

## Five arts shows to brighten up the final weeks of the winter season

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Artistic styles are creatures of fashion and in an era where art is intensely political and often documentary, it can be bracing to consider previous and opposing trends. For an exhibition entitled *Hard Edge*, the Vancouver Art Gallery is showing geometric abstraction of the 1960s and 1970s, those canvases of lines so clean they often required masking tape to paint them. From the VAG permanent collection, curator Richard Hill is assembling classics by Canadians including Jack Bush, Roy Kiyooka, Guido Molinari, Takao Tanabe and Joan Balzar as well as the American painter Frank Stella. Some of the works have never been shown since the VAG first acquired them. Opening March 4 at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Invigorating and optimistic, the Wedge Foundation collection of Black photography assembled by Toronto dentist and art collector [Kenneth Montague](#) features classic images from the 20th and 21st centuries. *As We Rise: Photography from the Black Atlantic* (first a coffee table book; now a show opening soon at Vancouver's Polygon Gallery) includes both photojournalism and art photography from the African diaspora in the Caribbean, North America and Britain. The

images range from James Van Der Zee's 1932 photo of a Harlem couple in raccoon coats and Vanley Burke's 1970 photo of a British boy flying the Union Jack on his bike to more recent fine art by such prominent Americans as Rashid Johnson, Kehinde Wiley and Mickalene Thomas. From Feb. 24 to May 13 at the Polygon Gallery in Vancouver.



*The Grass Grows Deep, by Meryl McMaster.*



*On the Edge of This Immensity, by McMaster. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST*

To create her dramatic large-scale photographs, the Ottawa artist Meryl McMaster researches Indigenous history and family stories, builds elaborate garments, headdresses and props that draw on her mixed Cree-European heritage, and poses herself in the Saskatchewan landscapes from where her paternal relatives sprang. In this rich consideration of identity, references abound – to stories as well known as the residential schools or as personal as an ancestor who used to flatten pennies by leaving them on the railway track. In one image, McMaster is hidden behind a raven headdress and a Campbell tartan shawl as she rings a pair of school bells; in another, the artist, carrying a photograph of her Cree and Métis grandmothers, appears with a red line drawn down the middle of her face. Entitled *Bloodline*, the exhibition includes these recent photographs, as well as earlier work and two films, a new departure for McMaster. At the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ont. to May 28.

In 2022, the artist Lydia Ourahmane made a 13-day trek by foot through Tassili n'Ajjer National Park in southeastern Algeria, accompanied by nine local guides, six artistic collaborators and technicians, and 20 donkeys to carry the gear. The result is a 47-minute wordless film that unveils the dramatic geology and mysterious rock art on a remote plateau in the Sahara desert. Much speculative material has been rewritten about the thousands of Neolithic drawings and engravings in Tassili, but this is not a documentary, rather a meditative walk through wind-carved canyons and prehistoric art galleries. Showing continuously at the Mercer Union in Toronto to April 15.



Three Black Cats, by Nova Scotia folk artist Maud Lewis. THE CANADIAN PRESS

With its friendly cats and bright tulips, the art of Maud Lewis has a comforting solidity and deceptive simplicity. A full retrospective of the famed Nova Scotia folk artist, including numerous scenes of winter woods, farmers' fields or boats at the wharf, examines how she developed her use of colour, form and composition. Organized by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Ontario, the exhibition is now showing at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Halifax, the provincial capital that was the furthest Lewis had ever travelled from her home near Digby. Ongoing.