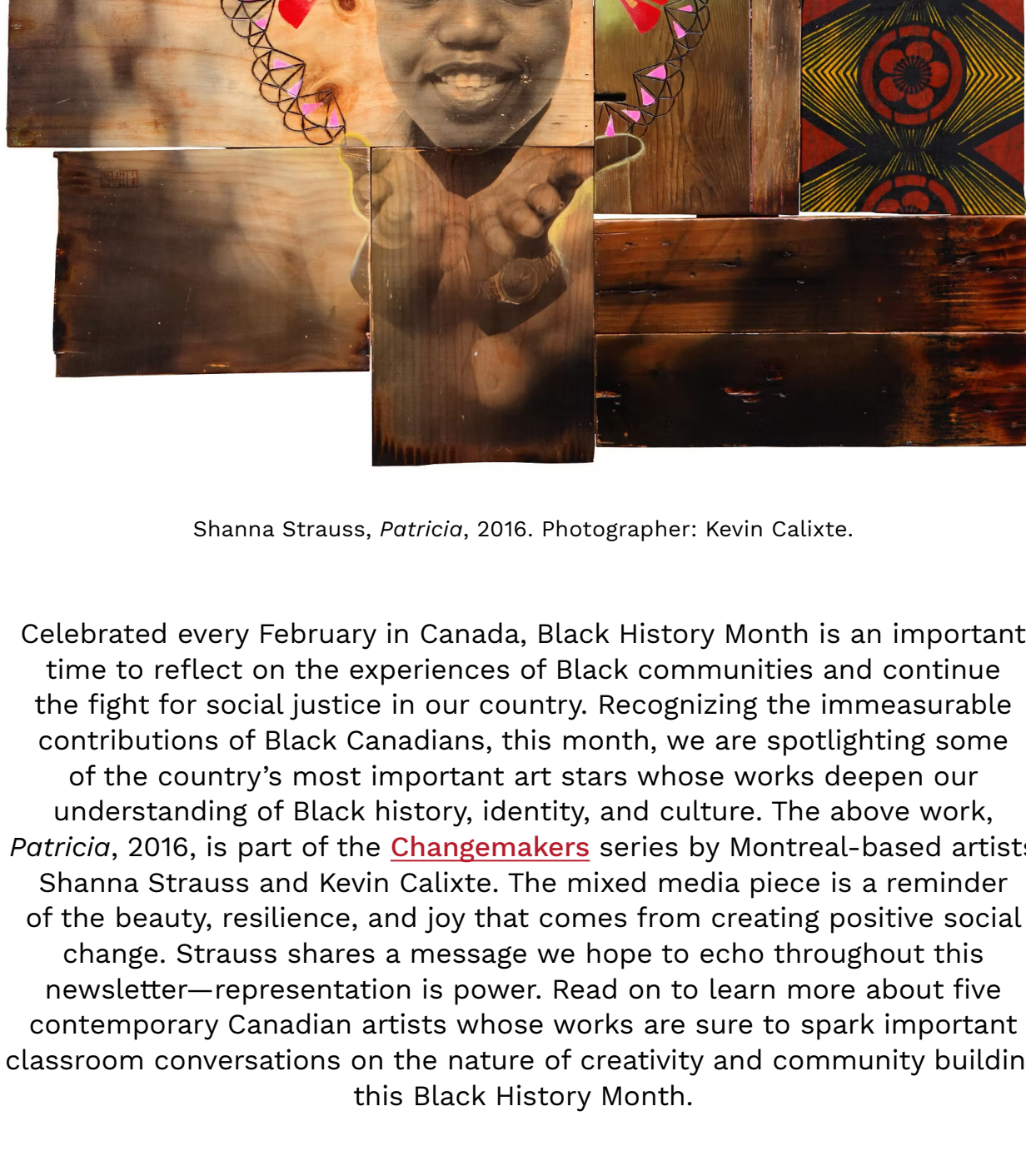


## CELEBRATING CONTEMPORARY BLACK CREATIVITY

## ARTISTIC REFLECTIONS ON SELF AND COMMUNITY

*This Black History Month, we're sharing five contemporary Canadian artists who are creating meaningful work about Black identity and the power of representation.*



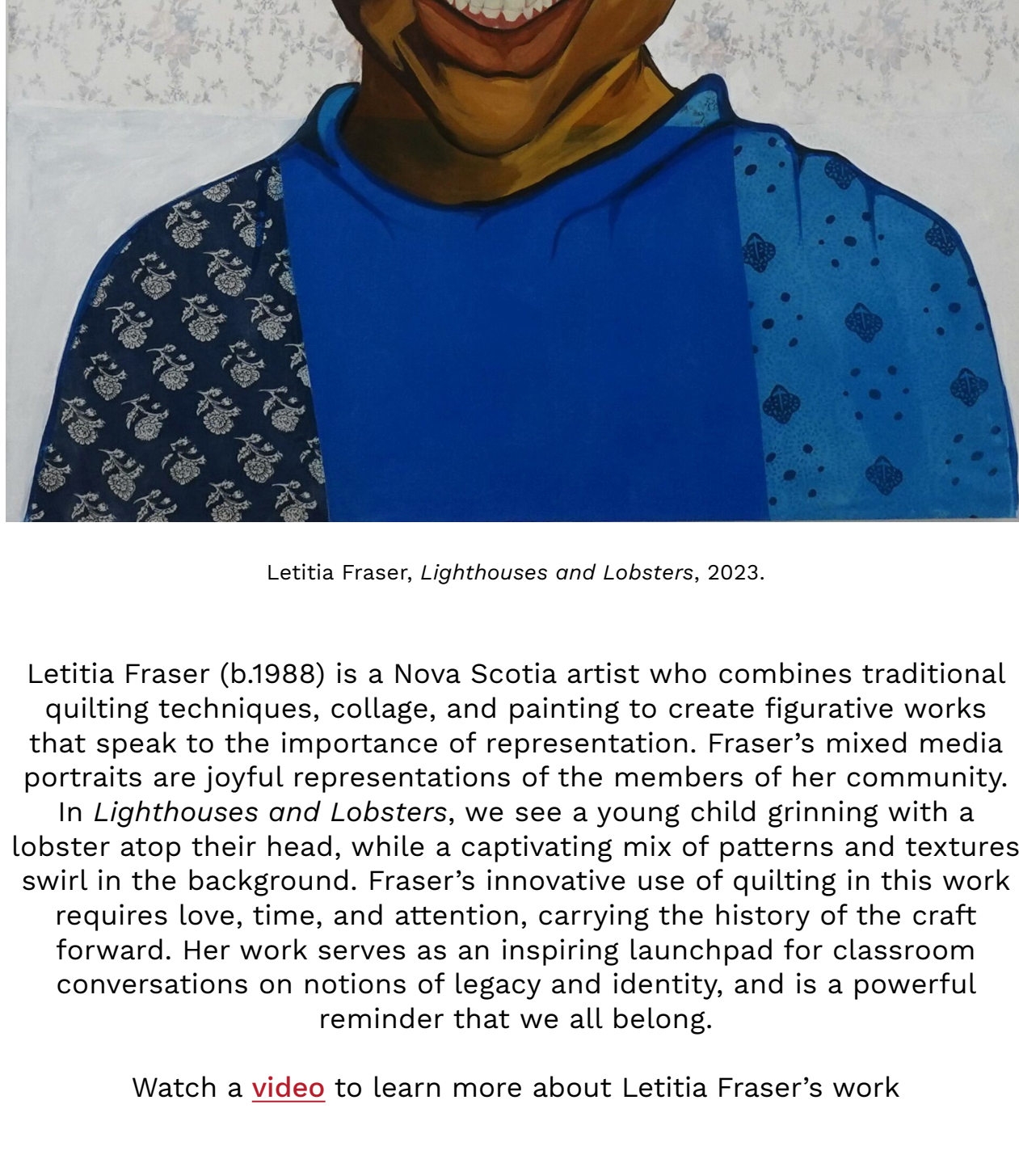
Shanna Strauss, *Patricia*, 2016. Photographer: Kevin Calixte.

Celebrated every February in Canada, Black History Month is an important time to reflect on the experiences of Black communities and continue the fight for social justice in our country. Recognizing the immeasurable contributions of Black Canadians, this month, we are spotlighting some of the country's most important art stars whose works deepen our understanding of Black history, identity, and culture. The above work, *Patricia*, 2016, is part of the [Changemakers](#) series by Montreal-based artists Shanna Strauss and Kevin Calixte. The mixed media piece is a reminder of the beauty, resilience, and joy that comes from creating positive social change. Strauss shares a message we hope to echo throughout this newsletter—representation is power. Read on to learn more about five contemporary Canadian artists whose works are sure to spark important classroom conversations on the nature of creativity and community building this Black History Month.

— The Art Canada Institute Education Team

## AVENUES TO EXPLORE

## Letitia Fraser



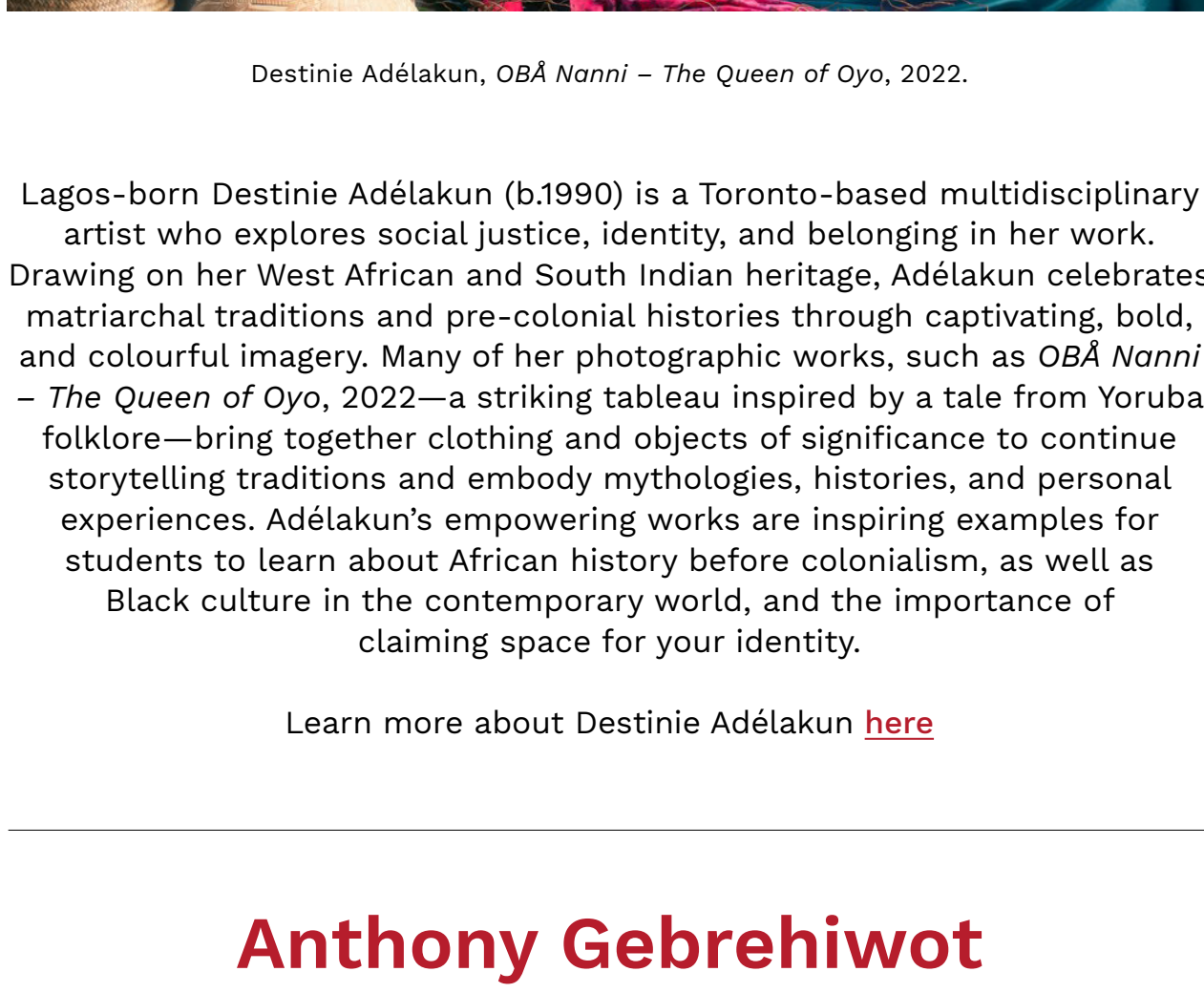
Letitia Fraser, *Lighthouses and Lobsters*, 2023.

Letitia Fraser (b.1988) is a Nova Scotia artist who combines traditional quilting techniques, collage, and painting to create figurative works that speak to the importance of representation. Fraser's mixed media portraits are joyful representations of the members of her community.

In *Lighthouses and Lobsters*, we see a young child grinning with a lobster atop their head, while a captivating mix of patterns and textures swirl in the background. Fraser's innovative use of quilting in this work requires love, time, and attention, carrying the history of the craft forward. Her work serves as an inspiring launchpad for classroom conversations on notions of legacy and identity, and is a powerful reminder that we all belong.

Watch a [video](#) to learn more about Letitia Fraser's work

## Destinie Adélakun



Destinie Adélakun, *OBÀ Nanni – The Queen of Oyo*, 2022.

Lagos-born Destinie Adélakun (b.1990) is a Toronto-based multidisciplinary artist who explores social justice, identity, and belonging in her work. Drawing on her West African and South Indian heritage, Adélakun celebrates matriarchal traditions and pre-colonial histories through captivating, bold, and colourful imagery. Many of her photographic works, such as *OBÀ Nanni – The Queen of Oyo*, 2022—a striking tableau inspired by a tale from Yoruba folklore—bring together clothing and objects of significance to continue storytelling traditions and embody mythologies, histories, and personal experiences. Adélakun's empowering works are inspiring examples for students to learn about African history before colonialism, as well as Black culture in the contemporary world, and the importance of claiming space for your identity.

Learn more about Destinie Adélakun [here](#)

## Anthony Gebrehiwot



Anthony Gebrehiwot, *The Power of a Hug*, 2020.

Scarborough-based artist Anthony Gebrehiwot (b.1989) explores how photography can be used as a tool for social change. By creating empathetic photographs that invite viewers to connect emotionally with his subjects, Gebrehiwot counters stereotypes of Black masculinity, in particular, the dehumanizing portrayals of Black men that are widespread in North American media. His portraits, such as *The Power of a Hug*, 2020, are thoughtful and tender, reflecting his deep commitment to his community.

We offer this image—representing a moment of care—to encourage classroom conversations about vulnerability, healing, and authenticity, while also inspiring students with meaningful examples of what Black masculinity can look like.

Learn more about Anthony Gebrehiwot's work [here](#)

## Curtis Talwst Santiago



Curtis Talwst Santiago, *Quarantine and Basketball*, 2020.

Alberta-born Trinidadian Canadian artist Curtis Talwst Santiago (b.1979) is renowned for his *Infinity* series, a collection of *quarantines and basketball*, 2020, depicts a scene many students can likely relate to—laying idly in the grass with nothing to do. If you look closely, you'll see a mask on the figure and a lurking shadow in the corner, reminders of the COVID-19 global pandemic that has changed our lives immeasurably. By immortalizing a mundane moment through the creation of a diorama, the experience of idleness become monumentalized. We share this work with the hope that it will demonstrate to students that, if something is meaningful, formative, or special to their experiences and identity, then it is worth sharing.

Learn more about Curtis Talwst Santiago's work [here](#)

## SUBMISSIONS NOW OPEN



Looking for more ways to integrate the story of Canadian artists into your classroom? Consider encouraging your students to enter the 2025 edition of ACI's annual student challenge. Students from Grade 7 through Grade 12 are eligible to submit original works of art in any medium. Submissions are open now, and the final deadline to submit is March 21, 2025.

Learn more about how to submit your students' work to the [Canadian Art Inspiration Student Challenge](#).

For project ideas, consult our free-to-download [Student Creativity Booklet](#).

As a bilingual organization, we are proud to offer our materials in both French and English, including this newsletter. Use the sign up links below to receive emails in your preferred language.

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## About the Art Canada Institute

Launched in 2013, the Art Canada Institute is the only national institution whose mandate is to promote the study of an inclusive multi-vocal Canadian art history to as broad an audience as possible, in both English and French, within Canada and internationally. The ACI works with more than fifty of Canada's leading art historians, curators, and visual culture experts who are dedicated to the creation of authoritative original content on the people, themes, and topics that have defined Canadian art history.

We are creating a central digital resource to tell the world about Canada's most important works of art and where they are located. By functioning as an online art museum, a [digital library](#), and an interactive Canadian art encyclopedia, the ACI is an indispensable resource on Canada's visual heritage.

Visit us at [aci-iac.ca](#)

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