

From the Editor - February 14, 2023 Issue

Galleries West

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Each week, I monitor a steady stream of emails about exhibitions across Canada. I sometimes notice patterns – a small gallery that consistently punches above its weight, say, or a major institution with a remarkable run of great shows. That latter brings me to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection.

It's off the beaten path in Kleinburg, a village north of Toronto, and we don't write about it as much as we'd like because penurious reviewers often struggle to get there without convenient public transit. But the McMichael's [touring exhibitions](#) are cutting such wide swaths across the country that I began to muse whether it is almost becoming a national gallery.

The McMichael is headed by executive director Ian DeJardin, a British import, with chief curator Sarah Milroy, a former editor of now-defunct *Canadian Art*, leading a curatorial team with 10 other people, from an intern, a designer and two technicians to an associate curator, a registrar and several people who oversee exhibitions and publications.

Last year, the McMichael's program included shows by several Western Canadian artists, including Winnipeg's Wanda Koop and Vancouver's [Gathie Falk](#). An exhibition by [Sandra Meigs](#), a longtime Victoria artist who moved to Ontario a few years ago, opens in May.

An exhibition by Northwest Coast carver [Dempsey Bob](#), which the McMichael organized with the Audain Art Museum in Whistler, B.C., is now on view in Kleinburg as part of a cross-country tour. Similarly, [Generations](#), a show the McMichael pulled together from the Sobey family collection, is touring five cities from St. John's, NL, to Edmonton.

My thoughts about the McMichael were prompted in part by a review in this issue of *Galleries West* of a fabulous show in Calgary by Toronto painter [Margaux Williamson](#) that also originated at the gallery.

I was reminded that last year, here in Victoria, I had seen the McMichael's marvellous circulating show by the late [Denyse Thomasos](#), a Black painter who grew up in Canada. And when I looked at the McMichael's website, I saw other BIPOC artists [now having shows](#) – Rajni Perera, who was born in Sri Lanka, and Plains Cree artist [Meryl McMaster](#), whose fascinating photographs will tour to Saskatoon and Joliette, Que. As well, a show of Indigenous art from the McMichael's permanent collection is touring to Phoenix, Albuquerque and Norfolk, Virginia, over the next two years.

Topping all that, [Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment](#), which looks at female counterparts to the Group of Seven, will occupy prime Ottawa real estate at the National Gallery of Canada [over the summer](#), the usual time for major blockbusters. It's another job well done by the McMichael's productive team.

Now, turning to this issue of *Galleries West*, our writers look at [Jeff Wall](#)'s first exhibition in Vancouver in 14 years; the [Queer Newfoundland Hockey League \(QNHL\)](#) by Lucas Morneau; [Jagdeep Raina](#)'s work on South Asian diasporic themes; [Annie MacDonell](#)'s exploration of the unifying possibilities of

psychedelics; and [three solo shows](#) by Barbara Steinman, Geoffrey James and Evan Penny.

Meanwhile, in our [news section](#), we have an exclusive story about the [\\$2-million cost of severance](#) at the National Gallery under former director Sasha Suda. Yes, it is vital to address historical inequities facing Indigenous and racialized artists, as the gallery is attempting to do, but the productive handling of public money is also an important concern for Canadians, particularly when times are tough. Under-performing cultural institutions could easily find themselves targets for funding cuts should the electorate swing to the right in the next federal election.

Finally, looking ahead to the next issue of *Galleries West*, we are working on articles about Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson at the Esker Foundation in Calgary; Toronto artist Paul P. at the National Gallery of Canada; and Syrian refugee Aboud Salman, who is rebuilding his art career in Alberta.