

McMichael Magazine

From the McMichael Canadian Art Collection

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Transforming Spirit: The Cameron/Bredt Collection of Contemporary Northwest Coast Art

7: Professional Native
Indian Artists Inc.

Frank (Franz)
Johnston

Thom Sokoloski

From the Permanent Collection



Maurice Cullen (1866–1934), *Chutes aux Caron*, c. 1928, oil on canvas, 102.3 x 153 cm, Gift of Mrs. Janet Heywood, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 2003.1

On the Cover

Don Yeomans (b. 1958), *Bear Mask* (detail), 2009, red cedar, paint, 99.4 x 61.5 x 31.8 cm, Gift of Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 2014.6.49

The McMichael Vision

To be recognized as an extraordinary place to visit and explore Canadian culture and identity, and the connections between art and nature.

Extraordinary place to visit

A physical and virtual gathering place that provides an engaging and continually changing experience to targeted audiences and communities driving new and repeat visits.

Explore Canadian culture and identity

Enables our users to understand who we are as Canadians and where we fit in the global context over time, through the medium of art.

Connections between art and nature

Bringing together and integrating the visual arts with the natural world to create a cultural landscape that combines works of nature and people.

The McMichael Mission

To interpret and promote Canadian and Aboriginal art, to attract local, national, and international audiences.

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A Word from the Executive Director and CEO

This third edition of *McMichael Magazine* opens with a message from a new member of the McMichael team. It is my great pleasure to introduce Dr. Sarah Stanners, our new Director of Curatorial and Collections. Sarah comes to the McMichael with a background of outstanding scholarship and a wealth of exciting ideas. McMichael staff looks forward to working with Sarah as she guides the gallery's exhibition plans for its fiftieth anniversary in 2016 and develops exciting ways to celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017. Keep your eyes and ears open for ways to listen to art.

The McMichael has always been associated with the Group of Seven, but this summer the gallery showcases the works of another group, known as the "Indian Group of Seven" or the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. Co-founded by Daphne Odjig in the early 1970s, this group included many artists associated with the McMichael—Norval Morrisseau, Carl Ray, and Odjig herself. It is a great honour to have their works installed at the McMichael.

The McMichael is also most fortunate to be able to increase its own collection of works by indigenous artists, with the generous donation of forty-nine works by contemporary Northwest Coast artists. This gift from Jamie Cameron, a former McMichael Board member, and Christopher Bredt will enable the gallery to show the development of artistic traditions from this region, by a celebrated group of artists.

Join us at the McMichael and share in the breathtaking art of this country.

—Dr. Victoria Dickenson, *Executive Director and CEO*



A Word from the Director of Curatorial and Collections

Some of you may be wondering why it is that an expert on mid-twentieth-century abstract art is now directing the Curatorial and Collections department at the McMichael? From my earliest days as the keeper of the Hart House Permanent Collection at the University of Toronto, which is comprised entirely of Canadian art, I have seen a discernable connection between representation and abstraction. With my later focus on the National Gallery of Canada's *Jack Bush* retrospective exhibition and my still-ongoing compilation of the *Jack Bush* catalogue raisonné of paintings, I have delighted in examining an artist's extraordinary journey from landscape to abstraction—one that is paradigmatic to the evolution of modern art in Canada.

I am very pleased to now be working for the McMichael, and I intend to keep the gallery's respected community, members, and future members at the forefront of my mind. I also feel it is important to extend our reach to all Canadians and indigenous people across this vast country, as well as to bring our national arts into context with the rest of the world around us. As my doctoral work was partly focused on the way in which prominent collectors or family-formed collections founded Canada's public museums, I am well-primed to navigate the history of the McMichael, while also keeping my eye on the future. So far, the view is great!

I was born and raised in Toronto, but I know all too well that a view from outside of the city lends a greater vantage point and perspective. I want to embrace the McMichael's special position and make the most of the new landscape before me.

—Dr. Sarah Stanners, *Director, Curatorial and Collections*

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7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.

By MICHELLE LAVALLEE, ASSOCIATE CURATOR, MACKENZIE ART GALLERY, REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN

7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc., showing at the McMichael from May 9 to September 7, 2015, is organized by the MacKenzie Art Gallery. This project has been made possible through a contribution from the Museums Assistance Program, Department of Canadian Heritage. The MacKenzie receives ongoing support from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, SaskCulture, the City of Regina, and the University of Regina.

Seven artists came together in the early 1970s to fight collectively for the inclusion of their work within the mainstream Canadian art world. One of Canada's most important artist alliances, the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. (PNIAI), made history by demanding recognition for its members as professional, contemporary artists. These artists broke with identity definitions and boundaries imposed

on First Nations. They fought against double standards and exclusionary practices that treated the work of Aboriginal artists as a type of handicraft, a categorization that prevented their work from being shown in mainstream galleries and museums. By challenging old constructs and stimulating a new way of thinking about the lives and art of First Nations people, they signalled a new course for the exhibi-

tion and reception of contemporary indigenous art. By the end of 1972, the “Group of Seven”—Jackson Beardy (1944–1984), Eddy Cobiness (1933–1996), Alex Janvier (b. 1935), Norval Morrisseau (1932–2007), Daphne Odjig (b. 1919), Carl Ray (1942–1978), and Joseph Sanchez (b. 1948)—constituted the first self-organized, autonomous First Nations artists’ advocacy collective in Canada.

“If our work as artists has somehow helped to open doors between our people and non-native people, then I am glad. I am even more deeply pleased if it has helped to encourage the young people that have followed our generation to express their pride in our heritage more openly, more joyfully, than I would have ever dared to think possible.”—Daphne Odjig¹

Previous page: Carl Ray (1942–1978), *Medicine Bear*, 1977, acrylic on canvas, 99.1 x 73.7 cm, Collection of Sunita D. Doobay, © Estate of Carl Ray. Photograph by Don Hall

Below: Alex Janvier (b. 1935), *High Hopes of a Liberal*, 1974, acrylic on canvas, 90.5 x 122.5 cm, Courtesy of Janvier Gallery, © Alex Janvier. Photograph by Don Hall

The work of the PNIAI is a testament to the ongoing relevance and strength of indigenous people, their ideologies, and cultures. This exhibition celebrates this history and the works of these master artists, and provides a glimpse of struggles overcome, gates broken open, and a legacy that has gone under-recognized. *7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. (7:PNIAI)* is the first full-scale exhibition and publication focused solely on the PNIAI. Highlighting their national importance and impact, *7* is the materialization of what this Group of Seven fought for more than forty years ago.



This exhibition focuses on that crucial decade during which the seven artists were active as a group, beginning with their initial meetings in 1971 until their dissolution as a legal entity in 1979. The exhibition considers their collective artistic impact, as well as the distinctive styles and experimentation of the individual artists during this significant period of production. Showcasing eighty-three of 120 works originally assembled at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan, the selection exemplifies the range and diversity of their production and includes a number of recently uncovered masterworks.

The exhibition is also accompanied by a 360-page catalogue with 120 colour illustrations. As the first monograph devoted to the PNIAI, this publication provides access to new and revisited research and writing on the group’s contributions. It includes essays written by seven distinguished indigenous scholars and curators: Barry Ace, Viviane Gray, Tom Hill, Lee-Ann Martin, Cathy Mattes, Carmen Robertson, and Joseph Sanchez. The PNIAI artists and co-founders Alex Janvier, Daphne Odjig, and Joseph Sanchez have also contributed personal memoirs. Additionally, a timeline highlights milestones within the PNIAI members’ lives alongside key moments in indigenous arts and political histories.

Through the exhibition and publication, the complexity of the group’s struggles for individual and collective agency during a truly rich and catalytic period in history is revealed. Though their personal aspirations were diverse, the collective vision of the PNIAI made them frontrunners in the development of contemporary indigenous art. *7:PNIAI* provides a glimpse of a vision that flourished despite the struggles these artists faced within the context of mainstream Canadian society. It is my hope that an intergenerational and cross-cultural audience will benefit from the opportunity to view the assembled works.

The origins of this artists’ alliance grew out of grassroots efforts to meet the needs of Aboriginal artists who had converged in one city, Winnipeg, Manitoba, in the late 1960s. Beyond trying to increase the market and respect for their work, these artists were engaged in a broader political struggle. The PNIAI members were affected by the many cultural and political policies that relegated First Nations people to secondary status and strictly regulated all aspects of their lives. Understanding how forces within Canadian society controlled the lives of First Nations people is key to appreciating the barriers these artists faced and their collective efforts to overcome them.

In 1970, Daphne Odjig and her husband, Chester Beavon, established Odjig Indian Prints

of Canada Ltd. and opened a small craft store under the same name at 331 Donald Street in Winnipeg the following year. The store was a gathering place for artists who had been working in isolation from each other not only in Winnipeg, but also as far afield as the art scenes in Ottawa and Toronto, Ontario. “My little shop became a drop-in centre,”⁴ Odjig remembers. Whether you were coming from the East or coming from the West, “Odjig’s,” as it was commonly known, became the place to engage with other artists.

Beginning with conversations generated at Odjig’s during that initial year, the connections between artists were further developed at informal gatherings in Winnipeg and eventually led to a concerted effort to form a unified, professional group. By 1973, thoughts of incorporation had begun to circulate and be debated among the members. Encouraged to legalize their status and formalize their association, they believed incorporation might enable them to secure funding to aid in the realization of the group’s objectives, particularly as they related to exhibitions, marketing, and education. An application to officially incorporate as Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated was prepared in February 1974; however, the group was not legally incorporated until April 1, 1975.⁵

Self-determination and self-definition were motivations at the heart of their group. Meetings usually took place at Daphne’s house, at the Northstar Inn, or at Odjig’s, where they shared their frustrations with the Canadian art establishment, grappled with prejudice, discussed aesthetics, and critiqued one another’s art. Interacting with others who shared similar experiences and cultural backgrounds was both stimulating and advantageous for the PNIAI members. Working together gave them a strength and unity that caught the attention of the media and brought a contemporary image of First Nations art to the forefront.

The struggle for mainstream acceptance for the group was a constant battle that pitted the artists against government programs, a non-native public’s expectations, and government-supported institutions wanting art that reflected “Indianness” in style and content.⁶ More often than not, their work was relegated to commercial and ethno-galleries, cultural centres and museums, and hallways and offices, rather than contemporary fine art galleries, where they believed they belonged.

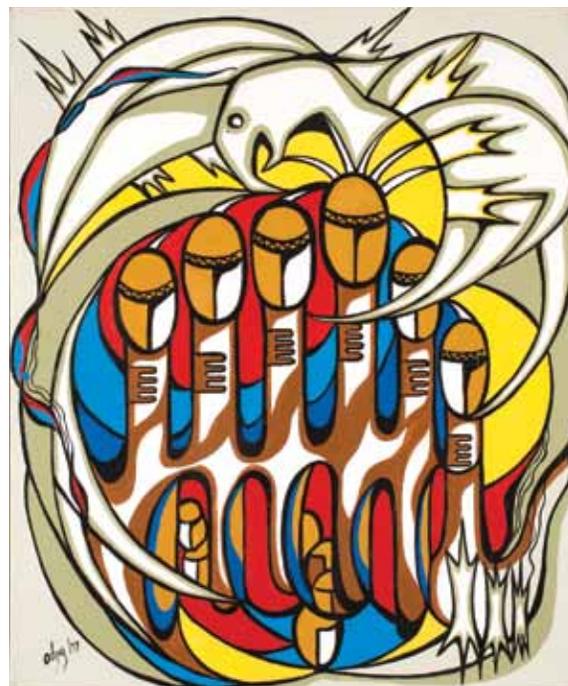
Seeking to control their creative processes, the PNIAI did not allow others to determine the validity of their connection to their heritage. The members were interested in the question of “Indian art,” but defined it for themselves. Members were interested in expanding their horizons as artists, rather than succumbing

to a prepackaged, narrow definition of “Indian art” and double standards around authenticity. In turn, they encouraged younger artists to create their own contemporary expressions as individuals.

Reflecting on the PNIAI’s part in the history of First Nations activism in the arts, Lee-Ann Martin observes: “This group incorporated two of the most important features of organizations that would follow—providing support to individuals and lobbying for aboriginal artists as a whole.”⁷ With an emphasis on professional accreditation, and exhibiting and marketing their work, their interest and artistic aspirations were national and international in scope. Their intent was to cast a wide net and to mentor and support young indigenous artists across Canada.

In the end, despite their best efforts to remain a unified cohort, members found it too arduous to coordinate exhibitions and raise funds without external support and additional expertise. The cohesiveness of the group was difficult to maintain as the artists began to work with different galleries and art dealers. Among the factors contributing to the group’s dissolution was Odjig’s decision in 1976 to sell her shop and gallery, and move to British Columbia. Without a central meeting point, the PNIAI members began to lose touch with one another as they became more involved with individual projects. Ray’s tragic death in September 1978 led to the further disintegration of the group.⁸

“The main galleries...wouldn’t even look at us. But none of us stopped painting. We just kept going.... The paintings started to speak for us....And this is the way it started....It’s a living legacy....It’ll never die now.”
—Alex Janvier²



Daphne Odjig (b. 1919), *Thunderbird of Courage*, 1977, acrylic on canvas, 61 x 50.8 cm, Private Collection (TBC), © Daphne Odjig. Photograph by Don Hall



PROFESSIONAL NATIVE INDIAN ARTISTS INC.
GROUP OF SEVEN:
JANVIER RAY
MORRISSEAU

OP
JIG
SANC
HEZ
BEA
RDY
COBI
NESS

7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. National Tour

Before its debut at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection (May 9 to September 7, 2015), 7:PNIAI opened at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina (September 21, 2013, to January 12, 2014) and has travelled to the Winnipeg Art Gallery (May 9 to August 31, 2014) and the Kelowna Art Gallery (October 11, 2014, to January 4, 2015). For further updates and information, please see mackenzieartgallery.sk.ca/engage/exhibitions/7.

While short-lived, the significance of the PNIAI in the history of Canadian art cannot be underestimated. Reaching across cultural boundaries, the forward thinking of these pivotal artists has had an undeniable cultural and political impact.⁹ It takes courage to make work that differs from the work of those before you and

“Together we broke down barriers that would have been so much more difficult faced alone.”
—Daphne Odjig³

not assimilate into the mainstream art world. The visual impact of the works in this exhibition will hopefully acquaint viewers with the excitement and newness of the images and styles that these seven artists produced—an excitement shared by the many artists who built on their artistic innovations. Even as the PNIAI members focused on advancing their own careers as artists, they never lost sight of their larger political goal of raising the profile of native people. Theirs was a political consciousness that was fuelled by and, in turn, gave energy to the indigenous rights movements at that time. The First Nations philosophy, aesthetics, and world view that permeated the PNIAI in the course of their struggles continue to inform the work of many indigenous artists and curators today.

As curator of this exhibition, I am witness to the spirit that pours out of the works of the PNIAI and into the hearts of so many. I am humbled and proud to be in a position to honour this group and their legacy, yet I am conscious that I have barely scratched the surface. For the last thought, I defer to the insights of Alex Janvier, who shared these words with a full house at the opening night of the exhibition at the MacKenzie Art Gallery:

*What you see here is...a true story, and that's how it began, and ever since then we haven't stopped. Members of this Group, some of them have gone on to their graves, but you'll see their work, they will talk to you with their art. Our story is really a Canadian story, a real Canadian story. It comes from here, by the people from here, and it's about here. I welcome all of you to take a good look and be proud. I've travelled around the world quite a bit...but when you come back to Canada, you almost want to kiss the earth that you come from because it's so good to come home. This art here...I hope will give you the same feeling, that every one of you has come home.*¹⁰ MM

ENDNOTES

1. Daphne Odjig in Bob Boyer and Carol Podedworny, *Odjig: The Art of Daphne Odjig: 1960–2000* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2001), 78.
2. Alex Janvier, “Closing Remarks: Carrying the Vision,” in *Selected Proceedings of Witness: A Symposium on the Woodland School of Painters*, ed. Bonnie Devine (Toronto: Aboriginal Curatorial Collective and Witness, 2009), 166.
3. Daphne Odjig, speech for the opening reception of *The Drawings and Paintings of Daphne Odjig: A Retrospective Exhibition*, Institute of American Indian Arts Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico, August 20, 2009.
4. Daphne Odjig, interview by author, Regina, February 6, 2010.
5. Through the legal firm Martens and Dennehy, an application to officially incorporate as Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated was prepared in February 1974. However, these incorporation documents were not accepted, and the group was required to revise and resubmit its application to Consumer and Corporate Affairs on March 13, 1974. Subsequently, and contrary to long-standing assumptions, the group was not legally incorporated until April 1, 1975. The Letters Patent show signatures of three of the seven directors: Quincy Pickering Jackson Beardy, Joseph Marcus Sanchez, and Daphne Louise Odjig Beavon. They also give the officially incorporated name as Anisnabe Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated (Corporation # 057450-3).¹⁰⁸ This version of their title has not been noted in any prior research or scholarship related to the group, and it was never used in their official correspondence or activities.
6. Barry Ace, “Reactive Intermediates: Aboriginal Art, Politics, and Resonance of the 1960s and 1970s,” in *7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.*, ed. Michelle LaVallee (Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2014).
7. Lee-Ann Martin, “First Nations Activism Through the Arts,” in *Questions of Community: Artists, Audiences, Coalitions*, eds. Daina Augaitis, et al. (Banff, Alberta: Walter Phillips Gallery in association with Banff Centre Press, 1995), 77–89.
8. While there is no record of a surrender of charter and no certificate of dissolution on file, according to Corporations Canada files, the PNIAI corporation was officially dissolved on April 27, 1979.
9. It is important to acknowledge that in addition to the seven members of the PNIAI, there were many First Nations artists producing work and contributing to a nationwide indigenous renaissance; for example, Bill Reid and others were important trailblazers on the West Coast. The decolonizing spirit that took hold through art as a first line of defence is one that continues through to the present and was described by art historian Carmen Robertson as a “Red Renaissance” during a talk, January 21, 2008, at the University of Regina and again as part of a keynote address, “Art of the Flatland: Aboriginal Contemporary Arts,” at the International Association of Philosophy and Literature Conference in Regina, Saskatchewan, May 24–27, 2010.
10. Alex Janvier, speech for the opening reception of *7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, September 20, 2013.

Opposite page, clockwise from top left:

Jackson Beardy (1944–1984), *Flock*, 1973, acrylic on canvas, 119.2 x 167.3 cm, Collection of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, © Estate of Jackson Beardy. Photograph courtesy of Aboriginal Art Centre, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

Eddy Cobiness (1933–1996), *Watering the Horse*, 1974, pen and ink, 71.5 x 56 cm, Courtesy of Woodland Cultural Centre, © Estate of Eddy Cobiness. Photograph by Don Hall

Jackson Beardy (1944–1984), *Nanabush Catches the Eagle*, 1972, acrylic on board, 80 x 99.1 cm, Ermi Tano Collection (TBC), © Estate of Jackson Beardy. Photograph by Don Hall

Daphne Odjig (b. 1919), *So Great Was Their Love*, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 101.6 x 81.3 cm, Private Collection, © Daphne Odjig

Daphne Odjig: Trailblazer and Advocate

By JANN L.M. BAILEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE KAMLOOPS ART GALLERY, KAMLOOPS, BRITISH COLUMBIA, AND CURATOR OF THE NATIONAL TOURING EXHIBITION *DAPHNE ODJIG: FOUR DECADES OF PRINTS*

At ninety-five, Daphne Odjig is still working, producing at least one drawing a day from her sun-filled room in Kelowna, British Columbia.

While memory and hearing are both fading, she kindly shared with me her humble admiration for all those who have been a part of her amazing journey in an interview in March of this year. Unquestionably, Odjig considers herself to be “a very lucky person.”¹

“...I was commissioned to do all these works...and travelled a lot, and I have had a lot of opportunities. I have been very, very lucky. I couldn’t have done all of this on my own...I am just grateful.”

Odjig has inspired many artists of her own generation, artists just starting to consider their practice and many others over the past five decades. She has been a trailblazer, advocating for the rights of indigenous artists, women, and children throughout her remarkable career.

As co-founder of the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. (PNIAI), Odjig, along with Jackson Beardy, worked tirelessly to shape and form the PNIAI, not only to promote their work by their own terms, but also to contest against exclusionary practices. Even though Odjig worked with members of the Woodland School, she found more affinity with the PNIAI, often referred to as the “Indian Group of Seven” and included Jackson Beardy (1944–1984), Eddy Cobiness (1933–1996), Alex Janvier (b. 1935), Norval Morrisseau (1931–2007), Odjig (b. 1919), Carl Ray (1942–1978), and Joseph Sanchez (b. 1948). Collectively, they sought to have their work and the work of artists who followed acknowledged for its artistic merit and included within the arts and cultural mainstream by expanding the indigenous vocabulary and attitude of the visual arts canon in Canada, not marginalized or categorized and relegated to the decorative annals of art history. This remained Odjig’s lifelong aspiration.

“...I worked tirelessly with Jackson Beardy to pull everyone together to create PNIAI, and our goal was to encourage others to be proud of their heritage and find their path....”

“...It was an easy group, good rapport, teamwork, and we encouraged one another, and we got along well....”

Primarily self-taught and encouraged as a young child by her grandfather, Jonas Odjig, and her father, Dominic Odjig, the artist’s work has undergone many important transitions over her career.

Odjig produces work that has a lyrical cadence, bold swirling lines, and vivid colour, often geometric in nature, which elegantly interweaves a multitude of highly expressive ovoid shapes within a flattened perspective.

In the early years of her career, Odjig reconnoitered her deep-rooted interest in art, an interest that began while drawing and painting with her grandfather. Fervent in her studies, she continued to investigate the work of her contemporaries—among others—and to explore her native roots.

Bob Boyer, who, along with Carol Podedworny, wrote *Odjig: The Art of Daphne Odjig: 1960–2000*², suggests that Odjig was attracted to the cubist style because of its “disregard for perspectival space, its skewing of the elements and relationships of reality and its central compositional structure.”³

“I liked Picasso; I liked his style. Dr. Swartz sent Picasso one of my paintings, and he liked it. I have to give Dr. Swartz credit for all the promotion of my work.”

Dr. Swartz owned a gallery in Calgary and wrote the book *Tales from the Smokehouse*, which Odjig illustrated. He also accompanied Odjig when she went to Israel.

During the course of her career, Odjig has been forthright in addressing concerns of colonization, bringing indigenous political issues to the vanguard of contemporary art practices and theory.

Born and raised well into her teens on the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, Odjig is the eldest of four surviving children and a member of the Potawatomi Nation.

Odjig’s experiences as a woman coming into her own during the volatile 1960s, when indigenous artists were beginning to explore their ethnicity, provided her encouragement and motivation. Like many artists of that era, Odjig began to interpret the traditional stories of her people. However, she soon found this limiting and was increasingly more interested in exploring her own narrative.

As Odjig continued to develop her own unique style, she took part in her first solo exhibition in 1967 at Lakehead Art Centre in Port Arthur, Ontario. She exhibited at the Canadian Pavilion at





Opposite page, from top:
Daphne Odjig (b. 1919), *Tribute to the Great Chiefs of the Past*, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 101.8 x 81 cm, Purchase 1975, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1975.11.1

Daphne Odjig (b. 1919), *Thunderbird Woman*, 1973, serigraph, 13/48, 71.0 x 55.5 cm, Collection of the Kamloops Art Gallery, Purchased with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance program, Ken Lepin, Elizabeth Illsey, Linda and Manny Jules, and the financial support of the Province of BC, KAG 2003-041

Daphne Odjig (b. 1919), *The Rhythm of the Drum*, 1977, serigraph, AP, 60.0 x 50.0 cm, Collection of the Kamloops Art Gallery, Purchased with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance program, Ken Lepin, Elizabeth Illsey, Linda and Manny Jules, and the financial support of the Province of BC, KAG 2003-035

Daphne Odjig (b. 1919), *The Embrace*, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 102 x 81.3 cm, Purchase 1975, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1975.11.2

Above: Daphne Odjig (b. 1919), *Conflict Between Good and Evil*, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 81.5 x 101.9 cm, Purchase 1975, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1975.11.3

Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan, and in 1972, along with Jackson Beardy and Alex Janvier, was included in a pivotal exhibition *Treaty Number 23, 287 and 1171* at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. This was the first time an exhibition exclusively included the work of indigenous artists featured in a public art gallery in Canada.

“...my work in exhibitions didn’t promote enough access for other artists, I don’t think...I did open a few doors...You know, I don’t think of the art as Aboriginal art...it’s art from your heart, your spirit...I don’t think it should be called Aboriginal art.”

This was an intense time for Odjig. She created an exceptional body of work, opened her own art gallery, was an activist for indigenous art, women and children, and was co-founder of the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. She also completed several major commissions, including one by the ELAL airline to produce works of the Holy Land titled the *Jerusalem Series* (1975–76), which had a profound and lasting effect on Odjig and was the impetus to continue to push personal boundaries. Additionally, Odjig was commissioned to produce a mural, *The Indian in Transition* (1978), for the National Museum of Man (now the Canadian Museum of History), which is exceptional.

“...Jerusalem really affected me...the domes, the architecture, it was beautiful...and I had a chance to ride a camel and go into the desert... it was really something...”

It was around this time that Odjig was contacted by Robert McMichael, founder of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. In McMichael’s publication *One Man’s Obsession*⁴ he writes:

When I first got in touch with Daphne Odjig in the 1970s it was arranged that several of her canvases would be sent to Kleinburg so we could make a selection.

In a letter to McMichael, dated April 21, 1975, Odjig specifies:

I have today sent four paintings for your selection. Each painting is numbered on the back 1–4. ...I appreciate the opportunity of having my work in the McMichael Canadian Collection.

On May 5, 1975, McMichael wrote back to Odjig, indicating:

I want to thank you for sending the four fine paintings by you for our Collection. ...We have selected three for purchase by the Collection. ...I hope, possibly when the Gallery is opened or sometime during the summer or autumn months, you might have an opportunity to visit the Collection. If you have any plans to be in the Toronto area in the foreseeable future I would like very much to meet.

In the final correspondence to Robert McMichael on May 12, 1975, Odjig wrote:

I would also like to meet you and tour the McMichael Collection. Dr. Cinedar spoke most highly of you and the collection during his recent trip to Winnipeg.

Odjig kept in touch with McMichael and was invited to Kleinburg to have dinner with Robert and Signe McMichael and view the collection, and over time they became good friends.

“...Robert and Signe were beautiful people; I knew them very well...I liked them very much....”

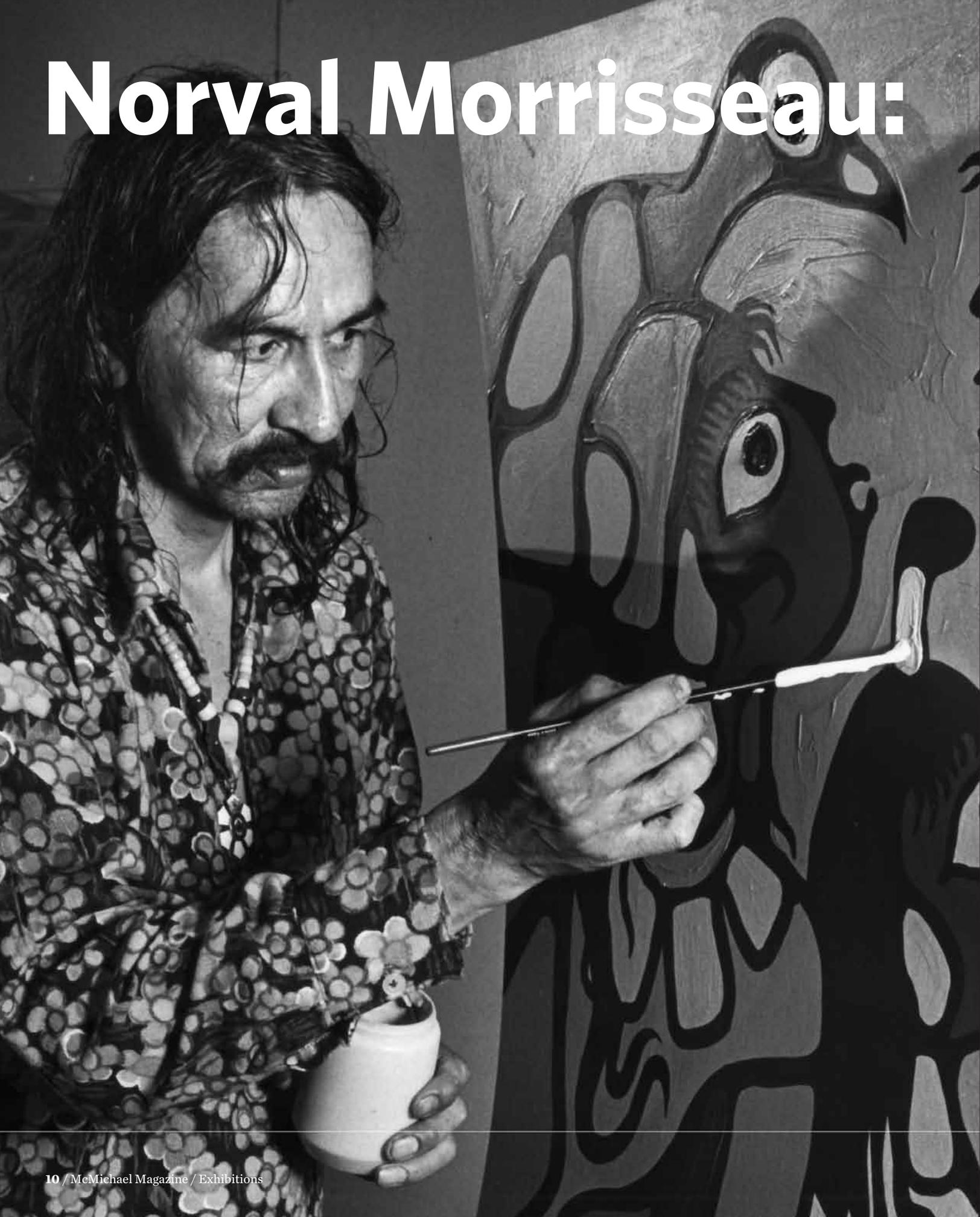
Odjig has received numerous honorary degrees, awards, and international accolades. However, at the heart of this engaging and gracious woman is a passion for life, a thirst for knowledge, and a spirit that has influenced and revitalized the political and creative landscape of generations of Canadian artists.

Jann L. M. Bailey would like to thank Daphne Odjig, Stan Somerville, Alan Stephenson, and Jennifer D. Foster, and the staff at both the McMichael Canadian Art Collection and the Kamloops Art Gallery, especially Victoria Dickenson, Janine Butler, and Krystyna Halliwell. She would also like to thank Penni Mitchell, Managing Editor of HERIZONS magazine, for granting permission to reprint material from the spring 2011 article entitled “Daphne Odjig” by Jann L. M. Bailey. MM

ENDNOTES

1. All quotes from the artist contained within this article, other than the correspondence with Robert McMichael, were gathered in an interview between Daphne Odjig and the writer on March 21, 2015.
2. Bob Boyer and Carol Podedworny, *Odjig: The Art of Daphne Odjig: 1960–2000*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2001.
3. Carol Podedworny, “Expanding a Cultural Aesthetic: Odjig and the New Woodland School”, *Odjig: The Art of Daphne Odjig: 1960–2000*, Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2001, p.17.
4. Robert McMichael, *One Man’s Obsession*. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1986.

Norval Morrisseau:



His Art and His Influence

Although information varies due to incomplete record keeping, 1931 is cited in published sources as the year of birth and Fort William (now Thunder Bay), Ontario, as the birthplace of Norval Morrisseau (1931–2007), also known as “Copper Thunderbird.” He was the eldest son in his family. His grandparents followed cultural tradition and assumed responsibility for his upbringing. Through his grandfather, a sixth-generation shaman, Morrisseau was introduced to Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) culture and traditions via exposure to spiritual education, stories, pictographs (paintings on rock), petroglyphs (rock carvings), and Midewiwin scrolls as a youth.

In the 1960s, Morrisseau sought to channel his shamanistic upbringing into his artistic practices, resulting in works of art that visually illustrated sacred traditional Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) stories through vibrant colours, allegorical subject matter, and remarkable forms. Despite the controversy Morrisseau’s artistry generated due to his visual revelations of these revered narratives, the artist felt that it was his responsibility to share Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) knowledge amongst his own people, as well as with non-First Nations people.

From the earliest phase in his production, Morrisseau’s practice reconnected with visual elements that appeared in the original pictographic sources. The surround lines or form lines were incorporated into his image making, as well as the use of transparency within shapes that reveal patterns or internal structures within forms or symbolic referents. His earliest images were created on natural material supports (that is, birchbark), paper or paper-board, and eventually Masonite and canvas.

Morrisseau’s art production that appeared on canvas, paper, and Masonite signified a shift in materials based on European-influenced traditions. The artist’s acrylic-painted compositions were characterized by an intuitive use of bright, pure-colour shapes

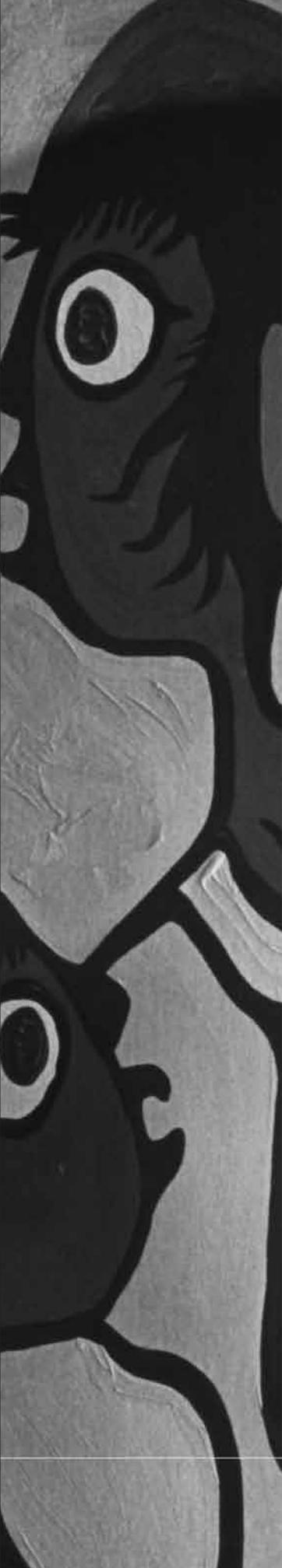
surrounded by black form lines. Some symbolically represented animals, and people radiated lines, suggestive of an inner power, while other elements configured as an X-ray view offered revelations of an inherent spirituality. The final works are vibrantly coloured with a visually compelling graphic quality.

The emergence of this renewed form of a symbolic, pictographic statement stimulated a shift toward rethinking the representation of traditional stories in a visual manner. As confident and assertive expressions of both personal and cultural identity, this approach to storytelling proved capable of generating a broader, positive response to the culture. Artists, in turn, felt encouraged to adapt and redefine this means of communication in order to continue to reach out beyond indigenous people, to a wider audience.

Morrisseau’s artistic style combined with the storytelling nature of his art served as a catalyst for other artists who would also lay claim to altering the visual interpretation of the forms of traditional imagery through adaptation of the colour palette, line work, subject matter, and other aspects of the painterly initiatives that he introduced. Carl Ray (1942–1978) initiated his own strategies for symbolically communicating cultural and spiritual knowledge. Jackson Beardy (1944–1984) and Daphne Odjig (b. 1919), who were based in Winnipeg, Manitoba, also became involved in producing work with stylistic concerns that supported the efforts to disseminate through visual representation this world view of beliefs and values to a wider audience. **MM**

[Opposite page: Norval Morrisseau working on the painting *Manifesting from Within Childlike Simplicity* in the Tom Thomson Shack, July 11, 1979. Photograph by Ian Samson](#)

[Photo: McMichael Canadian Art Collection Archives](#)





Breaking Barriers: Alex Janvier on His Early Life, His Artistic Development, and the Challenges of Being a Native Artist in Canada

By RACHEL WEINER, MEDIA RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS
COORDINATOR

Speaking by phone to Alex Janvier, at his home in Cold Lake, Alberta, the pioneering Canadian artist's depth of knowledge, experience, and humour immediately become apparent. The conversation shifts between topics as wide-ranging as the formation of the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. (PNIAI), native land rights, and the looming artistic influence of the late New York art critic Clement Greenberg. Janvier has just returned from his daughter's house, having completed three paintings in a matter of hours. His passion, drive, and creativity seem undiminished since his years as a member of the PNIAI.

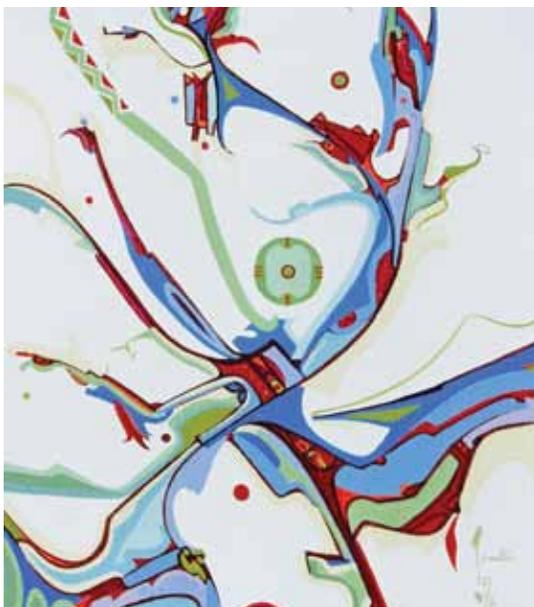
Janvier was born in 1935, at Cold Lake First Nations, Alberta, and is of Dene Suline and Saulteaux heritage. At the age of eight, he was uprooted from his family and sent to the Blue Quills Indian Residential School, near St. Paul, Alberta. In 1960, Janvier graduated with honours from the Alberta College of Art + Design in Calgary, after which he worked as an art instructor at the University of Alberta. He was later hired as a cultural adviser to the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Janvier has received numerous honours over the course his career, including the Order of Canada, a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts, and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. One of his most celebrated works, *Morning Star*, measuring 418 square metres, adorns a dome in the Grand Hall of the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec.

When did your interest in art begin to take shape?

As a kid I used to watch my older siblings. They'd clear the dirt smooth after it rained, and they would use sticks to do some drawings on the Earth's flat surface. So that was my introduction to artwork. I was only about four or five years old, but I saw my brother doing those kinds of things, and the older girls, too. They would do that during the summer, after they would return from the residential schools. They were my idols and heroes, so I'd follow them around. It was observation at its best. We were close to the bush and had a small lake that had a lot of ducks and action for inspiration. So my talent was on the move without knowing it. That was the beginning.

You mention your brothers and sisters being away at residential schools for most of the year. At the age of eight, you yourself were uprooted from your family. Can you describe that experience?

It affected me tremendously because I couldn't speak my language at the school. We were introduced to English by French







nuns, and I think they weren't actually the best at speaking English, so we were probably getting a kind of second-rate education. Not that I'm putting them down, but that's the way it was. The language factor

was a problem for me because I didn't speak any English, or French, or anything else except my native language, which didn't quite relate to what I was learning. So the only thing that I could personally relate to was the art that I could do. We used to have art on Friday after-

noons. And I just loved that because it was the only time I could be myself, instead of following their regimented teaching. I could relate it to me and my observations of nature.

You also received professional training as an artist. How did that shape your development?

I had early tutoring by Carlo Altenburg, who was one of the Europeans who came out of the Bauhaus movement. He was a professor at the University of Alberta. He came to St. Paul, where I had enrolled in an adult art class, and he saw something in me that he got excited about. That summer, I went to Edmonton to be tutored by him. I was very fortunate to be privately tutored that early on.

I understand that he introduced you to the works of the European, Chinese, and Japanese masters through books. What do you remember about that?

Carlo used to say, 'Study the pictures. Do not read.' So I would study the pictures and then on Saturday night he would invite me to his place for oxtail soup and he would quiz me on what I remembered from those books. He would inquire and wait for the answers.

Were there certain artists who you remember being particularly drawn to in those books?

I was highly interested in the work of [Wassily] Kandinsky. I liked what he did and I enjoyed his type of work. And the others were Paul Klee and Joan Miró. Those three were highlighted in my mind as people whose work I could relate to. And I thought that the Japanese artists were absolutely incredible.

As a student at the Alberta College of Art + Design, did you experience any discrimination?

Of course. They didn't think I was smart enough, but I fooled them because I had already had private

tutoring. My knowledge of art was pretty deep. Some of my professors even used to copy my work. One day, we were driving down Jasper Avenue in Edmonton, and I looked up, and on the side of one of these high-rises was one of my designs. So I went to Calgary and demanded an apology. First the professor denied it, but he knew I was onto him. So he said, 'Sue me.' He knew I didn't have money and couldn't even talk to a lawyer at the time. He had me cleanly over a barrel.

I would imagine that those kinds of situations were part of what made the PNAI such a necessity. There was a need for a group that would push back against that kind of exclusion and discrimination in the art world. Do you feel that there are barriers that persist today?

There are still barriers that nobody wants to speak about. During the opening of *7: Professional Native Indian Artist Inc.*, a curator who had been trained in New York spoke to me very honestly and said, 'I don't know how to look at this.' So, in certain regards, things haven't really improved. The mindset when we were first starting out was that New York was the greatest place for art, then we came along with something that threatened all that. I guess that's still where we're stuck, in a way. Thank God Canada allowed us to fit into this painting business.

But, even in Canada, there still seems to be certain hurdles for native artists.

Neither Calgary nor Edmonton would take the exhibition after Regina. They skipped us over to Kelowna, and then to Winnipeg, and now to Kleinburg. This is a show that should be publicized like nothing else in the art world. But we're still on the borderline of galleries, and the media shy away. It's good for the country, whether the country likes it or not. It's healthier to recognize where we're at. We're part of this country. We're not just isolated people anymore. There are some really great artists coming out—very strong painters. The new generations are the ones to watch out for. Not the 'Indian Group of Seven.'

I think that the persistent presence of some of these barriers makes it even more significant that you continue to work and paint. What sustains your dedication to your craft after so many years?

I guess it's the very thing that gave me life, protected me, and sustained me and my family. I live solely on my artwork. I would have liked to put a good fright into the art establishment of Canada. The honorees, and all that. But I had a family and I had to feed them, so I had to tone down my actions.

Do you see yourself continuing to paint for the foreseeable future?

As long as I can lift a brush and my eyes can see the colours, I'll continue.

Are you able to describe how you feel when you're painting?

I feel free. A free person. A free human being. mm



Opposite page:
Alex Janvier (b. 1935),
The Energy Bug, 1973, gouache on
paper, Unknown size. Photograph
by Alberta Health Services

Previous spread, left page,
from top:
Alex Janvier (b. 1935), *Buffalo
Tracks*, 2014, watercolour
on paper, 18 in., Courtesy of
Janvier Gallery

Alex Janvier (b. 1935), *A Rose
for Mother*, 1973, acrylic on
canvas, 20 x 16 in., Courtesy of
Janvier Gallery

Alex Janvier (b. 1935),
The Love Beings, 1976, gouache
on paper, 24 x 20 in., Courtesy
of Janvier Gallery

Previous spread, right page:
Alex Janvier, c. 2007, Courtesy
of Janvier Gallery

Above: Alex Janvier (b. 1935),
Sand Piper, 2011, acrylic on
canvas, 60 x 90 in. Photograph
by Bluefish Studios

An American Artist in Canada: Joseph Sanchez Talks about his Experience as a Member of the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. and His New Artistic Voice

By RACHEL WEINER, MEDIA RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

As a member of the influential 1970s-era artist collective the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. (PNIAI), dubbed the “Indian Group of Seven,” Joseph Sanchez has secured a place for himself within the annals of Canadian art—an unlikely path for an artist who has spent most of his life south of the forty-ninth parallel. Born in 1948 in Trinidad, Colorado, and raised on the White Mountain Apache Reservation in Arizona, Sanchez, who is of Spanish, German, and Pueblo descent, is the only non-Canadian member of the PNIAI. After serving in the United States Marine Corps, Sanchez relocated to Canada, where he met fellow PNIAI member Daphne Odjig in 1971, while living outside of Winnipeg in Richer, Manitoba. Sanchez cites Odjig as a teacher and mentor, and credits her with launching his career as an artist, activist, and art professional.

In 1975, Sanchez was repatriated under the Gerald Ford Presidential Amnesty and returned to Arizona. Currently residing in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Sanchez rededicated himself full time to his art practice after retiring in 2010 from his post as Deputy Director and Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts (formerly the Institute of American Indian Arts Museum), a position he had held since 2002.

Sanchez’s body of work is characterized by its surrealist style and emphasis on the human figure, particularly the female form. Today, he continues to expand his artistic voice, addressing themes of spirituality, environmentalism, and violence through large-scale narrative paintings, works on paper, and performance art.

What was your motivation for being part of the PNIAI?

A moment in destiny; a conversation that had been going on for some time among native artists across Canada; a group of artists working in support of each other; the chance to exhibit with Daphne [Odjig], Norval [Morrisseau], Alex [Janvier], and the other members; to support an aesthetic unlike any other; and a willingness to help, inspire, and motivate other artists like I was being supported. We were thinking about the future of the next generations and supporting native ideas that enriched our own people.

Do you feel the PNIAI was able to accomplish what it set out to?

Yes, there is more awareness of native arts, an inclusion in the Canadian art canon. The paintings of Norval Morrisseau, Daphne Odjig, and Alex Janvier are a legacy in the history of art in Canada, and the work of the rest of the group inspired others to follow suit, banding together and speaking in one voice. A spark was ignited during that time that still burns today.

Are there areas where there is still work to be done?

The support of native people by the government never materialized for the group, but we advocated for funding when none was available. Today, that support remains inadequate for native arts. We are again forgotten, for the most part, except for the romantic notions of the West. Considering the missing native women in Canada, it is clear that native people are still not a priority. I believe more work needs to be done today by our leaders in education, and that there needs to be recognition of native arts as integral to the national picture of the United States and Canada.

You and the other six artists in the group all have distinct aesthetics. Where does your practice intersect?

The unique styles of the seven were fuelled by the genius of Daphne Odjig, who, by her vision, style of painting, and beauty, gathered seven artists—individuals in content and style, from seven places—to come together to generate a momentum in First Nations art. Our ability to create from a cultural reference without the filter of academic or aesthetic consideration allowed for explorations of technique and content, combined with an atmosphere of shared laughter and vision, that pollinated our work with the spirit of the other artists.

You are the only member of the PNIAI to have lived primarily in the United States. Do you feel that your experience was somehow different than the experiences of the other six members?



Opposite page, from top:
Joseph Sanchez (b. 1948),
Angels of Desire, 1995, acrylic,
conté and ink on linen, 84 x 72 in.,
Courtesy of the artist

Joseph Sanchez (b. 1948),
Virgin of Light, 1974, oil on
canvas, 24 x 36 in.,
Courtesy of the artist

Joseph Sanchez at the Institute
of American Indian Arts (IAIA),
2007. Photo courtesy of the artist

indiodali talking with Kid Picasso,
early 1990s, photograph of live
performance. Photo courtesy of
the artist

Right: Joseph Sanchez (b. 1948),
Ghost Prayer, 1981, monoprint
on paper, Courtesy of the artist

I grew up on an Apache reservation in Arizona, so I experienced some of the same things as reserve life in Canada, but I was a lot younger and missed the residential school experience and the cruelty and racism of that injustice. The denial of an indigenous holocaust in the United States, the never-ending rush for native resources on reservation land, and the romantic Indian fantasy continue to place native culture as an artifact in America. And there is also the problem of having had to contend with academic and political descriptions of native people for so long.

These issues remain the same in both countries forty-five years later; although, Canada is ahead of the game in some ways. It seems support for the arts is more accessible. Native artists have been represented in Canadian pavilions in Venice, and Norval and Daphne have made it into the National Gallery [of Canada].

You have mentioned that it was your fifth grade teacher who first got you interested in art, and that your professional career was spurred by Daphne Odjig. How would you describe the role of teachers and mentors in your life? How have they shaped your career?

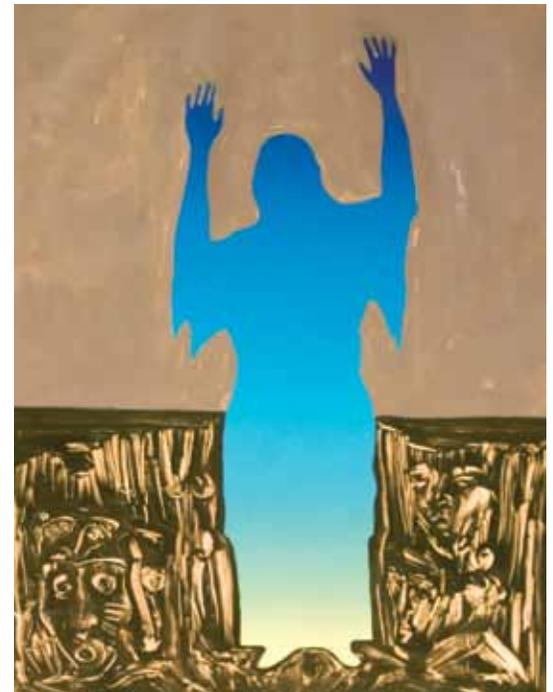
Since that early age, I have created, thinking in my mind that this is my calling. It was this early encouragement and meeting Daphne in my twenties that inspired years of work, study, and collaboration. Daphne was a mentor of incredible influence on me as an artist. Her encouragement of my skill and understanding would sustain me in a competitive art world.

I have not met another artist powerhouse like Norval; or experienced the skill and mastery of Alex Janvier; or the uniqueness and colour sense that is Daphne; or an artist that can embody his work like Carl [Ray]. I cherish the wisdom of Eddy Cobiness, and can never forget Jackson Beardy. They all mentored me through the years. This mentorship continued with the artist Philip C. Curtis, whose life and art created the Phoenix art scene.

That was the beginning of a large number of artists who passed through my life as collaborators in gallery shows, museum exhibitions, and public sculpture installations. In the same way, I continue to share the information I have learned from years of generous collaboration.

The female nude features prominently in your work. What draws you to that particular subject matter?

My early work deals with the disrespecting of women and the exploitation of the beauty of the female body by a society with a double standard. The sensuous lines in the female body speak volumes about growth and nurturing, and are not always about a sexual interpretation or experience. My work is about love, joining of energy, and the physical; the power of a female Earth erupting, raging, trickling, and giving birth. I do not find these themes in the



male body, but in nature and in the feminine. Painting for me today is feeling the energy of the voluptuous female nude as an embodiment of a Mother Earth renewed.

What other themes are you exploring in your art at the moment?

Today, mostly environmental issues, loss of water, and disrespect and violence in our society are what drive my creation.

What can you tell me about your work as a performance artist and your alter ego, Indio Dali? How are you able to express yourself through that character?

Indio is a modern storyteller who creates new stories from the fragments of old stories and new writings on the wall—an artist with an imagination of worlds, a weaver of time's interpretation of our history, our state of being.

Indio can speak to the occasion. He wants a surreal moment to move and dress in, an environment for the juxtaposition of thought, a place to be contrary, as they say in the native world, and not to follow a path that we didn't create. Indio gives opinions beyond the confines of my own identity.

If you were curating a show today that included a selection of your work, what other artists would you feature?

I would include Alex and Daphne's latest drawings combined with the work I have been doing recently in an exhibition that showcases our continuous line of creativity, a thread started during PNIAI that continues to this day. We have had much time together in recent years, so our memories and creative spirit unleashed by our contact with each other would make for an interesting visual dialogue. **MM**

Jamie Cameron and Christopher Bredt: Transforming Spirits for the McMichael

By VICTORIA DICKENSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CEO

Jamie Cameron and Christopher Bredt are both celebrated lawyers. Jamie is a professor at Osgoode Hall Law School at York University and one of Canada's most distinguished senior constitutional scholars, while Christopher is equally distinguished as a senior litigation partner with Borden Ladner Gervais LLP in Toronto. Both serve on numerous boards, but they have a special place at the McMichael.

Jamie served on the McMichael Board from 2004 to 2013, the last two years as Vice-Chair. She and Christopher are frequent visitors to the gallery, and they are now among its most significant donors. Their collections are legendary, and I have been privileged to view their important holdings of Canadian art and stunning works by Inuit and Northwest Coast artists in their own home. Now, visitors to the McMichael will share the privilege this fall,

when the gallery celebrates the wonderful Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron gift of forty-nine incomparable works by contemporary Northwest Coast artists. Their gift is, indeed, transformative, and the McMichael Canadian Art Collection is deeply grateful for their generosity.



From left: Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron
Photo: McMichael Canadian Art Collection Archives

Transforming Spirit: The Cameron/Bredt Collection of Contemporary Northwest Coast Art

September 19, 2015, to February 15, 2016

In exhibiting contemporary Northwest Coast art from the collection of Jamie Cameron and Christopher Bredt, gifted to the gallery in 2014, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection is presenting works of art that demonstrate the adaptive aspects of the practices of Northwest Coast artists who not only reinterpret their traditions, but also introduce innovative approaches to design, expressing themselves in new media.

By CHRIS FINN, ASSISTANT CURATOR

Many nations comprise the Aboriginal populations of British Columbia. The artistic development of the Northwest Coast people predates contact with European explorers and continues to evolve to the present day. Distinct artistic styles have emerged from various communities based on their social and religious customs. Cultural narratives related to historical cosmological beliefs are expressed through designs that are incorporated into the material and ceremonial culture of the people.

Transforming Spirit: The Cameron/Bredt Collection of Contemporary Northwest Coast Art offers viewers an opportunity to assess a range of aesthetic qualities inherent in the work created by indigenous artists of the Northwest Coast. Among the works featured in the exhibition are bentwood boxes, rattles, blankets, a totem pole, and works on paper, all by well-known artists, as well as many examples of an object important for its expressive qualities—the mask. This last object serves as a form

Robert Davidson
(b. 1946), *Are You Ready
for the New Light?*, 2002,
acrylic on black paper,
101.6 x 35.6 cm, Gift
of Christopher Bredt
and Jamie Cameron,
McMichael Canadian
Art Collection,
2014.6.19



for communicating the importance of nature, animals, and human beings, as well as imagined characters that are at the core of many First Nations cultures.

There are twenty-seven carved masks/headwear by well-known carvers representing a number of cultural backgrounds: Stan Bevan and Dempsey Bob (Tahltan/Tlingit); Joe David, Tim Paul, and Art Thompson (Nuu-chah-nulth); Ben Davidson, Robert Davidson, and Don Yeomans (Haida); Beau Dick, Simon Dick, Calvin Hunt, Henry Hunt, Simon James, and Henry Speck Jr. (Kwakwaka'wakw); Francis Horne Sr. (Coast Salish); Ken Mowatt (Gitksan); Keith Wolfe Smarch (Tlingit); and Norman Tait (Nisga'a). There are additional works by Al Cole (Nuxalk); Joe David; Jane Marston and lessLIE (Coast Salish); Larry Rosso (Carrier); Glen Rabena (Haida—adopted); Freda Diesing, Bill Reid, Robert Davidson, and Hazel Simeon (Haida); and Henry Speck Sr. (Kwakwaka'wakw).

The artists represented in this significant collection have established practices that have received international recognition through inclusion in important exhibitions and publications, and have been influential in inspiring younger artists to become actively involved in creating their own cultural expressions.

All of these works by contemporary artists build upon and expand the subjects, media, and traditional forms historically associated with Northwest Coast art and are reflected in the collections of the McMichael. In its entirety, the wonderful collection offers researchers and visitors multiple opportunities for studying artistic developments within these cultures. **mm**



From top: Calvin Hunt (b. 1956), *Sun Mask*, 1975, cedar, paint, 33.3 x 31.3 x 13.3 cm, Gift of Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 2014.6.25; Freda Diesing (1925-2002), *Eagle with Salmon*, 1979, serigraph on paper, 56.5 x 76.1 cm, Gift of Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 2014.6.23; Robert Davidson (b. 1946), *The World is as Sharp as the Edge of a Knife*, 1993, serigraph on Arches paper, 75.3 x 106.2 cm, Gift of Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 2014.6.20

All photos: Craig Boyko

PLANET INDIGENUS FESTIVAL AT THE McMICHAEL SHARED CLIMATE, SHARED CULTURE

Re-Generation: Desert *Water* Seed

Thursday, August 6 • Dancing Earth • 7:30 to 8:30 pm

Aboriginal choreographer and dancer, Rulan Tangen, leads her dancers in a dance ceremony, responding to the Humber River. \$29 general public; \$24 McMichael members; \$15 for students with a valid ID. Fee includes gallery admission. Registration required.

Artist Talk: TAAHÓ

Saturday, August 8 • Norman Hallendy • 11 am to 12 pm

Canadian photographer Norman Hallendy shares his knowledge of the connection of the Aboriginal community to water through his conversations with Navajo elders. Included with gallery admission. Registration required.

Shared Climate, Shared Culture

Planet IndigenUS Family Day

Sunday, August 9 • 11 am to 3 pm

Bring the family for hikes, Aboriginal storytelling, a North American Native Hoop Dance Workshop with Lisa Odjig, and more. Included with gallery admission.





Henry Speck (b. 1937),
Hamat'sa Crooked Beak,
2005, red cedar, cedar
bark, marine gloss
enamel, copper, felt,
rope, twine, 92.7 x
83 x 29.5 cm, Gift of
Christopher Brett
and Jamie Cameron,
McMichael Canadian
Art Collection,
2014.6.38. Photograph
by Craig Boyko



Left: Don Yeomans (b. 1958), *Bear Mask*, 2009, red cedar, paint, 99.4 x 61.5 x 31.8 cm, Gift of Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 2014.6.49

Opposite page: Don Yeomans (b. 1958), *Maquette for Where Cultures Meet*, 2009, yellow cedar, paint, wire with white string, 78.1 x 15.1 x 10.7 cm, Gift of Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 2014.6.48

The Art of Don Yeomans

The McMichael has recently acquired a large Northwest Coast wood carving titled *Bear Mask* created by British Columbia Haida artist Don Yeomans. This artwork was included in a wonderful gift to the McMichael of forty-nine works from the Jamie Cameron and Christopher Bredt Collection.

The bear is frequently depicted as a symbol in Northwest Coast art and is also represented as a powerful character within oral traditions. Certain physical qualities and behaviours such as size and the ability to rise to a standing position, as well as other traits, have led to comparisons between these animals and humans. Due to their seemingly human affiliation, bears are also perceived as protectors and spiritual allies.

Certain features that are traditionally emphasized in visually portraying the bear are also apparent in this carving by Yeomans. Most notable is the artist's interpretation of the wide mouth, with lips separated to reveal large teeth that are emphasized through the application of light-coloured paint contrasting with darker areas on the form. The snout is blunt and broad, with round nostrils that have also been accentuated with a light-coloured paint. The tongue extends downward, over the lower lip.

The overall quality of the surface finish, the attention to painted details, as well as the precision of the carved forms, attest to the artist's skills and understanding of the tools and materials used.

Yeomans's mastery of the medium is also readily apparent in a second work—the maquette for the large-scale pole, *Maquette for Where Cultures Meet*, also part of the Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron gift.

The art of the carved wooden poles of the Northwest Coast was a source of fascination for the early European explorers, who first encountered them in what is now British Columbia during the latter part of the eighteenth century. The growth of the trading relationship between Europeans and Aboriginal people of the Northwest Coast stimulated this initial interest, which led to more research in order to identify the varieties and makers of these poles.

A contemporary development of this form of carving activity is the commissioned pole. The McMichael commissioned Yeomans to produce *Maquette for Where Cultures Meet*, to be installed in the Grand Hall near the gallery entrance. Although this pole was produced for non-traditional purposes and placing, the approach to planning the carving was consistent with the process followed for a pole that would be produced for traditional purposes.

The artist explains the purpose of the crests and references to contemporary technology that he has incorporated into this carving and which are also represented in the larger pole: *Since ancient times, there have always been two clans among the Haida people, the Raven Clan and the Eagle Clan. Within each clan, numerous crests define the individual families. I have used both Raven and Eagle on the totem to represent all Haida people. The frog is a subcrest of the Eagle Clan. The cellphone, laptop, and MP3 player represent three aspects of modern life. I feel they are as much a part of contemporary Haida life as they are in any culture. It is on the electronic playground these formats provide that all cultures meet.*¹

Don Yeomans was born in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, in 1958. His mother was Métis, and his father was Haida. His training as a carver began when he was ten years old. Even at a young age, Yeomans demonstrated an exceptional ability to carve. He attended a fine arts program at Langara College in Vancouver, British Columbia. Following the completion of the program, he travelled to Haida Gwaii to apprentice with well-known Haida master carver Robert Davidson, to assist on a carving project. Throughout the development of his career, Yeomans has continued to introduce non-traditional forms and colours in his carvings in order to extend carving traditions and reflect the changing conditions within cultures. **MM**

ENDNOTE

1. Don Yeomans, Email correspondence. September 9, 2009.



The Photographs of Frank (Franz) Johnston

Organized by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection with Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival. Curated by Sharona Adamowicz-Clements. This exhibition runs from April 18 to October 12, 2015.

"I have learned that the camera can give you material that could not otherwise be gotten, and under judicious use can be legitimately of vast value to the discerning painter."—Frank (Franz) Johnston¹

For the second consecutive year, the McMichael participated in the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival, which takes place annually in May and features the best in photographic work from Canada and the world.² Once again, the McMichael developed a primary exhibition for the festival, and, this year, the focus of the exhibition was Frank Johnston and his relationship with the camera. It was a surprise to many that a founding member of the Group of Seven would be included in a show on photography.

Francis Hans Johnston (1888–1949), commonly called Frank and later Franz, was an original member of the Group, who was well-regarded for his paintings of the Canadian landscape and, yet, remains the only member to have resigned from the Group. In his lifetime, he was a successful artist whose work, unlike that of his fellow Group of Seven artists, was generally better received by the public. Soon after the first official show in 1920, Johnston left the Group to pursue a career as a solo artist and art educator. Throughout his life, Johnston gained professional respect from his teachings and prosperous art career, though he was accused of distancing himself from the Group for reasons of self-promotion and self-aggrandizement, or to avoid negative

criticism of their "new unpolished style." This distancing has contributed to his marginalization by scholars of Canadian art.

Many have been unaware of Johnston's "peripheral" interest in photography, which had not garnered him any attention. But, in fact, he was fascinated by the camera. He took it with him on excursions and long trips to take on-the-spot photos. "Get [into] the habit of carrying your camera, everywhere," he wrote, "and you'll save yourself many vain regrets" or lost opportunities to capture precious fleeting moments that could translate into artworks.³ In his essay, "Idle Moments," Johnston wrote about his experience with the camera and its benefits to the observant artist. Finding himself in situations where he was suddenly taken by the beauty of a place, he was able to preserve it, and the intense feelings it inspired, by quickly capturing it on film.

When Johnston purchased the Wyebridge town hall—just outside Midland, Ontario—for his home in 1940, he converted one of the old prison cells in the basement into a darkroom. Evidently, he was committed to the entire process of photography, controlling the development of negatives into prints. Over time, he amassed a large collection of images (also consisting of photographs taken by others). Thousands of these are now held in different private and public art and archival collections in Ontario.⁴ This photographic material represents a variety of subject matter, including the Canadian landscape, which he had always documented and celebrated in his work.



FIG. 1



FIG. 2

Fig. 1: Frank (Franz) Johnston (1888–1949), *Onaman Lake, Late March*, date unknown, oil with tempera on hardboard, 50.8 x 61 cm, Donated by Roberta Fuller, Bethany, Ontario, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 2004.6; fig. 2: Frank (Franz) Johnston (1888–1949), *Untitled*, date unknown, silver gelatin print, 20.5 x 25.5 cm, Huronia Museum, 2002.027.5239

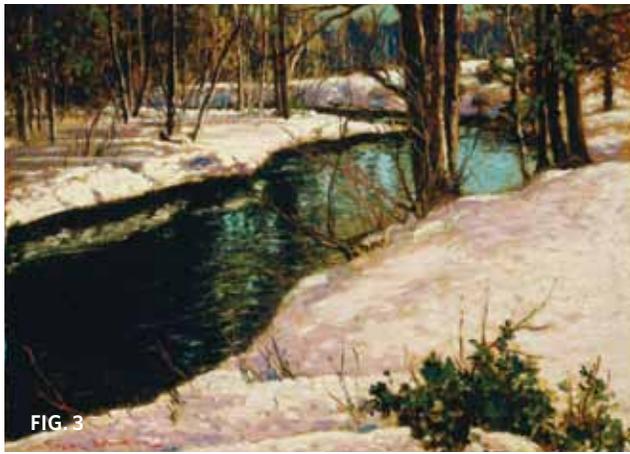


FIG. 3



FIG. 4

Fig. 3: Frank (Franz) Johnston (1888–1949), *Vanishing Winter*, date unknown, oil on hardboard, 32 x 44.8 cm, Donated to the McMichael Canadian Collection by Mr. E.G. Davis in memory of Mr. and Mrs. E.W.M. Davis of Montreal, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1987.44; fig. 4: Frank (Franz) Johnston (1888–1949), *Untitled*, date unknown, silver gelatin print, 20.5 x 20.5 cm, Huronia Museum, 2002.027.6417

With the existence of so many photographic prints in a variety of sizes dispersed in a number of holdings (possibly yet to be discovered), it was time to explore these works and consider their intended purpose. *The Photographs of Frank (Franz) Johnston* marks an early stage of research into the role of landscape photography in Johnston's art. It is, perhaps, the first exhibition to focus on Johnston's photography and to examine his work in this medium; first in relation to his paintings as source material for his finished canvases and, second, as artworks in their own right.

It is important to emphasize that in viewing Johnston's photographs, it became evident that the camera had a dual role. The first was to "judicious[ly]" guide Johnston, "the discerning painter," in his search of subject matter, imagery, and pictorial arrangement for his paintings, and, therefore, being "legitimately of vast value." Often, the paintings became a perfect replica of the photographs. In other instances, enlarged prints reveal the artistic vision of a competent photographer, thus encouraging one to view certain photographs as complete artistic statements in and of themselves.

Almost all of the photographs are undated, but by comparing the places depicted with the dates he is known to have frequented them, it is estimated that they were mainly taken in the 1930s and 1940s. The photographs in the exhibition include panoramic views, winter scenes, the picturesque countryside, and images of logging, canoeing, and dogsledding, which are also represented in Johnston's paintings.

Some photographs capture images of his five-month trip to the Arctic in 1939. Johnston was invited by prospector Gilbert LaBine, the founder and president of Eldorado Gold Mines Limited (later known as Eldorado Mining and Refining Limited), to join him at his radium mine at the Port Radium community on Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories. There he could paint the "true North," of which, like other members of the Group of Seven, he was in constant search (even after his departure from the Group). Undoubtedly, travelling up North was an exceptional occasion that required visual documentation, which could later act as source imagery for his art. Extreme weather conditions of the North meant that even the quickest colour sketch was physically tricky and emotionally taxing. Direct and actual observation could be etched to memory, but the camera was more reliable and its output lasting. It might

even capture otherwise missed nuances of light and significant details that could inspire an artwork.⁵

Johnston also spent some time in the Onaman Lake area above Lake Superior and east of Lake Nipigon in northern Ontario, where he had visited regularly since the 1930s. There are several photographs that were taken there and which were later used as visual aids for his paintings. The painting *Onaman Lake, Late March* (n.d.), in the McMichael Collection, depicts a sled being pulled by a dog team in a snow-covered wooded landscape. The painting was based on a number of photographs that capture similar images of this favourite subject matter (fig. 1 and fig. 2).

Other winter landscape photographs of streaming bodies of water demonstrate similar views in paintings such as the McMichael's *Reflections (on the Wye River)* (n.d.), *Vanishing Winter* (n.d.), *Ivory and Sapphire* (n.d.), and *Winter Beauty* (c. 1935). Compositionally, the paintings and photographs generally depict a river as a focal point, which is cut off, along with the trees in the upper register, by the framing of the picture. Both share the same effects of glistening light on snow and the crispness of the cool air that Johnston sought to express in his work (fig. 3 and fig. 4).

In other examples, it is evident that Johnston makes the camera his primary tool in recreating the final painting as an identical image to the photograph. *The Rendezvous* (n.d.) is a painting in the possession of a private collector, last seen in Barrie, Ontario, when it was submitted for appraisal at the travelling British Artiques Roadshow in September 2008. The painting represents a meeting of canoers on a lake surrounded by trees; it is a perfect replica of a photograph that was once in Johnston's possession, and it might have been taken by someone other than himself.

Huronia Museum has a painting titled *On to Hudson's Bay* (1947). Painted in full colour, it is a copy of a black-and-white photograph of men in a canoe headed out in open waters. In both the photograph and the painting, the viewer is unusually close to the men, whose backs are turned, sharing the same low sightline, as if travelling in a nearby canoe. Their canoe is full of cargo; the sail is still up, standing erect to provide a vertical counterpoint to the general horizontality of the vessel and its occupants. Although the painting and the photograph

represent the same scene, the latter evokes a much greater sense of immediacy and movement, therefore showing us the limitations of the painting (fig. 5 and fig. 6).

Johnston's consistent approach to representing an image in two disciplines translates into a sense of continuity and uniformity in his work. Looking at the two artistic expressions side by side offers insight into Johnston's working method: how he perceived the world around him through the photograph, and how, in turn, his paintings were influenced by photography. During his earlier years with the Group of Seven, Johnston's paintings tended to be postimpressionistic, with great emphasis on colour. Later they evolved into highly realistic and polished representations of the world, which coincided with his use of the camera.

Based on the direct correlation between some photographs and paintings, it is natural to conclude that Johnston grew reliant on the camera as a practical tool. It is also possible that Johnston's already established painting practice informed his photographic process. Some of his earlier paintings of the 1910s and 1920s embody compositional approaches and thematic interests that he later, in the 1930s and 1940s, captures in the photograph. His photographs of cropped trees or snow-covered ground, for example, can be seen in paintings such as *First Snow* (1929), in the McMichael's collection.

In addition to his intimate snowscapes, Johnston was equally fond of clouds. As a recurring subject, they have a predominant role in his work, sometimes covering more than half the picture plane. To date, no photograph of clouds has been found that could compare precisely with a painting counterpart, but there are clear similarities in his approach to this motif in both media. His treatment of clouds as seen in his photographs *Untitled (Clouds)*, and *Farm and Clouds*, *Why Road*, reflect the same aesthetic sensibility of the McMichael-owned paintings *September Clouds*, *Georgian Bay* (n.d.) and *Thunderers* (c. 1922) that predate the photographs. In the paintings and the photographs, the artist focuses on the airy and voluminous quality of floating white clouds above wide-open vistas or hovering over trees. The viewing angle is also similar, always from afar and above, as if recorded from a bird's eye view. In fact, in many of his works, Johnston represents the landscape from a distance, suggesting that the artist felt that proper appreciation of the sight could only be achieved if observed remotely (fig. 7).

Johnston must have felt that he was more than just an amateur photographer, when, in 1939, he submitted *Untitled (Clouds)* to a photography contest organized by *Scientific American* magazine. The photograph represents clouds over a landscape of treetops, recorded as a thin strip of dark mass at the bottom of the picture plane. One lonely tree rises above the others in the distance, with another closer in the foreground. Johnston carefully composed the photograph to demonstrate the grandeur of nature through massive clouds over a vastly stretched line of trees. He was also

aware of the dramatic effects of light and dark. The black-lined trees are overwhelmed by the whiteness of the clouds that seem to overtake them. The photograph reveals its maker's sense of awe before nature, and his understanding of capturing mood through a monochromatic "palette."

Unfortunately, the photograph did not grab the attention of jury members. In the February 1940 issue of the magazine, Johnston's name is not included under the list of winners or honourable mentions. Nevertheless, the submission itself proves that he felt photography was an art form on its own and not just preparatory reference for the higher fine arts.

Indeed, Johnston's photographs are not thoughtless snapshots. He approached photography with the same artistic principles by which he was guided when committing to paint. The photographs reveal him as an acute observer of his surroundings, which he critically considered before capturing the scenes with the camera. The elegant play of dark and light, form and shadow, particularly as seen in his snowscapes with trees reflected in water or on the ground, reveal a thoughtful photographer.

There are many other photographs in which Johnston represents images that are compositionally well-executed, as well as playful and experimental. They show variation in execution and process, with some photographs having a soft and warm glow that yields a dreamy, romantic quality, while others are articulated more clearly with sharp dark and light contrasts (fig. 8 and fig. 9).

Johnston's technical ability must have been sufficient for him to be made an Honorary Member of the LaBine Camera Club.⁶ In a letter written to Johnston on June 8, 1939, Dane MacDonald, the



president of the club, informs him of this privilege, and acknowledges Johnston's "knowledge of photography" that had been of help to the other members. Evidently, his work made an impact, and Johnston was being taken seriously as a photographer.

Such a pronouncement probably brought Johnston, who delighted in attention and praise, much satisfaction and a certain affirmation of his photographic practice, yet, that was not always the case. Johnston was slow to recognize the role of the camera in his work. There seemed to have been a time, when he was young and just entering the world of commercial art and design,⁷ when photography was not looked upon so favourably by the professional art community. In his writing about the camera, Johnston states that there was a sense "that any artist who used a photograph to produce something original, was prostituting his art." He clearly speaks of the prevailing sense of "shame" (his word) in relying on the camera for art making. The photograph's status as a lower art form may have been the main reason why Johnston's photographic practice was unknown, especially since he felt he had to "apologize" (as he put it) every time he used the camera. For an artist who wished to please, he felt pressured to conform and create paintings, instead of photographs, that would bring him "national recognition [in the most honourable way through the] purchase of [his] paintings [by] the National Gallery of Canada."⁸

Later in his life, however, Johnston felt differently about the camera. With age and practice, he became confident about his abilities and recognized the potential of this sophisticated device. In a sweeping and poetic ode to the camera, he mentions that on one August day while waiting for friends on a ferry dock in northern Ontario, he "made six exposures...each of which has a quality of rhythm and a tone scale that would be difficult to duplicate in any other subject matter," (he meant medium).⁹ Johnston saw the camera as having its own special advantages that even painting could not rival. Could it be that he was suggesting that photography was an inherently elevated art form because of the advanced technological capabilities of the camera? Ironically, while acting in the service of the painting, the photograph surpassed the former's limitations. "No poem [he concluded] could more eloquently [than the camera] reveal the beauty to be found in common places."¹⁰

The McMichael's exhibition *The Photographs of Frank (Franz) Johnston* aims to remedy the loss of photography as an art form in Johnston's practice and restore its place in Johnston's biography, so one can better understand the development of his art. Although Johnston did not succeed as a professional photog-

rapher, he clearly delighted in using the camera, which might be credited, in part, with the success he did enjoy with his paintings. The research into Johnston's photography is still in its infancy and requires much more attention, primarily in the area of locating more of his photographic material and better understanding his photographic process, as well as establishing clearer timelines relating to his output. For the moment, the discovered photographs reveal a different side of the artist, which very few outside his own family knew, and they provide a broader portrait of the man, reintroducing him as the painter-photographer. **MM**

ENDNOTES

1. Rodri Franz Johnston, "The Painter Uses a Camera." (Johnston signed this unpublished and undated essay as it appears in this endnote.)
2. The McMichael exhibition opened in mid-April and is extended to mid-August to give visitors more time to see it beyond the short viewing period of the festival.
3. Rodri Franz Johnston, "Idle Moments." (Johnston signed this unpublished and undated essay as it appears in this endnote.)
4. Huronia Museum in Midland, Ontario, has in its possession thousands of Johnston's photographs, contact sheets, and negatives, which deserve further study.
5. In spite of the practical advantages of the camera, being an easier and quicker tool for the passerby artist, it posed its own set of problems in sub-zero temperatures, and Johnston never refrained from his routine of sketching. His letters home indicate that he sketched, photographed, and filmed when he was in the Arctic.
6. The LaBine Camera Club was formed at the Eldorado radium mine in the Northwest Territories. Before becoming a well-known photographer based in Yellowknife, Henry Busse was involved in the club. From Robert G. Jenkins, *The Port Radium Story* (Summerland, British Columbia: Valley Publishing, 1999), 38, 120-121.
7. Johnston was an apprenticed designer at a Toronto jeweller's company, Ryrie Brothers (from 1904). He worked as a catalogue illustrator at Brigdens Limited (from 1906), as a commercial designer at Grip Limited (from 1908), at Rous and Mann (from 1912), and at the New York-based Carleton Illustrators Studios (around 1913-1915).
8. "The Painter Uses a Camera."
9. "Idle Moments."
10. Ibid.



FIG. 8



FIG. 9

Fig. 5: Frank (Franz) Johnston (1888-1949), *Untitled (Men Canoeing II)*, date unknown, Private Collection; fig. 6: Frank (Franz) Johnston (1888-1949), *On to Hudson's Bay*, 1947, oil on canvas, Huronia Museum; fig. 7: Frank (Franz) Johnston (1888-1949), *Untitled (Clouds)*, date unknown, Private Collection; fig. 8: Frank (Franz) Johnston (1888-1949), *Untitled*, date unknown, silver gelatin print, 20.5 x 25.5 cm, Huronia Museum, 2002.027.5140; fig. 9: Frank (Franz) Johnston (1888-1949), *Untitled*, date unknown, silver gelatin print, 20.5 x 25.5 cm, Huronia Museum, 2002.027.5912

Thom Sokoloski: Water— Nature's Sensorium

Toronto-based Sokoloski is an indefatigable advocate of the power of art, in its various incarnations, to articulate the rich layers of the human imagination and spirit. His most recent project, *Colour of the River Running Through Us*, will be installed on the grounds of the McMichael from July 1 to August 16, 2015.

Thom Sokoloski, one of Canada's most versatile and accomplished multidisciplinary artists, has worked all over the world. Born in 1950, in St. Catharines, Ontario, he has designed installations, as well as set dance and theatre pieces, for La MaMa theatre in New York City; the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto; the Opéra de Lyon in France; the Banff Centre in Banff, Alberta; Musica in Strasbourg, France; and transmediale in Berlin. He has also directed five of R. Murray Schafer's operatic works. He spoke with me in March of this year.

Why is water so important in *Colour of the River Running Through Us*?

There are a couple of reasons. I had explored the idea of water in a previous work called *The Scarecrows*, which was first workshopped at the Socrates Sculpture Park in New York in 2012. We used a kind of a spirit bottle that came about because of my curiosities in Haitian ritual and ceremony. The idea of containing ideas, relationships, and memories in a bottle worked pretty well with the public. Jenny-Anne McCowan, with whom I collaborate on the participatory aspects of my work, set up a little factory, where people could bring in a bottle and materials, and create these spirit bottles that were escorted in canoes out to these scarecrow figures. When I met with [Executive Director and CEO] Victoria [Dickenson] and [Associate Director, Creative Learning and Programs] Anna [Stanisz] from the McMichael, we decided to stick with the idea of combining some kind of vessel and a container. So there will be thirteen points of meditation set up on the grounds of the McMichael that will refer to the Humber Valley and the Humber River. They will be

unique natural sensoriums of sight and sound. People will have the opportunity to be inspired from what they are experiencing in those particular stations, or they can draw upon the well of their own memories in relation to whatever river experience they may have had in Canada. They will also be given a participatory manual with an introduction to the idea of haiku.

Will they write their own haiku?

Yes, and they'll deposit them in a bell jar that will be suspended underneath this tripod on which there is an abstracted canoe structure. I've been working with production designer and architect Evan Webber on what this flotilla of sculptural forms will look like. I found out that the centre rib of a canoe is really beautiful; it looks a bit like a squashed Viking ship, with a high stern and high bow point. So we're going to something like that more than to a real canoe. The thirteen structures represent the provinces and territories of Canada. The idea is that people are participating in a ceremony/ritual. The informing metaphor is that they are in the river itself. The structures are inspired by surveyor tripods and those used to well water. It involves the idea of going into this well of memories, feelings, and experiences.

In your description of the piece, you talk about the canoe and 'its mellifluous relationship with water.' It suggests you're engaging a kind of watery poetics.

I love everything about water, and I am an avid canoeist. There is something about water that is indigenous to our identity. When you enter the Canadian Shield, you understand what the Group of Seven was trying to do; they wanted to get into the soul of the country.

Opposite page: Thom Sokoloski (b. 1950), *Colour of the River Running Through Us*, 2015, Renderings and photograph by Thom Sokoloski





Thom Sokoloski (b. 1950),
The Encampment, Luminato
 2012, City of Toronto, Art
 installation and photograph
 by Thom Sokoloski

In *Artaud's Cane*, in 1994, you talked about the affinity you have for museums and for the display of human behaviour. But in this installation, you are going into the grounds of the McMichael, rather than into the galleries.

I was still doing theatre then. After 2004, site-specific installation art became my focus. Call it an outdoor gallery. I'm fascinated by how situations can be set up in which the public can be taken out of their everyday life and put into an experience where they're not looking at their cellphone or their debts or what they're buying next. They can actually be alone with themselves and explore the sensorium of nature.

You are interested in multidisciplinary. I wonder if it is possible for any single art form to carry the scale of the messages you want to get across?

I always wanted to immerse myself in different art forms, certainly the performing arts from dance to music to theatre, and I did that working with people like Jerzy Grotowski, Jacques Lecoq, and R. Murray Schafer. There are extraordinary individuals who round your life and give you the grounding that allows you to persevere and do what you want to do. When I moved into sculpture and installation, it all happened very quickly. It was like diving into black water; you're afraid, but once you dive in, you realize that the darkness is really lovely. So, to answer your question, I would love to go back to theatre and opera one day, and all this work I've been doing over these last ten years will inform my work again.

The piece has a dusk-to-dawn element, doesn't it? What is appealing about that?

The luminosity, the threshold that happens. I will be using solar energy, and so you never really know when the light comes on in the sculpture. It begins to have this light life, and what it becomes for any individual will be a response generated by their own imagination and perception. What I love about the work I'm doing now is that it is less about an expectation from the public than it is about providing different things, opportunities or doors or keys, with which the public can get to take in any direction they want to go.

You're connecting water in this piece to the idea of dream and imagination. In a fundamental way, it is a sort of creative

float for you.

Yes. Whenever it rains, people dream better. There is no getting away from it; water is always there. You're in it, and you're gliding through. It is a connection to something that is fundamental to our physical and spiritual selves.

You like big topics, and in other examples of your work, you have dealt with the political. Is this work more poetic than politic?

There's certainly a politic around water, and we can't take it for granted. You have to be firm and say, 'I want water to be clean.' I think you do have to be political around ecology. **mm**

COLOUR OF THE RIVER RUNNING THROUGH US

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Inspired by Samuel Champlain's arrival in Ontario 400 years ago, celebrate the TORONTO 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games' community spirit with Thom Sokoloski's sculptural-based public art installation, *Colour of the River Running Through Us*.

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Sundays, July 12 (Family Day) & 26, & August 9 • 1:30 to 3 pm

Explore the theme of the river through movement meditation and poetry writing.

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Speaking from the Middle Space: A Conversation with Contemporary Artist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas

By RACHEL WEINER, MEDIA RELATIONS
AND COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Photograph by Farah Nosh

Born in 1954 in Masset, Haida Gwaii, internationally acclaimed contemporary visual artist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas is, perhaps, best known for his unique blending of traditional Haida iconographies and framelines with the graphic style of Asian manga, broadly defined as a form of Japanese comic books. His works, which include large-scale public art projects, mixed media sculptures and canvases, repurposed automobile parts, acrylics, watercolours, ink drawings, and illustrated publications, are housed in public spaces, museums, galleries, and private collections across North America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Middle East, including the British Museum in London, the Seattle Art Museum, the Vancouver Art Gallery, and the Glenbow Museum in Calgary.

Using art to communicate a world view that is both rooted in his Haida ancestry and that speaks to an international contemporary audience, Yahgulanaas explores themes of identity, environmentalism, and the human condition in his work. Yahgulanaas's graphic novel *RED: A Haida Manga*, published in 2009, tells the tragic story of a Haida chief whose quest for revenge after the kidnapping of his sister threatens to destroy his community. *RED* is the basis for a new children's art studio recently developed by the McMichael in partnership with the artist. Students draw on the work's themes and Haida Manga style to create personalized panels that are then assembled into a class mural depicting the many stories of children's experiences.

In this interview, Yahgulanaas discusses the experience of collaborating with the McMichael and sheds light on his art, his influences, and his thoughts on some of the challenges and opportunities facing Canada's indigenous population.

You have stated that this is a critical time in the history of Canada's indigenous peoples. How so?

It is a critical time in Canada because, unlike in the past, over the last two decades court decisions have consistently and increasingly ruled in favour of indigenous people. It is my hope that this young nation state continues to make the conscious choice to change seriously unhealthy and ingrained attitudes toward indigenous peoples.

Much of my work aims to engage the broader public, inviting the viewer to re-engage in contemporary social issues. *Abundance Fenced*—a monumental piece of public art that I designed in solid sheets of steel, textured mesh, and industrial rivets—is a forty-two-metre-long piece crowning a concrete retaining wall that looms over a six-lane highway in Vancouver. On the other side of *Abundance Fenced* is a complex of sports fields, a daycare centre, residential and community spaces—a pierced border—speaking to the complex system of interdependence essential to all of us.

You have described your practice as occupying a kind of 'middle space.' What do you mean by that?

The art form I am known for, 'Haida Manga,' is committed to hybridity as a positive creative force that opens a middle or third space for critical engagement. It offers an empowering way of viewing and engagement as it offers participation, dialogue,

and reflection as a reward for action. The upcoming artist monograph, *The Seriousness of Play*, examines how this third space is opened up in my work.

How did the influences of traditional Haida imagery and Japanese manga come together for you?

Haida Manga is a hybridized form that blends North Pacific indigenous iconographies and framelines with the graphic dynamism of Asian manga. By liberating the narrative and the line, Haida Manga opens a space for play, collaboration, creative engagement, and empowerment. Cultural and personal familiarity with the cultures of the Pacific Rim are part of Haida histories and of my family memories. Manga, a contemporary Asian graphic art, is a new way of talking about complex issues and it literally means 'to draw without limitations.' In the late 1990s, I consciously began to merge Haida and Asian artistic influences into my visual practice.

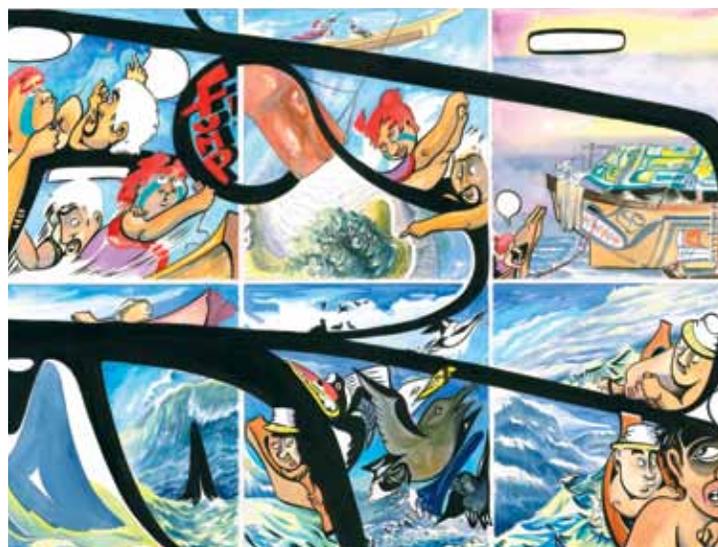
RED, a narrative painting and illustrated publication, proves how Haida Manga creates new perspectives, positions, and identities that are available on a personal and collective scale.

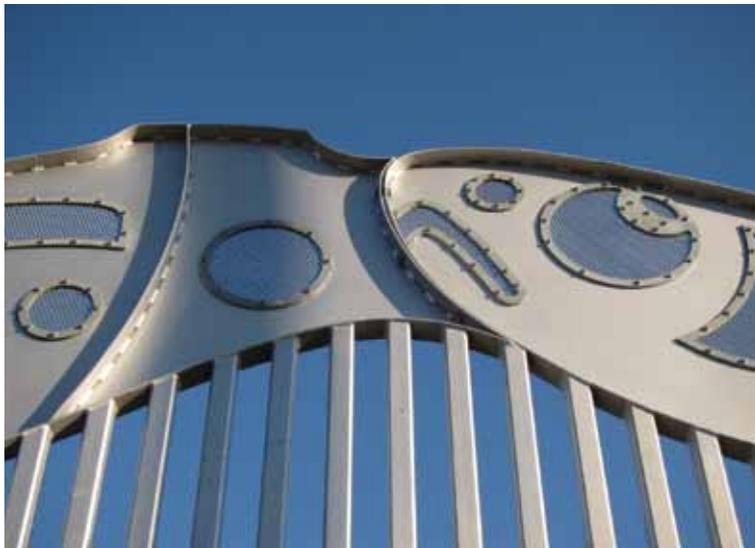
What made you want to work in the graphic novel genre? How does it lend itself to what you want to say as an artist?

Sequential graphic narratives and, indeed, non-sequential graphic narratives are potent communication tools that trump language, class, and ethnicity.

You often create works that can be viewed from different angles or displayed in multiple ways? Why is that such an important part of your practice?

Artwork is an adventure for the people who create it and for those who choose to participate in observing the experience. I create work that avoids the idea of dominance and resists the fatal notion that the artist is some ultimate authority. I like to create work that confounds the observer and requires them to decide how to engage. One method is the *Rotational* series, where there is no singularly dominant horizon. I put my name in one corner, a title in another, a date in a third corner, and I usually find something amusing to put





Opposite page:
Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas
(b. 1954), *RED* (detail), 2008,
watercolour and ink on paper,
168 x 381 cm, Courtesy of the artist

Left: Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas
(b. 1954), *Abundance-Fenced* (detail),
Vancouver, B.C., 2011, steel, 42 m,
Courtesy of the artist. Photograph by
Robert Keziere

Below: Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas
(b. 1954), *Copper from the Hood*, 2011,
steel and copper, 132 x 102.5 x 10 cm,
Collection of the Royal British
Museum, Courtesy of the artist.
Photograph by Christopher Fadden

in the fourth. The observer must now choose their perspective and in this way becomes a participant. Haida Manga encourages people to make observations and choices arising from their own experience, without relying on the authority of others.

You have done a series of works on car hoods, one of which was acquired by the British Museum in 2011. What is the significance of the car hood as a kind of canvas for your work?

Using an automobile hood, the works are covered in copper leaf and painted with my distinctive Haida Manga imagery. The sculptures reference both traditional Haida coppers—a symbol of wealth in the indigenous community—and the car as signifier of social dominance and economic status in contemporary society.

Does the experience of being a contemporary artist present certain barriers, either from within or externally from the art world? Do you feel constrained by tradition?

I don't feel constrained by tradition; rather, I feel my learned techniques in North Pacific indigenous art acted as a positive catalyst for the unexpected hybrid visual practice I explore today.

Who are your artistic influences?

I have many artistic influences. For example, I am influenced by the natural environment, relationships, contemporary social issues, the human condition, and, of course, the artistic works of others. There are many sculptors, carvers, painters, animators, and cartoonists who I am inspired by, including Charles

Edenshaw, my grandfather, for his exceptional Haida carvings and paintings; Joan Miró for his use of positive and negative space; Barbara Hepworth for the way she pierces the form; Moebius for the worlds he creates, especially in the science fiction comic book he illustrated, *The Incal*, with [author] Alejandro Jodorowsky; and Master



Hokusai for his sense of freedom and boldness with the brush.

You've talked about the dangers of raising up or minimizing indigenous peoples, and have suggested that the art world is now in a period of elevating indigenous artists in a way that is, perhaps, not entirely productive. What makes this trend problematic?

The relationship between indigenous peoples and globalizing society tends to be complex and strained. Art that seeks to simplify this relationship and privilege one group is not productive, but reductive. By not accepting the complexity, the successes, and failures inherent in all relationships, art can prevent us from moving forward and having constructive and creative conversations about our shared past, present, and future. I am committed to using art as a way to move beyond conditioned behaviours and to create spaces where we can reimagine our relationships to and with each other.

What made you want to collaborate on an art studio for students? What do you hope they will take away from the experience?

I wanted to collaborate on an art studio for students because I feel that it is incredibly important for young artists to have the confidence to build on their own practice and create new work. It is my hope that the students leave this experience feeling fearless in their expression and inspired to follow the artistic path of their choice.

What was your reaction to seeing the students' work when you visited the McMichael in December 2014?

I was impressed with the creativity of their work and fuelled by the insights they offered. Through their individual use of colour and expressive imagery, I saw personalities and stories emerge. As a mid-career artist, it was a really enriching experience to see how my work acts as catalyst for creativity, for stimulating other younger insights into being in the world. **MM**

Connecting Art and Nature: The Birchbark Canoe Project

Surrounded by 100 acres of conservation land, the McMichael offers a perfect site to explore the connection between art and nature. Adding to the grounds' splendour is the beautiful Humber River, which winds through the valley's paths and trails, carrying with it whispers of a past when it served as a major thoroughfare connecting Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay. Throughout the years, the river has nurtured a sense of community among all those who explored and settled in the area through this important waterway. As in the past, the river's flowing waters continue to bring people together and are the inspiration for a major art installation, *Colour of the River Running Through Us*, and a series of public and school programs offered at the McMichael this spring and summer.



Left: Great Lakes Canoe Journey crew, from left: Isaac Weber, Chelsie John, Sylvia Plain, Sage Petahtegoose, and Michael Dennis. Photograph by Sylvia Plain

Right: Student iPad art from Woodland Legends Art Engagement gallery workshop. Photograph by MCAC Creative Learning department



In 2014, Sylvia Plain, founder and coordinator of the *Great Lakes Canoe Journey*, and four First Nations youth constructed a birchbark canoe at OCAD University in Toronto, under the guidance of Algonquin canoe builder Chuck Commanda, grandson of William Commanda of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation in Quebec. From May 25 to June 12, the McMichael welcomed Plain. During these three weeks, Plain and Sage Petahtegoose were on-site to present the magnificent birchbark canoe and share traditional teachings with the McMichael's students.

Several school tours and studio programs were available in both French and English, and were offered in conjunction with this ongoing event. Teachers and educators were able to take advantage of this opportunity by choosing from a roster of new accessible programs that connected with the themes of the *Birchbark Canoe Project*, such as the *Woodland Legends* in-gallery art workshop, an indisputable favourite among visiting school groups, which teaches students to use iPads® to creatively respond to original works by famed Anishinabe artist Norval Morrisseau. Students also took

an *Art as Resistance* tour through the stunning exhibition *7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.*, where they learned about the power of art to initiate social change and defy stereotypes, or engaged in a conversation about various Canadian perspectives on the wilderness through an *Artists and the Wilderness* tour. Finally, a new Métis sash studio program, developed in collaboration with Métis artist Nathalie Bertin, taught students the finger-weaving technique, as well as the history and function of the sash within Métis culture. From digital art making to traditional hand weaving, the gallery's programming engages participants in questioning what it means to be Canadian, and the various ways that water and the natural environment continue to inform this nation's identity.

While the *Birchbark Canoe Project* was principally a school programs initiative, with the exception of one weekend celebration, the theme of the river and water continues in the summer with *Colour of the River Running Through Us* (see pages 26–28) and Planet IndigenUS at the McMichael, Shared Climate, Shared Culture, August 6, 8, and 9. **MM**

Art for Future Generations: The McMichael Gift Agreement

By LINDA MORITA,
LIBRARIAN/ARCHIVIST



By the late 1950s, Signe and Robert McMichael recognized they had become the custodians of a national treasure that rightfully belonged to all Canadians. By the early 1960s, they decided to take steps to make their art collection more accessible to the public and ensure its preservation for future generations. In 1964, they wrote a letter to John P. Robarts, then Premier of Ontario, to express their desire to make an unprecedented donation to the province of Ontario. The formal agreement, which gifted 194 works of art, the land, and buildings to the people of Canada, was signed fifty years ago, on November 18, 1965.

The following excerpts from Robert McMichael's autobiography, *One Man's Obsession*¹, describe how this donation, the first of its kind in Ontario, came to be:

We can never remember the day, or even the exact month, we decided to give away our home and the possessions we loved most. The seed of the idea probably had been planted when we first laid Tapawingo's firm foundation. It was nurtured by the first little Canadian paintings we acquired and our budding acquaintance with the artists themselves. Certainly, from the first we

had felt a consuming need to surround ourselves with the symbols we regarded as representing the spirit of our country. (pp. 147–148) Our gift of the land, buildings and collection was unique. Tapawingo became the first public cultural facility to be owned by the Province of Ontario.... The final Agreement was put together with the help of some of the government's best legal talent and was something of a pioneer effort. (p. 168)

With the approach of autumn 1965, it appeared that John Robarts and the government's legal experts had finally produced a unique agreement which clearly embodied Signe's and my wishes and conditions while allowing for the continuing growth and development of the property and the collection. We felt we were about to become partners with the Province in a very exciting new concept for a public art centre. November 18th was to be the big day. (p. 157) MM

ENDNOTE

1. Robert McMichael, *One Man's Obsession*. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1986.

Fig. 1: The driveway to the original house, which is visible behind the trees to the right, with a garage on the left side, 1965; fig. 2: Robert McMichael and dogs. View from the front door of the original house, facing southwest toward new houses in Kleinburg, Ontario, 1965; fig. 3: Signe and Robert McMichael's home, to which they had given the name *Tapawingo* (circa 1964–5); fig. 4: The agreement between Robert and Signe McMichael and the province of Ontario, represented by then Premier John P. Robarts (seated in centre), was signed on November 18, 1965. The official public opening of the McMichael Conservation Collection of Art took place the following year, on July 8, 1966; fig. 5: Robert and Signe McMichael and then Premier John P. Robarts, with the signed agreement, November 18, 1965

All photos: McMichael Canadian Art Collection Archives



FIG. 3



FIG. 4



FIG. 5

Gallery 8 Cedar Bench: A Tribute in Wood Created by Carver and Artist, Doug Cranmer

By LINDA MORITA,
LIBRARIAN/ARCHIVIST





Fig. 1: Trucking the bench from Vancouver to Kleinburg, Ontario, July 1970; fig. 2: Doug Cranmer carving the bench top with an adze, 1970. Photograph by W.B. McLuckie, Vancouver; fig. 3: Unloading the bench top and moving it into the gallery; fig. 4: Moving the bench through the gallery spaces on wooden dowel rollers (through the room now known as the Founders' Lounge); fig. 5: The (then-named) Western Canada Gallery, which opened in 1970, featured the bench and lintels carved by Doug Cranmer, paintings by Emily Carr, Kwakwaka'wakw totem pole, and Chilkat blanket

All photos: McMichael Canadian Art Collection Archives



FIG. 4



FIG. 5

Since the original McMichael home was built in 1954, several additions were constructed, first to the home and then to the gallery, to increase the exhibition and public spaces. In 1969, the gallery's growing art collection called for the largest addition to date. This new wing would house the Western Canada Gallery, showcasing the art and culture of the Northwest Coast, primarily by Aboriginal artists and Emily Carr. The gallery itself would be a tribute to the forests that inspired the art that would hang on its walls. The logs for the walls and the red cedar shakes for the roof were purchased through the Council of Forest Industries (COFI) of British Columbia.

When Robert McMichael envisioned the grand centerpiece of the gallery to be a one-piece red cedar bench, which would seat two school groups at one time, COFI helped to make it happen. COFI located a cedar tree of suitable size growing on Vancouver Island, transported it to mainland Vancouver for production, and ultimately donated the bench. In a rented hockey-arena-turned-artist-studio, 'Namgis artist Doug Cranmer (1927–2006) was commissioned to transform the massive raw slab of wood into a work of art. In just forty days, using a tradi-

tional tool called a D adze, Cranmer carved the entire surface of the thirty-nine-foot bench.

Weighing more than a ton, the bench, with its separate top and base, was transported by flatbed tractor trailer from Vancouver to Kleinburg, Ontario, in July 1970. The bench was then painstakingly and labouriously moved on wooden dowel rollers through the galleries to the newest wing at the farthest end of the building.

K'esu', meaning "wealth being carved," was the Kwakwaka'wakw name given to Doug Cranmer as a child. Later in life, he was given his highest chiefly name, Pal'nakwala Wakas, which means "great river of overflowing wealth." From the 1950s to 2000, Cranmer's art distinguished him as a leader and mentor in Northwest Coast art in the Kwakwaka'wakw tradition. His carvings and poles were in high demand for major commissions in Canada, as well as internationally. In Gallery 8 at the McMichael, Cranmer's work is represented by the magnificent bench (believed to be the world's longest single-tree, red cedar, adze-carved bench) and the painted, carved lintels above the doors. **MM**

Norval Morrisseau: Commissioned Paintings at the McMichael

By CHRIS FINN,
ASSISTANT CURATOR

As founders and directors of the McMichael, Robert and Signe McMichael's collecting vision embraced a broad range of works beyond the Group of Seven and their contemporaries, which included art by Norval Morrisseau (1931–2007), Carl Ray (1942–1978), Daphne Odjig (b. 1919), and other Aboriginal artists.

In his autobiography, *One Man's Obsession*¹, Robert McMichael recounts his introduction to Norval Morrisseau in early January 1975. The artist arrived at the gallery requesting a meeting to present two of his recent paintings. McMichael's first impression was instant engagement with the “dazzling colours” of the artist's *Self-Portrait* and with the complexity of the other work, titled *Artist's Wife and Daughter*.

Although anxious to acquire these works, McMichael was concerned about their longevity, since they had been painted on a highly acidic form of matte board that would deteriorate over time, eventually destroying the paintings.

In discussing the problems related to preserving work produced on this type of support, McMichael asked the artist if he had ever painted on Masonite.

The artist was not familiar with this material. In order to acquire paintings by the artist, the collector and artist reached an agreement—Morrisseau would repaint his self-portrait and the work featuring his wife and daughter on Masonite panels that McMichael would provide. Once completed, the artist would be paid for these works that would be included in the gallery's permanent collection. To ensure that these works would not be duplicates, the artist was also responsible for destroying the two images on matte board.

The two completed works produced on Masonite were acquired by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in 1975. They are currently being displayed in the travelling exhibition *7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.*, organized by the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan, now at the McMichael until September 7, 2015. **MM**

ENDNOTE

1. Robert McMichael, *One Man's Obsession*. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1986.

Opposite page:
Norval Morrisseau,
(1931–2007), *Artist's
Wife and Daughter*,
1975, acrylic on
hardboard,
101.6 x 81.3 cm,
McMichael
Canadian Art
Collection, Purchase
1975, 1981.87.1



In Memoriam



Kiugak (Kiawak) Ashoona (1933–2014)

Kiugak Ashoona was one of the first generation of talented Inuit artists who emerged from the Canadian North. His carvings have received much critical acclaim and have been widely exhibited. The most recent touring show of the artist's work—*Kiugak Ashoona: Stories and Imaginings from Cape Dorset*—was organized by the Winnipeg Art Gallery and displayed at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in 2013. Ashoona also worked extensively in drawing as an expressive medium, producing an important collection of graphic images, many of which are part of the archives of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in Cape Dorset, Nunavut, on long-term loan to the McMichael.

Born on Baffin Island in Tariugajuk, Nunavut, Ashoona's family includes several notable artists. His mother, Pitseolak Ashoona, and his sister, Napachie Pootoogook, both achieved national and international recognition for their graphic work. Many of their drawings were the basis for original, limited-edition print images included in the annual collections produced in Cape Dorset that received worldwide distribution. In addition, Ashoona's brothers, Koomwartok and Qaqaq, have also been recognized for the quality of their carved works.

Ashoona's approach to his carving began with the initial step of studying the stone. He would leave it, then return to it in order to assess its potential for realizing a chosen subject. By employing this thoughtful and considered method as an integral part of his practice, Ashoona was able to carve a variety of subjects finished in a highly detailed manner.

For an extended period of his life, Ashoona lived on the land, developing his skills as a hunter. Although some of the ideas for his carvings were drawn from the artist's imagination, many of his works reflect his interest in the traditional stories and cultural values of an older way of life. ■■■

Opposite page:
Kiawak Ashoona
(1933–2014),
Photograph by
Norman Hallendy,
1968, Gift of
Norman Hallendy,
1991, McMichael
Canadian Art
Collection Archives,
ARC-NH1991.14.14

With Gratitude

The McMichael acknowledges the following supporters for their contributions made between January 1, 2014, and May 31, 2015. Their generosity makes it possible to connect people with art, artists, and art making through exhibitions that explore Canada from coast-to-coast-to-coast and programs that engage people of all ages. Thank you for helping to keep the McMichael an extraordinary place to visit.

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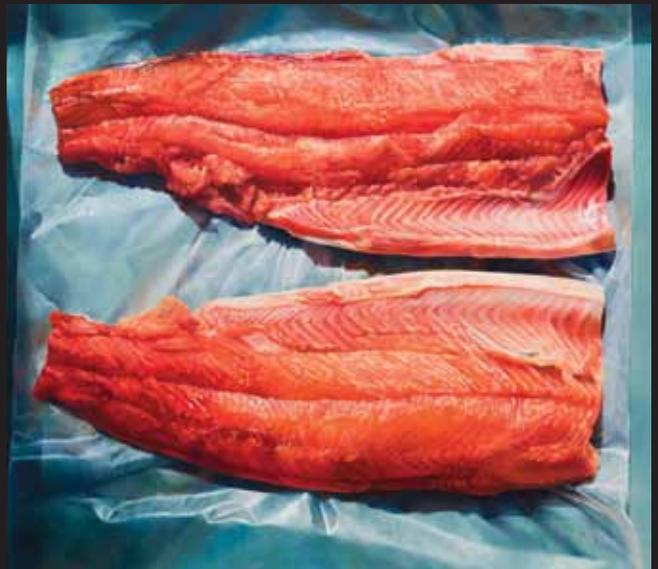
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Come and meet these established and emerging Canadian artists and sculptors, purchase original works of art, and support the ongoing work of the volunteers at the McMichael.

GALA OPENING

Friday, October 23, 6 - 10 PM

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For more information, contact:

Geoff Simpson & Loris Ortolan
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SALE CONTINUES

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SHOW PREVIEW AVAILABLE AT
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MOONLIGHT GALA 2015 THANK YOU

The fourth annual Moonlight Gala was an unforgettable evening under the starlit sky!

We are grateful to our sponsors, donors, supporters, guests, and volunteers for making this event a spectacular success. This year's gala raised more than \$225,000 to help keep the McMichael an extraordinary place to visit.

See you under the moonlight next year.

Please visit MOONLIGHTGALA.MCMICHAEL.COM to see event photos and to view a list of our very generous sponsors and donors.

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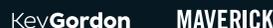
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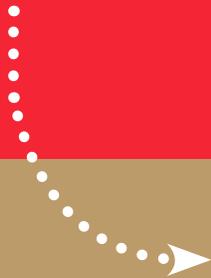


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This House Was Made for Christmas



A.J. Casson (1898-1992),
Christmas card design for
Mr. and Mrs. C.A.G.
Matthews, 1927,
screen print, printed by
Sampson-Matthews,
14.4 x 13.2 cm,
Private collection

A McMichael Special Exhibition
October 3, 2015, to January 31, 2016