

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MASTER OF THE MONUMENT

Walter S. Allward: Life & Work
The new ACI book by Philip Dombowsky

Although Walter S. Allward shared the same virtuoso talent as Michelangelo, the visionary artist behind Canada's iconic Vimy Memorial was nearly forgotten for many years. Now, on the anniversary of the battle that he famously commemorated, a new book documents the revered sculptor's life and career.



Walter S. Allward, Vimy Memorial, 1921–36.

April 9, 2021, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE— The world-famous Vimy Memorial in France—pictured on our \$20 bill—is a symbol of a pivotal touchstone in Canada's history. Yet its creator, Walter S. Allward (1874–1955), is far from a household name. In honour of the 104th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge during the First World War, the Art Canada Institute (ACI) is pleased to announce the release of [*Walter S. Allward: Life & Work*](#) by Philip Dombowsky, a new open-source online art book dedicated to the internationally celebrated Canadian sculptor who designed the majestic Vimy Memorial, 1921–36.

"Despite his enormous success, Allward was largely ignored after his death until 2001, when he appeared as a fictional character in Jane Urquhart's novel *The Stone Carvers*," says Philip Dombowsky, author of *Walter S. Allward: Life & Work*.

ACI's new publication offers crucial insight into how Allward thrust Canadian modern sculpture onto the international stage while profoundly influencing the next generation of sculptors, including the renowned Emanuel Hahn (1881–1957), Frances Loring (1887–1968), and Elizabeth Wyn Wood (1903–1966).

[*Walter S. Allward: Life & Work*](#)—available free of charge, in both English and French—sheds new light on how Allward became our nation's foremost sculptor in the early twentieth century, and how his professional success culminated in the creation of the most important and well-known Canadian public monument in history.

Born in Toronto and raised amidst economic hardship, Allward received minimal formal artistic training, yet at age nineteen won a competition for a statue to be erected near the Ontario Legislative Building in Queen's Park, Toronto. His talent and drive quickly made him Toronto's most promising young sculptor at the turn of the century. Developing an expressive style of sculpture that drew widespread admiration, Allward received numerous commissions for public monuments.

"This valuable experience prepared him for the design of the Vimy Memorial—the most significant and ambitious project of his career," says Sara Angel, Founder and Executive Director of the Art Canada Institute. "Comprising twin pylons and twenty allegorical figures completed over the course of fourteen years, the Vimy Memorial commemorates the 61,000 Canadians who lost their lives during the First World War and is visited by 800,000 people annually."

Inspired by such famed sculptors as Michelangelo (1475–1564) and Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), Allward designed innovative monuments that broke with the then-popular Beaux-Arts style and its focus on a single figure placed on a pedestal. His landmark works, including the Bell Memorial in Brantford and the Stratford and Peterborough war memorials, display dramatic poses and multiple figures within horizontal compositions—elements that would come to feature prominently in the awe-inspiring Vimy Memorial.

Walter S. Allward: Life & Work forwards ACI's mission to create a central digital resource to share Canada's most important artists, and works of art, with the world. ACI is an indispensable resource for exploring and learning about Canada's visual arts heritage. To date, ACI has published 46 expert-authored digital books that are available free of charge. As well, the Art Canada Institute has recently developed Canada's only comprehensive art education guides for teachers and students from kindergarten to grade 12—content that is also free and available online and serves over 700,000 educators.

To explore the Art Canada Institute's open-source digital book ***Walter S. Allward: Life & Work*** by **Philip Dombowsky**, please visit: <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/walter-allward>

For **media requests** or for **interviews with**:

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About Philip Dombowsky

Philip Dombowsky is an Archivist at the National Gallery of Canada. He holds an MA (Art History, Concordia) and a Master of Library and Information Studies (McGill). Dombowsky has curated numerous exhibitions for the NGC Library and Archives, most notably in the area of book design and illustration. He is the author of *Index to the National Gallery of Canada's Exhibition Catalogues and Checklists 1880–1930*, which won the Melva J. Dwyer Award in 2008.

About the Art Canada Institute

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, on a digital platform, and free of charge in both English and French, across Canada and internationally. To accomplish this, ACI works with Canada's leading cultural institutions, art historians, curators, and visual culture experts, and is dedicated to the creation of authoritative original content on the people, themes, and topics that have defined Canadian art history.

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IMAGES

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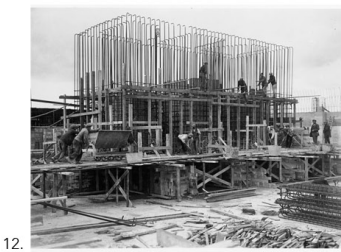


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1. Walter S. Allward, Bell Memorial (detail of central panel), 1909–17, bronze and granite, Brantford, Ontario. Courtesy of Doolittle Productions. Photo credit: Benjamin Doolittle.
2. Walter S. Allward, Vimy Memorial (detail of *Canada Bereft*), 1921–36, Seget limestone and concrete, Parc Mémorial Canadien, Chemin des Canadiens, Vimy, France. Photo credit: Burke Paterson.
3. Walter S. Allward, Vimy Memorial (detail of soldiers' names), 1921–36, Seget limestone and concrete, Parc Mémorial Canadien, Chemin des Canadiens, Vimy, France. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Photo credit: Brian Dell.
4. Vimy Memorial with view of bombed battlefield and trenches in front. Courtesy of Shutterstock (ID: 241243135). Photo credit: Willequet Manuel.
5. Walter S. Allward, Vimy Memorial, 1921–36, Seget limestone and concrete, Parc Mémorial Canadien, Chemin des Canadiens, Vimy, France. Photo credit: Dean MacDonald, Veterans Affairs Canada.
6. Walter S. Allward, Vimy Memorial (detail of *Male Mourner* and *Female Mourner*), 1921–36, Seget limestone and concrete, Parc Mémorial Canadien, Chemin des Canadiens, Vimy, France. Photo credit: PxHere.
7. Walter S. Allward, Vimy Memorial (detail of *Female Mourner*), 1921–36, Seget limestone and concrete, Parc Mémorial Canadien, Chemin des Canadiens, Vimy, France. Photo credit: PxHere.
8. Walter S. Allward, Vimy Memorial (detail of *The Sympathy of the Canadians for the Helpless*), 1921–36, Seget limestone and concrete, Parc Mémorial Canadien, Chemin des Canadiens, Vimy, France. Photo credit: Enacademic.
9. Walter S. Allward, Vimy Memorial (detail of *The Breaking of the Sword*), 1921–36, Seget limestone and concrete, Parc Mémorial Canadien, Chemin des Canadiens, Vimy, France. Photo credit: Enacademic.
10. Walter S. Allward, Baldwin-Lafontaine Monument, 1908–14, bronze and granite, Parliament Hill, Ottawa. Courtesy of Wikimapia. Photo credit: bio2935c.
11. Walter S. Allward, *The Old Soldier*, War of 1812 Memorial (detail of bust), 1903–7, bronze and granite, Victoria Memorial Square, Toronto. Photo credit: Matthew Blackett.
12. Construction of the Vimy Memorial substructure, n.d., photographer unknown. Photo credit: Canada: Dept. of Veterans Affairs / Library and Archives Canada / e002852545.
13. *Statue of Justice* for the King Edward VII Memorial (detail), 1920. Photo credit: Isabel Gibson.
14. Georges Bertin Scott, *Unveiling Vimy Ridge Monument*, 1937, oil on canvas, 250 x 179.5 cm, Beaverbrook Collection of War Art, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa (19670070-014).
15. Canadian machine gunners positioning themselves in shell holes on Vimy Ridge, April 1917, photographer unknown. Photo credit: Canada. Dept. of National Defence/Library and Archives Canada / PA-001017.

16. Carvers working on *The Sympathy of the Canadians for the Helpless* sculpture for the Vimy Memorial, n.d., photographer unknown. Photo credit: Canada: Dept. of Veterans Affairs / Library and Archives Canada / e002852535.
17. Walter S. Allward, Toronto, July 1913, photograph by M.O. Hammond, Archives of Ontario (I0014547).