



flag-bearers

Indigenous artists in Canada proactively insert their creative agency to counter and disrupt the story of confederacy as a means to bring attention to, and reconcile, the devastating and perpetual effects of colonialism. The burden of retelling and relearning truths, over and over, has gained public recognition, momentum and stamina across the country in many forms. Art has become an effective means to solidify Onkwehonwe worldviews, advocate for social justice and is critical to reactivating the creative spirit that was stolen, outlawed, dismissed, excluded and suppressed.

In the face of genocide and the fact that “Indians” were to be imagined out of existence and erased from society through assimilation policies supported by nation-state legislation and religion, success ultimately came through the dispossession of land, culture and resources. These violent tactics severed steady/stable access and relationships of being to place, language, customary tradition, artistic expression, cultural objects and aesthetics, ceremonies, community and identity.

The 1951 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences issued the Massey-Levesque Report. It examined Canadian culture and recognized that the country’s rich cultural history was deeply imported and rooted in an elite European culture. Even though the study was to identify and define an authentic nation, it did not speak to the diversity of cultures sovereign of European descent. The report suggested that true Indian art cannot be revived, since its death was inevitable, and shouldn’t be encouraged to endure. The measures of prejudice insisted “Indians” were to assimilate culturally and develop their artistic talent in the manner of appropriating the repurposed European practices of Canadian settler-colonists. Ironically, that same year, Canada’s Indian Act policy that prohibited Indigenous cultural expressions, sanctioned in 1884, was lifted and many of its restrictive features were removed.

The residue of oppression continues to disrupt, yet stirs individual and collective insistence for justice and recognized presence in our home and native land. Artist Rachelle Lafond from the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee renders Canada in *Chiichinuu (Our Home)*, 2012, as an embroidered map evoking traditional crafting aesthetics to document the country’s architecture. Lafond stitches the outline of Canada as a foundation divided by the provinces to illustrate a national floor plan for a typical single-family detached dwelling. Such mass settlement patterns demarcating the land as plentiful and free focus on the real estate built over native land. The map is void of any trace of the traditional demarcated territories or the tiny plots of reserve land set aside under the Indian Act and Treaties in the name of the Crown. Lafond offers a map key to shed light upon the dispossession of homeland and infrastructure crisis as a consequence of a federally failed reserve system.

Chiichinuu (Our Home) is among 49 works by 33 artists who bear the untiring burden to “raise a flag” and urge us to pay critical attention to witness the creative legacy that was collected against all odds and endures well into the age of reconciliation and confederation recognition. Together, this survey of work is an invitation to appreciate, reflect and contemplate upon narratives articulated through artistic perspectives prioritizing nuances of Indigeneity that embodies place and identity centered through timeless relationships to land, society and history/heritage.

Ryan Rice, Curator

The Indigenous Art Centre program at Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development Canada (INAC) manages the federally-supported national Indigenous Art Collection, which includes more than 4,000 works by prominent, emerging and mid-career First Nations, Inuit and Métis artists.

Established in 1965 and recently celebrating a 50th anniversary in 2016, the collection remains the only active cultural program withstanding in the federal government. The expanse of the collection represents a distinct national legacy of cultural production and survivance that supports and maintains the tenacity of visual culture upheld by generations of Indigenous artists and curators across the country.

The Indigenous Art Collection is one of the most important and comprehensive collections of contemporary Indigenous fine and cultural arts in Canada and beyond. However, the public collection, sanctioned by the Treasury Board of Canada, may be one of Canada’s best-kept secrets. The collection represents a sweeping range of Indigenous cultures across Canada and reveals the immense contributions by ground-breaking artists such as Allan Sapp, Robert Davidson, Joanne Cardinal-Schubert, Arthur Shilling, Shelley Niro and Annie Pootoogook across 20th/21st century Indigenous and Canadian art history. A large representation of work from the collection has been borrowed for significant exhibitions that have travelled to prominent venues nationally and internationally. Key works have supported the retrospective exhibitions of Norval Morrisseau, Daphne Odjig, Carl Beam and Alex Janvier at the National Gallery of Canada.

The administration of the centre was significant as well, and included Indigenous artists and curators; Tom Hill, Richard W. Hill Sr., David General, Viviane Gray, Barry Ace, July Papatsie, Ryan Rice, Barry Pottle, Lee-Ann Martin and Linda Grussani, who developed and shaped the collection with great intention, expertise and cultural responsibility.

Today, the Indigenous Art Centre is an amalgamation of the Inuit Art Centre and Aboriginal (formerly Indian) Art Centre that sustains the government’s obligation to develop, preserve and promote the intercultural heritages transferred through the vitality of Indigenous visual art and culture.

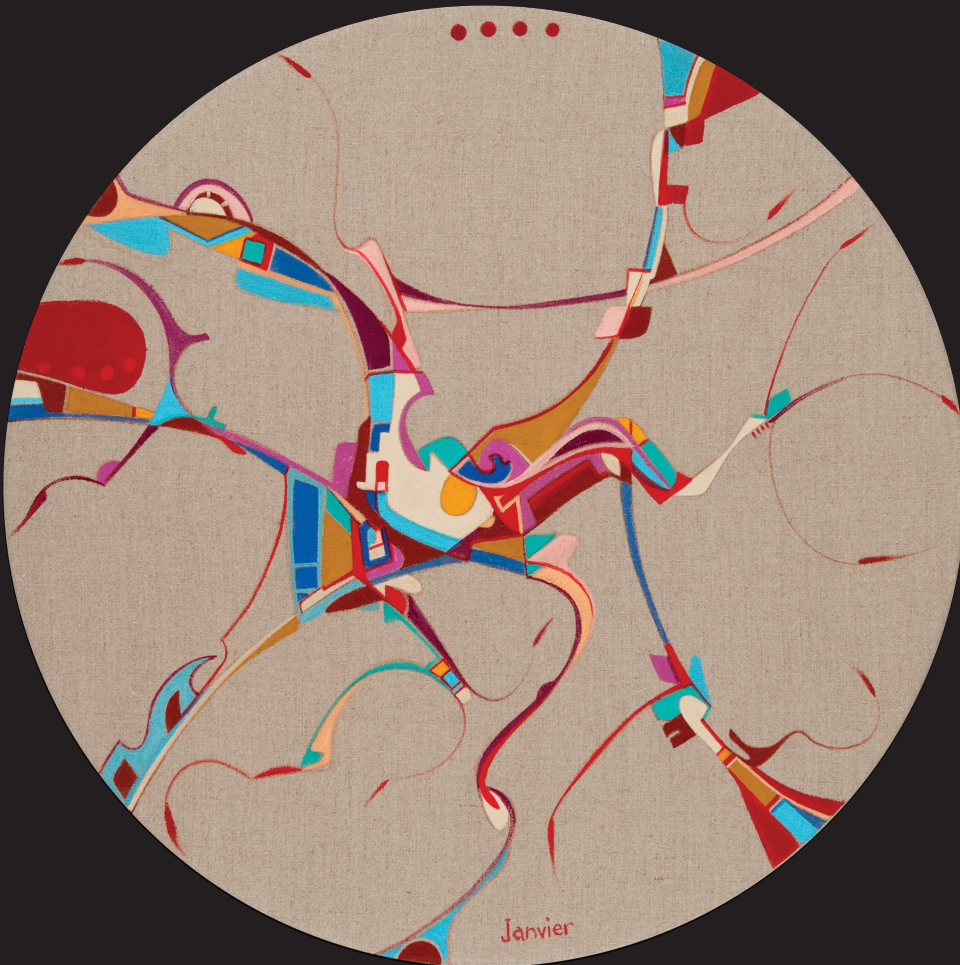
Ryan Rice

Jordan Bennett

Onsite Gallery is thrilled to present artist Jordan Bennett, whose vibrant and inspiring art multiple is featured on the flip side of this brochure. As a specially commissioned work for raise a flag: works from the Indigenous Art Collection (2000-2015), Bennett responded to the concept of raising a flag. As he described, he “wanted this flag to be raised to support and reflect on the current realities facing our Indigenous communities, but especially our waters and land through the exploitation of natural resources.”

Jordan Bennett is a Mi’kmaq multi-disciplinary visual artist from Stephenville Crossing, Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland). Jordan has shown extensively in Canada and abroad, in venues such as The Museum of Art and Design, NYC, NY; Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Santa Fe, NM; Project Space Gallery, RMIT, Melbourne, AUS; The Power Plant, Toronto, ON; Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, Montreal, QC; Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France; The Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver BC and most recently was one of two artists to represent Newfoundland and Labrador at the 2015 Venice Biennial at Galleria Ca’Rezzonico, Venice, Italy. Jordan has recently been long listed for the 2016 and 2015 Sobey Art Award, presented with the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Councils Artist of the Year, received the Excellence in Visual Arts Newfoundland’s Large Year Award, and named as one of the artists in the 2014 Blouin ARTINFO’s Top 30 under 30 in Canada.

Jordan’s work explores a combination of observations and influences from historical and popular culture, new media, traditional art forms, political issues, and his own cultural practices through the processes of sculpture, digital media, installation, painting, sound installation and various other mediums. Jordan recently completed a Master’s degree from the University of British Columbia Okanagan, with a particular focus on exploring Mi’kmaq and Beothuk visual culture and histories.



An Education Guide to accompany raise a flag is available online as a free PDF. This interpretive document is written and developed by Farah Yusuf and will allow for a self-directed interpretation of the exhibition.

Please visit Onsite Gallery’s website at www.ocadu.ca/onsite to access the guide through the raise a flag webpage.

Ryan Rice

Ryan Rice, Kanien’kehá:ka, is an independent curator and the Delaney Chair in Indigenous Visual Culture at OCAD University.

His curatorial career spans 20 years in museums and galleries. Rice served as the Chief Curator at the IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and also held curatorial positions at the Aboriginal Art Centre (Ottawa, ON), named curatorial fellowships with the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (Victoria, BC) and the Walter Phillips Gallery (Banff, AB), and Aboriginal Curator-In-Residence at the Carleton University Art Gallery. He received a Master of Arts degree in Curatorial Studies from the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, New York; graduated from Concordia University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts and received an Associate of Fine Arts from the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Rice’s writing on contemporary Onkwehonwe art has been published in numerous periodicals and exhibition catalogues, and he has lectured widely. Some of his exhibitions include ANTHEM: Perspectives on Home and Native Land, FLYING STILL: CARL BEAM 1943-2005, Oh So Iroquois, Scout’s Honour, Hochelaga Revisited, Soul Sister: Re-imagining Kateri Tekakwitha, Counting Coup, and Stands With A Fist: Contemporary Native Women Artists. Rice was also a co-founder and former director of the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective and currently sits on the Art Gallery of Ontario’s Education Council, Ontario Association of Art Galleries and the Native American Arts Studies Association board.

Ryan Rice would like to say Nia:wen Ko:wa to Linda Grussani, Kaiatanoron Dumoulin Bush, Ronen Zivli, Melissa General, Lisa Deanne Smith, Linda Columbus, Jordan Bennett and the staff of the Indigenous Art Centre for their support and contribution to raise a flag.

Photo credits — Back image: Jordan Bennett, *Water Weighs*, acrylic on wood panel, 76 x 102 cm, 2016, image courtesy of the artist; above: Alex Janvier, *Four Spots*, 2011, acrylic on linen, 61 cm diameter; cover: Rachelle Lafond, *Chiichinuu “Our Home”*, 2012, thread and canvas, 28 x 33 cm. Janvier and Lafond’s images are courtesy of the Collection of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and reproduced with the permission of the artist.

Sept 16 – Dec 10, 2017



ONSITE GALLERY



Barry Ace, Sonny Assu, Carl Beam, Christi Belcourt, Rebecca Belmore, Christian Chapman, Dana Claxton, Ruth Cuthand, Wally Dion, David Garneau, Tanya Harneet, Faye Heavyshield, Greg A. Hill, Mark Igloffort, Jimmy Iqbal, Elisapee Ishulutaq, Alex Janvier, Piona Keyashuk, Myra Kukiyawut, Rachelle Lafond, Jim Logan, Kayley Mackay, Qayavau Manunite, Ohtaq Mikkigak, Lisa Myers, Nadia Myers, Marijane Nicolson, Lionel Peyachew, Tim Pishlak,

Curated by Ryan Rice, Delaney Chair in Indigenous Visual Culture, OCAD University

works from the Indigenous Art Collection (2000-2015)

raise a flag



Onsite Gallery offers powerful, thought-provoking exhibitions of art, design and new media to stimulate conversations on critical issues facing Toronto and the world.



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