AMAUTI, C.1940–60

by Peter Pitseolak

Aggeok Pitseolak wearing a beaded amauti, c.1940–60, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau.

Widely known as the first photographer to explore life in the Arctic from an Indigenous perspective, the self-taught Peter Pitseolak (1902–1973) commemorated stories, customs, and daily activities during a period of immense change and government incursion in the mid-twentieth century. Pitseolak often shot and developed images alongside his wife in their home community of Kinngait (Cape Dorset), Nunavut. In *Aggeok Pitseolak wearing a beaded amauti*, c.1940–60, Aggeok is featured in a traditional parka made of seal fur. Pitseolak's remarkable body of work stands in contrast to documentary photographs taken by Canadian government officials who largely used the medium to justify colonial presence in the North.

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CHINESE MAN IN REVOLUTIONARY BACKGROUND, C.1912

by C.D. (Chow Dong) Hoy

C.D. Hoy, *Chinese man in Revolutionary background*, 1912, Barkervillle Historic Town Archives.

The photographs of C.D. (Chow Dong) Hoy (1883–1973) offer a rich visual archive of the people of Quesnel, British Columbia, a frontier town that was predominantly Asian Canadian and Indigenous at the turn of the twentieth century. *Chinese man in Revolutionary background*, 1912, shows how Hoy would employ props and backdrops particular to the culture of his sitter to craft an image of prosperity. One of the first photographers of Chinese descent to work in Canada, Hoy left an extraordinary record of his multiracial community in his works, including depictions of Carrier and Tsilhqot'in people as well as White settlers. A particularly busy time for his studio was Quesnel's annual Dominion Day Stampede.

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UNIDENTIFIED MAN WITH A CIGAR, C.1870–80

by unknown photographer

Unidentified man with a cigar, c.1870–80, photographer unknown, Brock University Archives, St. Catharines.

Tintype portraits were popular with working-class visitors at fairs and tourist destinations—they proliferated because they were durable and relatively easy to make, but for many years, they were not widely collected by institutions nor studied. The exhibition *Free Black North*, held at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2017, explored how tintypes offered Black people living in small-town Ontario a means of aspirational self-fashioning, such as in this photograph of an unidentified man with a cigar.

Learn more about *Free Black North*

GREY NUNS, 1861

by George William Ellisson

George William Ellisson, *Grey Nuns*, 1861, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

The striking double portrait *Grey Nuns*, 1861, depicts two members of the eponymous Montreal religious order founded in 1737 by Marguerite d'Youville wrapped in thick habits and gazing out at us solemnly, hands folded on their laps. George William Ellisson (or Ellison) (1827–c.1879) was a photographer active first in Saint John and then in Quebec City between the late 1840s and 1860s. Besides the Grey Nuns, he made portraits of prominent figures like Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, and photographed views of Quebec City to sell as stereographs.

Read more in ACI's *Photography in Canada, 1839–1989: An Illustrated History* by Sarah Bassnett and Sarah Parsons

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Image Credits: **[1, 5]** Michel Lambeth, *Little girl watching the photographer as the crowd behind her watches the Grey Cup Parade*, 1965, from the series Call them Canadians. Collection of the National Film Board of Canada Still Photography Division Archive, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (NFB-65-3018). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. © Estate of Michel Lambeth. Photo credit: NGC. **[2]** Shelley Niro, *The Rebel*, shot in 1982, shown in 1989, hand-tinted photograph, 28 x 35.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist. © Shelley Niro. **[3]** Gerald Hannon, *Kiss-in at the corner of Yonge and Bloor, Toronto*, 1976, gelatin silver print. Collection of The ArQuives, Toronto. Courtesy of The ArQuives. © Estate of Gerald Hannon. **[4]** Claire Beaugrand-Champagne, *Ti-Noir Lajeunesse, the blind fiddler, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, Disraeli*, 1972, gelatin silver print, 10.2 x 17.2 cm. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, Purchase (1999.38). Courtesy of the artist. © Claire Beaugrand-Champagne. **[6]** Lutz Dille, *Jewish Market, Toronto*, 1954, gelatin silver print, 18.4 x 24.1 cm. Courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto. © Estate of Lutz Dille. **[7]** Rosemary Gilliat Eaton, *Close-up portrait of a chickadee taking a sunflower seed from Dorothy Stotesbury's mouth. Shilly Shally Lodge, Gatineau Park*, c.1958, colour slide, 35mm. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (4311382). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada. **[8]** Peter Pitseolak, *Aggeok Pitseolak wearing a beaded amauti*, c.1940–60, black and white negative, 5.7 x 8.9 cm. Collection of the Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau (2000-684). **[9]** C.D. Hoy, *Chinese man in Revolutionary background*, 1912. Collection of the Barkervillle Historic Town Archives (P1687). Courtesy of the Barkerville Historic Town Archives. **[10]** Photographer unknown, *Unidentified man with a cigar*, c.1870–80, tintype, 8.9 x 6.4 cm. Collection of the Brock University Archives, St. Catharines (BUA002284240f). Courtesy of the Brock University Archives. **[11]** George William Ellisson, *Grey Nuns*, 1861, albumen silver print, 20.2 x 17.6 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1972 (21645). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC.