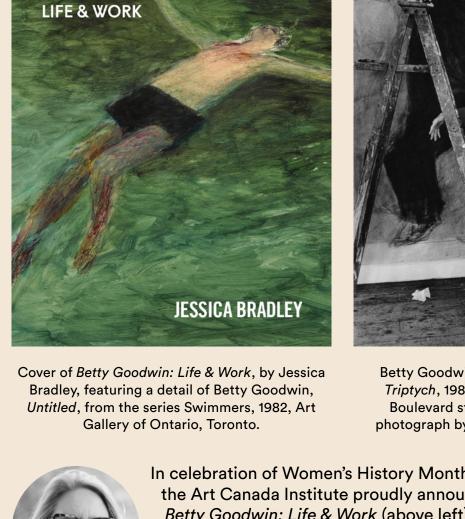
## **OCTOBER 18, 2024**

## THE LIFE & WORK OF BETTY GOODWIN The Art Canada Institute's newest online art book by

CHRONICLE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

Jessica Bradley traces the renowned artist's six-decadelong exploration of human existence. **Betty Goodwin** 







Order of Canada—about how she forged her prolific career: Jessica Bradley "The strange part is I never said, I'm going to become an artist. I just kept going and persevered." Goodwin's tenacity is fundamental to the story of how, after enduring great hardship while growing up in Montreal, she spent decades searching for her own artistic voice as a painter before garnering international acclaim in mid-life for her iconic prints of vests. Evoking the loss

of her father, a vest maker, when she was nine years old, Goodwin's haunting images of items of clothing marked the beginning of an innovative practice that would span the next four decades and deeply engage with themes of mourning, suffering and injustice, and the fragility of life. In the excerpts below, drawn from Betty Goodwin: Life & Work, Bradley thoughtfully traces the trajectory of Goodwin's remarkable career. Sara Angel Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

WAITING

Betty Goodwin, Waiting, 1950, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Goodwin's artistic development in the 1940s and 1950s was nurtured within a community of Jewish artists in Montreal whose strong sense of social justice was fuelled by postwar displacement and poverty. Her work Waiting, 1950, which depicts forlorn figures resting on a bench, reflects the influence of the Jewish Painters of Montreal, including Ghitta Caiserman (1923–2005), Alfred Pinsky (1921–1999), Moe Reinblatt (1917–1979), and Rita Briansky (b.1925), progressive advocates for change. The group members, known for their realist style, admired the depictions of urban life by American artist Ben Shahn (1898–1969) as well as the works of German artist Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945), which reflect on the human costs of the First World War and themes of social justice. Learn more **FALLING FIGURE** 

Betty Goodwin, Falling Figure, 1965, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. By the mid-1960s, Goodwin had drifted away from the group of Montreal artists who had initially influenced her. She was making colourful paintings like Falling Figure, 1965, depicting simplified floating figures, devoid of backgrounds. Goodwin reduced the body to its basic contours in these images that were early indications of the direction she would eventually take in more intensely evocative forms. However, Goodwin was relentlessly self-critical and remained unsatisfied

with her early work, much of which she is known to have destroyed.

Learn more

**VEST ONE** 



Betty Goodwin, *Tarpaulin No. 3*, 1975, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

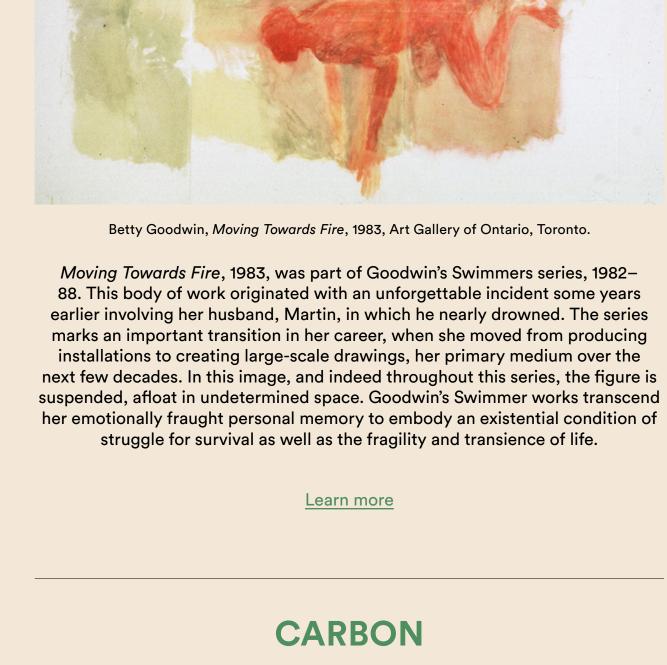
By the mid-1970s, Goodwin was ready to move on from printmaking. Her next major artistic foray came with her transformation of canvas—large sheets of strong, water-resistant or waterproof material—into innovative works like Tarpaulin No. 3, 1975. For several years, during walks around her Plateau Mont-Royal neighbourhood, Goodwin had taken photographs of the tarpaulins on transport trucks. She eventually acquired several when she visited the depot where they were being repaired. Captivated by their worn appearance, Goodwin reworked their surfaces, highlighting holes, tears, repairs, and stains with pencil, charcoal, and oil stick.

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Betty Goodwin, In Berlin: A Triptych, The Beginning of the Fourth Part, 1982-83, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. During the 1970s, Goodwin ventured beyond the familiarity and comfort of her studio and began producing site-specific installations—the preferred approach to artmaking for many artists during this time. In Berlin: A Triptych, The Beginning of the Fourth Part, 1982–83, Goodwin's largest and most imposing



Galerie René Blouin, Montreal, 1986, photographer unknown. In 1986, Goodwin joined the Montreal gallery opened by René Blouin. At its inaugural exhibition, she presented Carbon, 1986, a large suite of charred black figure drawings that occupied an entire gallery wall. This piece is Goodwin's most ambitious example of the dark, opaque rendering of the body

that supplanted the transparency of the swimmer works and announced her increasing focus on the existence of intractable inhumanity she observed in the world. The annihilation of the body, of human lives, is pervasive in this work in which life-sized bodies appear appallingly charred or incinerated and are interspersed with more fragile, spectral figures.

Learn more

WITHOUT CEASE THE EARTH

**FAINTLY TREMBLES** 



Follow us on social media Facebook artcaninstitute/ Instagram @artcaninstitute X (Formerly Twitter) @artcaninstitute Image Credits: [1] Cover of Betty Goodwin: Life & Work, by Jessica Bradley (Toronto: Art Canada Institute, 2024), featuring a detail of Betty Goodwin, *Untitled*, from the series Swimmers, 1982, oil, oil pastel, graphite on paper, 76.9 x 108.3 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of Martin and Betty Goodwin in memory of Clare Roodish and Paul Goodwin, with the support of the Volunteer Committee in celebration of its 50th Anniversary, 1996 (96/285). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Betty Goodwin Estate. Photo credit: AGO. [2] Betty Goodwin posing with her work Triptych, 1986, at her Saint-Laurent Boulevard studio, Montreal, 1986. Photograph by Charlotte Rosshandler. Betty Goodwin Fonds, Edward P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art

Betty Goodwin, Untitled (Nerves, No. 1), 1993, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. By the 1990s, Goodwin frequently incorporated enlarged photographs printed on Mylar as a preliminary ground for her drawings, as in *Untitled (Nerves*, No. 1), 1993. This work originated in snapshots of a dense mass of roots taken by Goodwin in 1992 during a holiday in the Dominican Republic. A cropped version of that photograph provides the preliminary trace from which she extrapolated several similar works in her Nerves series, 1993–95. In these, the dense root system is transformed by Goodwin into an analogy for the body's subcutaneous network of nerve tissues, a symbol of its life energy. In *Untitled (Nerves, No. 1)*, Learn more Jessica Bradley began her career as a liaison officer at the Canada Council Art Bank and went on to become associate curator of contemporary art at the National Gallery of Canada (1979–87) and curator of contemporary art at the Art Gallery of Ontario (1995–2004). She has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in contemporary Canadian art history and critical theory at the University of Ottawa and Concordia University, Montreal, and has organized THANK YOU TO OUR BENEFACTORS The Art Canada Institute gratefully acknowledges the generous support of this book's sponsors. **Presenting Sponsor:** OF CANADA **Lead Sponsor:** The Alan and Patricia Koval Foundation Title Sponsors: Michelle Koerner

free-standing sculptural installation, was created for the landmark exhibition O Kanada at Berlin's Akademie der Künste in 1982. The work, which consists of a series of raised corridors and open bridge-like structures accompanied by a large megaphone form, explores the theme of passage—by now a recurring one in her work. It comprises a virtual walkway, a series of possible paths that together imply communication as well as its breakdown. Learn more **MOVING TOWARDS FIRE** 

Betty Goodwin, Carbon, 1986, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Installation view of Carbon at

Betty Goodwin, Without Cease the Earth Faintly Trembles, 1988, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Goodwin's later works, including Without Cease the Earth Faintly Trembles, 1988, grew more solemn as she became increasingly preoccupied with troubling worldwide events she encountered in the nightly news: the famine in Ethiopia and the genocide of the Kurds in Iraq. She began to find ways to incorporate found objects, such as pieces of rough scrap metal, where the harsh solidity of steel served to emphasize her characteristically tentative repetition of lines, an accumulation of gestures from which a sense of the body's vulnerability emerges. A thin steel rod is suspended at the centre of Without Cease the Earth Faintly Trembles, typical of Goodwin's attempts to address themes of torture and confinement by giving irrefutable form to brutality.

Learn more

Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of the Estate of Betty Goodwin, 2012 (Series 6, Box 20). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Charlotte Rosshandler. Photo credit: AGO. [3] Betty Goodwin, Waiting, 1950, oil paint over black chalk, 60.1 x 101.7 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of Betty and Martin Goodwin, 1999 (99/677). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Betty Goodwin Estate. Photo credit: AGO. [4] Betty Goodwin, Falling Figure, 1965, oil on canvas, 102.1 x 117.2 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of Betty and Martin Goodwin, 1999 (99/704). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Betty Goodwin Estate. Photo credit: AGO. [5] Betty Goodwin, Vest One, August 1969, soft-ground etching, etching,

drypoint, and roulette with oil pastel and graphite on wove paper, 70.7 x 56 cm (overall), 60 x 45.9 cm (plate). Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Gift of Betty and Martin Goodwin, Montreal, 1999 (40300). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. © Betty Goodwin Estate. Photo credit: NGC. [6] Betty Goodwin, Tarpaulin No. 3, 1975, gesso, pastel, chalk, and charcoal on canvas with metal grommets and rope, 231 x 293.5 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1976 (18532). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. © Betty Goodwin Estate. Photo credit: NGC. [7] Betty Goodwin, In Berlin: A Triptych, The Beginning of the Fourth Part, 1982-83, oil, oil pastel, charcoal, crayon, white and coloured chalk, graphite, watercolour; frameworks: pine, steel, tin plate, plywood, paint, variable dimensions. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Purchase, Saidye and Samuel Bronfman Collection of Canadian Art and Canada Council Grant (1983.18f h). Courtesy of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. © Betty Goodwin Estate. Photo credit: MMFA. [8] Betty Goodwin, Moving Towards Fire, 1983, oil stick, coloured chalks, and graphite on three sheets of thin wove paper, 291 x 108 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchase, 1985 (85/296). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Betty Goodwin Estate. Photo Credit: AGO. [9] Betty Goodwin, Carbon, 1986, charcoal powder, wax, oil pastel, pastel, graphite, oil, and gesso on dimpled galvanized aluminum, 275 x 975.6 cm. Installation view of Carbon at Galerie René Blouin, Montreal, 1986. Photographer unknown. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Purchase, Horsley and Annie Townsend Bequest (1987.13a-h). Courtesy of the Betty Goodwin Estate. © Betty Goodwin Estate. Photo credit: Atelier Photosynthèse, Montreal. [10] Betty Goodwin, Without Cease the Earth Faintly Trembles, 1988, mixed media on Transparga film and sectioned steel bar, 193 x 113 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of Alison and Alan Schwartz, 1997 (97/1589). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Betty Goodwin Estate. Photo credit: AGO. [11] Betty Goodwin, Untitled (Nerves, No. 1), 1993, oil, pastel, tar, and wax over Cronaflex print on Mylar, 196.3 x 134.5 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of Alison and Alan Schwartz, 1997 (97/1590). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Betty Goodwin Estate. Photo credit: AGO.

About the Author of Betty Goodwin: Life and Work Betty Goodwin's work in the mid-1970s, I was taken with the way she could range was inventive and without limits, and her determination formidable." The Jack Weinbaum Family Foundation Susan Wortzman The ACI is a not-for-profit educational charity that receives no government financing or public support. Our work is made possible by an important circle of friends, patrons, and benefactors. If you would like to support our important work, please see this page.

the figure appears to both sink into the earth and be nurtured by it in an exchange. several exhibitions as an independent curator. Bradley notes, "When I first saw handle the most delicate effects with astonishingly forceful results. Her material

IN BERLIN: A TRIPTYCH, THE BEGINNING OF THE FOURTH PART