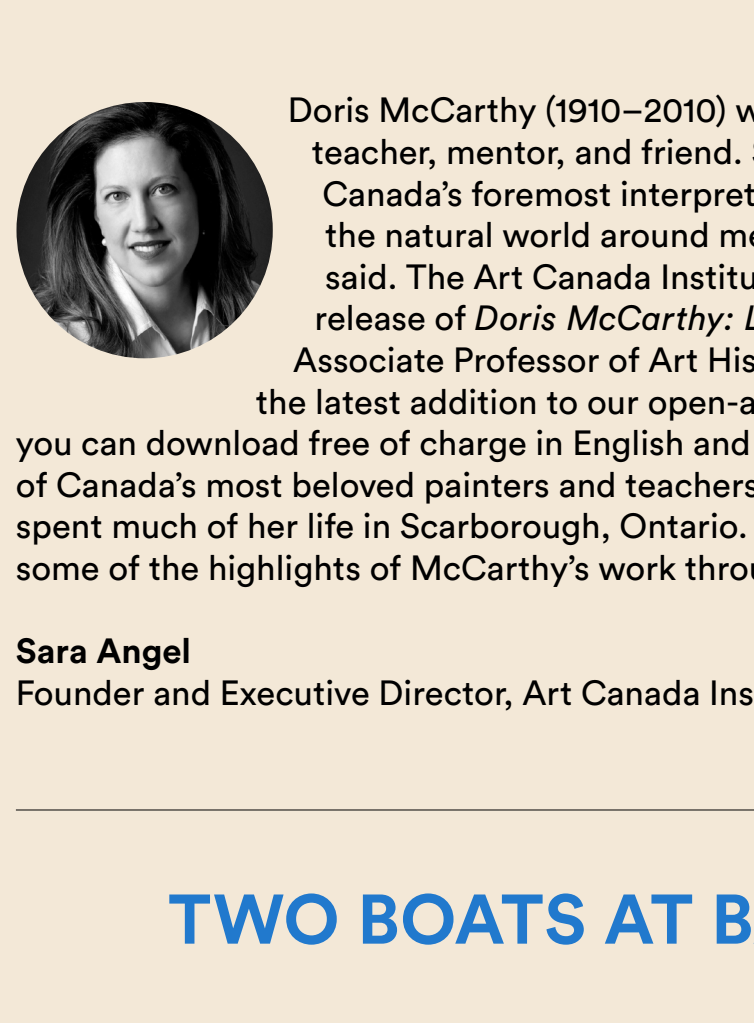


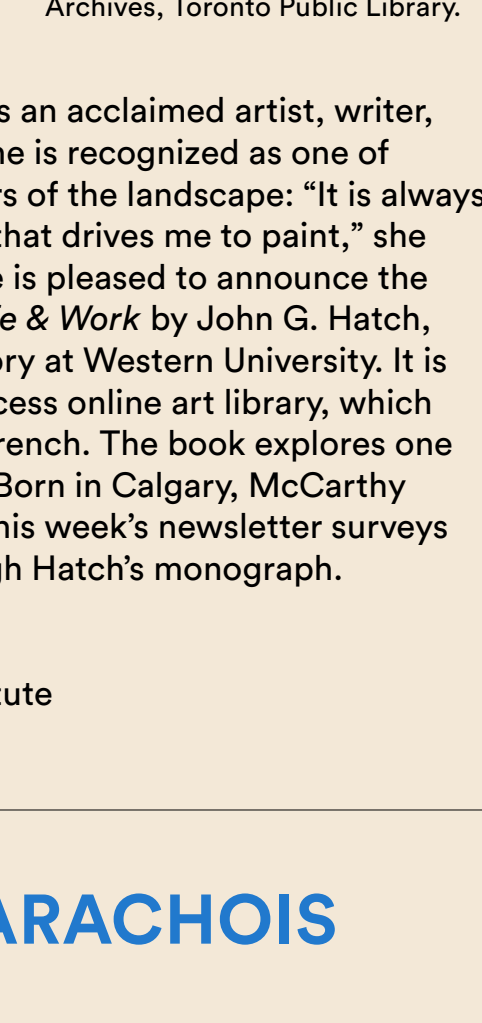
JUNE 7, 2024

DORIS MCCARTHY: LIFE & WORK ACI'S NEW BOOK RELEASES TODAY

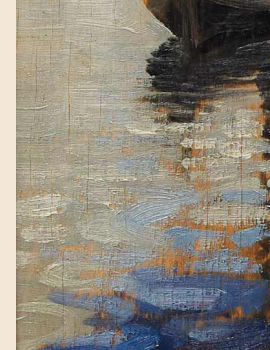
Our latest title, written by John G. Hatch, explores the career of the chameleonic painter of Canada's many landscapes, an influential educator, and a gifted writer.



Doris McCarthy, *Iceberg Fantasy No. 9*, 1973, private collection.



Doris McCarthy, 1989, photograph by Patti Gower, Toronto Star Archives, Toronto Public Library.



Doris McCarthy (1910–2010) was an acclaimed artist, writer, teacher, mentor, and friend. She is recognized as one of Canada's foremost interpreters of the landscape: "It is always the natural world around me that drives me to paint," she said. The Art Canada Institute is pleased to announce the release of *Doris McCarthy: Life & Work* by John G. Hatch, Associate Professor of Art History at Western University. It is the latest addition to our open-access online art library, which you can download free of charge in English and French. The book explores one of Canada's most beloved painters and teachers. Born in Calgary, McCarthy spent much of her life in Scarborough, Ontario. This week's newsletter surveys some of the highlights of McCarthy's work through Hatch's monograph.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

TWO BOATS AT BARACHOIS

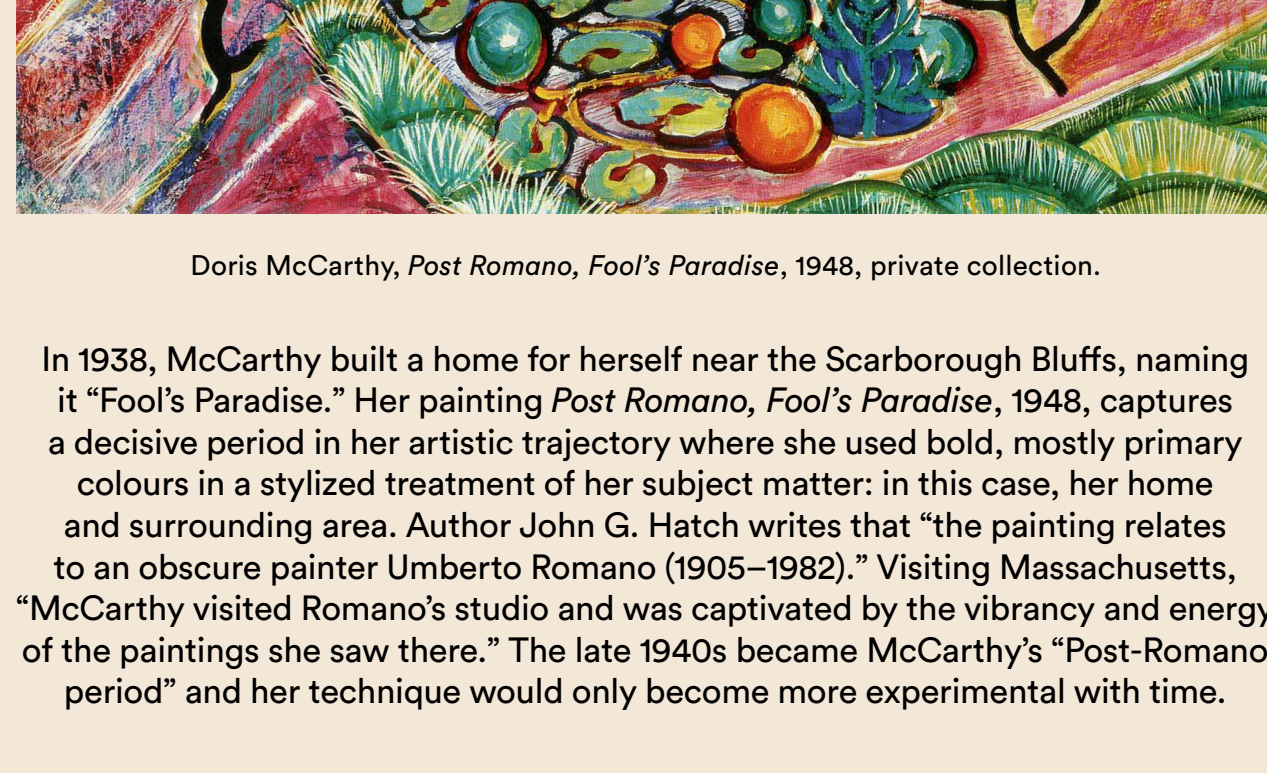


Doris McCarthy, *Two Boats at Barachois*, 1934, private collection.

McCarthy's *Two Boats at Barachois*, 1934, was painted on a summer trip to the Gaspé Peninsula. It is characteristic of her early work, which offered more naturalistic depictions compared to what would come later. It also epitomizes McCarthy's [plein-air approach](#)—working out in nature, exposed to the elements, was essential to her painting practice. McCarthy said: "When I'm working out of doors and the light is changing every minute, there's a sense of excitement and pressure because you have to get it down, because in the afternoon the shadows are going to go in the other direction. So, you don't waste any time."

[Learn more](#)

THE DRAWING CLASS

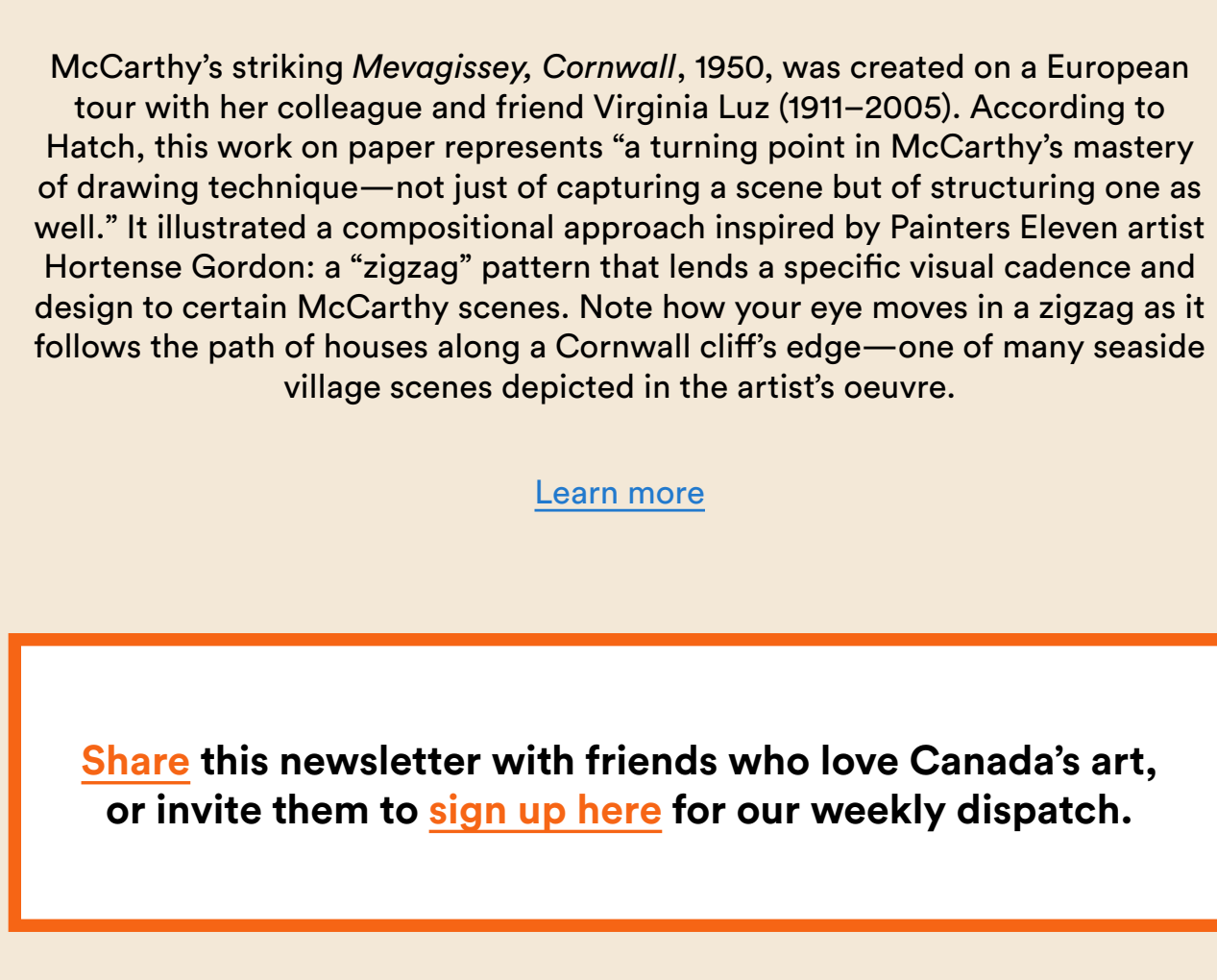


Doris McCarthy, *The Drawing Class*, 1946, private collection.

In 1931, McCarthy began teaching in the art department at Central Technical School in Toronto, and during the Second World War she was assigned upper-level painting and drawing classes. This experience is the subject of the dynamic and lively canvas *The Drawing Class*, 1946. In the mid-1940s, McCarthy likely saw herself as more of a teacher than an artist. She was a teacher at Central Tech for forty years. Her pedagogy there focused on nurturing the creativity of her students, including Kazuo Nakamura (1926–2002), Tom Hodgson (1924–2006), Barry Oretsky (b.1946), and Joyce Wieland (1930–1998), who described the bold and bohemian McCarthy as "the most exciting woman I'd ever met."

[Learn more](#)

POST ROMANO, FOOL'S PARADISE

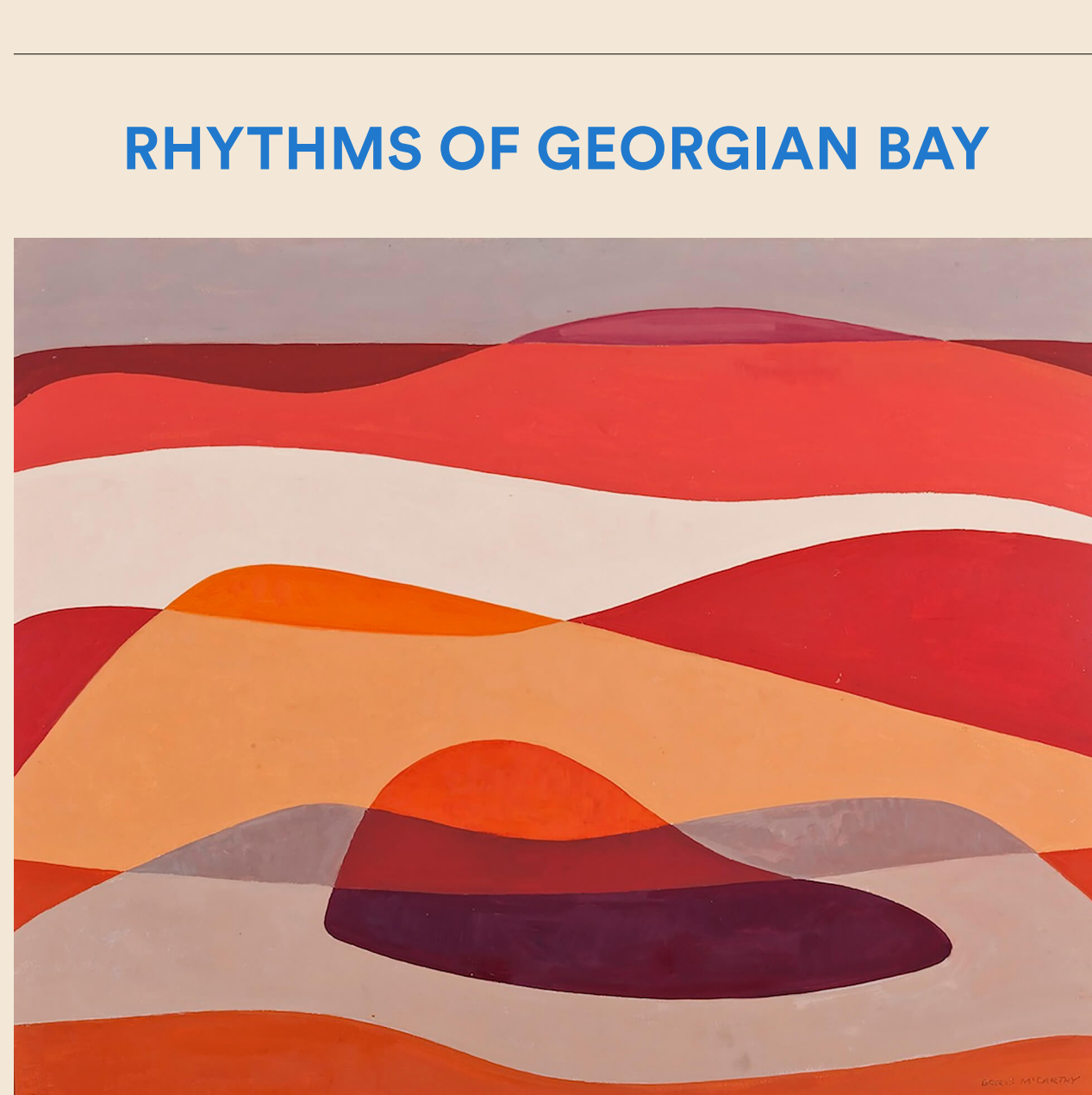


Doris McCarthy, *Post Romano, Fool's Paradise*, 1948, private collection.

In 1938, McCarthy built a home for herself near the Scarborough Bluffs, naming it "Fool's Paradise." Her painting *Post Romano, Fool's Paradise*, 1948, captures a decisive period in her artistic trajectory where she used bold, mostly primary colours in a stylized treatment of her subject matter: in this case, her home and surrounding area. Author John G. Hatch writes that "the painting relates to an obscure painter Umberto Romano (1905–1982)." Visiting Massachusetts, "McCarthy visited Romano's studio and was captivated by the vibrancy and energy of the paintings she saw there." The late 1940s became McCarthy's "Post-Romano period" and her technique would only become more experimental with time.

[Learn more](#)

MEVAGISSEY, CORNWALL



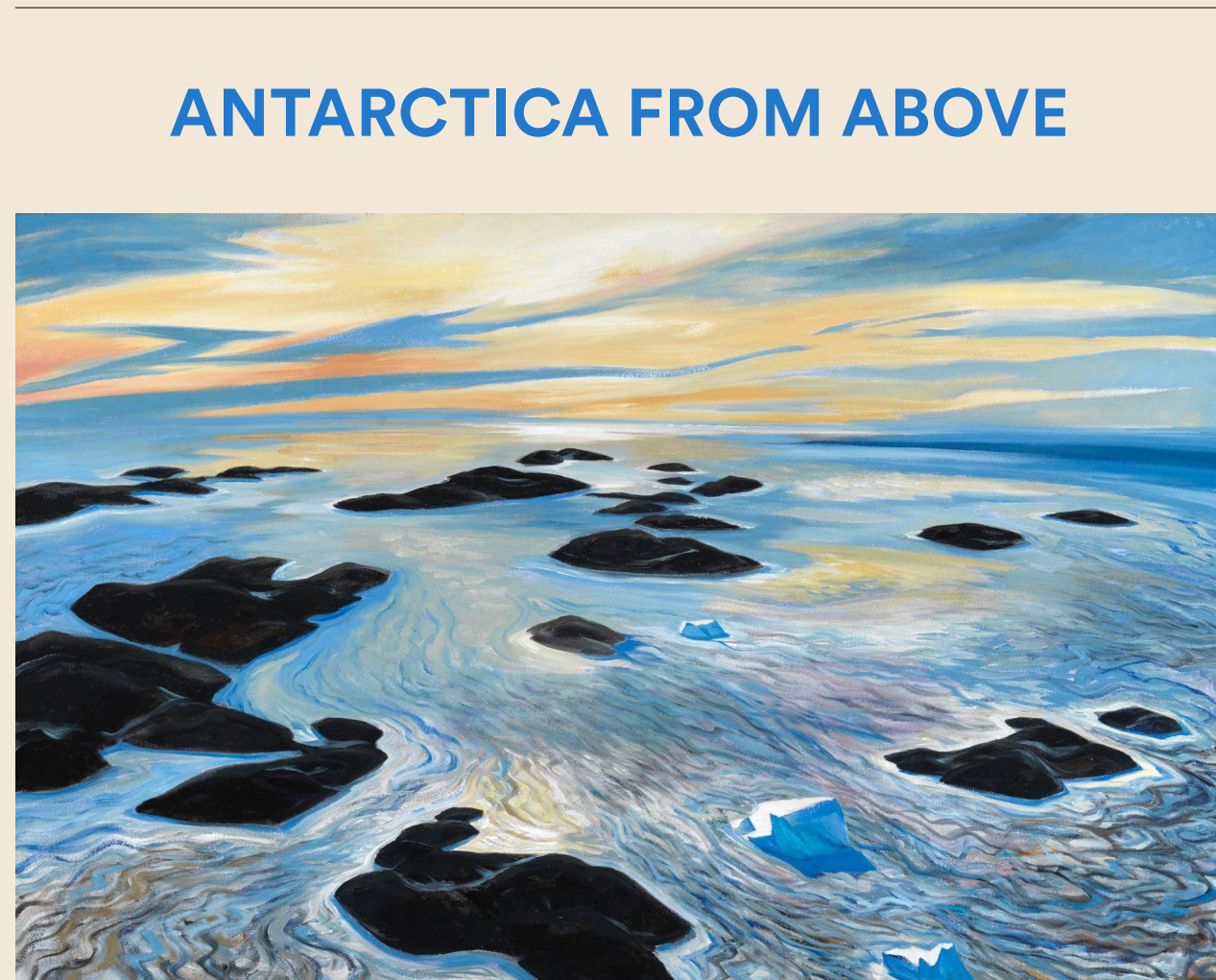
Doris McCarthy, *Mevagissey, Cornwall*, 1950, Doris McCarthy Gallery, Scarborough.

McCarthy's striking *Mevagissey, Cornwall*, 1950, was created on a European tour with her colleague and friend Virginia Luz (1911–2005). According to Hatch, this work on paper represents "a turning point in McCarthy's mastery of drawing technique—not just of capturing a scene but of structuring one as well." It illustrated a compositional approach inspired by Painters Eleven artist Hortense Gordon: a "zigzag" pattern that lends a specific visual cadence and design to certain McCarthy scenes. Note how your eye moves in a zigzag as it follows the path of houses along a Cornwall cliff's edge—one of many seaside village scenes depicted in the artist's oeuvre.

[Learn more](#)

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ST. AIDAN BANNER

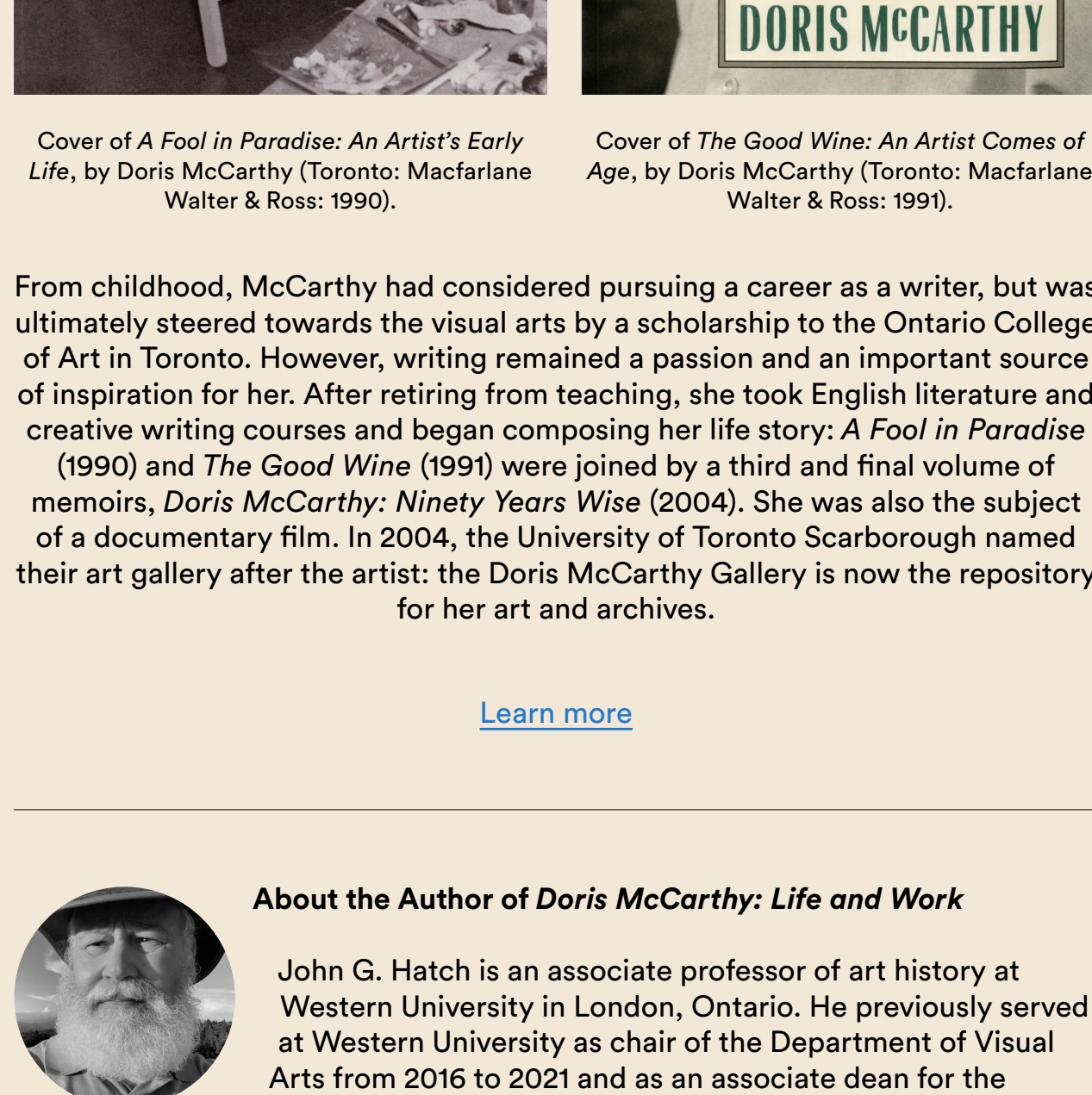


Doris McCarthy, *St. Aidan Banner*, c.1957, Church of St. Aidan, Toronto.

This remarkable textile work, *St. Aidan Banner*, c.1957, has a fascinating backstory. Author John G. Hatch writes, "McCarthy's relationship to her faith was a profound one. She was a devout parishioner of the Church of St. Aidan in the Beaches neighbourhood of Toronto practically all her life, from Sunday school on." This banner is one of several religious artworks she created for the church, and one of two liturgical wall-hangings made in 1956 and 1957 to mark St. Aidan's fiftieth anniversary (however, they were apparently taken down without explanation soon after the celebration). Here, McCarthy's visual style is more folkloric and departs from conventional religious iconography by depicting St. Aidan barefoot.

[Learn more](#)

RHYTHMS OF GEORGIAN BAY

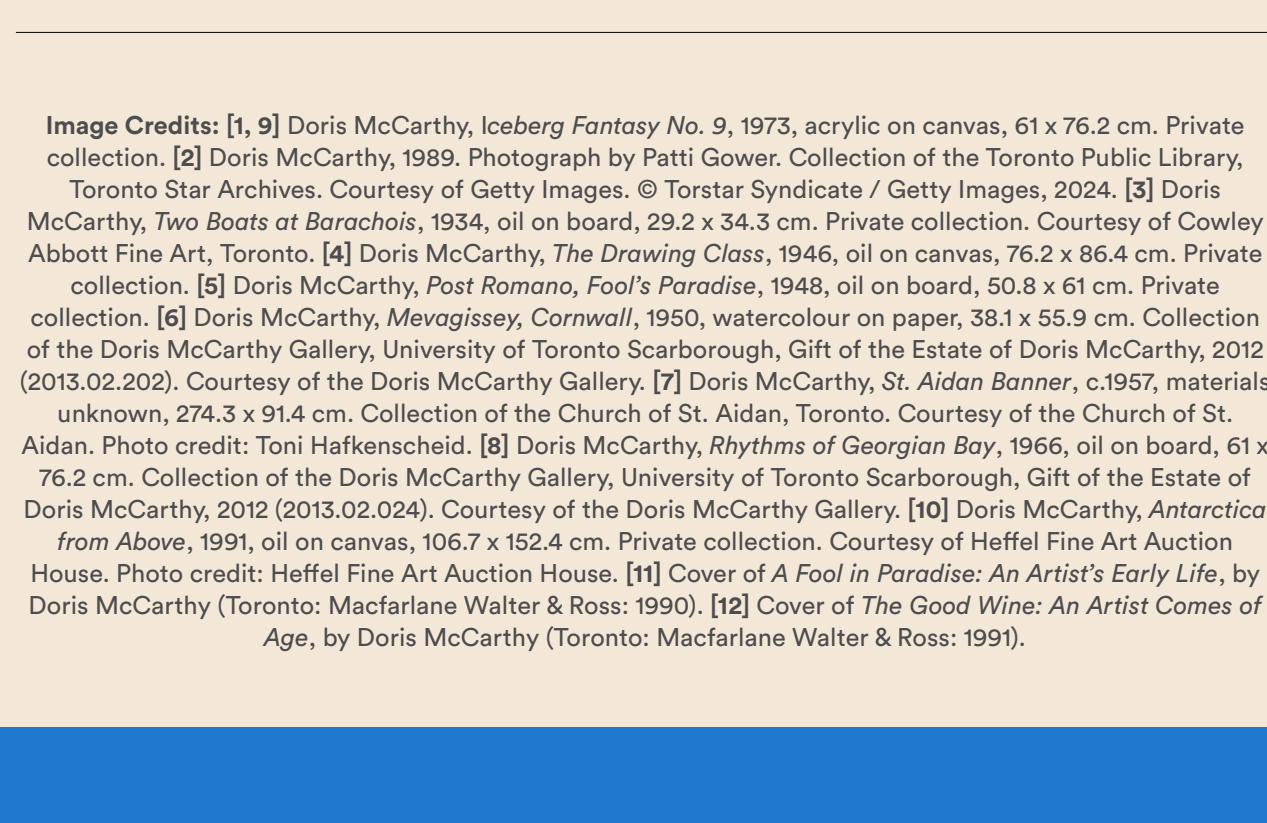


Doris McCarthy, *Rhythms of Georgian Bay*, 1966, Doris McCarthy Gallery, Scarborough.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, McCarthy created a hundred or so paintings in a simplified yet bold abstract style. Pushing the boundaries between representational and abstract art, these canvases—which Hatch calls "hard-edge landscape paintings"—responded to the contemporary colour-field and hard-edge painting styles championed by Canadian artists like Jack Bush (1909–1977) and William Pehereudoff (1918–2013). (McCarthy was chameleonic in her ability to contend with new styles.) *Rhythms of Georgian Bay*, 1966, is particularly radical in its apparent departure from her detailed, more realist landscapes. However, her masterful approach to composition marked by repeating forms and a zigzag pattern remains. McCarthy recalled that, at Georgian Bay, "I tried to say the rocks and water movements in the simplest way possible."

[Learn more](#)

ICEBERG FANTASY NO. 9

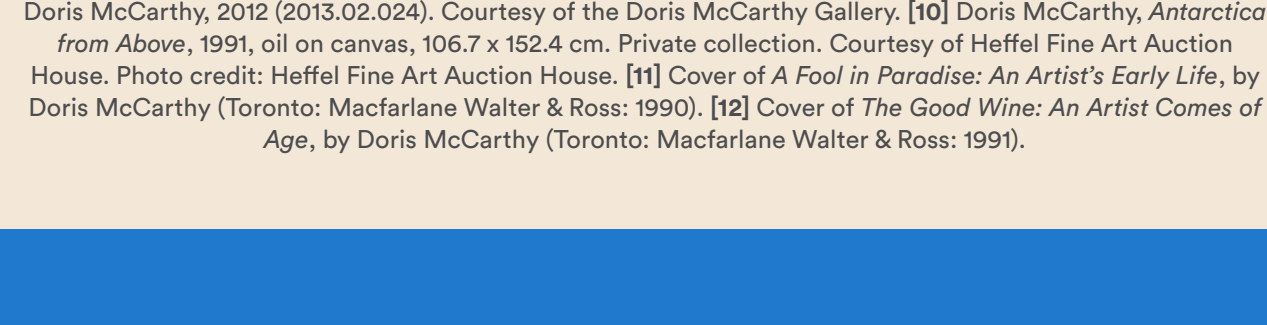


Doris McCarthy, *Iceberg Fantasy No. 9*, 1973, private collection.

In 1972, following her retirement from Central Technical School in Toronto after teaching there for four decades, McCarthy took her first trip to the Arctic. It was the catalyst for an impressive body of work capturing Arctic vistas; icebergs, in particular, came to dominate much of her later work. The dazzling *Iceberg Fantasy No. 9*, 1973, aptly illustrates the innovative ways that McCarthy approached her subject matter. This work, for example, demonstrates her attention to the way sunlight produces unexpected shadows of green and blue on clean white ice. Seeing out the visual essence of her subject in these paintings, the word "fantasy" in the title reinforces that this is a highly personal interpretation of the Northern landscape.

[Learn more](#)

ANTARCTICA FROM ABOVE



Doris McCarthy, *Antarctica from Above*, 1991, private collection.

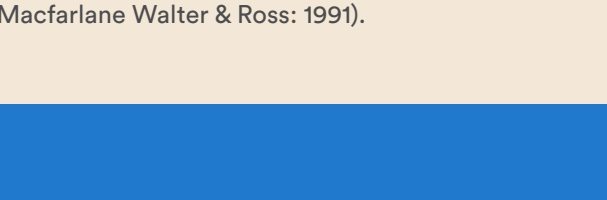
The brilliant *Antarctica from Above*, 1991, was painted while McCarthy was on a tour of Antarctica organized by the American Museum of Natural History in 1991. She approaches the polar desert continent very differently than she does the Canadian Arctic: here, the dramatically elevated vantage point gives the viewer an expansive look across this rocky terrain. Author John G. Hatch writes, "*Antarctica from Above* is the standout among McCarthy's Antarctic works, capturing a dramatic moment of illumination from the sun as it rides above the horizon during the summer months, never setting, and with a hint of the curvature of the earth."

[Learn more](#)

A FOOL IN PARADISE AND THE GOOD WINE



Cover of *A Fool in Paradise: An Artist's Early Life*, by Doris McCarthy (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross: 1990).



Cover of *The Good Wine: An Artist Comes of Age*, by Doris McCarthy (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross: 1991).

From childhood, McCarthy had considered pursuing a career as a writer, but was ultimately steered towards the visual arts by a scholarship to the Ontario College of Art in Toronto. However, writing remained a passion and an important source of inspiration for her. After retiring from teaching, she took English literature and creative writing courses and began composing her life story: *A Fool in Paradise* (1990) and *The Good Wine* (1991) were joined by a third and final volume of memoirs, *Doris McCarthy: Ninety Years Wise* (2004). She was also the subject of a documentary film. In 2004, the University of Toronto Scarborough named their art gallery after the artist: the Doris McCarthy Gallery is now the repository for her art and archives.

[Learn more](#)

About the Author of *Doris McCarthy: Life and Work*

John G. Hatch is an associate professor of art history at Western University in London, Ontario. He previously served at Western University as chair of the Department of Visual Arts from 2016 to 2021 and as an associate dean for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities from 2009 to 2015. Hatch's research has focused on the intersections of art and science, particularly in the twentieth century. On discovering McCarthy, Hatch said, "I knew little of Doris McCarthy until I encountered her 1966 painting *Rhythms of Georgian Bay*. It was one of the most refreshing and novel approaches to the Canadian landscape I had seen in a very long time."

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Image Credits: [1, 9] Doris McCarthy, *Iceberg Fantasy No. 9*, 1973, acrylic on canvas, 61 x 76.2 cm. Private collection. [2] Doris McCarthy, 1989. Photograph by Patti Gower. Collection of the Toronto Public Library, Toronto Star Archives. Courtesy of Getty Images. [3] Torstar Syndicate / Getty Images, 2024. [3] Doris McCarthy, *Two Boats at Barachois*, 1934, oil on board, 29.2 x 34.3 cm. Private collection. Courtesy of Cowley Abbott Fine Art, Toronto. [4] Doris McCarthy, *The Drawing Class*, 1946, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 86.4 cm. Private collection. [6] Doris McCarthy, *Post Romano, Fool's Paradise*, 1948, oil on board, 50.8 x 61 cm. Private collection. [6] Doris McCarthy, *Mevagissey, Cornwall*, 1950, watercolour on paper, 38.1 x 55.9 cm. Collection of the Doris McCarthy Gallery, University of Toronto Scarborough. Gift of the Estate of Doris McCarthy, 2012 (2013.02.20). Courtesy of the Doris McCarthy Gallery. [7] Doris McCarthy, *St. Aidan Banner*, c.1957, materials unknown, 274.3 x 91.4 cm. Collection of the Church of St. Aidan, Toronto. Courtesy of the Church of St. Aidan. Photo credit: Tom Hafkenscheid. [8] Doris McCarthy, *Rhythms of Georgian Bay*, 1966, oil on board, 61 x 76.2 cm. Collection of the Doris McCarthy Gallery, University of Toronto Scarborough. Gift of the Estate of Doris McCarthy, 2012 (2013.02.024). Courtesy of the Doris McCarthy Gallery. [10] Doris McCarthy, *Antarctica from Above*, 1991, oil on canvas, 106.7 x 152.4 cm. Private collection. Courtesy of Hefel Fine Art Auction House. Photo credit: Hefel Fine Art Auction House. [11] Cover of *A Fool in Paradise: An Artist's Early Life*, by Doris McCarthy (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross: 1990). [12] Cover of *The Good Wine: An Artist Comes of Age*, by Doris McCarthy (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross: 1991).