

Summer Exhibitions at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection: Wanda Koop, Gathie Falk, Elisapee Ishulutaq



Gathie Falk, *All Over Rose Trees and Light Bulbs*, 1984, oil on canvas, 198.1 x 167.6 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, © Gathie Falk

June 9, 2022, KLEINBURG, ON - The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is pleased to announce its summer suite of exhibitions; three exceptional solo presentations by women artists who share a passionate love of colour: **Wanda Koop**, Canada's most masterful living painter of light and luminescence; **Gathie Falk**, now 94, a trailblazer across media whose work evokes the uncanny in the everyday; and **Elisapee Ishulutaq** in her first museum survey, whose vibrant large-scale drawings of daily life in Nunuvut mark her as one of Canada's most innovative artists. Taken together, these retrospective exhibitions illuminate the extraordinary bodies of work that have been created assiduously over decades by some of Canada's most perceptive artists - working in and out of the limelight – the full breath of which will be on display at the McMichael this summer. For five weeks starting in June, the McMichael will also welcome artist **Jen Aitken** to the Thomson Shack for the RBC Emerging Artist Residency.



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](#)

May 21 – October 30, 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 is increasingly exploring 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 also 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.

“Throughout her dazzling career, audiences have come to know Koop primarily as a figurative artist,” says Chief Curator Sarah Milroy. “But abstraction is a painter’s language that runs throughout all of Koop’s works. This show explores her recent push even deeper into the frontier of pure colour and light. Here we see Koop creating layers of colour to bottomless effect, evoking expanses of light that evoke her euphoric experience of the beauty of nature.”

Wanda Koop: Lightworks is curated by McMichael Chief Curator Sarah Milroy. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with contributions from Milroy, award-winning novelist Miriam Toews and director and Cree activist Clayton Thomas-Müller. The latest in the McMichael expanding lineup of award-winning publications, *Lightworks* also features photography of Koop’s studio space by William Eakin.



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](#)

June 18, 2022-January 2, 2023

At age 94, **Gathie Falk** 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 performances 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 works from her *Pieces of Water* series, a sumptuous immersion in her lush painterly style and lavish use of colour. Another section will gather 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 and 1980s, 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 the wonder at life that has always underpinned Falk's art making.

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.



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

[Elisapee Ishulutaq: My World](#)

July 2 – November 20, 2022

This will be 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.

Ishulutaq's drawings are bold in their minimalism, her high-contrast forms evoking the dramatic mountainscapes that surround her community. Large panoramic drawings provide holistic 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 will be 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.



RBC Emerging Artist Residency: Jen Aitken

June 6 to July 3, 2022

From June 6 through July 3, 2022, the McMichael welcomes Toronto-based artist Jen Aitken to the Tom Thomson shack as part of the RBC Emerging Artist Residency at the McMichael. During the residency, Aitken will use the Thomson Shack as a studio space in which to create a site-specific installation that responds to the site's architecture. Visitors will be able to meet Aitken and engage with the work in progress on June 26 and July 3 when she will lead drop-in drawing workshops with visitors in the Shack. The McMichael will also host a virtual Artist Talk on July 5 where Aitken will be in conversation with chief curator Sarah Milroy.

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.

Media Contacts

Sam Cheung

Media Relations and Communications Coordinator
McMichael Canadian Art Collection
905.893.1121 x2210
scheung@mcmichael.com

Grace Johnstone

Director, Marketing, Communications and Sales
McMichael Canadian Art Collection
905.893.1121 x2265
gjohnstone@mcmichael.com

Wanda Koop: Lightworks

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