

John Scott: Firestorm

A Major Retrospective of the Late Canadian Artist Opens at the McMichael

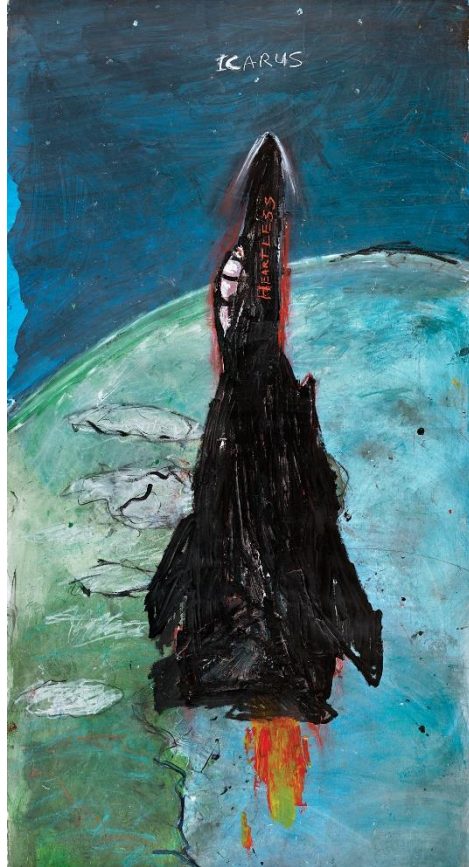


Left: John Scott (1950–2022), *Untitled*, 1995, latex, acrylic, charcoal, oil stick and footprint on paper, 91 x 65 cm, collection of Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa, gift of Dale and Doris McKeown, 1997, 1997.63.21. Photo: Justin Wonnacott. © Estate of John Scott. Right: *Untitled*, 1997, latex, acrylic, and collage on paper, 61.6 x 91 cm, collection of Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa, gift of Ari Gold, 1997, 1997.31.28. Photo: Justin Wonnacott. © Estate of John Scott

Kleinburg, ON – On December 7, the McMichael will open [John Scott: Firestorm](#), a powerful and timely retrospective of the work of the late Canadian artist John Scott (1950–2022) that foregrounds his lifelong examination of cycles of conflict, retaliation and resilience, and the complexities of human experience. Spanning four decades of work, *Firestorm* features paintings, drawings, and sculptures that reveal Scott's preoccupation with violence, surveillance, and the omnipresent threat of nuclear conflict. Known for his bold and provocative imagery, Scott's work critiques tyrannical power while expressing deep empathy for human vulnerability.

"John Scott was one of the most visionary and prescient artists of his day," says Sarah Milroy, Executive Director and Chief Curator. "He was able to identify aspects of society — militarism, a collective obsession with violence — with searing clarity, expressing his ideas with indelible force. His drawings shake us to our foundations, and they have never been more relevant. Ultimately this exhibition offers a soulful take on the human condition."

Firestorm is the first major retrospective to focus on Scott's potent imagery of machines and the modern world's capacity for industrial war—a body of work as meaningful today as when it first appeared in the 1970s. Growing up along the Canada-U.S. border in Windsor, Ontario, during the height of the Cold War, Scott's perspective was shaped by an acute awareness of socio-political tensions. Through his signature imagery of stealth bombers, firearms, and tanks—what he called "engines of history"— Scott challenges viewers to confront the stark dichotomy between the destructive force of modern weaponry and the fragility of human life.



John Scott (1950–2022), *Heartless (Icarus)*, 2004, mixed media on paper, 251.5 × 134.6 cm, Gail Daymond and Glenn Piotrowski, Photo courtesy of Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto © Estate of John Scott

Working in the tradition of Francisco Goya, Käthe Kollwitz and Nancy Spero, Scott's work bears raw, sculptural gestures and bold mark-making. His aesthetic—urgent, dark, and unflinching—resonates with contemporaries such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and William Kentridge.

Guest-curated by Dr. John O'Brian, *Firestorm* positions Scott's legacy within an international context, underscoring his impact as one of Canada's most distinctive artistic voices.

The exhibition is accompanied by a scholarly catalogue with new essays by John O'Brian, Richard Hill, and Robert Jacobs, edited by Sarah Milroy. Published by Figure 1 Publishing, the catalogue features more than 100 works and a comprehensive biography.

John O'Brian is Professor Emeritus of Art History at UBC where he taught from 1987 to 2017. He holds a PhD in Art History from Harvard University and has authored or edited more than 20 books.

The McMichael will host a **Curatorial Talk with John O'Brian and Sarah Milroy** on **Sunday, December 8 at 2 pm**. [Click here](#) for more information and to register.

For more information on this exhibition and related programming, please visit www.mcmichael.com.

Ces informations sont aussi disponibles en français.

Media wishing to request interviews, media tours, obtain high-resolution images or review copies of publications are asked to contact Sadie Evans at sevans@mcmichael.com or 905.893.1121 ext. 2290.

ABOUT THE McMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is an agency of the Government of Ontario and acknowledges the support of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, and the McMichael Canadian Art Foundation. It is the only major museum in the country devoted exclusively to Canadian art. In addition to touring exhibitions, the McMichael houses a permanent collection of more than 7,000 works by historic and contemporary Canadian artists, including Tom Thomson, the Group of Seven and their contemporaries, Indigenous artists, and artists from the many diasporic communities. The gallery is located on 100 acres of forested landscape and hiking trails at 10365 Islington Avenue, Kleinburg, north of Major Mackenzie Drive in the City of Vaughan. For more information, please visit mcmichael.com.

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