ART CANADA INSTITUTE | INSTITUT DE L'ART CANADIEN

JANUARY 2, 2026

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN
CANADIAN ART LIVES LIVED

Celebrated figures in Canadian art who we lost in 2025 and recollections by their colleagues, peers, and friends.

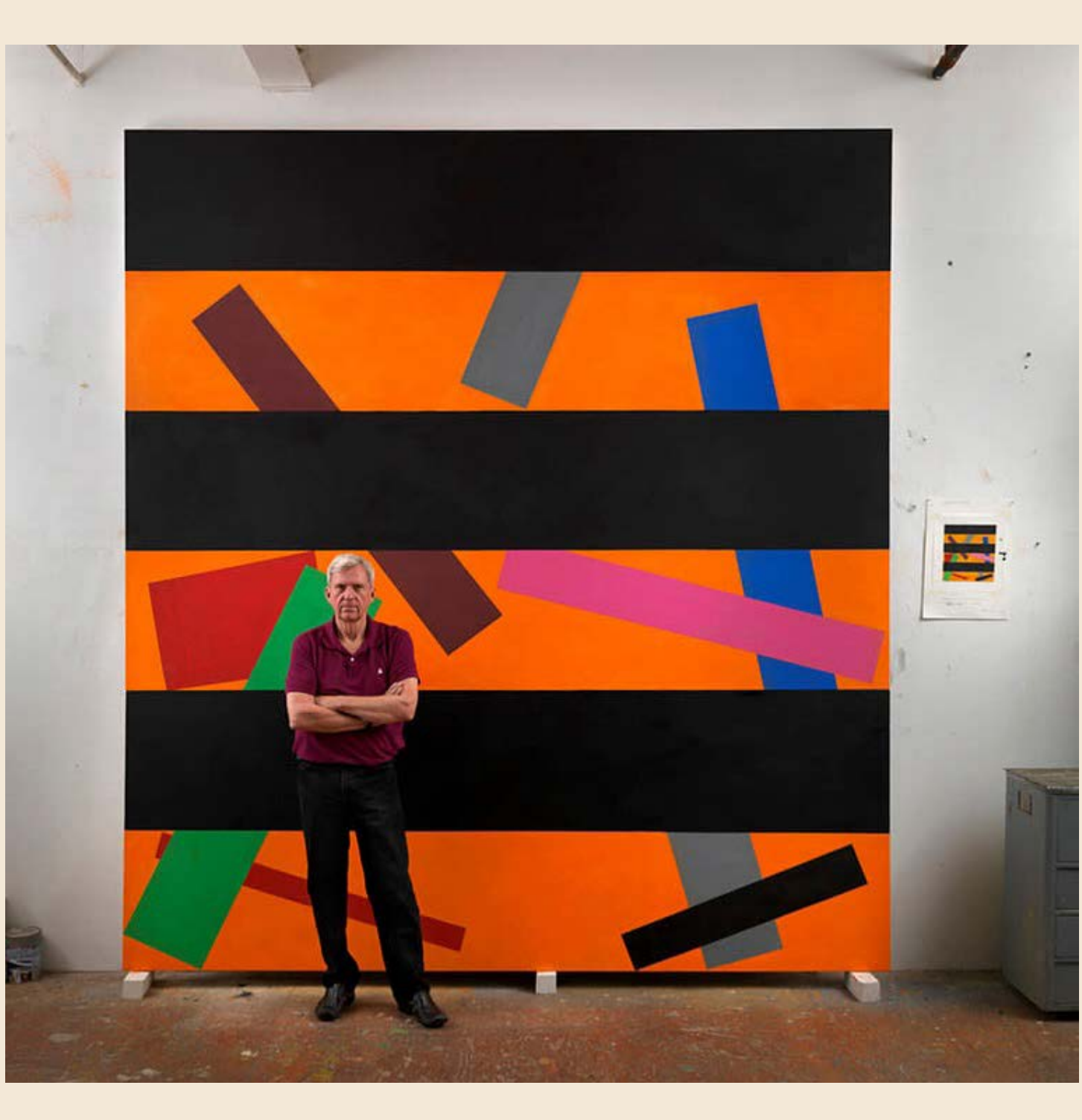
As we start a new year we remember the passing of brilliant artists and cultural leaders, lost in 2025, who profoundly impacted this country's creative landscape with their talent, innovative spirits, and remarkable achievements. Their legacies will have an impact for generations to come. This week's newsletter is dedicated to them, with heartfelt words from their peers, friends, and colleagues. The people featured below are gone but not forgotten. Their passion, intellect, work, and warmth remain embedded in the memories of all those privileged to have known them and their contributions.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

RIC EVANS

January 10, 1946 – August 12, 2025

Canadian visual artist whose abstract practice enriched the national art scene



Ric Evans, 2015, photograph by Joseph Hartman.

"I first met Ric Evans and saw his work in 1975 in a small AGO group show, simply entitled *Four Painters*. This was a time when painting, and especially abstract painting, was under attack for a number of ideological reasons. But Ric's abstract painting outlived ideology, and throughout he stayed in top form. The exhibition was curated by Alvin Balkind. When he asked his four artists for a description of their work, they simply gave the facts: 'Ric Evans paints six-inch vertical bands of artist's oil colour on a ground of latex interior house paints, on canvases 3 by 6 feet.' His latest paintings were youthfully bold—or was it old-masterly confident?—speaking in his own language of tightly bound geometries, quirky colours, contrasting paint surfaces, and unstable spatial locations."

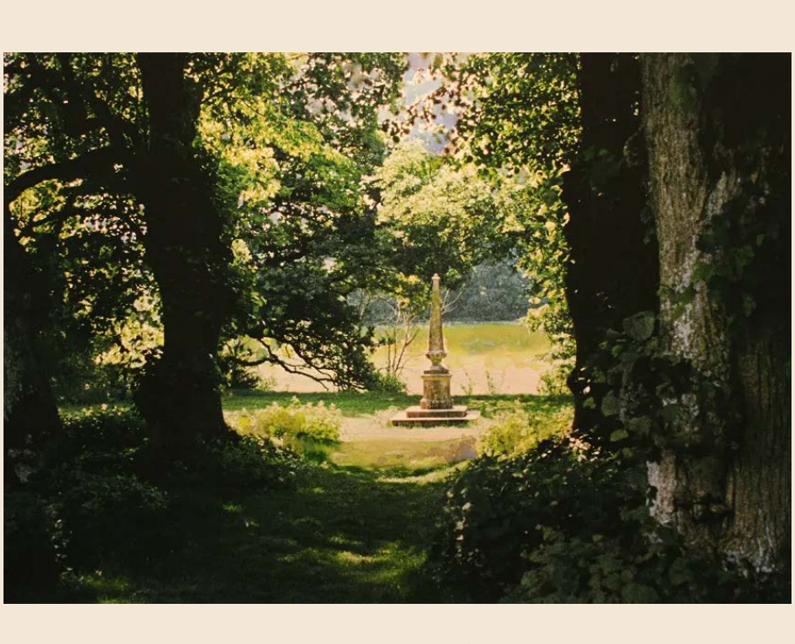
—Roald Nasgaard, curator and author of *Abstract Painting in Canada* (2008)

JENNIFER DICKSON

September 17, 1936 – January 18, 2025

Internationally renowned Ottawa-based artist and key figure in the local visual arts scene

Jennifer Dickson, n.d., photograph by Peter Wedgewood.



Jennifer Dickson, *Transitions 5 (Sun's Chalice, Hinton Ampner)*, n.d., Wallace Galleries, Calgary.

"Jennifer Dickson was a force of intellect and imagination. She believed in art's power to restore meaning and order in a chaotic world, and for more than six decades, she pursued that belief with discipline and grace. Her photographs, prints, and assemblages—of gardens, sacred historical spaces, and the body itself—unfold like meditations on time, memory, and transformation. A Member of the Order of Canada and an elected member of both the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts and the Royal Academy of Arts (London, U.K.), she was celebrated internationally for her conceptual insight and technical acuity. To work with Jennifer was to witness a mind alive with curiosity and conviction."

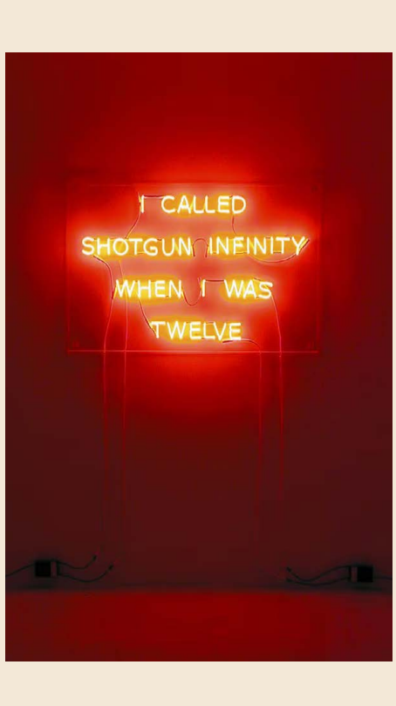
—Rebecca Basciano, chief curator, Ottawa Art Gallery

KELLY MARK

1967 – February 21, 2025

Canadian conceptual artist and sculptor based in Toronto

Kelly Mark, *Hello and Goodbye*, 2018, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.



Kelly Mark, *I Called Shotgun Infinity When I Was Twelve*, 2006, estate of Kelly Mark.

"Kelly Mark was known for her conceptual and often humorous explorations of everyday life, repetition, and labour. Working across video, installation, drawing, and performance, she transformed ordinary routines and objects into poetic reflections on time, value, and human persistence. Her projects often blurred the line between art and daily existence, documenting mundane tasks or repeating simple actions endlessly. Through subtle wit and rigorous discipline, Mark examined how meaning was constructed in the banal and highlighted the beauty within the repetitive patterns of modern life."

—Taiga Bentley, owner/director, Olga Korper Gallery

VICTOR CICANSKY

February 12, 1935 – March 3, 2025

Renowned Saskatchewan sculptor known for his whimsical ceramic creations

Victor Cicansky, n.d.

Victor Cicansky, *Sexy Garden: Carrots III*, 2019, various collections.

"Victor knew there was magic in the earth. His two passions, ceramics and gardening, both involved coaxing life from mud. In the garden, he grew thriving plants, bringing to life vegetables and fruits that in turn nourished him and his loved ones. In the studio, he grew ideas. He turned clay and metal into playful and spirited artworks. Victor's studio was full of magic. Sometimes when I showed up to work, I would come in to find that it had transformed overnight into an enchanted grove of bronze trees. Branches... would be growing from every available surface. They were crammed onto tables, chairs, and the floor, their precious bronze fruits and leaves wrapped up in protective layers of foil.... I like to think that he's returning to the earth, to be the spark in someone else's soil."

—Nikki Little, Victor's former studio assistant and friend

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AGANETHA DYCK

September 12, 1937 – July 18, 2025

Beloved Manitoba artist whose work explored themes of domestic life, transformation, and the environment

Aganetha Dyck, n.d.

Aganetha Dyck, *Wedding Guest*, from the series the Extended Wedding Party, 1994–95, Winnipeg Art Gallery.

"With all their quick wit and underlying humour, these are the products of an individual who brings to form the very meaning of our daily existence. There is a persistent aesthetic questioning in the work of Aganetha Dyck, as well as a message to us about what it means to be human. Dyck's work speaks about us, our place in the community, and our need and quest for survival."

—Shirley Madill, executive director, Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery

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RITA BRIANSKY

July 25, 1925 – April 24, 2025

Polish-born Canadian artist associated with the Jewish Painters of Montreal

Rita Briansky in her studio, 1997, photograph by Dave Sidaway / *Montreal Gazette*.

Rita Briansky, *Alone*, 1943, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec.

"I had the privilege of working with Rita on her fonds with us at the Jewish Public Library Archive. It was always a pleasure to visit Rita in her home studio. She always had the table set with tea, even when her own mobility was diminishing. But more than that, she was so proud of her students, who she taught on Zoom throughout her nineties. She was a cheerleader and a prolific tireless worker. It has been an honour to process her huge collection of paintings, drawings, and prints following her passing. Rita will be missed."

—Lucy Pauker, processing archivist, Jewish Public Library Archive, Montreal

"Rita Briansky's commitment to painting was complete. She liked to say, 'I was born with a pencil in my hands.' With poet Ida Massey as a mentor and [painter] Alexander Bercovitch as her teacher, she forged an unwavering path as an artist at an early age. Her paintings were autobiographical, but not in a direct sense; rather, they portrayed what she saw with her eyes through the filter of her state of mind. Taken in their entirety, they leave a record of a life lived in vivid awareness of the beauty and tragedy—the fullness and aloneness—of being."

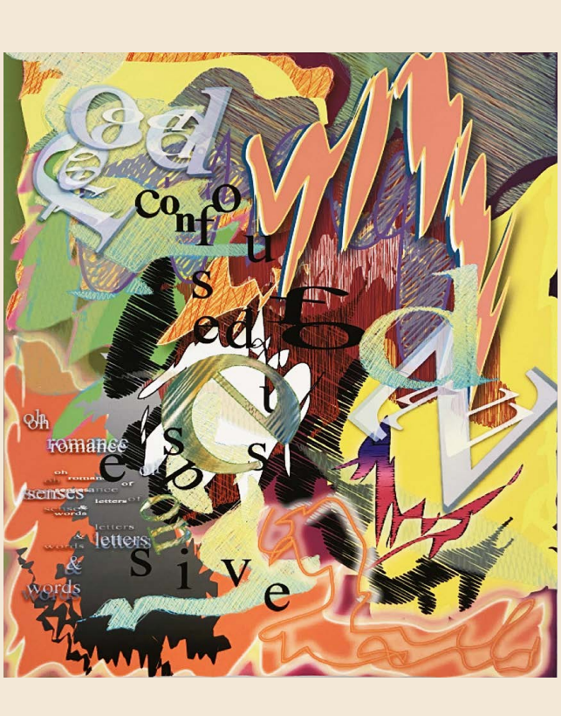
—Susan Scott, visual artist and friend of Rita Briansky

JUDITH COPITHORNE

August 5, 1939 – May 15, 2025

Vancouver-based concrete poet who used words and shapes to create "poem-drawings"

Judith Copithorne, n.d., photograph by Brian Nation.



Judith Copithorne, *Oh Romance*, 2015, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver.

"[Judith Copithorne's] work from the 1960s and 1970s engaged with meditation and community, referring to mandalas, maps, and yogic texts. Over the course of her long career, her work expanded to include explorations into digital means of composing poem-drawings, creating crisp and oversaturated drawings with texts. Copithorne's practice in concrete poetry and other forms of experimental writing led to her social and artistic participation at Sound Gallery, Motion Studio and Intermedia in 1960s Vancouver, as well as performances with Helen Goodwin's dance company, TheCo. She worked alongside many artist-poets, taking part in Downtown Vancouver Poets, an informal group imagined as a counterpoint to those involved at *TISH*, a Canadian poetry newsletter run by student-poets at UBC in 1961. We will miss Judith's generous and sometimes cheeky conversations."

—Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, whose collection includes Judith Copithorne's work.

NOBUO KUBOTA

June 27, 1931 – September 30, 2025

Pioneering multimedia artist, musician, and sound poet

Nobuo Kubota, *Roctoc*, 1986, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston.

"Nobuo Kubota, an award-winning Japanese Canadian artist, broke boundaries with his sound poetry, free improvisation, sculpture, and intermedia performance works. I first studied with him in 1977 at the Ontario College of Art, and in 2025, I made *I Am the Art: Nobuo Kubota*, a documentary that captures his remarkable spirit. Interned as a child during the Second World War, he later transformed the Japanese phonetics he learned in language school into groundbreaking sound art. A former architect and founding member of the Artists' Jazz Band, the CCMC (an improvisational jazz group that included artists Michael Snow and Graham Coughtry), and Toronto's Music Gallery, he helped shape Canada's avant-garde music scene. In person, Nobi was full of humour, Zen, curiosity, and mischievous boldness, always pushing into new territory. His legacy endures through his sculptures, paintings, calligraphic drawings, and the many artists he inspired."

—Annette Mangaard, artist and filmmaker,
director of *I Am the Art: Nobuo Kubota*

FRANK GEHRY

February 28, 1929 – September 30, 2025

Storied Canadian-born architect who designed some of the world's most famous buildings

Portrait of Frank Gehry, photograph by Mario Croes.

Frank Gehry's design for the new Art Gallery of Ontario.

"[Frank Gehry] took the sprawling scale of Toronto, and the spreading form of the art gallery, and suggested a kind of intimacy. [...] That he brought such feeling to the creation of lived form was a gift to all of us—imagining what comfort means as you see, and experience, the building blocks of place, light, scale and material. The feeling of connection. I know this to be true: that he created such an architecture of belonging at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and that it changed the lives of many."

—Matthew Teitelbaum, Michael and Sonja Koerner
Director of the Art Gallery of Ontario, 1998–2015

Matthew Teitelbaum was the Michael and Sonja Koerner director of the Art Gallery of Ontario from 1998–2015, and director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston from 2015–25. In 2002 he began a six-year journey with Frank Gehry, together with Ken Thomson and his family, and with staff and board members, to imagine, plan, and build something new at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

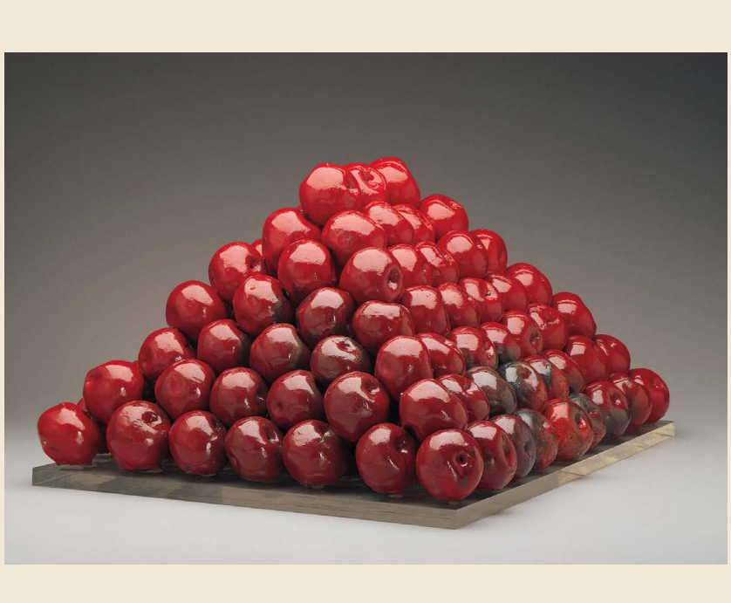
This except was drawn from "Working with Frank Gehry, I Learned He Was the Great Architect of Empathy," published in the Globe and Mail on December 8, 2025.

GATHIE FALK

January 31, 1928 – December 23, 2025

Acclaimed artist known for her work in painting and ceramic sculpture, as well as her pioneering installation and performance art

Gathie Falk in 2019, photograph by Tom Gould.



Gathie Falk, *196 Apples*, 1969–70, Vancouver Art Gallery.

"Apples, snowballs, shoes—the acclaimed work of Gathie Falk asks us to consider the haunting beauty of everyday objects. [...] In her paintings and sculptures, Falk combined a rich understanding of minimalism and the conceptualist readymade with a playful sensitivity reminiscent of poetry. For five subsequent decades, she created some of the most well-known art in Canada and abroad, using sculpture, performance, painting, and drawing. From pyramids of fruit to papier-mâché canoes, her work is boundless."

—Michelle Jacques, author of *Gathie Falk: Life & Work*.

JEANNE PARKIN

December 8, 1922 - December, 2025

Art advocate, advisor, and founder of Jeanne Parkin Arts Management Ltd

Jeanne Parkin in 1993 with her friends General Idea–(*clockwise*) Felix Partz, AA Bronson, and Jorge Zontal.

Photograph of Jeanne Parkin, 1990s.

"As a personality with gravitas, Jeanne was someone who made contemporary art glamorous and important in Canada. She was the smallest person in the room, but you couldn't miss her because there was a group standing around her. Just by her sheer enthusiasm, just because she was at an opening, people thought, "If Jeanne is paying attention to this then I will." A woman ahead of her time, Jeanne brought contemporary art to a wide Canadian audience by telling her clients, her friends, and all those around her, "You can never look at art too much because the longer you look, the sooner you begin to understand." I know it sounds like I am talking about a rock star, but in a way she was, working both inside and outside major institutions for more than a half-century to ensure that important works and their creators were enshrined and celebrated."

—Marc Mayer CM, Former Director, National Gallery of Canada.

The above quotation is from the Art Canada Institute podcast *Jeanne Parkin - A Living History*.

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