

Fall Exhibitions at the McMichael:
Contemplation and Conversations in Canadian Art



Tom Thomson (1877–1917), *Petawawa Gorges*, 1916, oil on wood panel, 21.4 x 26.5 cm, Purchased with funds donated by Major F.A. Tilston, V.C., McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1981.9.2

September 22, 2022, KLEINBURG, ON - The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is pleased to announce its fall/winter slate of exhibitions; three presentations that venerate the cultural contributions of historic Canadian, newcomer and Indigenous artists while embracing the new generation charting its own path to the future.

This season of contemplation and discovery opens in September with a new display of the Canadian art pantheon, featuring diverse works selected from the Gallery's extensive permanent collection. Then, in November, the McMichael will present the work of one of

Canadian art's most prescient and imaginative rising stars, **Rajni Perera** (b. 1985). Drawing heavily from science fiction narratives and themes of environmentalism, Perera offers an unwavering critique of current global change through ornate, transcendent visions of worlds to come. Uniting past and present, in December the McMichael will also proudly mount the first-ever retrospective of legendary Northwest Coast carver and sculptor **Dempsey Bob** (b. 1948). This exhibition, spanning Bob's career from the 1970s through to the present day, provides an intimate look at the way the artist draws from the stories of his Tahltan-Tlingit community, while simultaneously updating age-old Northwest Coast carving traditions with new sculptural ideas.

Taken together, these exhibitions highlight the extraordinary breadth of creativity found in every era of Canadian art. This fall, the McMichael is proud to support the country's most perceptive and talented artists both past and present.



F.H. Varley (1881–1969), *Early Morning, Sphinx Mountain*, c. 1928, oil on canvas, 119.4 x 139.8 cm, Purchase 1972, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1972.11

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun (b. 1957), *New Climate Landscape (Northwest Coast Climate Change)*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 193 x 243.8 cm, Purchase 2020, BMO Financial Group, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 2020.10

[Conversations: Masterworks from the McMichael Canadian Art Collection](#)

September 10, 2022 – April 2024

Conversations is a selection from the Gallery's permanent collection of more than 7,000 works of art that aims to convey something of its current breadth. This carefully crafted exhibition, curated by McMichael Executive Director Ian A.C. DeJardin, takes joy in placing apparently disparate works in creative conversation with one another. Featuring works by Kenojuak Ashevak, Rebecca Belmore, Edward Burtynsky, Franklin Carmichael, Emily Carr, Kim Dorland, Sorel Etrog, Paterson Ewen, Lawren Harris, Prudence Heward, Gershon Iskowitz, A.Y. Jackson, Cornelius Krieghoff, Jean Paul Lemieux, Arthur Lismer, An Te Liu, Zachari Logan, Helen McNicoll, David Ruben Piqtoukun, David Milne, Michael Snow, Tom Thomson and others.

“I’ve always felt, looking at art on gallery walls, that it’s as if there are countless murmuring conversations going on, just out of earshot, between works and between artists. In the vaults of a great museum like the McMichael, you stumble on these kinds of conversations all the time,” said Dejardin. “This selection of works from the permanent collection takes these ‘conversations’ as its inspiration.”

The exhibition will reward repeat visitors with an unfolding rotation of gems hand-selected from the McMichael’s vaults, further extending the inter-generational conversations between art and artists of different eras and styles.



Storm, 2020, mixed media on marbled paper, 76.2 × 61 cm, James McKellar, Photo courtesy of Patel Brown, L2022.77, © Rajni Perera

[Rajni Perera: Futures](#)

November 18, 2022 – May 7, 2023

Rajni Perera is one of Canada’s most promising contemporary multimedia artists. Experimenting with mediums as varied as painting, sculpture and photography, the Toronto-based artist expresses her vision of imagined futures in which mutated subjects exist in dystopian realms. Early examples of Perera’s mutated goddesses will be displayed in concert with her more recent abstractions and sculptures. Drawing deeply on the artistic traditions of

her birthplace, Sri Lanka, as well as Indian miniature painting, medieval armour, and science fiction, Perera has created a body of work that spans feminist and diasporic themes, while contemplating survival in an environmentally degraded future. Her work responds to existential threats with creativity and invention, offering a vision charged with humour and sharp critique, hope and dread. Underscored by current global affairs and accelerated climate change, Perera's vision is as timely as it is compelling.

Futures is curated by McMichael Chief Curator Sarah Milroy and includes works from all phases of the artist's career, including new pieces made specifically for Perera's McMichael exhibition. The accompanying publication features an interview of the artist by Milroy, as well as essays by leading international literary figures Fariha Roisin and Britt Wray.



Dempsey Bob (b. 1948), *Wolf Headdress*, c. 1988-1989, alder, acrylic paint, fur, operculum shell, 40.6 x 20.3 cm, Private Collection, Photo: Rachel Topham Photography

[Wolves: The Art of Dempsey Bob](#)

December 10, 2022 – April 16, 2023

Wolves: The Art of Dempsey Bob offers a personal encounter with the work of the leading carver of British Columbia's Northwest Coast, and an immersive experience of the Tahlitan and Tlingit mainland cultures. This first-ever retrospective surveys **Dempsey Bob's** development

from his early days as a student of legendary female carver Freda Diesing through to his late career masterworks, which advance the traditions of carving in the 21st century.

Bob's carvings blend traditional narratives and iconography with contemporary influences. His exposure to oral histories, songs, and dances from a young age has contributed to his understanding of art and its purpose within community. Equal parts traditionalist and vanguard artist, Bob acknowledges the lineage to which he is indebted, yet he refuses nostalgia. Instead, he boldly reinterprets the traditional characters and iconography from the age-old stories of his people, at times inflecting those traditional tales with influences drawn from world art. Bob's work urges a re-examination of humankind's place in the natural world that is both timely and urgently needed.

Wolves: The Art of Dempsey Bob is a co-production of the Audain Art Museum and McMichael Canadian Art Collection. It is co-curated by McMichael Chief Curator Sarah Milroy and Dr. Curtis Collins, Director and Chief Curator of the Audain Art Museum in Whistler, British Columbia.

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication, *Dempsey Bob: In His Own Voice*, edited by Milroy. The publication includes stories from the artist about his life and his people, his explanations of the works in the exhibition, and extensive photo-documentation of his studio and home community on the Skeena River. *Dempsey Bob: In His Own Voice* brings the rich culture of British Columbia's north coast to a wider audience through the art and stories of one of Canada's most articulate and compelling cultural figures.

Ongoing Exhibitions



Elisapee Ishulutaq, *Untitled (Four Colourful Birds)*, n.d., oil stick on paper, 22.25" x 30", Private collection

[Elisapee Ishulutaq: My World](#)

Closing October 30, 2022

This is the first solo museum exhibition of works by the exceptional Inuit artist **Elisapee Ishulutaq** (1925–2018), focusing on her epic works on paper in pencil and oil stick. Her works immerse us in the experience of daily life in her home community of Pangnirtung, located on a spectacular mountainous fjord on Baffin Island, Nunuvut, capturing the community's way of life in vibrant colour, as well as her life on the land prior to her family's relocation to Pangnitung.

Ishulutaq's drawings are bold in their minimalism, her high-contrast forms evoking the dramatic mountainscapes that surround her community. Large panoramic drawings provide encompassing views of life in the hamlet of Pangnirtung, while smaller works evoke the dazzling world of birds in flight, boats at sea, or the inky back expanses of the night sky in the depths of winter. Intriguing, too, are her hybrid scenes in which Arctic realities are counterbalanced by imagery from an imaginary south—and the unexpected appearances of elephants or leafy trees.

Ishulutaq's works draw us deeply into her way of seeing, transmitting an indelible view of life in the Arctic seen through her unique lens. This exhibition extends the longstanding commitment of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection to the art of Canada's North, bringing to light an artist whose accomplishments have yet to be fully celebrated.

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication that will include an introductory essay by McMichael Chief Curator Sarah Milroy, a lead essay by Inuit writer and artist Tarralik Duffy, an essay by art historian John Geoghegan, and a contribution from Darlene Wight, Curator of Inuit Art at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, who knew Elisapee Ishulutaq during her lifetime.



Wanda Koop, *Standing Wishtanding*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 50.8 × 40.6 cm, courtesy of the artist, Photo: William Eakin, © Wanda Koop

[Wanda Koop: Lightworks](#)

Closing November 20, 2022

Wanda Koop (b. 1951) is one of Canada's leading painters, her works appearing in the galleries of Toronto, Montreal, Los Angeles, New York and Houston. Though she has had a more than forty-year career as an artist, the presentation at the McMichael catches Koop in a late-career moment of glory as she continues on her bold path of experimentation. Based in Winnipeg, Koop has created a body of work that attests to her astute observations of contemporary life, responding to such issues as climate change, Indigenous land rights, and the digital media environment in which we are immersed, as well as the transcendent beauty of the natural world.

Since her earliest days, Koop's work has engaged with abstraction, as she stripped away inessential detail to create strikingly pared down compositions and combinations of colour. In her more recent paintings, though, Koop increasingly explores colour and light as subjects in themselves, masterfully engineering her canvases through the application of dozens of layers of deftly controlled pigment. The resulting surfaces seem to glow from within, suggesting euphoric states of vision.

Through the arrangement of these recent works into an ensemble of rare beauty, Koop introduces visitors to realms of light as never before, offering a rare glimpse into her deepest sources of inspiration. In addition to her paintings on canvas, the exhibition includes two of her new Light Sticks installations—suites of long, thin, shaped works that bear strips of intense colour and patterning, arranged sculpturally against the wall—a breakthrough by the artist into the third dimension.

This exhibition is curated by McMichael Chief Curator Sarah Milroy, with an accompanying catalogue featuring essays by writers Miriam Toews and Clayton Thomas-Muller.



Gathie Falk, *Picnic with Dog*, c.1976, ceramic, paint media, 60.5 x 47 x 71 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery, © Gathie Falk

[Gathie Falk: Revelations](#)

Closing January 8, 2023

At age 94, **Gathie Falk** (b. 1928) is one of Canada's most beloved and esteemed artists, long known and celebrated for her pioneering achievements in painting, performance art, ceramics, and installation art. A trailblazer on all fronts, she has brought a rich sensibility to bear on her observations of the everyday, perceptions often tinged with the surreal and the uncanny. From her fruit piles to the landmark performance works of her early career, to her extended pursuit of themes and variations in her painting practice —expanses of water dazzling with light, riotous flower borders set against cement sidewalks, night skies pierced by starlight or obscured by clouds—she finds the wondrous in the routine world around her. This exhibition summarizes an extraordinary career, opening with a display of her ceramic fruit piles, with subsequent sections devoted to her early work in performance, ceramic still life, and selections from her *Theatre in Black and White and Colour* works which extend her notions of theatrical presentation into the realm of oil on canvas.

The show continues with a gathering of Falk's flower border paintings and a number of paintings from her *Pieces of Water* series, a sumptuous immersion in her lush painterly style and lavish use of colour. Another section gathers her sculptural investigations of shoes and clothing in her art, often rendered in serial form.

Finally, the exhibition concludes with a presentation of Falk's Night Sky paintings from the 1970s onward, accompanied by her ghostly *Reclining Figure (after Henry Moore): Stella*, a major sculptural work from 1999 that evokes the absent figure. This concluding gallery evokes the

mysteries we face at the end of our days as we search the heavens, and contemplate the wonder of life and death, a core theme in Falk's art making from the start.

The exhibition is accompanied by a major publication, including essays by McMichael Chief Curator Sarah Milroy, Vancouver curator and writer Daina Augaitis, artists Liz Magor and Landon Mackenzie, writer Nancy Tousley, and art historians John Geoghegan and Jocelyn Anderson.

To obtain high-resolution images or request an interview, please contact Sam Cheung, Media Relations and Communications Coordinator at scheung@mcmichael.com or 905.893.1121 ext. 2210.

Ces informations sont aussi disponible en français.

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 Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, 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 6,500 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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