

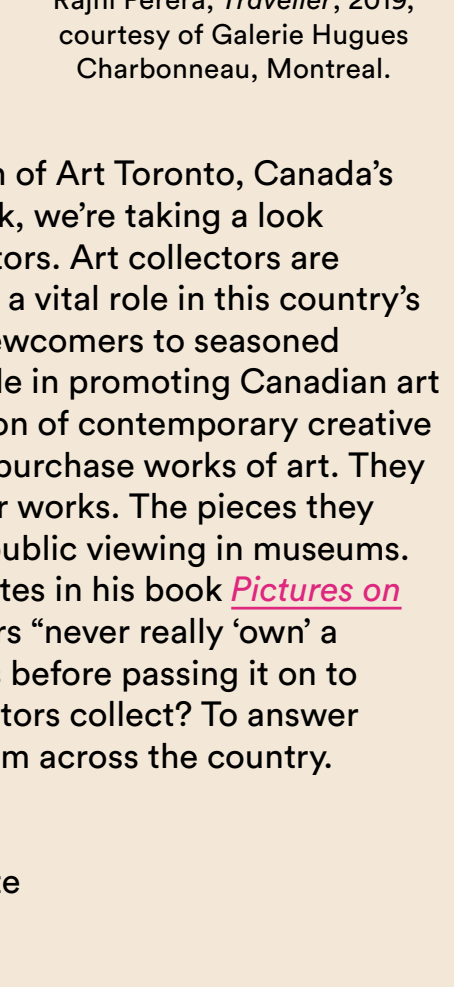
OCTOBER 25, 2024

THE ART OF COLLECTING INSIGHTS FROM NINE CANADIAN COLLECTORS

Who collects what—and why?



Florence-Agathe Dubé-Moreau (left) and Laurent Duvernay-Tardif (right), n.d., photograph by Justine Latour.



Rajni Perera, *Traveller*, 2019, courtesy of Galerie Hugues Charbonneau, Montreal.

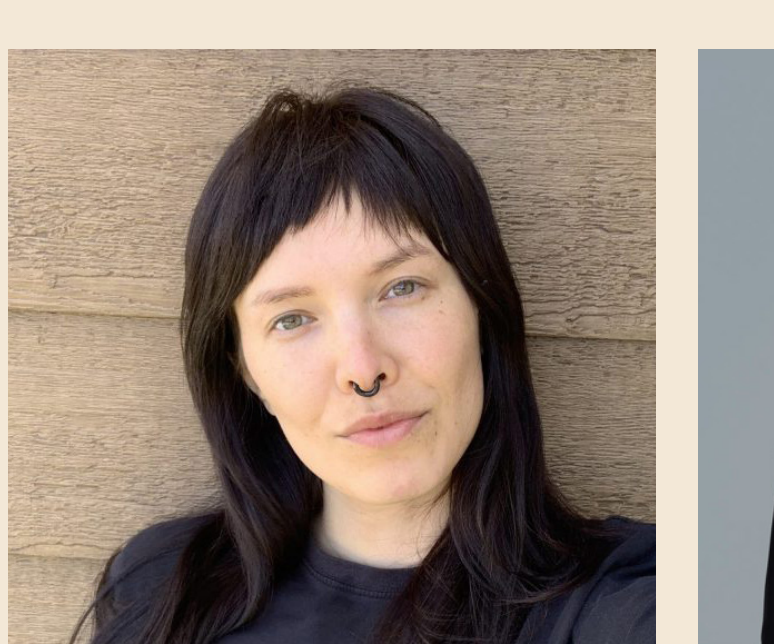


With the twenty-fifth presentation of Art Toronto, Canada's largest art fair, opening this week, we're taking a look at nine of the nation's art collectors. Art collectors are passionate individuals who play a vital role in this country's art ecosystem. From aspiring newcomers to seasoned enthusiasts, each plays a vital role in promoting Canadian art and fostering a deeper appreciation of contemporary creative practices. They do much more than purchase works of art. They promote artists while preserving and caring for their works. The pieces they amass over time often provide the foundations for public viewing in museums. As Vancouver-based aficionado Michael Audain writes in his book *Pictures on a Wall: Building a Canadian Art Collection*, collectors "never really 'own' a work of art; we are merely its temporary custodians before passing it on to future generations." So, why do Canadian art collectors collect? To answer this question, here is a selection of connoisseurs from across the country.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

MICHAEL AUDAIN

Vancouver, British Columbia



Michael Audain pictured in front of Takao Tanabe's 2004 painting *Inside Passage 1/04: Malacca Strait*, 2012, photograph by Mark Reynolds.



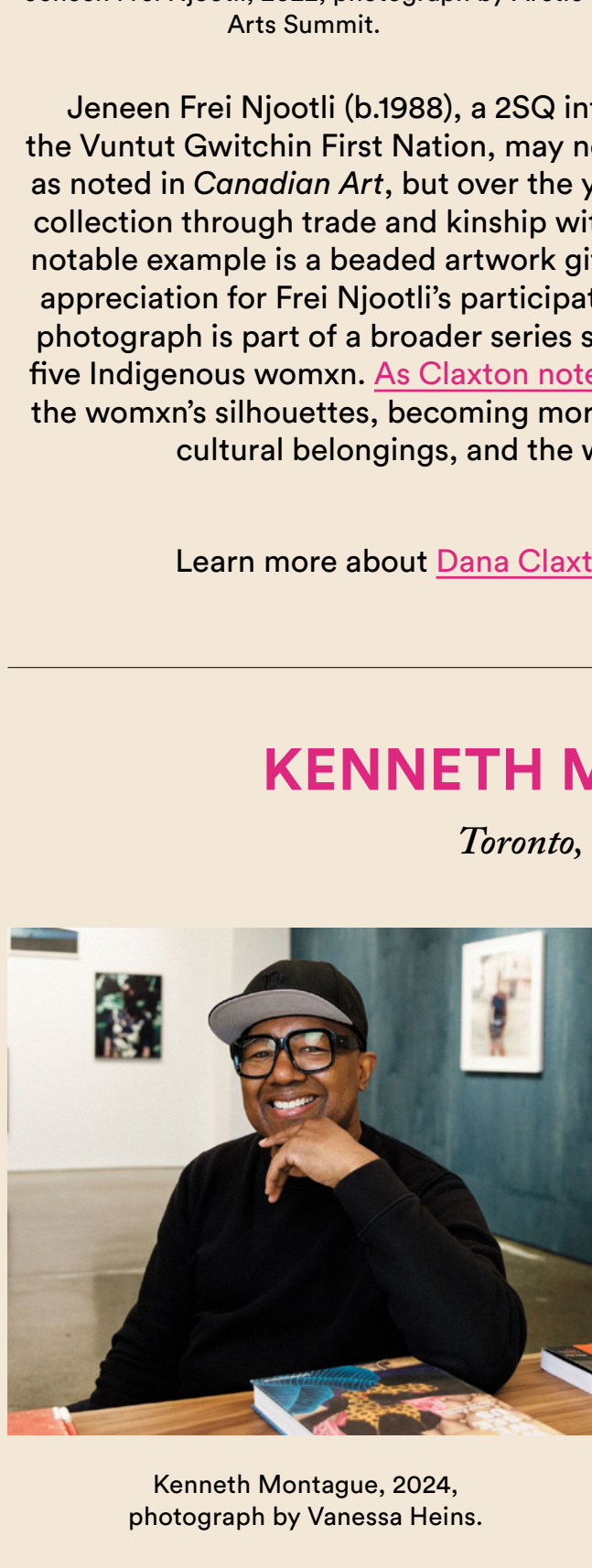
Emily Carr, *Survival*, 1940, Audain Art Museum, Whistler.

Born in the United Kingdom and raised in British Columbia, Michael Audain (above left) is one of Canada's leading home builders, philanthropists, and art collectors. His impressive private art collection forms the core of the Audain Art Museum's holdings through his family's donations. In his book *Pictures on a Wall*, Audain shares that his appreciation for art began in childhood during visits to the British Columbia Provincial Museum (now the Royal British Columbia Museum). There, he developed a love for the "art of the original people of the Northwest Coast (although it wasn't considered true art then)." For Audain, "the process of collecting becomes a passion in itself." In 2023, *Survival*, 1940 (above right), by Emily Carr (1871–1945) became one of the Audain Art Museum's newest acquisitions, funded by Audain and his wife, Yoshiko Karasawa. Audain, an esteemed collector of Carr, describes her as a "world-class artist" whose work evokes "a dynamic union between land, sea and sky." *Survival*, depicting a single tree in a cleared forest, was exhibited at the 1952 Venice Biennale, marking Canada's debut at the event. Now on permanent display, it offers the public a rare chance to view it after more than sixty years in private hands.

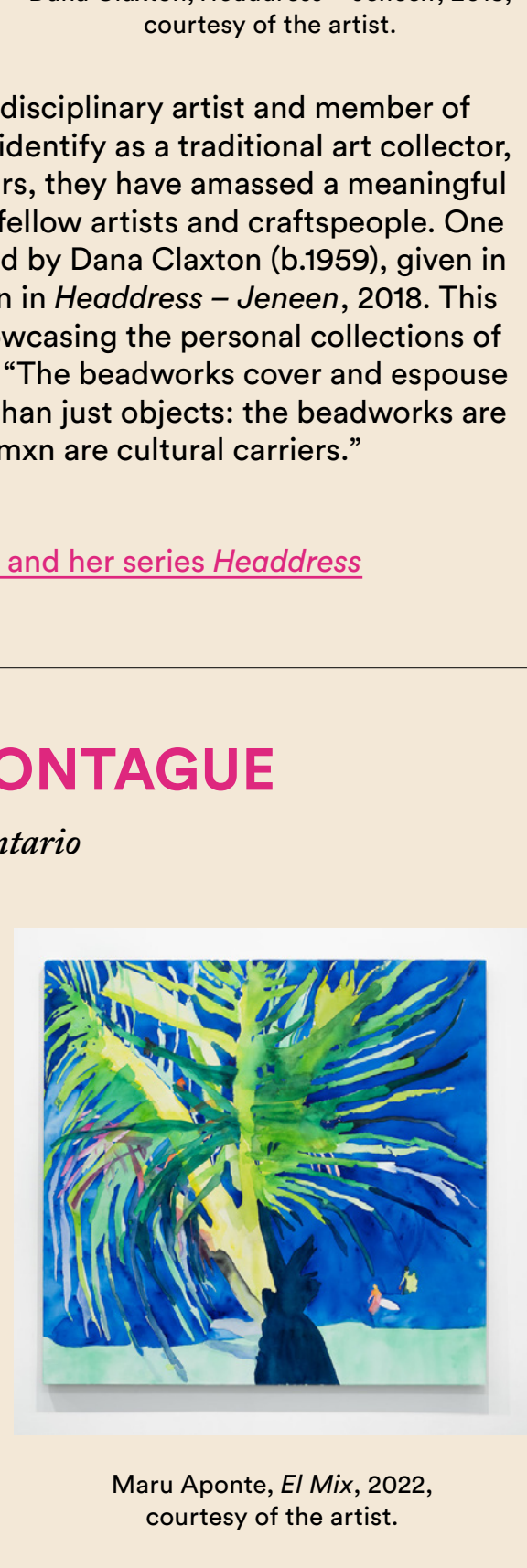
Read more in ACI's [Emily Carr: Life & Work](#) by Lisa Baldissera

JENEEN FREI NJOOTLI

Old Crow, Yukon



Jeneen Frei Njootli, 2022, photograph by Arctic Arts Summit.



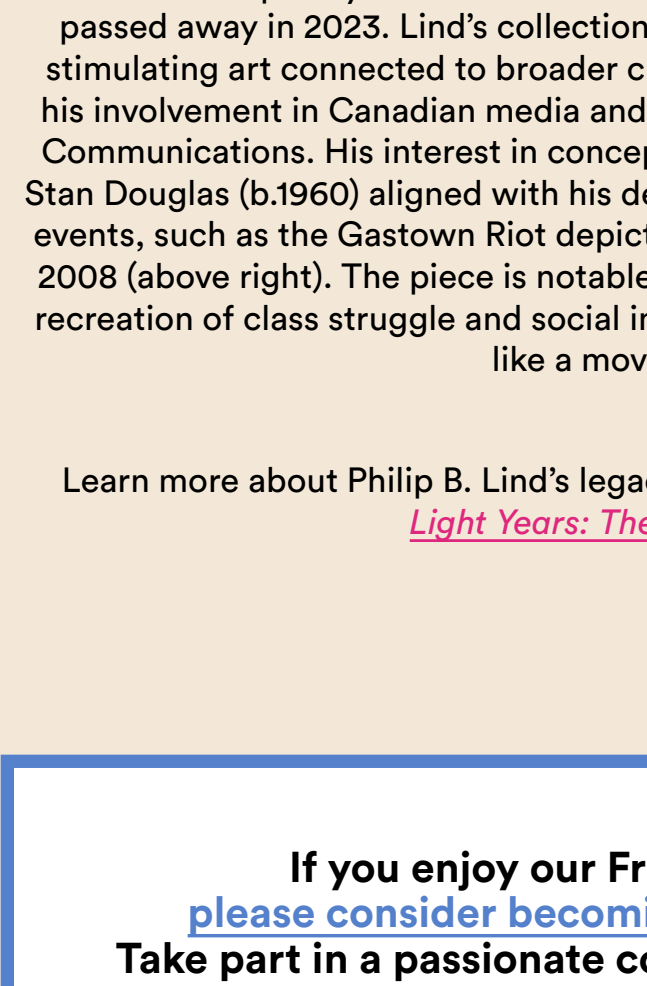
Dana Claxton, *Headdress - Jeneen*, 2018, courtesy of the artist.

Jeneen Frei Njootli (b.1988), a 2SQ interdisciplinary artist and member of the Juntut Gewitchin First Nation, may not identify as a traditional art collector, as noted in *Canadian Art*, but over the years, they have amassed a meaningful collection through trade and kinship with fellow artists and craftspeople. One notable example is a beaded artwork gifted by Dana Claxton (b.1959), given in appreciation for Frei Njootli's participation in *Headdress - Jeneen*, 2018. This photograph is part of a broader series showcasing the personal collections of five Indigenous women. [As Claxton notes](#): "The beaded works cover and expose the womxn's silhouettes, becoming more than just objects; the beaded works are cultural belongings, and the womxn are cultural carriers."

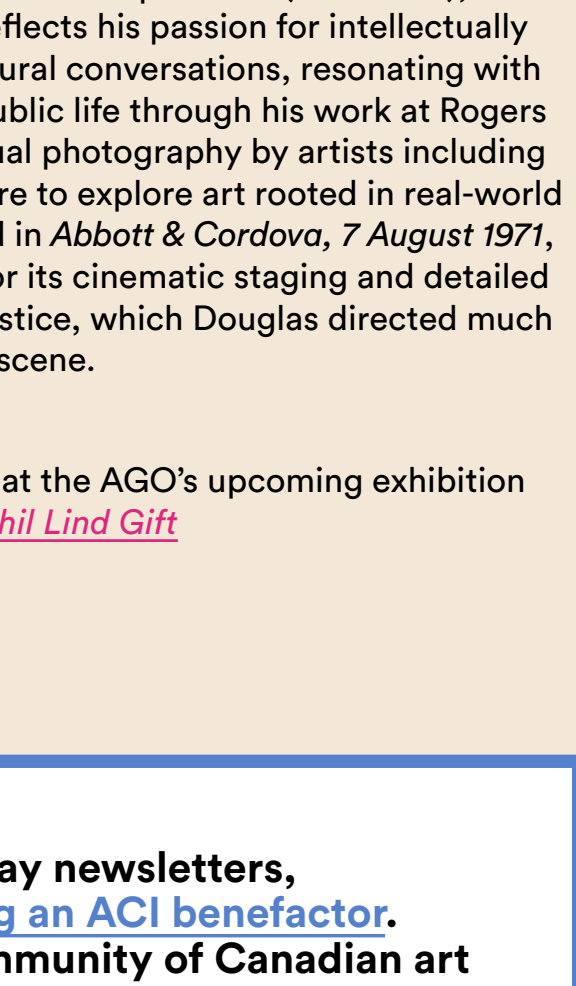
Learn more about [Dana Claxton and her series Headdress](#)

KENNETH MONTAGUE

Toronto, Ontario



Kenneth Montague, 2024, photograph by Vanessa Heins.



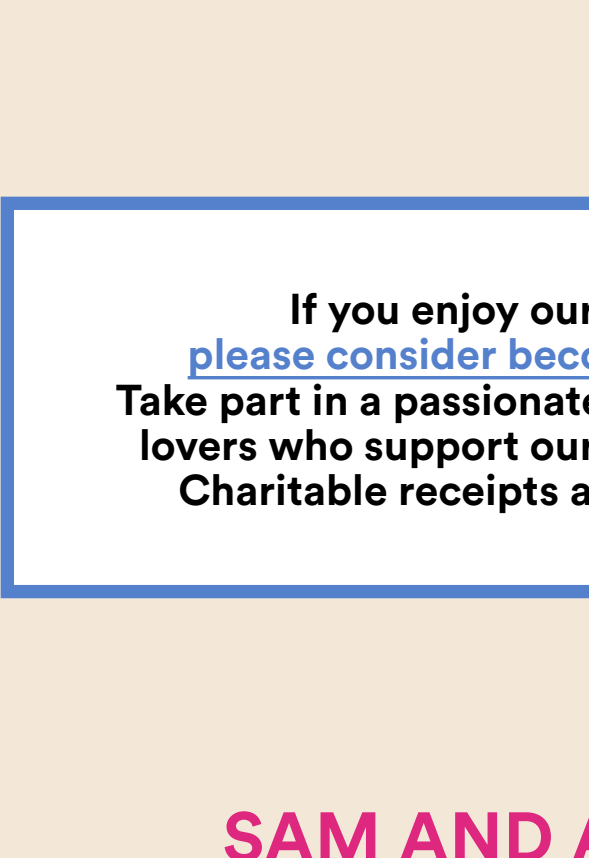
Maru Aponte, *El Mix*, 2022, courtesy of the artist.

A dentist by profession, Dr. Kenneth Montague (above left) is also a remarkable art collector and founding director of the non-profit Wedge Curatorial Projects. He credits his Jamaican immigrant parents for instilling in him a genuine appreciation for visual culture and the importance of supporting Black pride within his community and beyond. Established in 1997 in a wedge-shaped hallway inside his home, Montague's collection now spans over four hundred works and is one of Canada's largest privately owned collections focused on Black identity and emerging diasporic artists. One such artist is Maru Aponte (b.1996), whose Puerto Rican heritage shines through in paintings like *El Mix*, 2022 (above right), where contemporary watercolour techniques convey reflective memories of home.

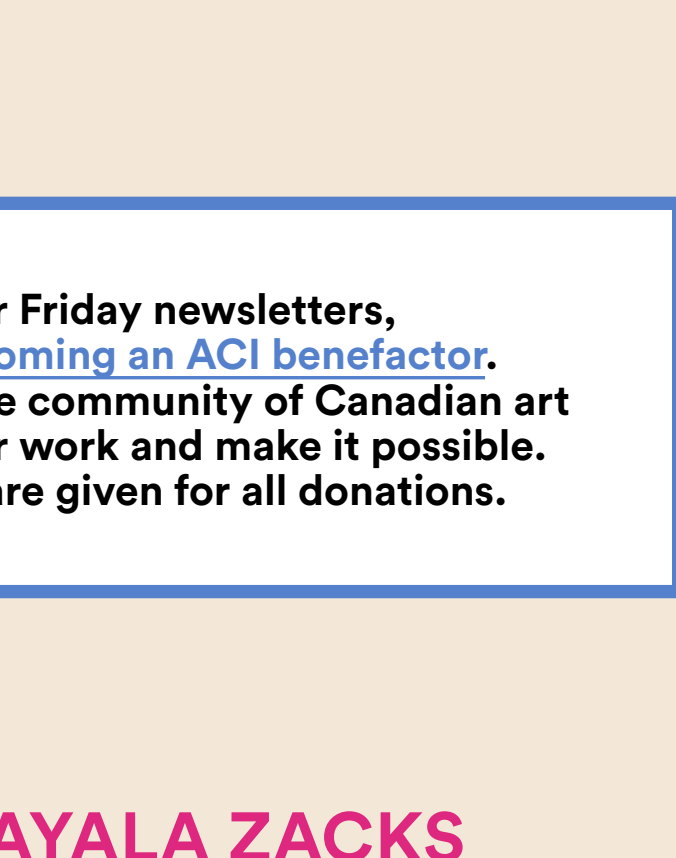
Learn more about [Maru Aponte](#)

PHILIP B. LIND

Toronto, Ontario & Vancouver, British Columbia



Philip B. Lind, n.d., courtesy of Rogers Communications.



Stan Douglas, *Abbott & Cordova, 7 August 1971*, 2008, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

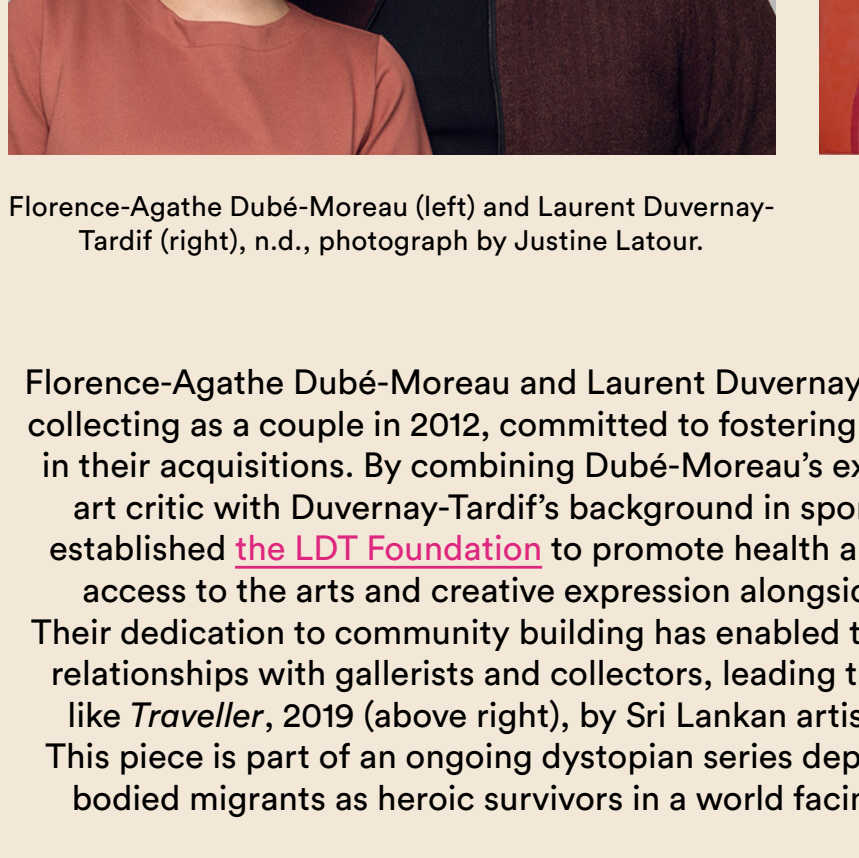
Earlier this year, the Art Gallery of Ontario announced a notable gift of thirty-seven contemporary works from the estate of Philip B. Lind (above left), who passed away in 2023. Lind's collection reflects his passion for intellectually stimulating art connected to broader cultural conversations, resonating with his involvement in Canadian media and public life through his work at Rogers Communications. His interest in conceptual photography by artists including Stan Douglas (b.1960) aligned with his desire to explore art rooted in real-world events, such as the Gastown Riot depicted in *Abbott & Cordova, 7 August 1971*, 2008 (above right). The piece is notable for its cinematic staging and detailed recreation of class struggle and social injustice, which Douglas directed much like a movie scene.

Learn more about [Philip B. Lind's legacy at the AGO's upcoming exhibition Light Years: The Phil Lind Gift](#)

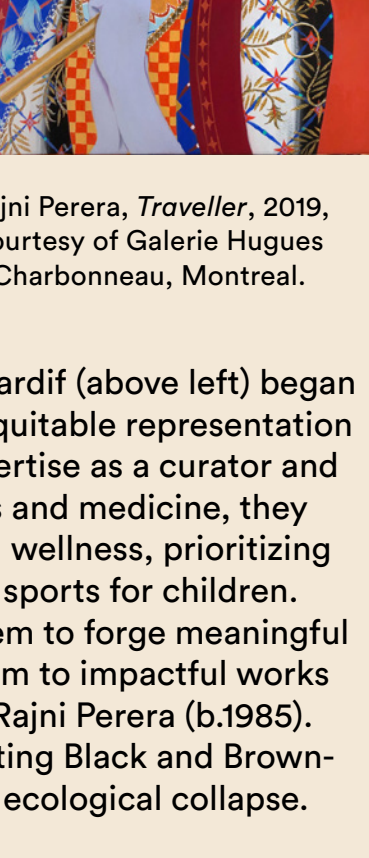
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SAM AND AYALA ZACKS

Toronto, Ontario



Ayala (left) and Sam Zacks (centre) pictured with Dr. Harry Thode (right), c.1967, photographer unknown.



Paul-Émile Borduas, *Abstract in Blue*, 1959, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. © Estate of Paul-Émile Borduas / CARCC Ottawa 2024. Photo credit: AGO.

In 1971, following the death of her husband Sam Zacks (above left), Ayala Zacks (above left) gained national recognition for donating their family collection of over three hundred works of European and Canadian modern art to the Art Gallery of Ontario, a contribution that transformed the institution. Among the many works they donated over the years is *Abstract in Blue (Abstraction en bleue)*, 1959 (above right), by Paul-Émile Borduas (1905–1960), which debuted at the artist's first solo exhibition in 1959 at Galerie Saint-Germain in Paris, where it also appeared on the exhibition's invitation cover.

Read more in ACI's [Paul-Émile Borduas: Life & Work](#) by François-Marc Gagnon

FLORENCE-AGATHE DUBÉ-MOREAU AND LAURENT DUVERNAY-TARDIF

Montreal, Quebec



Florence-Agathe Dubé-Moreau (left) and Laurent Duvernay-Tardif (right), n.d., photograph by Justine Latour.



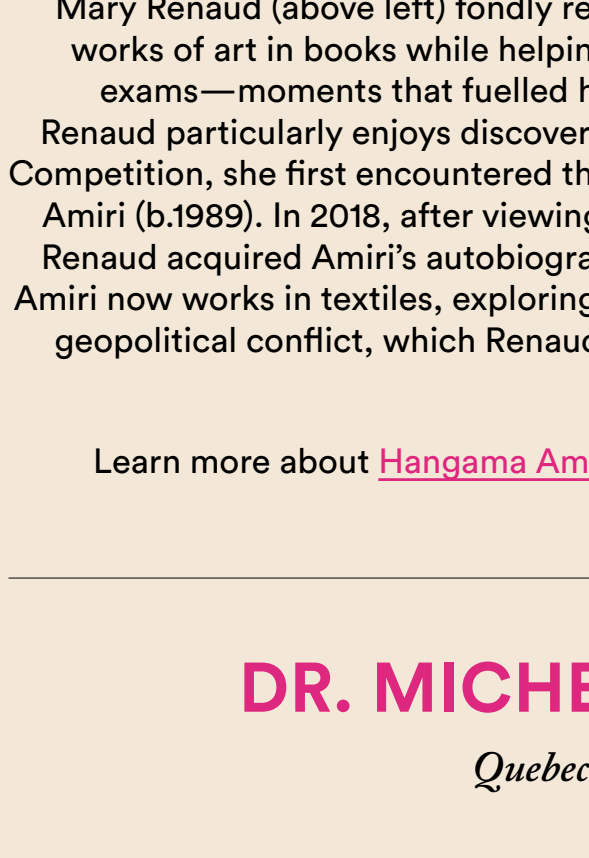
Rajni Perera, *Traveller*, 2019, courtesy of Galerie Hugues Charbonneau, Montreal.

Florence-Agathe Dubé-Moreau and Laurent Duvernay-Tardif (above left) began collecting as a couple in 2012, committed to fostering equitable representation in their acquisitions. By combining Dubé-Moreau's expertise as a curator and art critic with Duvernay-Tardif's background in sports and medicine, they established [the LDT Foundation](#) to promote health and wellness, prioritizing access to the arts and creative expression alongside sports for children. Their dedication to community building has enabled them to forge meaningful relationships with galleries and collectors, leading them to impactful works like *Traveller*, 2019 (above right), by Sri Lankan artist Rajni Perera (b.1985). This piece is part of an ongoing dystopian series depicting Black and Brown-bodied migrants as heroic survivors in a world facing ecological collapse.

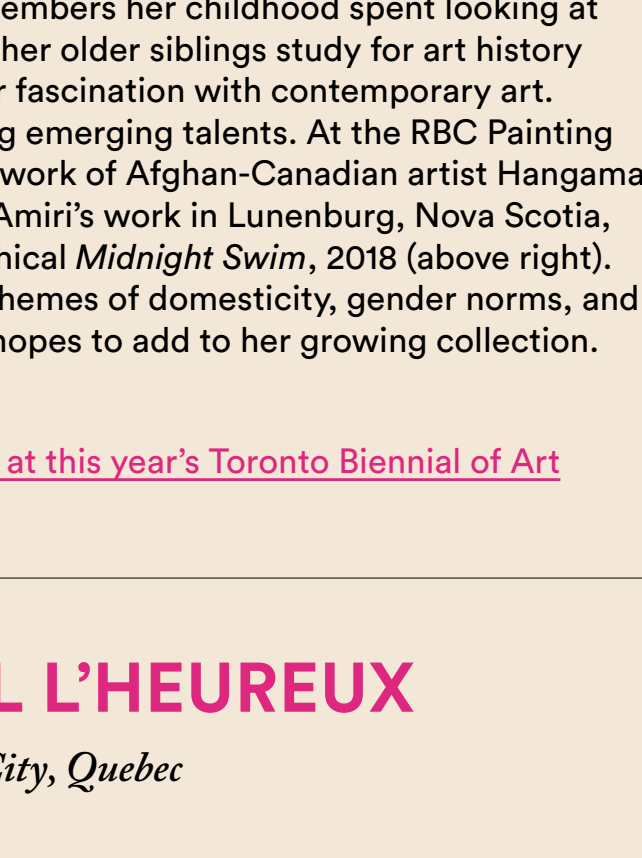
Learn more about [Rajni Perera at this year's Toronto Biennial of Art](#)

DAVID MIRVISH

Toronto, Ontario



David Mirvish in his office, 2016, photograph by Richard Lauteis.



Installation view of Arnaud Maggs, *64 Portrait Studies*, 1976–78, David Mirvish Gallery, Toronto, 1978, photographer unknown.

For over sixty years, David Mirvish (above left) has been passionate about collecting art. At eighteen, he opened his gallery in a storefront rented from his father, just west of the iconic Honest Ed's shopping emporium. The David Mirvish Gallery became a leading force in promoting abstract expressionism, showcasing works by Canadian and international artists like Jack Bush (1909–1977), Helen Frankenthaler (1928–2011), and Frank Stella (1936–2024). Before closing in the late 1970s, the gallery presented *64 Portrait Studies*, 1976–78 (above right), by Arnaud Maggs (1926–2012) in 1978. Not only did this piece mark the beginning of Maggs's multiple-image portrait explorations, its composition was defined by the length of a 28-foot wall in the Mirvish Gallery. [Maggs wrote in his notebook](#), "I decided to use the one wall only, and that is how the number of pictures, 64, was determined."

Read more in ACI's [Arnaud Maggs: Life & Work](#) by Anne Cibola

MARY RENAUD

Vancouver, British Columbia



Mary Renaud, courtesy of Art Toronto.



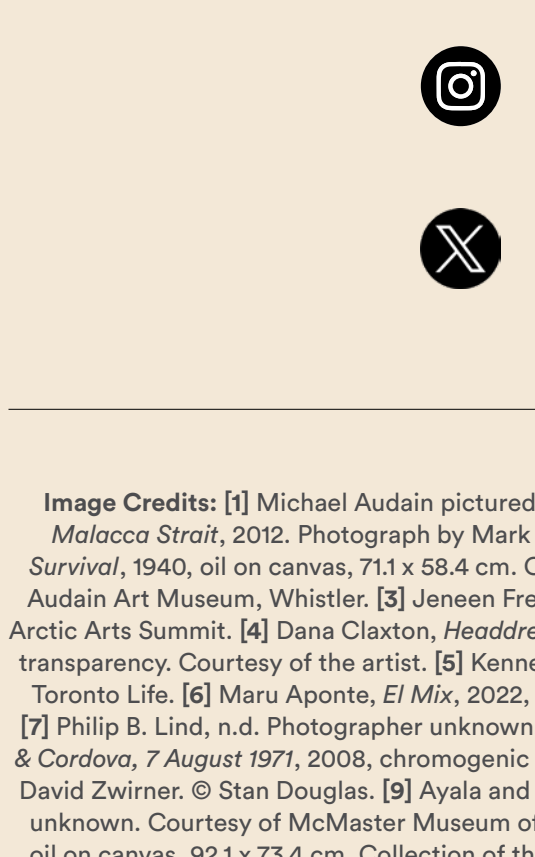
Hangama Amiri, *Midnight Swim*, 2018, courtesy of Mary Renaud.

Mary Renaud (above left) fondly remembers her childhood spent looking at works of art in books while helping her older siblings study for art history exams—moments that fuelled her fascination with contemporary art. Renaud particularly enjoys discovering emerging talents. At the RBC Painting Competition, she first encountered the work of Afghan-Canadian artist Hangama Amiri (b.1989). In 2018, after viewing Amiri's work in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Renaud acquired Amiri's autobiographical *Midnight Swim*, 2018 (above right). Amiri now works in textiles, exploring themes of domesticity, gender norms, and geopolitical conflict, which Renaud hopes to add to her growing collection.

Learn more about [Hangama Amiri at this year's Toronto Biennial of Art](#)

DR. MICHEL L'HEUREUX

Quebec City, Quebec



Dr. Michel L'Heureux pictured in front of Marc Fugère's 2013 sculpture *Sonder l'inconnu*, Quebec City, 2013, photograph by Jean-Marie Villeneuve.



Manuel Mathieu, *Aurore 2*, 2020, courtesy of Galerie Hugues Charbonneau, Montreal.

Dr. Michel L'Heureux (above left) is an accomplished health-care professional with over thirty years of experience in palliative care, asset management, and philanthropy. Inspired by his parents' love of art history, he began collecting at sixteen, initially drawn to historical landscapes and traditional compositions. Nearly a decade ago, L'Heureux developed an appreciation for Canadian abstraction, contemporary Inuit art, and conceptual photography. This transformation led him to artists like Manuel Mathieu (b.1986), whose Haitian upbringing and immigration to Canada reflect themes of historical violence, resilience, and spiritual legacy. After seeing Mathieu's work in Montreal, L'Heureux acquired *Aurore 2*, 2020 (above right), captivated by the duality of the diptych composition.

Learn more about [Manuel Mathieu at this year's Toronto Biennial of Art](#)

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