

The 10 most notable artworks at Canadian galleries in 2023

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Abdelkader Benchamma, *Déluge*, 2023. Ink on paper. TONI HAFKENSCHIED/HANDOUT

Solastalgia: Archaeologies of Loss by Abdelkader Benchamma at the Power Plant, Toronto

In a spectacular installation covering eight walls in two adjoining galleries at the Power Plant, French artist Abdelkader Benchamma uses blue and black ink to summon up water, rock and wind. In this vast swirling mural in which the themes from framed pieces spill out into gestures painted directly on the walls, there are small references to human history: We are insignificant in the face of an environment that we ignore at our peril.

To March 24 at the Power Plant, Toronto



Marisol, *The Generals*, 1961-1962. BRENDA BIEGER/BUFFALO AKG ART MUSEUM

The Generals by Marisol at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

In Montreal, the Marisol retrospective circulated by the Buffalo AKG Art Museum returns the 1960s art star to her well-deserved limelight. From her repertoire of wicked Pop sculpture, it includes such classic pieces as *The Generals*: George Washington and Simon Bolivar squeezed together on one barrel-shaped horse in a sly comment on politics in the Americas as well as a nod to Marisol's Venezuelan and American nationalities. The 1962 work was the first piece she ever sold to a museum, what was then called the Albright-Knox, a Buffalo institution she repaid years later with the gift of her entire estate.

At the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts to Jan. 21, and at the Buffalo AKG Art Museum from July, 2024, to January, 2025



Untitled black vessel by Magdalene Odundo. GARDINER MUSEUM/HANDOUT

Untitled black vessel by Magdalene Odundo at the Gardiner Museum, Toronto

The celebrated British potter Dame Magdalene Odundo turns clay into living things, curvaceous vessels that slyly evoke the human body. In the current show of her work at the Gardiner Museum, one standout is from the Gardiner's own collection, a vase with a fecund belly and bony spine.

To April 21 at the Gardiner Museum in Toronto



The green fairy storybook, Sarindar Dhaliwal. FRED LUM/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

The green fairy storybook by Sarindar Dhaliwal at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

The work of Indo-Canadian artist Sarindar Dhaliwal is partly about colour and partly about stories, lots of stories, from hard immigrant experience to fanciful tales. In a retrospective currently at the Art Gallery of Ontario, the green fairy storybook of 2009 feels both charming and seminal as it reveals the artist's synesthesia: The text spread across the spines of brightly coloured leather-bound books recounts Dhaliwal's childhood experience of looking up at the library stacks and falling in love with the look of the books ... and the promise of stories.

To Jan. 7 at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto

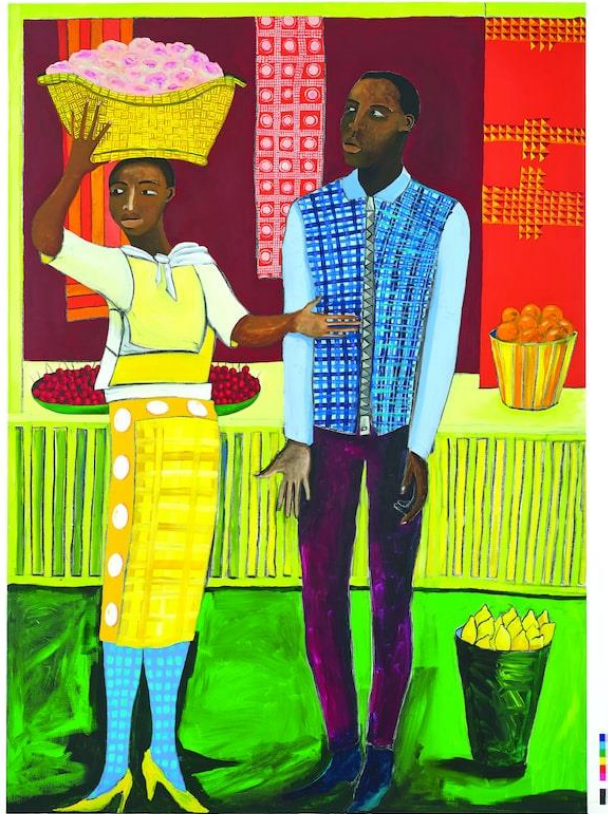


Jeremy Shaw, Phase Shifting Index, 2020, seven-channel video, sound and light installation. TIMO OHLER/HANDOUT

Phase Shifting Index by Jeremy Shaw at Polygon Gallery, Vancouver

In his seven-channel video project, Phase Shifting Index, Berlin-based Vancouver native Jeremy Shaw considers groups dedicated to achieving transcendence through choreographed movement. The subtly retro and occasionally comic films, which made their first Canadian appearance at the Polygon Gallery in Vancouver last summer, depict these people as sympathetic but a bit loopy. Still, all the participants achieve their goal in a spectacular digitized ending that may leave viewers feeling they too have reached nirvana.

Now at the Musee d'art contemporain, Montreal, to Feb. 25.



Bittersweet, 2022. Acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 213 x 152 cm. Rennie Collection, Vancouver.
 ©Lubaina Himid. Courtesy of the artist, Hollybush Gardens, London. Photo: Andy Keate.COURTESY OF
 THE ARTIST

Bittersweet by Lubaina Himid at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

In the Being and Belonging show at the Royal Ontario Museum, the paintings of British artist Lubaina Himid stood out from the crowd in an exhibition about politics and identity in the Islamic diaspora. While other artists in this gathering considered the confines of immigrant experience and tribal identity, Himid paints theatrical and slightly mysterious moments in Black life. (She is the first Black woman to win Britain's Turner Prize, in 2017.) Bittersweet shows a couple in front of their fruit stand: The woman gently restrains a man who is expostulating at some unseen and unexplained event occurring off-stage. The viewer can consider if they are victims of an indignity or simply witnesses to it.



Lydia Ourahmane, Tassili, 2022, video still. 4K video, 16mm transferred to video, digital animation, sound. 47:41 minutes. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST/HANDOUT

Tassili by Lydia Ourahmane at the Mercer Union, Toronto

In a wordless 47-minute film shot against all odds in the forbidden precincts of Tassili n'Ajjer in Algeria, international artist Lydia Ourahmane considers the remarkable collection of Neolithic rock art that make this place so mysterious and so tightly guarded. A wintertime showing at the Mercer Union in Toronto revealed a red weathered landscape dotted with surreal images of humans and animals painted on the rock 10,000 years ago.



55 Rotten Apples (1969-70) by Gathie Falk. HANDOUT

Eight Red Boots by Gathie Falk at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ont.

In the Gathie Falk retrospective at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ont., stacks of glistening ceramic fruit – apples, grapefruits and oranges – couldn't fail to delight the viewer. These Pop pieces from the 1970s still feel fresh and fun, 50 years after Falk, now in her 90s, first created them. Yet, *Eight Red Boots*, a cabinet of oxblood-coloured footwear made in 1973, is a more intriguing piece, dark and mysterious as Falk pursued her interest in multiples: Whose boots and why four pairs?

Now at the Audain Art Museum in Whistler, B.C., to May 6



Caroline Monnet sandpaper works, at Art Gallery of Burlington.HANDOUT

Petit papier sablé 01-04 (Sandpaper 01-04) by Caroline Monnet at the Art Gallery of Burlington, Ontario

When Montreal artist Caroline Monnet travels, she always checks out the local hardware stores. A wintertime show at the Art Gallery of Burlington featured shelters of plastic pipe and waterproof membranes, but a delicate series of cut-out doilies in strong colours literally sparkled: The works are made from laser-cut sandpaper. Monnet, of French and Algonquin heritage, uses mass-produced building materials and Indigenous decorative techniques, such as birch-bark biting, in a politically charged encounter between the contemporary and the traditional.



Jean Paul Riopelle, Hommage aux Nymphéas – Pavane, 1954. JEAN PAUL RIOPELLE/HANDOUT

Hommage aux Nymphéas – Pavane (Tribute to the Water Lilies – Pavane) by Jean-Paul Riopelle at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

The centenary of Quebec artist Jean-Paul Riopelle provided an occasion to admire the splendid Hommage aux Nymphéas – Pavane (Tribute to the Water Lilies – Pavane), a huge painted triptych from 1954 in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada. Inspired by Claude Monet's famed Water Lilies, Riopelle translated the luminescence of Impressionism into his own abstract language. Jagged rectangles of black, white, yellow, red and blue rise triumphantly and shine outward, almost as though lit from behind – the stained glass of a secular church.

To April 7 at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa