

## Canada's art museums re-emerge from pandemic with local talent, international stars

*The Globe and Mail*

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September 14, 2021

Original URL: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/article-canadas-art-museums-re-emerge-from-pandemic-with-local-talent/>



Yoko Ono and John Lennon hold their bed-in for peace at Montreal's Queen Elizabeth Hotel in 1969. IVOR SHARP/YOKO ONO

The travel and shipping restrictions caused by the pandemic threw a wrench into the works of big art museums. Their largest exhibitions, the so-called blockbusters, rely on international loans that became impossible in 2020, with delays and cancellations tumbling into 2021. There are still many signs of the continuing stresses that the pandemic has placed on programming: In Canada, the fall lineup does include the occasional international art star, but look to convenient homegrown efforts too. Here are five highlights.

**“How long does it take for one voice to reach another?” at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Sept. 11, to Feb. 13, 2022**



Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother, a wooden megaphone created by Rebecca Belmore. MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Canada’s first home for international blockbusters, fared better than some of its sister institutions when the pandemic hit: Its big summer show for 2020 was based on a Swiss collection of postimpressionist art that had already arrived when the border closed. More than a year later, the museum must now turn to its own cupboards for programming and has come up with a multidisciplinary thematic show from its permanent collection. Using everything from pre-Columbian objects and ancient Persian manuscripts to art by 21st century Canadians, the MMFA curators consider the voice in visual art, as a source of human contact both literal and symbolic. The title quotes from a 1991 stainless steel work by Quebec artist Betty Goodwin that is permanently inscribed into the museum’s floor.

**Picasso: Painting the Blue Period at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, from Oct. 6, to Jan. 16, 2022**



The Blue Room, by Pablo Picasso. PABLO PICASSO, THE BLUE ROOM, 1901. THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION © THE ESTATE OF PABLO PICASSO VIA AP

After a 15-month delay, the Art Gallery of Ontario plans to open its show devoted to Picasso's earliest work this fall. The exhibition considers the very start of the artist's career, from 1901 to 1904, and is inspired by X-rays that the AGO and the Phillips Collection in Washington have done on their respective blue-period canvases. As well as revealing the artist's method with paint, *Painting the Blue Period* will consider how he borrowed from his contemporaries stylistically and found subject matter in current events and contemporary life as he shuttled between Paris and Barcelona. The show includes more than 100 objects from 15 countries.

**Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ont. from Sept. 10, to Jan. 16, 2022, and at the Glenbow Museum, Calgary from Feb. 19 to May 8, 2022**



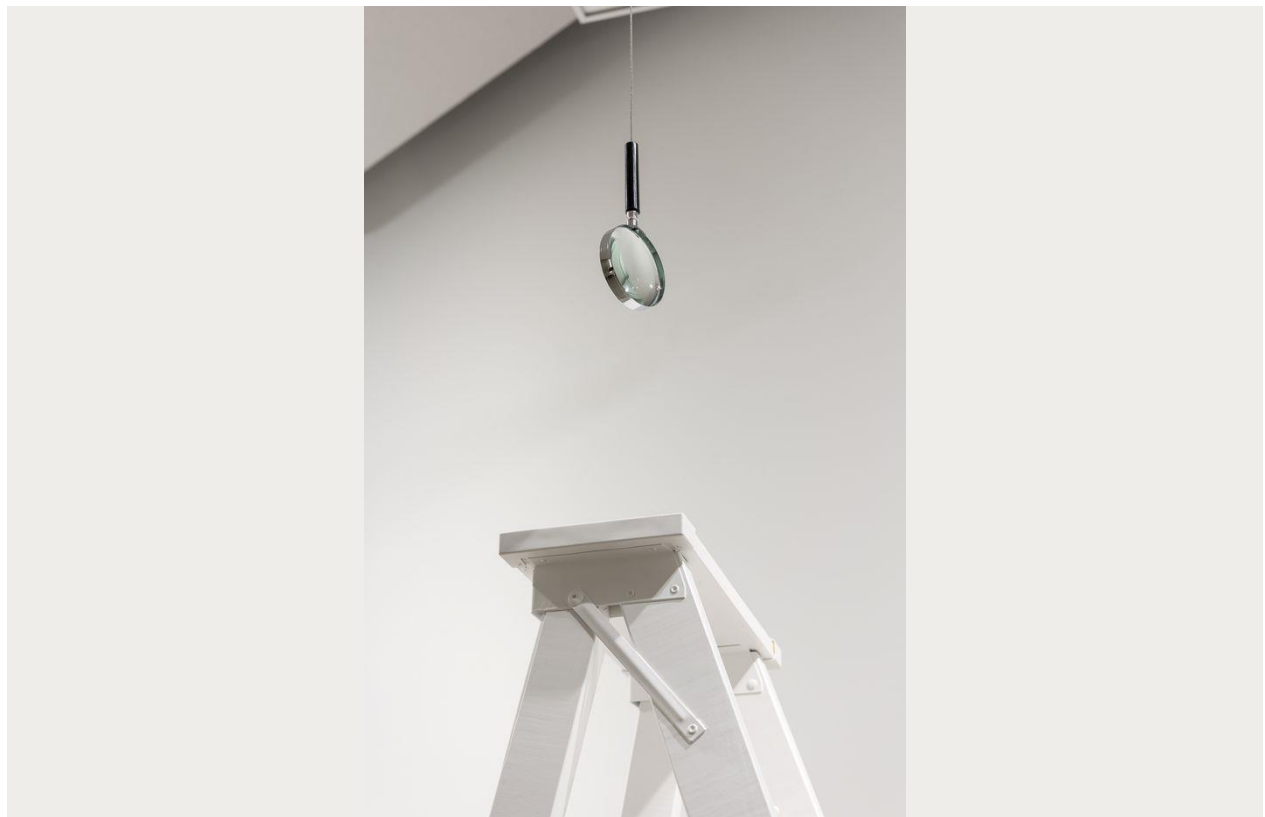
Head of woman, by Pegi Nicol MacLeod. THE ROBERT MCLAUGHLIN GALLERY

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection didn't need to wait on international loans to put together *Uninvited*, an exhibition devoted to female Canadian artists of the early 20th century. Still, this show, originally intended as a counterweight to the anticipated hoopla of the Group of Seven centenary in May, 2020, was delayed more than a year by the pandemic. It's an overdue look at the many female artists – not merely Emily Carr but also Prudence Heward, Marion Long, Paraskeva Clark, Pegi Nicol MacLeod, Frances Loring and Florence Wyle – who have been overshadowed by the myth of the hardy outdoorsmen of the Group. After this Ontario viewing, the show tours to the Glenbow Museum in Calgary next winter.

**Greater Toronto Art 2021 (GTA 21) at the Museum of Contemporary Art Toronto from Sept. 29, to Jan. 9, 2022.**

Since it opened on Sterling Road in 2017, MOCA's focus has tended to be internationalist: This exhibition is the institution's big chance to finally enmesh itself in the local art scene. About two dozen artists – or collectives – are included in the first iteration of what MOCA promises will be a triennial event. The show should represent a welcome opportunity to measure a good swath of contemporary Canadian art.

**Growing Freedom: The instructions of Yoko Ono and The art of John and Yoko at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Oct. 9, to May 1, 2022.**



Growing Freedom, by Yoko Ono. BLAINE CAMPBELL/COURTESY OF CONTEMPORARY CALGARY

This double-header comes to Vancouver from Montreal's Phi Foundation and examines the theme of collaboration in the art of Yoko Ono. The first part presents Ono's instructional projects in which she invites the audience to complete the work through various actions – from hammering a nail into a canvas in the gallery back in 1966 to a 2013 work that asked women to contribute a testament of harm done to them and a photo of their eyes. The second part looks at Ono's peace projects created with husband John Lennon in the late 1960s.