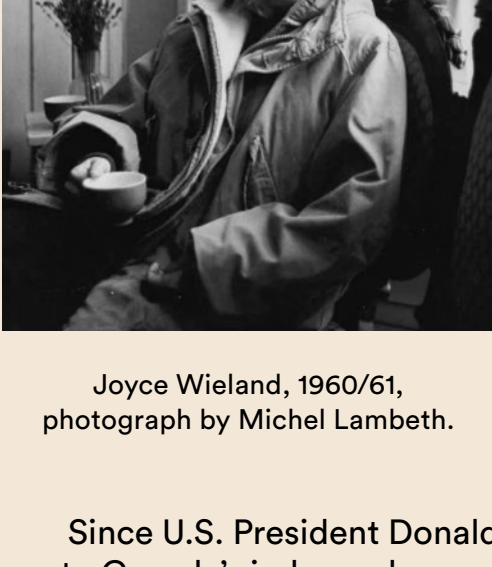


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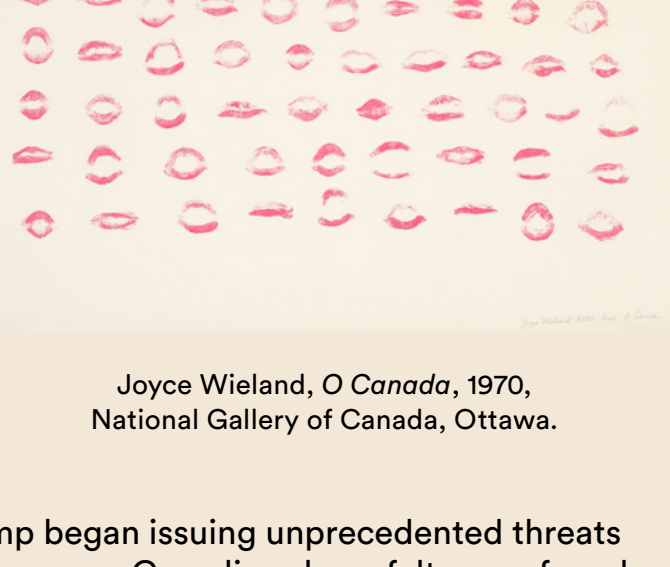
# LIPSTICK NATIONAL ANTHEM

## A CLOSE LOOK AT JOYCE WIELAND'S REMARKABLE O CANADA

*At a time of renewed patriotism,  
the artist's iconic work is ripe for rediscovery.*



Joyce Wieland, 1960/61, photograph by Michel Lambeth.

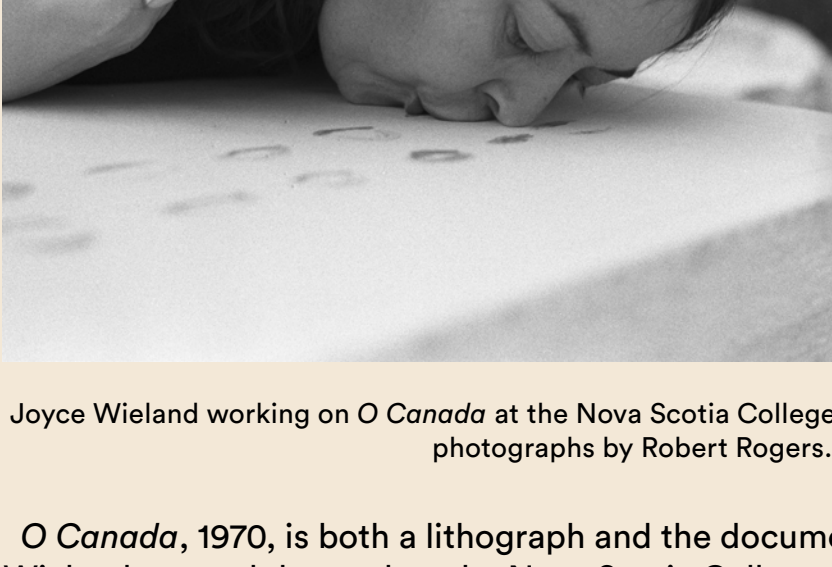


Joyce Wieland, *O Canada*, 1970, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Since U.S. President Donald Trump began issuing unprecedented threats to Canada's independence and economy, Canadians have felt a newfound patriotism. The recently opened retrospective *Joyce Wieland: Heart On*, now on at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts until May 4 (before it travels to the Art Gallery of Ontario), and the related *Pucker Up! The Lipstick Prints of Joyce Wieland* at the National Gallery of Canada, could not be better timed. They focus on the extraordinary work of the great Toronto-born multidisciplinary artist Joyce Wieland (1930–1998), the first living female artist to have a show at the National Gallery of Canada, in 1971. One of the most notable works in that landmark exhibition was the lithograph *O Canada*, 1970, which Wieland created by wearing bright red lipstick, pronouncing each syllable of the national anthem, and pressing her lips to the lithograph stone. Now on view in *Heart On*, the piece is more meaningful than ever. Here is a close-up look and brief history of the mesmerizing work.

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

## PUCKER UP! MAKING O CANADA

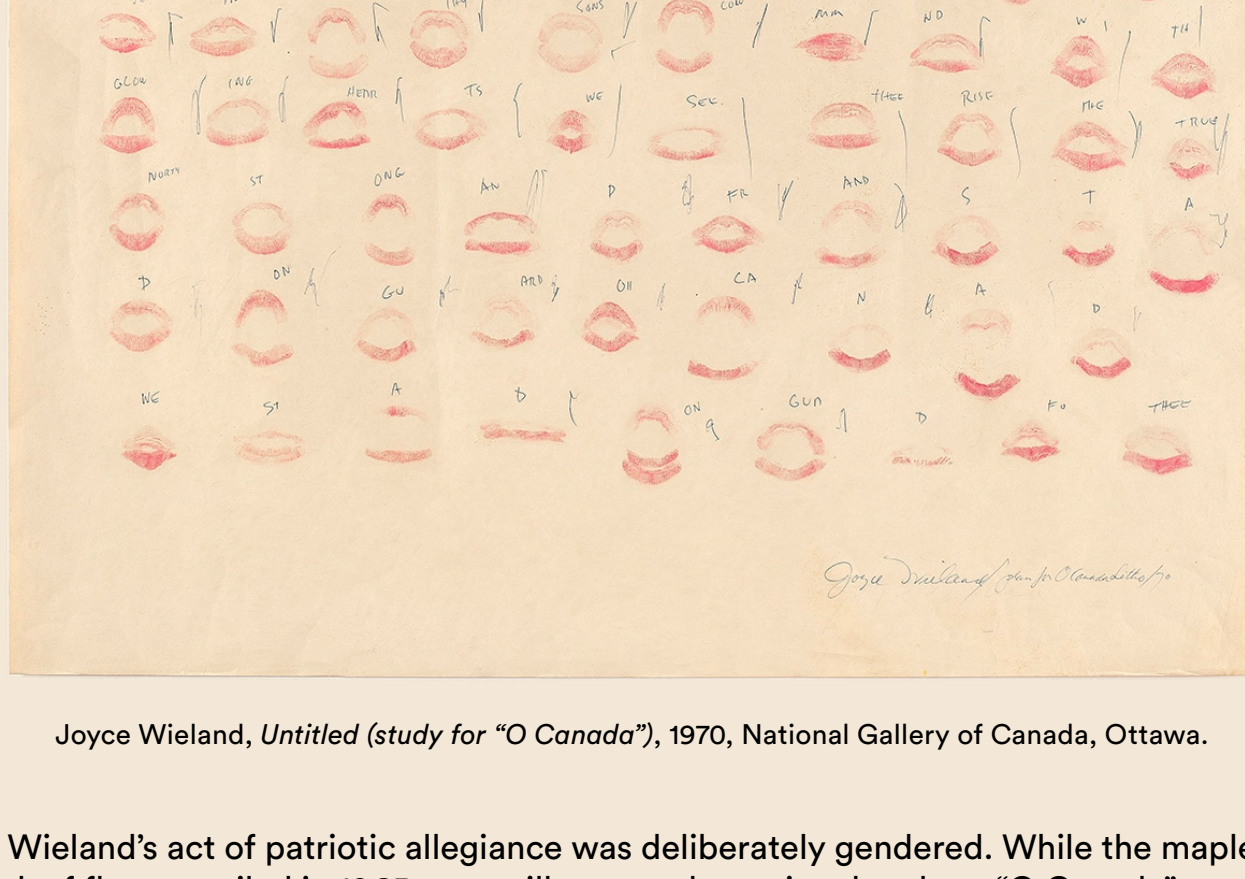


Joyce Wieland working on *O Canada* at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, 1970, photographs by Robert Rogers.

*O Canada*, 1970, is both a lithograph and the documentation of a performance. Wieland created the work at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax, where master printer Robert Rogers (b.1944) took a remarkable suite of photographs (above) as she worked. They capture the creation of *O Canada*, in which Wieland amorously embraces the lithographic stone. Wearing lipstick was key, partly because lithography requires an oily substance to render the desired design.

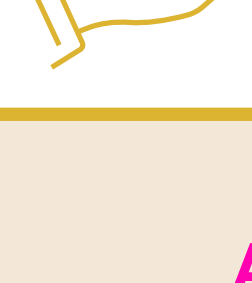
Read more about this work in ACI's *Joyce Wieland: Life & Work* by Johanne Sloan

## INTERACTIVE ART: MAKING O CANADA



Joyce Wieland, *Untitled (study for "O Canada")*, 1970, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Wieland's act of patriotic allegiance was deliberately gendered. While the maple leaf flag, unveiled in 1965, was still young, the national anthem "O Canada" was even younger. It had only been introduced in 1967, and Wieland wanted to not only draw attention to it, but feminize it. As art historian John O'Brian remarks in his article "Anthem Lip-Sync" (2000), the work "conflates male patriotic love with female erotics, while refusing to collapse the tension between the two." As ACI author Johanne Sloan writes in *Joyce Wieland: Life & Work*, Wieland calls on the viewer to reimagine, reclaim, and embody nationhood. *O Canada* shows rows of lips in various stages of opening and closing, inviting viewers to feel their mouths twitch in recognition—and participate in this interactive work.



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## ART ABOUT CANADA

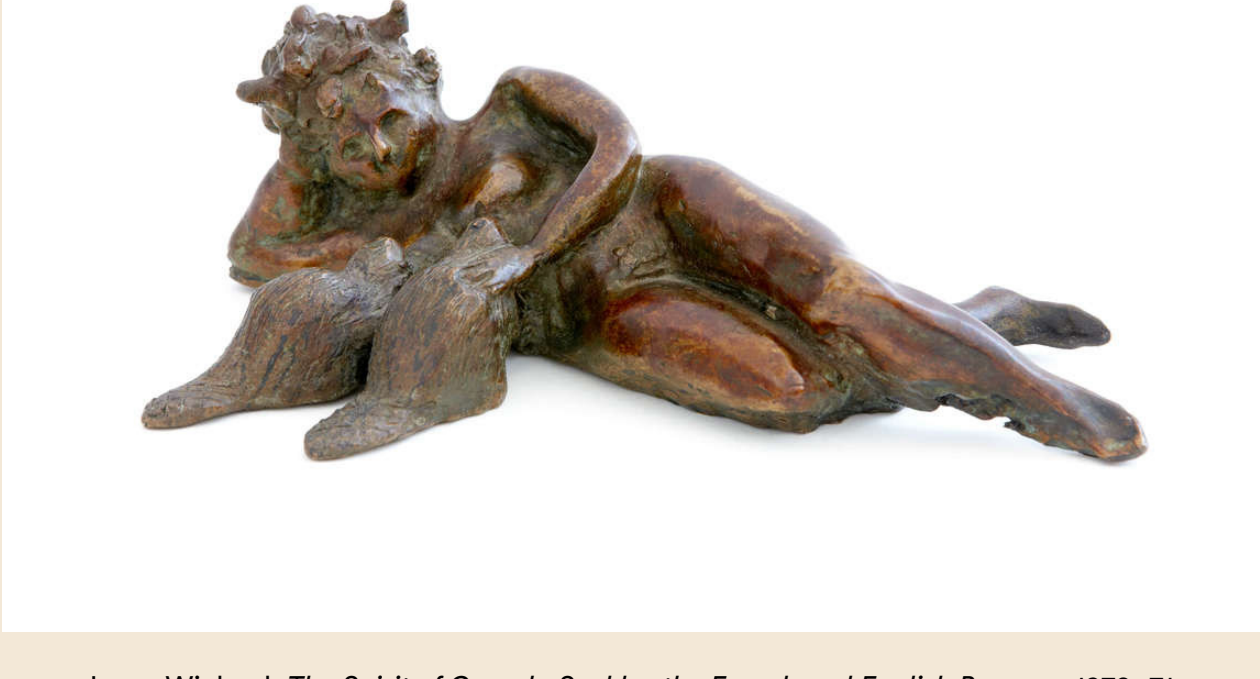


Joyce Wieland, *Confedspread*, 1967, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

While living in New York from 1962 to 1971 with her husband Michael Snow (1928–2023), Wieland became preoccupied with the question of national identity and began to make art about Canada. Over that riotous decade, her avant-garde filmmaking, painting, and experiments with mixed media took off. She became more concerned with politics, nationalism, and activism, notably in response to what Vietnam called "The American War." In 1967, not long after Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson unveiled Canada's new flag, Wieland created *Confedspread* (a portmanteau of "confederation" and "bedspread"). It is composed of both plastic and cloth, and the maple leaf becomes part of a larger tapestry that embodies domestic comfort and warmth.

Read more about this work in ACI's *Joyce Wieland: Life & Work* by Johanne Sloan

## A NEW SYMBOLISM FOR CANADA

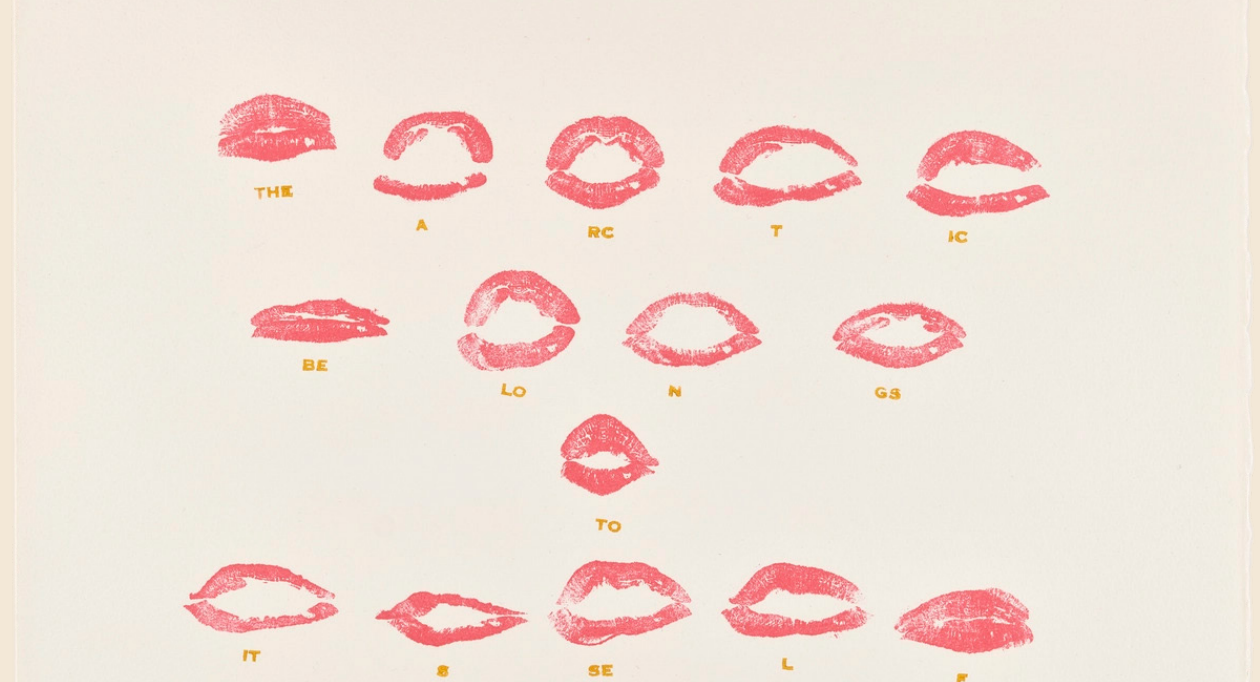


Joyce Wieland, *The Spirit of Canada Suckles the French and English Beavers*, 1970–71, Art Gallery of Hamilton.

At the launch before the opening of her 1971 show *True Patriot Love*, Wieland remarked, "I think of Canada as female." The exhibition continued the exercise Wieland had started in 1967 with *Confedspread* of transforming feminine craft into a powerful vehicle for communication and reinterpreting traditional forms as female. It also challenged the country to re-examine its values and reconsider its sense of national identity. With *The Spirit of Canada Suckles the French and English Beavers*, 1970–71, made for *True Patriot Love*, Wieland reinterprets the ancient Roman account of twin brothers Romulus and Remus being suckled by a she-wolf. Updating the ancient story in *The Spirit of Canada Suckles the French and English Beavers*, Wieland offers a fresh take on Canada's origins.

Read more about this work in ACI's *Joyce Wieland: Life & Work* by Johanne Sloan

## THE ARCTIC BELONGS TO ITSELF, 1973



Joyce Wieland, *The Arctic Belongs to Itself*, 1973, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Following the creation of *O Canada*, Wieland produced this 1973 lithograph made from lipstick impressions that form the powerful phrase *The Arctic Belongs to Itself*. Her point in creating the work is that Canada's North is not a territory to tame and exploit for natural resources or national security but a land with its own needs and peoples. Wieland rendered this political message in the same intimate medium that she had earlier used for *O Canada*. In doing so, she pointed out that to love one's country is to also criticize its shortcomings.

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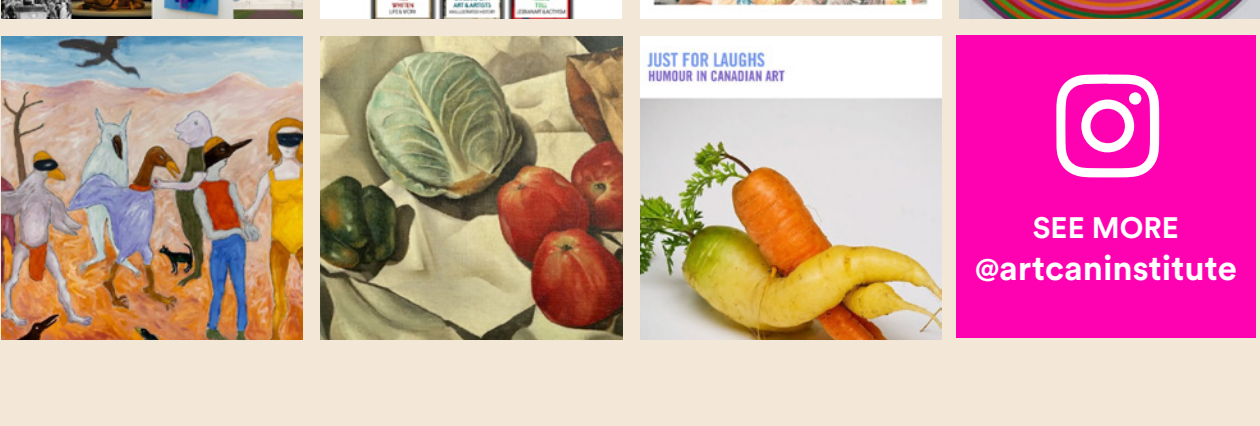


Image Credits: [1] Joyce Wieland, 1960/61. Photograph by Michel Lambeth. © The Estate of Michel Lambeth / Library and Archives Canada. [2] Joyce Wieland, *O Canada*, 1970, lithograph in red on wove paper, 57.4 x 76.4 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1971 (16901). © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo credit: NGC. [3, 4] Joyce Wieland working on *O Canada* at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, 1970. Photographs by Robert Rogers. Lithography Workshop Fonds, Anna Leonowens Gallery Archives, NSCAD University. [5] Joyce Wieland, *Untitled (study for "O Canada")*, 1970, lithograph in red on wove paper, 56.8 x 76.1 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1971 (16901). © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo credit: NGC. [6] Joyce Wieland, *Confedspread*, 1967, plastic and cloth, 146.2 x 200.4 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1968 (15458). © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo credit: NGC. [7] Joyce Wieland, *The Spirit of Canada Suckles the French and English Beavers*, 1970–71, bronze, 6 x 19.3 x 12.5 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of Irving Zucker, 1992. © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. [8] Joyce Wieland, *The Arctic Belongs to Itself*, 1973, lithograph on paper, 33 x 43.4 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchase 1987 (86/285). © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo credit: AGO.