

JANUARY 23, 2026

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

CANADIAN ARTISTS AND THE WORKS THAT INSPIRED THEM

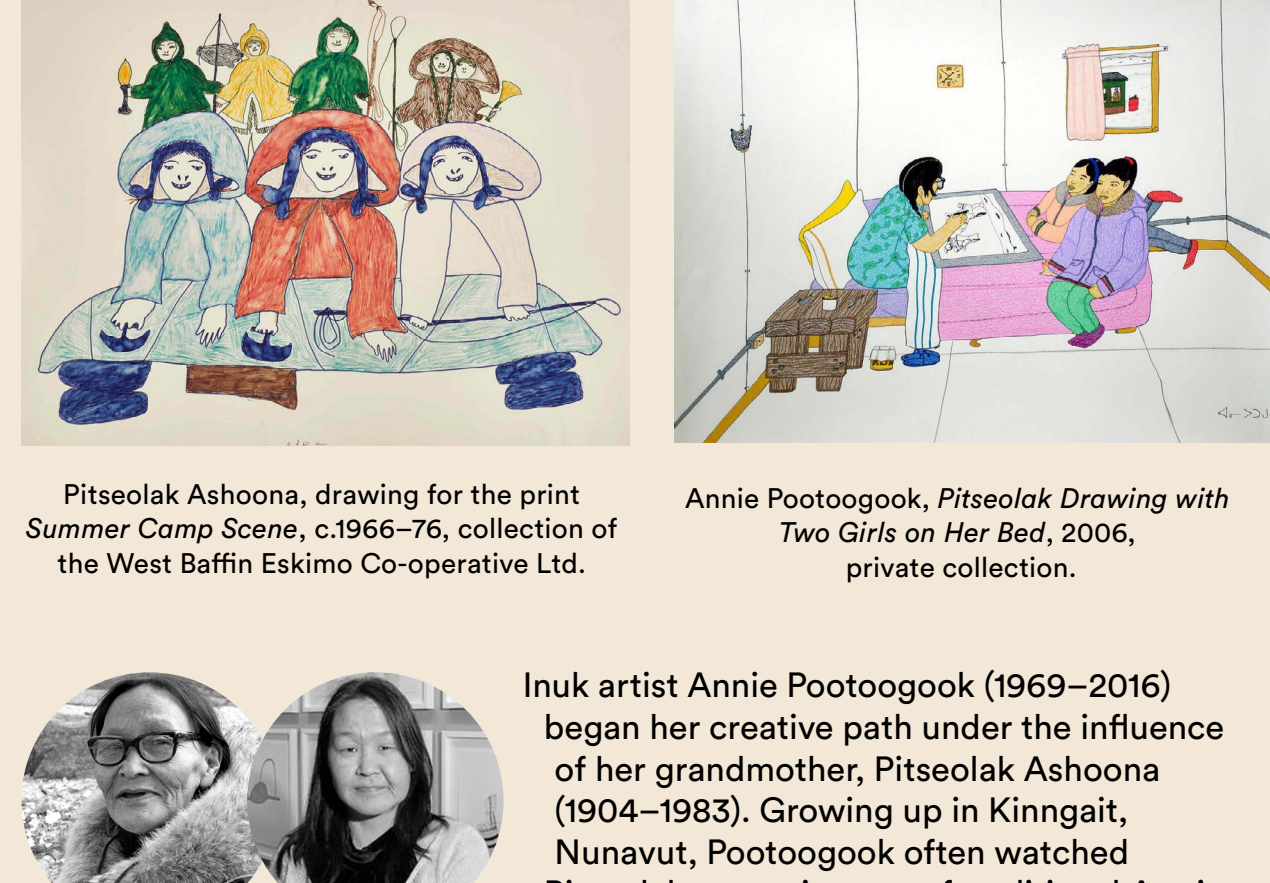
Tracing how artistic knowledge is transmitted through mentorship, lineage, and encounter.



Learning and inspiration are central to every artistic practice. Even the most singular voices are shaped through close looking—by studying the work of others, absorbing techniques, questioning choices, and discovering new possibilities through mentorship, admiration, or art-historical lineage. To mark the International Day of Education on January 24, this week's newsletter brings together ten pairings of Canadian artists linked by influence and exchange. Some connections were forged through direct teaching, while others unfolded across time, through works encountered. Tracing these connections reveals how artistic knowledge circulates, how ideas transform as they move between generations, and how influence continues to shape the evolving story of Canadian art.

Sara Angel
 Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

DAPHNE ODJIG AND SHELLEY NIRO



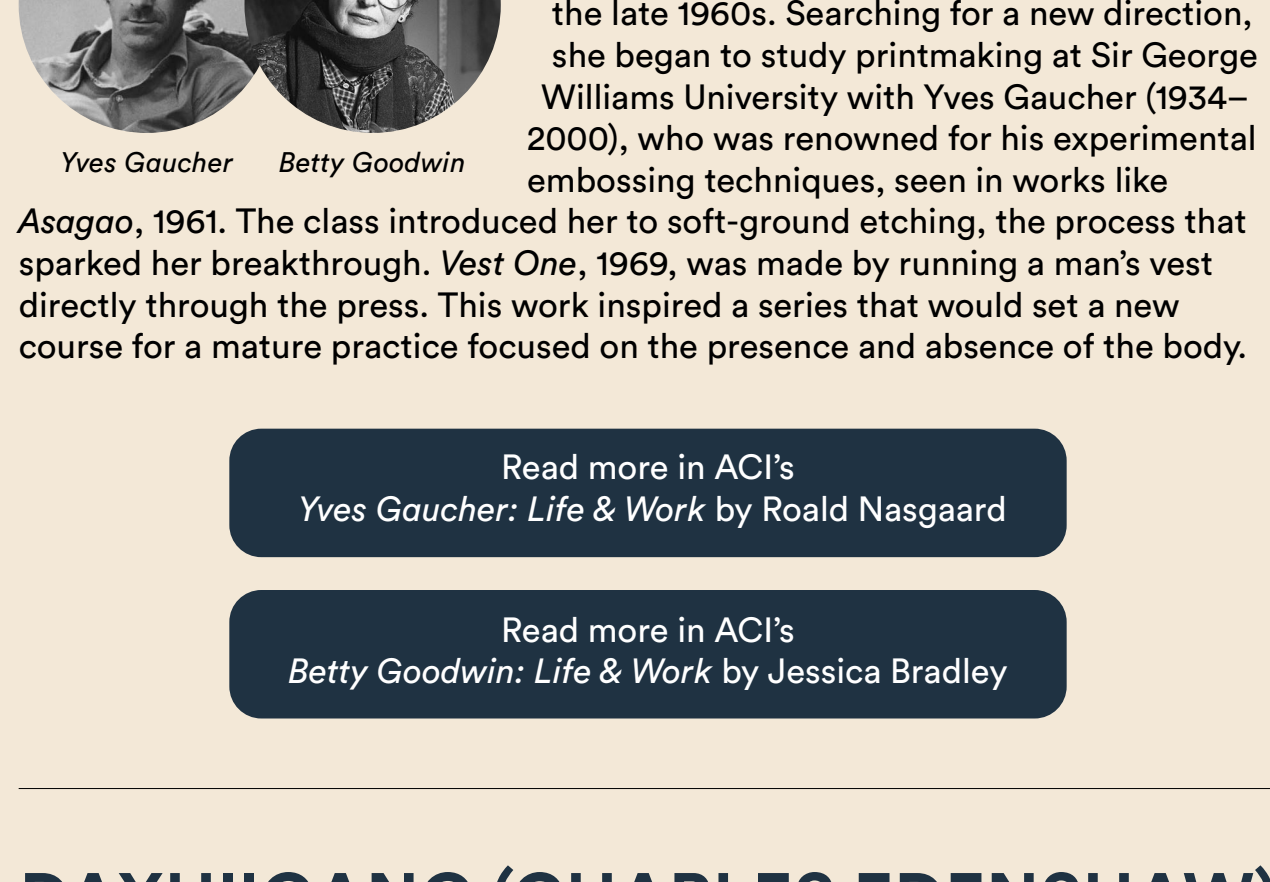
Daphne Odjig, *Odjig Family; Father, Mother, Grandfather, Stanley, Daphne, Donald, Winnie, Xmas, Dec 25th, 1986*, Art Gallery of Ontario.
 Shelley Niro, *Raven's World*, 2015, Art Gallery of Hamilton.

Mohawks of the Bay Quinte artist Shelley Niro (b.1954) identifies First Nations painter Daphne Odjig (1919–2016) as her earliest influence. Odjig often depicted motherhood and generational bonds, as seen in *Odjig Family*, 1986. For Niro, Odjig's work offered a formative example of an Indigenous woman shaping visual culture. "Knowing an Indian woman did it astounded me," Niro recalls. "I've tried drawing all my life and could never get close to [Odjig's] renditions." Niro's own practice frequently centres Indigenous women's strength and matrilineal continuity. In *Raven's World*, 2015, she portrays her granddaughter, Raven, against a cosmic field referencing Sky Woman—a protective ancestral presence guiding future generations.

[Learn more about Daphne Odjig](#)

[Learn more about Shelley Niro](#)

PITSEOLAK ASHOONA AND ANNIE POOTOOGOOK



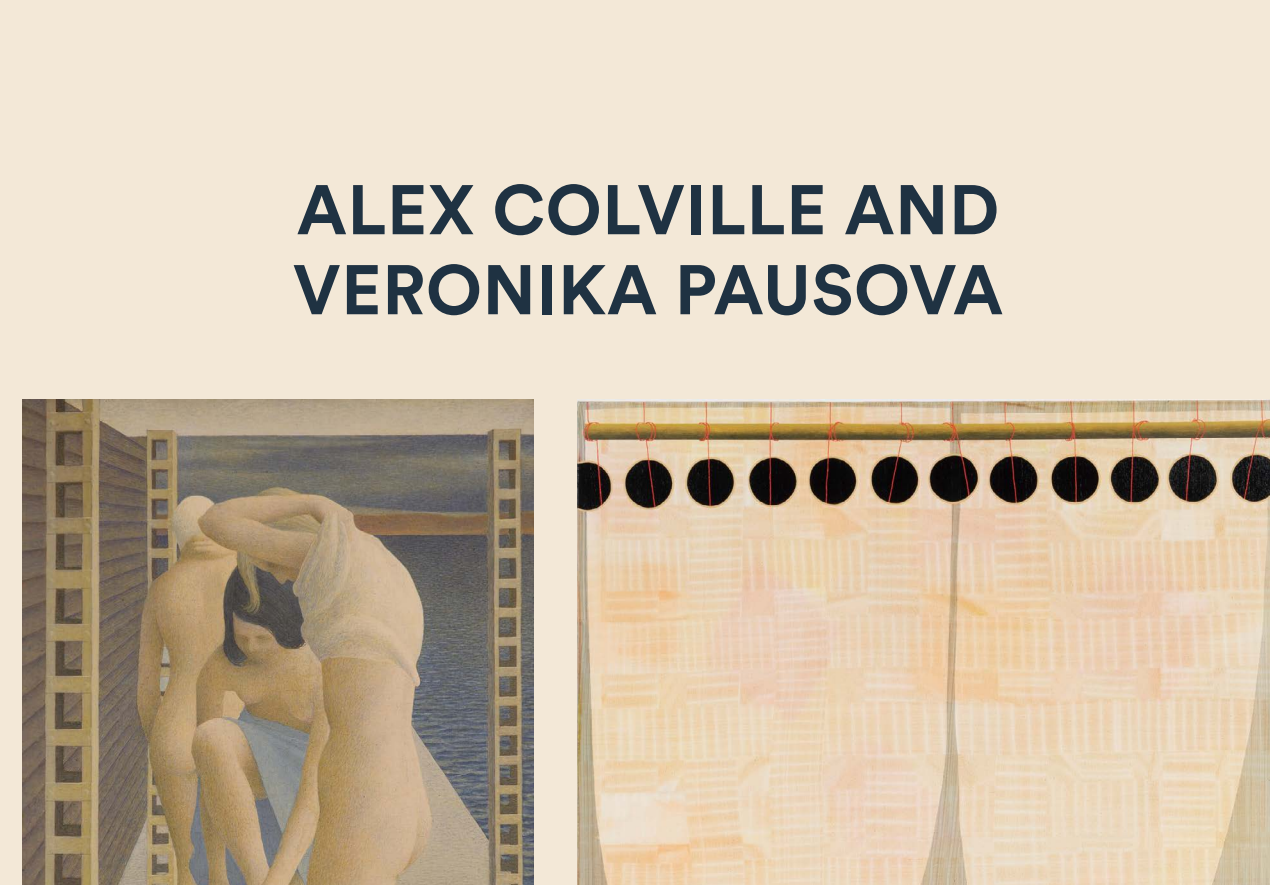
Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for the print *Summer Camp Scene*, c.1966–76, collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd.
 Annie Pootoogook, *Pitseolak Drawing with Two Girls on Her Bed*, 2006, private collection.

Inuk artist Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016) began her creative path under the influence of her grandmother, Pitseolak Ashoona (1904–1983). Growing up in Kinngait, Nunavut, Pootoogook often watched Pitseolak create images of traditional Arctic life, such as *Summer Camp Scene*, 1966–76. The intergenerational apprenticeship model—learning by watching—appears in Pootoogook's own work, shown above, where two girls observe their grandmother drawing on a bed. Pootoogook later recalled, "I wanted to learn, so I had to watch her.... She drew true stories." This inheritance shaped Pootoogook's candid, contemporary approach, and she, like her grandmother, brought a distinctly new perspective to Inuit visual culture.

[Read more in ACI's Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work by Christine Lalonde](#)

[Read more in ACI's Annie Pootoogook: Life & Work by Nancy G. Campbell](#)

YVES GAUCHER AND BETTY GOODWIN



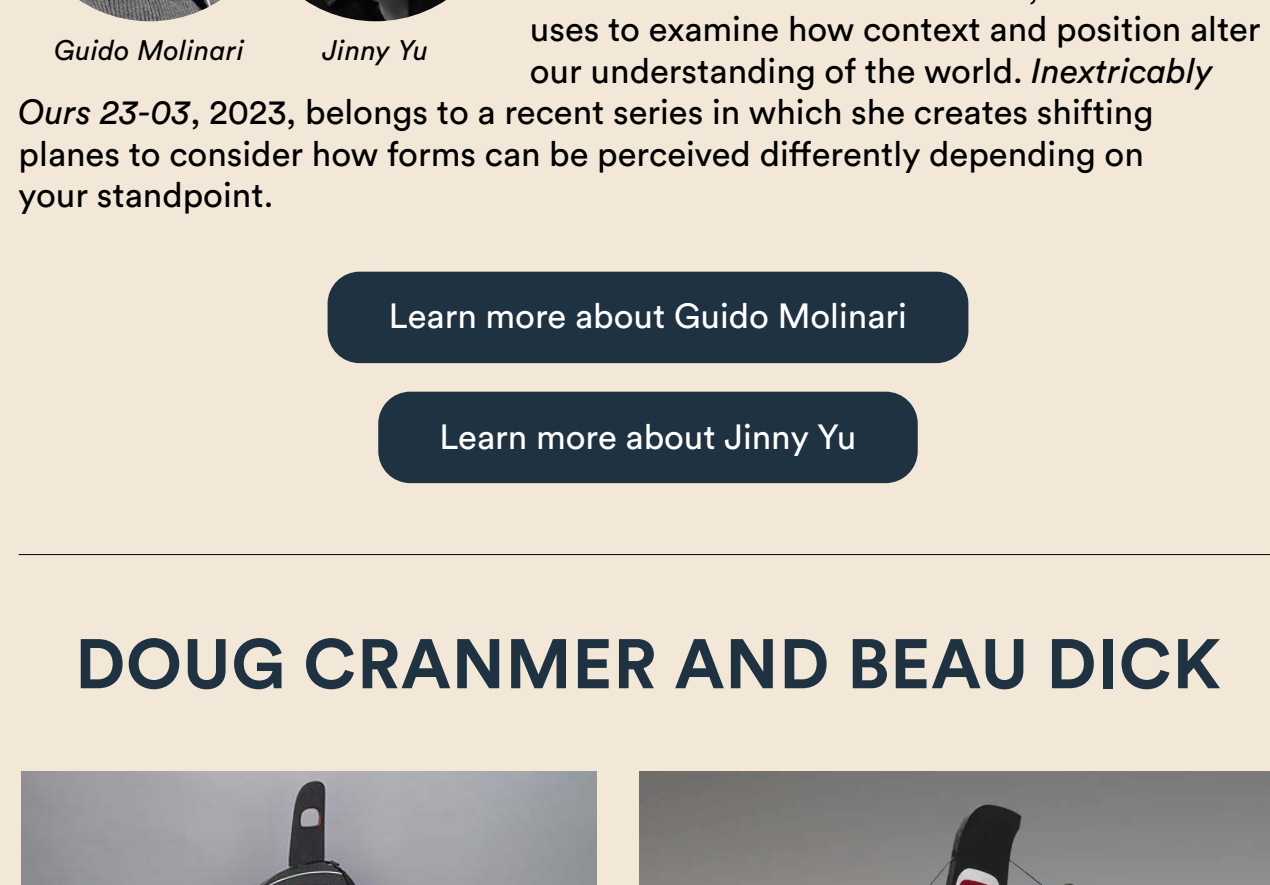
Yves Gaucher, *Asagoo*, 1961, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.
 Betty Goodwin, *Vest One*, August 1969, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Montreal-based artist Betty Goodwin (1923–2008) had been making art for two decades before becoming dissatisfied with her work in the late 1960s. Searching for a new direction, she began to study printmaking at Sir George Williams University with Yves Gaucher (1934–2000), who was renowned for his experimental embossing techniques, seen in works like *Asagoo*, 1961. The class introduced her to soft-ground etching, the process that sparked her breakthrough. *Vest One*, 1969, was made by running a man's vest directly through the press. This work inspired a series that would set a new course for a mature practice focused on the presence and absence of the body.

[Read more in ACI's Yves Gaucher: Life & Work by Roald Nasgaard](#)

[Read more in ACI's Betty Goodwin: Life & Work by Jessica Bradley](#)

DAXHIIGANG (CHARLES EDENSHAW) AND ILJUWAS BILL REID



Daxhiigang (Charles Edenshaw), *Bracelet*, c.1885, UBC Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver.
 Iljuwas Bill Reid, *Hinged Raven Bracelet*, c.1955, UBC Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver.

Haida artist Iljuwas Bill Reid (1920–1998) was profoundly shaped by his great-great-uncle Daxhiigang (Charles Edenshaw) (1839–1920). In 1954, Reid came across two of Daxhiigang's gold bracelets, an experience he later described as life-changing. The pieces revealed to Reid the depth of Haida jewellery traditions, where bracelets serve as personal markers of knowledge and lineage. The discovery of his ancestor's work clarified his responsibility to continue and honour this cultural legacy. Reid's own gold bracelet, pictured on the right, reimagine a central figure in Haida storytelling—the Raven—in a sculptural form that expands the expressive possibilities of goldwork.

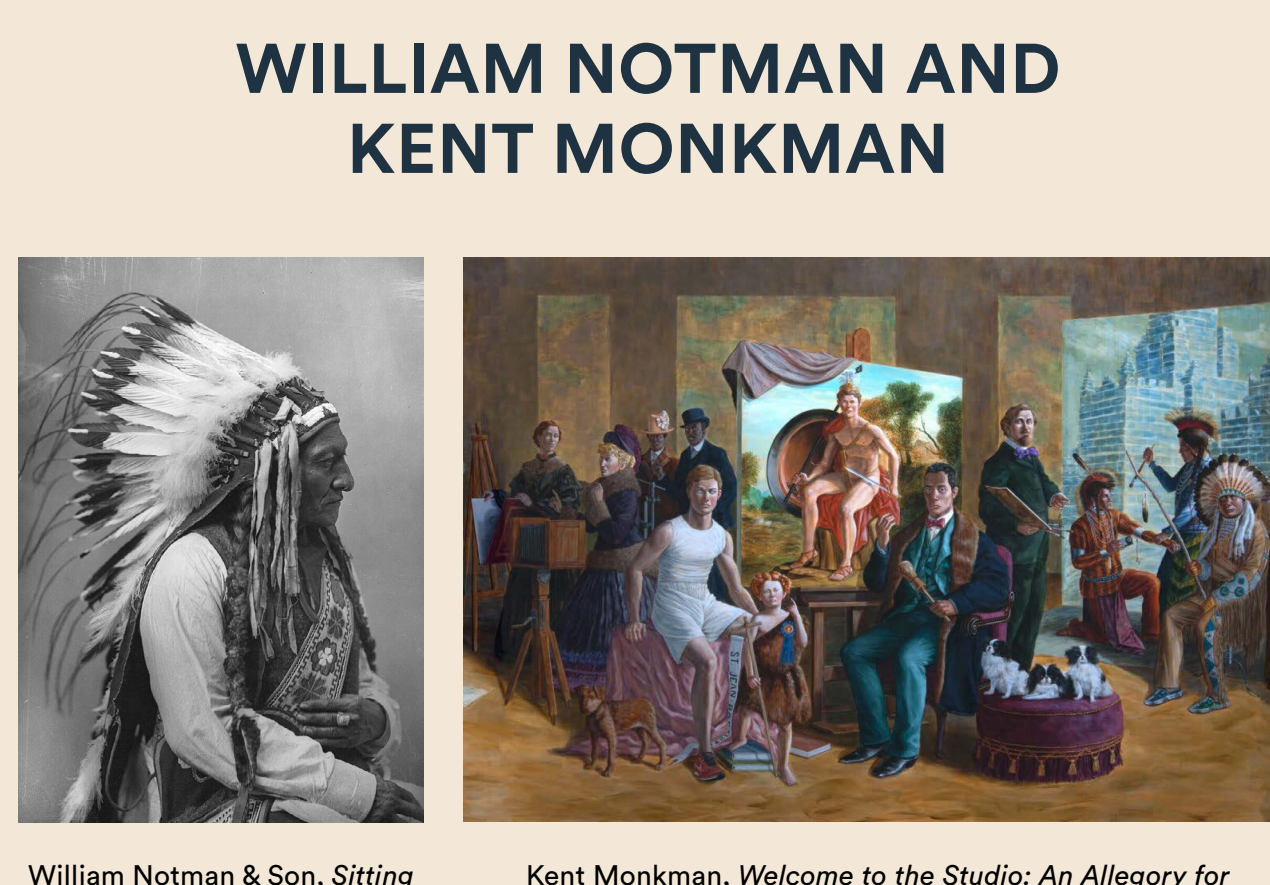
[Learn more about Daxhiigang \(Charles Edenshaw\)](#)

[Read more in ACI's Iljuwas Bill Reid: Life & Work by Gerald McMaster](#)

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ALEX COLVILLE AND VERONIKA PAUSOVA



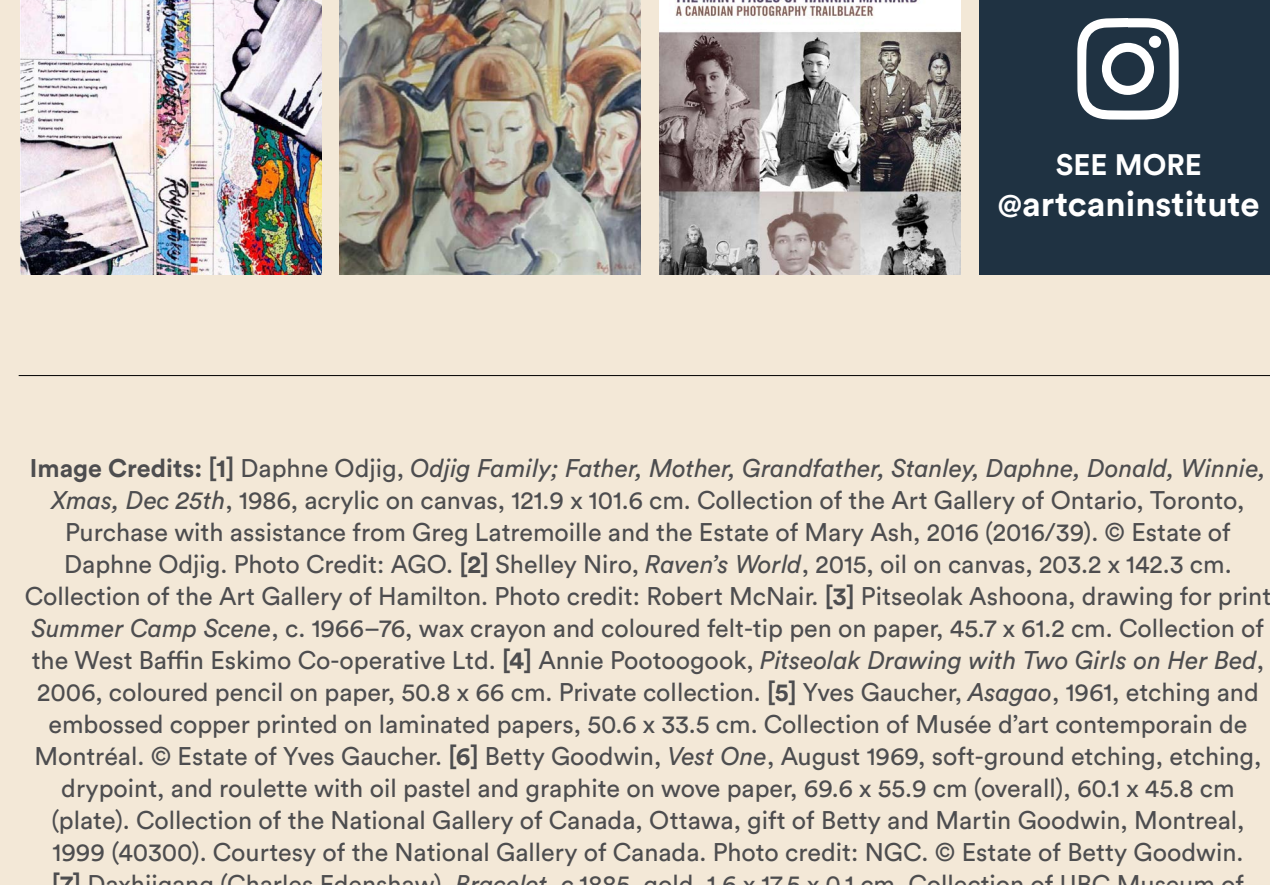
Alex Colville, *Three Girls on a Wharf*, 1953, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax.
 Veronika Pausova, *Soft Body, Tight Tendons*, 2021, courtesy of the artist and Bradley Ertaskiran.

Montreal-based artist Veronika Pausova (b.1987) points to Alex Colville (1920–2013) as a painter whose work she deeply admires. Pausova observes that Colville's art can feel unexpectedly contemporary—"like *Second Life* or CGI." She responds to the clarity and constructed stillness in his paintings—qualities that quietly echo in her own precise, surreal approach to storytelling. Pausova creates graphic compositions that mix narrative with playful absurdity. In *Soft Body, Tight Tendons*, 2021, two large legs hang suspended, their feet pulled by taut red strings as if controlled from above.

[Read more in ACI's Alex Colville: Life & Work by Ray Cronin](#)

[Learn more about Veronika Pausova](#)

GUIDO MOLINARI AND JINNY YU



Guido Molinari, *Triangulaire Rouge-orange*, 1974, Guido Molinari Foundation, Montreal.
 Jinny Yu, *Inextricably Ours 23-03, 2023*, courtesy of the artist and Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto.

Ottawa-based artist Jinny Yu (b.1976) studied under the revered Montreal painter Guido Molinari (1933–2004) during her time at Concordia University. Molinari's approach to form, colour, and perception helped shape Yu's own interest in abstraction, which she uses to examine how context and position alter our understanding of the world. *Inextricably Ours 23-03, 2023*, belongs to a recent series in which she creates shifting planes to consider how forms can be perceived differently depending on your standpoint.

[Learn more about Guido Molinari](#)

[Learn more about Jinny Yu](#)

DOUG CRANMER AND BEAU DICK

Doug Cranmer, *Killer Whale Headress*, 1974, UBC Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver.
 Beau Dick, *Big Whale*, 2017, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Kwakwaka'wakw artist Beau Dick (1955–2017) was mentored by Kwakwaka'wakw master carver Doug Cranmer (1927–2006), who was venerated for works like *Killer Whale Headress*, 1974. Cranmer's practice—the breadth and experimentation of Dick's informed—he encouraged the younger artist not to confine himself to a recognizable signature style and to push beyond convention. *Big Whale*, 2017, is part of Dick's Undersea Kingdom series, which includes several of his most whimsical mask works. Undersea ancestral carving with contemporary elements, this piece features a small figurine of Dick himself riding the whale, playfully guiding its movement through an undersea world.

[Learn more about Doug Cranmer](#)

[Learn more about Beau Dick](#)

JEFF WALL AND KEN LUM

Jeff Wall, *Picture for Women*, 1979, Centre Pompidou, Paris.
 Ken Lum, *Nancy Nishi, Joe Ping Chau: Real Estate*, 1989, courtesy of the artist.

Ken Lum (b.1956) enrolled at Simon Fraser University with plans to become a scientist until an evening art class taught by Vancouver photographer Jeff Wall (b.1946) set him on a new path. Wall encouraged him to take his art practice seriously, and the two later became part of the Vancouver School, a group of artists who shared ideas, shaped each other's thinking, and developed a common attitude toward art. This helped ground Lum's early explorations in photo-conceptualism. In his work *Nancy Nishi, Joe Ping Chau: Real Estate*, 1989, bold text is paired with a posed portrait of two real estate agents, highlighting how identity can be shaped and stereotyped through the visual languages of advertising and branding.

[Learn more about Jeff Wall](#)

[Learn more about Ken Lum](#)

WILLIAM NOTMAN AND KENT MONKMAN

William Notman & Son, *Sitting Bull*, Montreal, 1885, McCord Stewart Museum, Montreal.
 Kent Monkman, *Welcome to the Studio: An Allegory for Artistic Reflection and Transformation* (detail), 2014, McCord Stewart Museum, Montreal.

In 2014, Toronto-based Cree artist Kent Monkman (b.1965) worked closely with the McCord Stewart Museum's extensive archive of nineteenth-century photographs by Scottish Canadian photographer William Notman (1826–1891). In *Welcome to the Studio*, 2014, he recreates a Victorian-era artist's atelier using figures drawn from thirty-four Notman portraits, including *Sitting Bull*, 1885. But Monkman reverses the power dynamic by placing Indigenous people (and himself) at the centre of the composition. This critical reworking of colonial photography and painting invites viewers to question how historical narratives are built and why certain images are presented as historical record.

[Read more in ACI's William Notman: Life & Work by Sarah Parsons](#)

[Read more in ACI's Kent Monkman: Life & Work by Shirley Madill](#)

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Image Credits: [1] Daphne Odjig, *Odjig Family; Father, Mother, Grandfather, Stanley, Daphne, Donald, Winnie, Xmas, Dec 25th, 1986*, acrylic on canvas, 121.9 x 101.6 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Purchase with assistance from Greg Latremaille and the Estate of Mary Ash, 2016 (2016/39). © Estate of Daphne Odjig. Photo Credit: AGO. [2] Shelley Niro, *Raven's World*, 2015, oil on canvas, 203.2 x 142.3 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton. Photo credit: Robert McHair. [3] Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *Summer Camp Scene*, c. 1966–76, wax crayon and coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 45.7 x 61.2 cm. Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd. [4] Annie Pootoogook, *Pitseolak Drawing with Two Girls on Her Bed*, 2006, coloured pencil on paper, 50.8 x 66 cm. Private collection. [5] Yves Gaucher, *Asagoo*, 1961, etching and embossed copper printed on laminated papers, 50.6 x 33.5 cm. Collection of Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. © Estate of Yves Gaucher. [6] Betty Goodwin, *Vest One*, August 1969, soft-ground etching, etching, drypoint, and roulette with oil pastel and graphite on wove paper, 69.6 x 55.9 cm (overall), 60.1 x 45.8 cm (plate), and collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, gift of Betty and Martin Goodwin, Montreal, 1999 (40300). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC. © Estate of Betty Goodwin. [7] Daxhiigang (Charles Edenshaw), *Bracelet*, c.1885, gold, 1.6 x 17.5 x 0.1 cm. Collection of UBC Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver. [8] Iljuwas Bill Reid, *Hinged Raven Bracelet*, c.1955, gold, 4.3 x 5 x 6 cm. Collection of UBC Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver. [9] Alex Colville, *Three Girls on a Wharf*, 1953, glazed caséin tempers on Masonite, 41.1 x 25.4 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax. © A.C. Fine Art. [10] Veronika Pausova, *Soft Body, Tight Tendons*, 2021, oil on canvas, 127 x 104.1 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Bradley Ertaskiran. [11] Guido Molinari, *Triangulaire Rouge-orange*, 1974, acrylic on canvas, 228.5 x 198.3 cm. Collection of the Guido Molinari Foundation, Montreal. [12] Jinny Yu, *Inextricably Ours 23-03, 2023*, oil on aluminium, 152.4 x 137.7 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto. [13] Doug Cranmer, *Killer Whale Headress*, 1974, cedar wood, acrylic paint, synthetic fibre, cotton fibre, plastic, metal, 46 x 26.8 x 42.2 cm. Collection of UBC Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver. [14] Beau Dick, *Big Whale* (from the Undersea Kingdom series), 2017, red cedar, acrylic, copper, cloth, plastic action figure, collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Photo: Vancouver Art Gallery. [15] Jeff Wall, *Picture for Women*, 1979, transparency in lightbox, 142.8 x 204.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist. [16] Ken Lum, *Nancy Nishi, Joe Ping Chau: Real Estate* (from the Portrait-Logo series), 1989, chromogenic print, lacquer, enamel, on aluminium, Sintra, 243.8 x 182 cm. [17] William Notman & Son, *Sitting Bull*, Montreal, 1885, silver salts on glass, gelatin dry plate process, 17 x 12 cm. Collection of McCord Stewart Museum, Montreal. [18] Kent Monkman, *Welcome to the Studio: An Allegory for Artistic Reflection and Transformation*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 190 x 730 cm. Collection of McCord Stewart Museum, Montreal.