

JULY 4, 2025

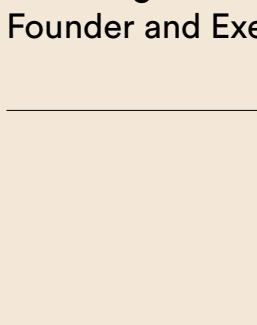
WE WILL NEVER BE THE 51ST STATE

CANADIAN ARTISTS CRITIQUE THE U.S.A.

A look at Canadian historical and contemporary art that pushes back on U.S. threats to our culture and sovereignty.



Gary Taxali, *Message from Canada*, 2025, courtesy of Gary Taxali.



It may be the Fourth of July, but it is hard to get excited about the United States' Independence Day. President Donald Trump's attack on our sovereignty in the form of schoolyard taunts about annexing Canada to become the "fifty-first state" has sparked an upsurge of patriotic sentiment among Canadians. While this has manifested as a refusal to visit the U.S., a turn away from American products, and a renewed focus on Canadian national unity and new trade relationships,

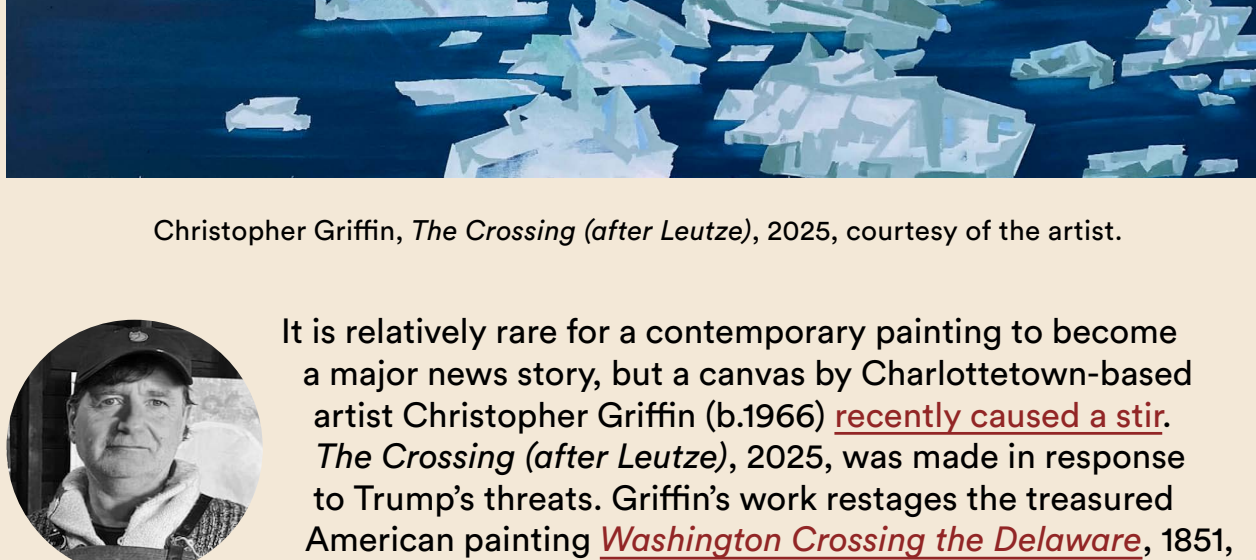
Canadians have long critiqued the power and influence of the U.S. over our own and global affairs. This week's newsletter cheekily marks the holiday of our neighbouring country with a sample of Canadian art, contemporary and historical, that astutely protests U.S. politics and culture.

Sara Angel

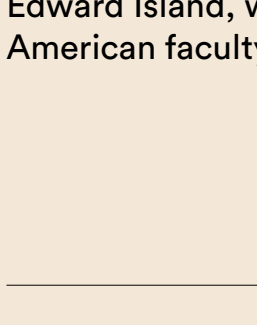
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

THE CROSSING (AFTER LEUTZE), 2025

by Christopher Griffin



Christopher Griffin, *The Crossing (after Leutze)*, 2025, courtesy of the artist.



Christopher Griffin

It is relatively rare for a contemporary painting to become a major news story, but a canvas by Charlottetown-based artist Christopher Griffin (b.1966) [recently caused a stir](#).

The Crossing (after Leutze), 2025, was made in response to Trump's threats. Griffin's work restages the treasured American painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851, by Emanuel Leutze (1816–1868). *The Crossing (after Leutze)* replaces the figures of George Washington and his troops with a boat full of lemmings. Controversy erupted this past April when the administration at the Atlantic Veterinary College at the University of Prince Edward Island, where the painting was installed, received complaints from two American faculty members and one student.

[Learn more about Christopher Griffin](#)

MAP OF NORTH AMERICA, 1972

by Greg Curnoe



Greg Curnoe, *Map of North America*, 1972, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax.



Greg Curnoe

London, Ontario, artist Greg Curnoe (1936–1992) created this masterpiece about Canadian–American relations to be humorous. But now, it is anything but funny. This provocative hand-drawn *Map of North America*, 1972, erases the U.S. entirely so that Mexico is fused with Canada. (Alaska is sheared off completely.) The work takes on added resonance with Trump's claim that the Canada–U.S. border is an “artificially drawn line.”

In the Art Canada Institute book *Greg Curnoe: Life & Work*, art historian Judith Rodger also notes that the map's labels give outsized importance to small islands, like the uninhabited Clipperton, as if they were global superpowers.

[Read more in ACI's Greg Curnoe: Life & Work by Judith Rodger](#)

AMERICAN TEARS, 2025

by Christian Chapman



Christian Chapman, *AMERICAN TEARS*, 2025, courtesy of Christian Chapman.



Christian Chapman

Christian Chapman (b.1975), an award-winning Anishinaabe artist from Fort William First Nation, Ontario, created the recent screenprint *AMERICAN TEARS*, 2025, which reimagines the iconic *Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962, by U.S. Pop artist Andy Warhol (1928–1987). While Warhol's original catalogued all the flavours of what was then a prototypical American lunch, the imaginary Chapman's Soup comes in more eccentric flavours like beaver, hangover, and, here, the tears of Americans, perhaps shed after realizing the drastic consequences of their 2024 election. Chapman is celebrated for advancing the Woodland style that originated with the eminent painter Norval Morrisseau (1931–2007), bringing an interest in storytelling and a sense of play.

[Learn more about Christian Chapman](#)

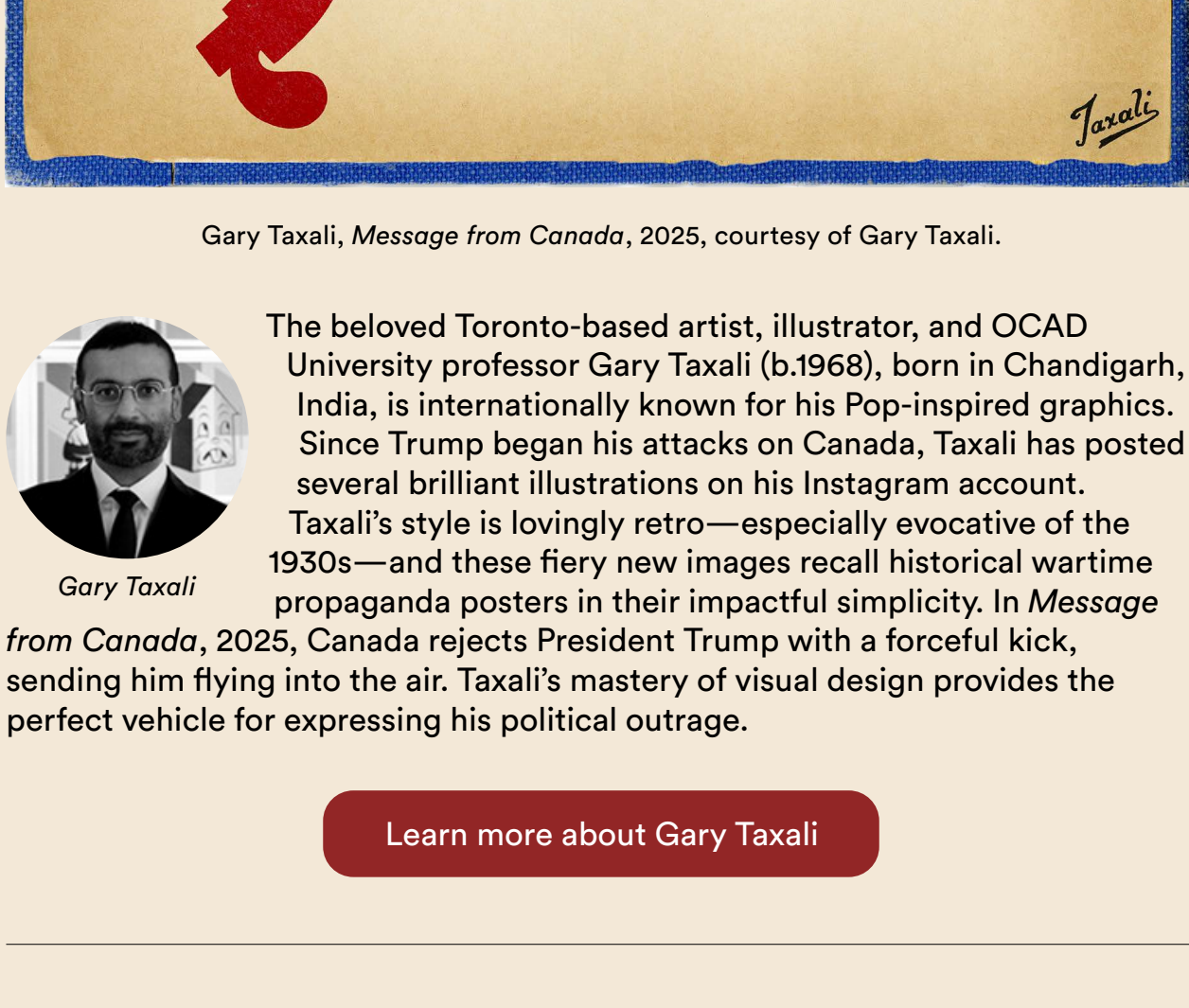


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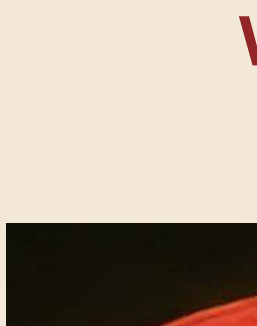
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MESSAGE FROM CANADA, 2025

by Gary Taxali



Gary Taxali, *Message from Canada*, 2025, courtesy of Gary Taxali.



Gary Taxali

The beloved Toronto-based artist, illustrator, and OCAD University professor Gary Taxali (b.1968), born in Chandigarh, India, is internationally known for his Pop-inspired graphics. Since Trump began his attacks on Canada, Taxali has posted several brilliant illustrations on his Instagram account.

Taxali's style is lovingly retro—especially evocative of the 1930s—and these fiery new images recall historical wartime propaganda posters in their impactful simplicity. In *Message from Canada*, 2025, Canada rejects President Trump with a forceful kick, sending him flying into the air. Taxali's mastery of visual design provides the perfect vehicle for expressing his political outrage.

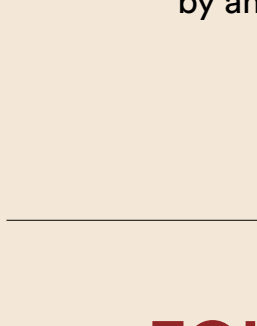
[Learn more about Gary Taxali](#)

BETSY ROSS, LOOK WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO THE FLAG YOU MADE WITH SUCH CARE, 1966

by Joyce Wieland



Joyce Wieland, *Betsy Ross, Look What They've Done to the Flag You Made with Such Care*, 1966, private collection.



Joyce Wieland

The proudly Canadian oeuvre of Toronto-born artist Joyce Wieland (1930–1998) is more relevant than ever, particularly her works taking aim at U.S. cultural dominance and its war in Vietnam. In the Art Canada Institute book *Joyce Wieland: Life & Work*, art historian Johanne Sloan [writes](#) that it was while living in New York in the 1960s that Wieland “became more concerned with politics, nationalism, and activism.” In the mixed media piece *Betsy Ross, Look What They've Done to the Flag You Made with Such Care*, 1966, Wieland nods to the woman who fashioned the first American flag while decrying the degradation of the country's proclaimed values: punctuated with a Band-Aid, the flag has been chewed up and spat out.

[Read more in ACI's Joyce Wieland: Life & Work by Johanne Sloan](#)

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Image Credits: [1, 5] Gary Taxali, *Message from Canada*, 2025, digital illustration. Courtesy of Gary Taxali. © Gary Taxali. [2] Christopher Griffin, *The Crossing (after Leutze)*, 2025, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 152.4 cm. Courtesy of the artist. © Christopher Griffin. [3] Greg Curnoe, *Map of North America*, 1972, India ink on paper, 29.5 x 22.2 cm. Collection of the Dalhousie Art Gallery, Dalhousie University, Halifax, purchased in 1978 from The Third Dalhousie Drawing Exhibition. Courtesy of the Dalhousie Art Gallery. © Estate of Greg Curnoe. [4] Christian Chapman, *AMERICAN TEARS*, 2025, screenprint on paper, 71.1 x 55.9 cm. Courtesy of Christian Chapman. © Christian Chapman. [6] Joyce Wieland, *Betsy Ross, Look What They've Done to the Flag You Made with Such Care*, 1966, mixed media, 56 x 34.3 cm. Private collection. © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.