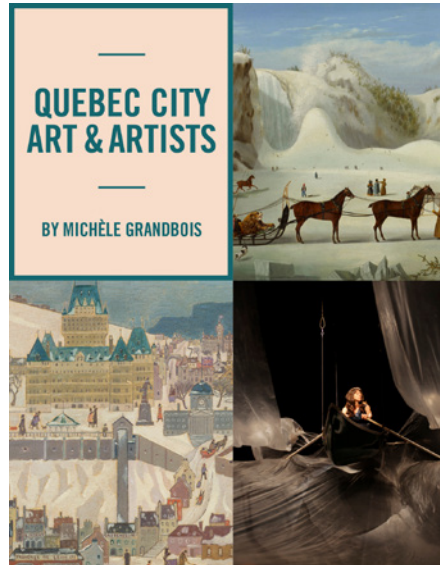


Quebec City: Home and Inspiration to Artists for More Than Four Centuries

From First Nations craft to contemporary conceptual art, this new online art book by Michèle Grandbois celebrates Quebec City's central role in the history of Québécois and Canadian art.

A selection of press images is available through the link at the end of this release.



Cover of *Quebec City Art & Artists: An Illustrated History*.

April 30, 2025, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—Today the Art Canada Institute (ACI) proudly announces the release of [*Quebec City Art & Artists: An Illustrated History*](#), the latest addition to its celebrated Canadian Online Art Book Project. Written by Michèle Grandbois, this digital publication is available free of charge in both French and English.

Quebec City has an extraordinarily rich history of art that predates its founding in 1608 and continues to captivate us today. Although revered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site—an undeniable attraction for tourists—the city is not a prisoner to bygone eras. “Despite the powerful influence of history in the capital, which is both an inspiring milieu and an open-air museum,” Grandbois explains, “the strength of the city’s contemporary creators makes it one of the most dynamic artistic scenes in Canada.”

[*Quebec City Art & Artists: An Illustrated History*](#) brings together the city’s storied past with its bold present, taking an unprecedented look at the provincial capital’s artistic identity and the key artists, community builders, and cultural institutions that have shaped it.

Pioneering Institutions and Builders

Quebec City has long been an important site of creativity and innovation, and many prominent institutions and pioneering personalities have contributed to its enduring legacy. In New France, religious orders furthered the growth of the city’s first cultural centres, notably with the founding of the **Collège des Jésuites**, in 1635, and then, in 1639, the School of the Ursulines (the first educational institution for girls), led by **Marie de l’Incarnation** (1599–1672), a multitalented writer, embroiderer, and teacher.

Quebec City's cultural networks continued to develop into the nineteenth century with the arrival, in 1817 and 1820, of the **Desjardins Collection**—a treasure trove of European paintings that would inform the training of generations of artists until the country's first university museum, the **Pinacothèque de l'Université Laval**, was established in 1875. At the same time, the governor general of the new Dominion of Canada, **Lord Dufferin** (1826–1902), helped to modernize Quebec City while also preserving its built heritage, notably the ramparts of the Upper Town.

The first public art school in Canada, the **École des beaux-arts de Québec**, was founded in 1922, thanks to the cultural policy developed by Provincial Secretary **Louis-Athanase David** (1882–1953). David also endorsed the 1922 law that led, in 1933, to the creation of Quebec's first provincial museum, the **Musée de la province de Québec** (today the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec). These institutions helped establish Quebec City as a vital destination for studying art.

Since the 1970s, **artist-run centres** have continued to expand Quebec City's art scene through the promotion of new alternative practices (such as video, conceptual, and performance art). These centres have also launched many innovative initiatives, including **Manif d'art—La biennale de Québec**, the city's must-see art event, which has run every two years since 2000.

A Place of Prolific Creation

The city's breathtaking location overlooking the St. Lawrence River and the European feel of the narrow streets and stone buildings of its historic district have long inspired local and visiting artists, many of whom have created works that helped define the idea of both Quebec and Canada.

- **First Nations** (centuries old): Many First Nations have lived in and around the location of present-day Quebec City at various times. First Nations artists created delicate ceramics and made extensive use of wampum, polished and perforated shells that were used to foster diplomatic relations and create ornamental objects, such as necklaces.
- **Marie Lemaire des Anges** (1641–1717): Trained in her father's embroidery workshop in France, Marie Lemaire des Anges joined the Ursuline order at sixteen and arrived in New France in 1671. She established a workshop that ultimately employed thirty nuns creating elaborate altarpieces and liturgical vestments. Her textile masterpiece, known as *The Nativity*, demonstrates the importance of religion to the cultural development of Quebec City.
- **François Baillairgé** (1759–1830): The first Quebec City-born artist to study in Paris, Baillairgé was skilled at drawing and painting, as well as carpentry, sculpture, and church decoration. His greatest legacy is in Quebec City's built heritage and the spectacular interior decorations he created for many city churches, most notably Notre-Dame de Québec Basilica-Cathedral.
- **Joseph Légaré** (1795–1855): Légaré was a prolific painter who learned his craft through exposure to the works in the Desjardins Collection. Regarded as the father of Quebec landscape painting, he also devoted himself to depicting contemporary events and the disasters that afflicted his city. His considerable contribution lies in his activities as a collector as well; Légaré gave Quebec City its first art gallery.
- **Jean Paul Lemieux** (1904–1990): Quebec City's urban views pervade the work of this revered artist, either as setting or as subject matter. Trained as a painter, Lemieux was also an important critic and, for many years, an art teacher. Known for his work as a muralist, he admired the form for its accessibility and democratic nature.

- **Giorgia Volpe** (b.1969): Born in Brazil, Volpe has made her home in Quebec City since coming to attend Université Laval in 1998. She established her reputation through the creation of site-specific works that make use of recycled materials and traditional skills, such as weaving and braiding.
- **BGL Collective** (active 1996–2021): The group took its name from the first initial of the last names of its members: Jasmin Bilodeau, Sébastien Giguère, and Nicolas Laverdière. Meeting as students at Université Laval, the three would spend twenty-five years creating playful yet critical life-size installations from recycled materials, including for the Canada Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale.

“From its earliest days,” says Sara Angel, Founder and Executive Director of the Art Canada Institute, “Quebec City has encouraged the arts and celebrated its artists. ***Quebec City Art & Artists: An Illustrated History*** shows how the city has absorbed differing styles and traditions, creating an environment in which the new can flourish but the old isn’t forgotten.”

Quebec City Art & Artists: An Illustrated History advances ACI’s mission to create a central digital resource to share Canada’s most important artists, and works of art, with the world. To date, ACI has published sixty-seven expert-authored digital books that are available free of charge. As well, ACI develops Canada’s only comprehensive art education guides for teachers and students from kindergarten to grade 12—content that is also free and online and serves over 700,000 educators.

To explore the Art Canada Institute’s open-access digital book *Quebec City Art & Artists: An Illustrated History* by Michèle Grandbois, please visit: <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/quebec-city-art-artists/>.

For **media requests** or for **interviews** with:

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- **Sara Angel**, Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

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About Michèle Grandbois

Michèle Grandbois is a native of Quebec City, where she studied and made her career. From 1987 to 2014, she was curator at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ), where she organized some thirty exhibitions and authored a dozen publications on Canadian artists, including Jean-Philippe Dallaire, Marc-Aurèle Fortin, Clarence Gagnon, and Jean Paul Lemieux. In 1996 and 2011, the Canadian Museums Association honoured her work with its Award of Outstanding Achievement in Research. Since retiring from the MNBAQ, Grandbois has passionately pursued her writing on Canadian art history with museums and auction houses. She is the author of the 2016 Art Canada Institute publication *Jean Paul Lemieux: Life & Work*.

About the Art Canada Institute

The Art Canada Institute is the only national institution whose mandate is to promote the study of an inclusive, multi-vocal Canadian art history to as broad an audience as possible, on a digital platform, and free of charge in both English and French, across Canada and internationally. To accomplish this, ACI works with Canada’s leading cultural institutions, art historians, curators, and visual culture experts, and is dedicated to the creation of authoritative original content on the people, themes, and topics that have defined Canadian art history.

To learn more about ACI and to access our free digital library, please visit us! aci-iac.ca

IMAGES

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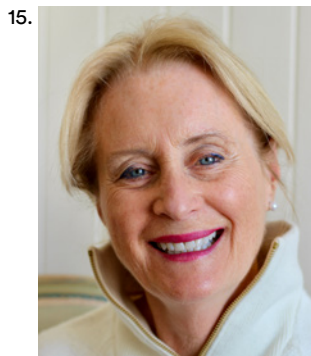
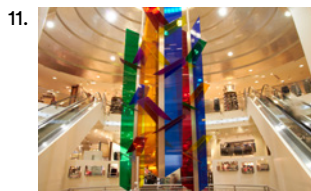
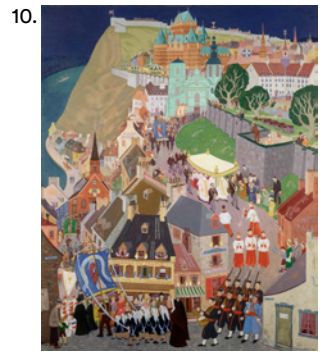


IMAGE CREDITS

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1. Samuel de Champlain, David Pelletier (engraver), *Carte géographique de la Nouvelle France faite par le sieur de Champlain Saint Tongois capitaine ordinaire pour le roy en la marine* (*Geographical Map of New France Made by Mr. de Champlain of Saintonge, Ordinary Captain for the King's Navy*), 1612, engraving on paper, 50.2 × 81.5 cm. From *Les voyages du sieur de Champlain Xaintongois, capitaine ordinaire pour le Roy, en la marine*, by Samuel de Champlain (Paris: Jean Berjon, 1613). Collection of the Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center, Boston Public Library (F1030.1 .C43 1613). Photo credit: Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center, Boston Public Library.
2. Marie Lemaire des Anges (née Marie Lemaire) (attributed) and the Ursuline Workshop of Quebec, *Parement d'autel dit de la Nativité* (*Altar Frontal Known as The Nativity*), second half of the seventeenth century, wool and polychrome silk thread, spun and frisé gold and silver thread with foil, purl and sequins, *filé riant* with a silk core, bobbin lace with spun, frisé and silver foil thread, and distemper on silk (medallion), 95 × 261 × 4 cm. Collection of the Pôle culturel du monastère des Ursulines, Quebec City, Restoration carried out by the Centre de conservation du Québec (1995.63). Photo credit: Pôle culturel du monastère des Ursulines; MNBAQ, Patrick Altman.
3. Antoine Benoist, after Richard Short, *Vue du Palais épiscopal et de ses ruines, comme elles paraissent sur la montagne depuis la Basse-Ville* (*A View of the Bishop's House with the Ruins, as They Appear in Going Up the Hill from the Lower to the Upper Town*), 1761, etching, 35 × 50.5 cm (paper); 32.4 × 50.5 cm (image). Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, Purchase (1954.125). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre.
4. Once-known artist, wampum belt, eighteenth century, shell: northern quahog (*Mercenaria mercenaria*), knobbed whelk (*Busycon carica*); hide; fibre: hemp, 7.5 cm (width) × 0.3 cm (depth) × 99 cm (length), McCord Stewart Museum, Montreal. Collection of the McCord Stewart Museum, Montreal, Gift of David Ross McCord (M1905). Courtesy of the McCord Stewart Museum.
5. A view of the golden baldachin and the high altar inside the Notre-Dame de Québec Basilica-Cathedral, Quebec City, 2021. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Photo credit: Wilfredo Rafael Rodriguez Hernandez.
6. Cornelius Krieghoff, *The Royal Mail Crossing the St. Lawrence*, 1860, oil on canvas, 43.2 × 61 cm. Private collection. Photo credit: Cowley Abbott Fine Art.
7. Mrs. Paul Thomas, basket, 1911 or earlier, sweet grass, wood, 11.2 cm (height), 21.3 cm (outside diameter). Collection of the Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau (III-H-44). Courtesy of Canadian Museum of History.
8. Jules-Ernest Livernois, *Le grand escalier du Grand Séminaire, Québec* (*The Grand Staircase of the Grand Séminaire, Quebec City*), from the album *Maisons d'éducation de la province de Québec*, c.1895, gelatin silver print, 19.2 × 11.4 cm. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec, Gift of the Yves Beauregard Collection (2014.115.16). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.
9. Alfred Pellan, *Fleurs et dominos* (*Flowers and Dominoes*), c.1940, oil on canvas, 116 × 89.4 cm. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, Purchase (1940.105). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / CARCC Ottawa 2025. Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.
10. Jean Paul Lemieux, *La Fête-Dieu à Québec* (*Corpus Christi, Quebec City*), 1944, oil on canvas, 152.7 × 122 cm. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, Purchase (1945.41). © Estate of Jean Paul Lemieux. Photo credit: MNBAQ, Patrick Altman.
11. Guido Molinari, Michel Dallaire (designer), *Solstice*, n.d., glass, 8 m. Collection of La Maison Simons, Downtown Montreal. © Estate of Guido Molinari / CARCC Ottawa 2025. Photo credit: La Maison Simons.

12. Diane Landry, *École d'aviation (Flying School)*, 2000, installation with automated umbrellas, harmonicas, motors, steel, cardboard, halogen lighting, MIDI controller, computer, 24 objects: 30 × 100 cm (variable widths), 100 × 220 cm (variable heights), 800 × 800 cm (ceiling projection). Installation view from the exhibition *Diane Landry: Flying School (École d'aviation) & Mandala Naya*, at the Rice Gallery, Houston, 2005. Collection of the Cameron Art Museum, Wilmington. Courtesy of Diane Landry. Photo credit: Diane Landry.
13. BGL, *Rapides et dangereux (Fast and Dangerous)*, 2005, motorcycle and video documentary on digital video disk (DVD), 7 min., 36 sec. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 2007 (42088.12). Courtesy of BGL. © BGL. Photo credit: Doyon-Rivest.
14. Ludovic Boney, *Une cosmologie sans genèse (A Cosmology Without Genesis)*, 2015, aluminum, pigments, and steel cables, 1,570 × 800 cm. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, created as part of the Government of Quebec's Politique d'intégration des arts à l'architecture et à l'environnement des bâtiments et des sites gouvernementaux et publics (2016.80). © Ludovic Boney. Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.
15. Michèle Grandbois, author of *Quebec City Art & Artists: An Illustrated History*.
16. Cover of *Quebec City Art & Artists: An Illustrated History*, by Michèle Grandbois. Top right: Robert Clow Todd, *The Ice Cone, Montmorency Falls, Québec* (detail), c.1845, oil on canvas, 51.2 × 67.9 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchased with the assistance of the Government of Canada through the Cultural Property Export and Import Act, 1987 (87/94). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. Photo © AGO. Bottom left: Jean Paul Lemieux, preparatory sketch for "Québec (projet de peinture murale)" ("Québec [Mural Project]") (detail), 1949, oil on millboard, 25.4 × 101.6 cm. The Royal Collection, United Kingdom. Courtesy of The Royal Collection. © Estate of Jean Paul Lemieux. Photo credit: Royal Collection Enterprises Limited. Bottom right: Diane Landry, *Brise-glace (Icebreaker)* (detail), 2013, video performance for HD projection or video loop monitor, 9 min., 50 sec., created during an artist residency with Productions Recto-Verso, Mois Multi 14. Collection of Méduse, Quebec City. Courtesy of Diane Landry. Photo credit: Ivan Binet.