

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, September 24, 2021

MAUD LEWIS REDEFINING CANADIAN FOLK ART

Maud Lewis: Life & Work

The new open-access online art book by Ray Cronin
Publishing on September 24, 2021

The first and only online art book on the extraordinary life and career of one of Canada's most beloved painters explores how she transformed Canadian folk art. It also reveals how, despite serious poverty and physical challenges, Maud Lewis rose to national fame in the mid-1960s through her ability to convey brightly coloured scenes of joy and optimism.



LEFT: *Yellow Birds* (detail), c.1960s. CENTRE: Maud Lewis, n.d., photograph by Cora Greenway. RIGHT: *Model T Ford*, c.1955–65.

September 24, 2021, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—One of our country's most cherished artists, Maud Lewis (1901–1970) created vivid paintings that sparked the evolution of folk art from a once obscure practice into a fine art form deemed worthy of being exhibited and critically studied. Though she was admired across the country in her lifetime and since her death has become an icon of Nova Scotia, until recently her work has been virtually ignored by national museums and institutions. Her popularity in her home province has helped inspire many people to promote, collect, and research folk art, which is now venerated as a pivotal form of visual culture in Atlantic Canada. In honour of this outstanding artist, the Art Canada Institute (ACI), in partnership with the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, is pleased to announce the release of *Maud Lewis: Life & Work* by Ray Cronin, a new open-access online art book—available free of charge, in both English and French.

The remarkable story of how Lewis overcame adversity by finding solace in painting has captivated the world for over fifty years, spawning numerous books, documentaries, and the acclaimed feature film *Maudie* (2016). She suffered from juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, a painful and progressive disease, and when her parents passed away, she was left with nothing, leading her to marry a local fish peddler

named Everett Lewis in 1938. “Destitute and in poor health, Lewis turned to art,” says Sara Angel, Founder and Executive Director of the Art Canada Institute. “From the couple’s tiny home, she began producing and selling paintings in the unique style that would secure her fame.” In 1965, she captured the attention of the nation when her work appeared in the *Star Weekly* and on the CBC television program *Telescope*. The demand for Lewis’s paintings skyrocketed and never abated during her lifetime.

Today, Lewis is internationally celebrated for her idyllic scenes of the Nova Scotia countryside—as author Ray Cronin notes, “Her artistic vision of Nova Scotia eventually helped change the way Nova Scotians saw their own province.” Her merry depictions of lighthouses and villages, forests and rivers, animals and flowers, became central to a popular nostalgic vision of the rural past. She is equally well known for her determination to paint virtually every surface of her home, transforming it into an exuberant masterpiece. Cronin observes, “Lewis’s painted house remains one of the most popular exhibitions in the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, and one of the main reasons people seek out the gallery from across the world”—a testament to her enduring creative legacy.

Maud Lewis: 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. To date, ACI has published 48 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-access digital book ***Maud Lewis: Life & Work*** by Ray Cronin, please visit: <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/maud-lewis>

For media requests or for interviews with:

- **Ray Cronin**, author of ***Maud Lewis: Life & Work***
- **Sara Angel**, Executive Director, **Art Canada Institute**

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About Ray Cronin

Ray Cronin is an author and curator who lives in Nova Scotia. His books ***Alex Colville: Life & Work*** and ***Mary Pratt Life & Work*** were published by the Art Canada Institute in 2017 and 2020, and he is also the author of *Our Maud: The Life, Art and Legacy of Maud Lewis* (Art Gallery of Nova Scotia), and five numbers of the Gaspereau *Field Guides to Canadian Artists*. He has contributed essays to over sixty books and catalogues on Canadian artists, and regularly writes for Canadian and American art magazines.

About the Art Canada Institute

The Art Canada Institute is the only national institution whose mandate is to promote the inclusive, multivocal study of Canadian art and its 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.

To learn more about ACI and to access our free digital library, please visit us!
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IMAGES

Download image files here: <https://bit.ly/maud-lewis>



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IMAGE CAPTIONS & CREDITS

1. Maud Lewis, *Paintings for Sale*, 1960s, oil on wood, 76 x 61.0 cm, Collection of CFFI Ventures Inc. as collected by John Risley. Courtesy of CFFI Ventures Inc.
2. Maud Lewis, *Lighthouse and Gulls*, n.d., oil on board, 30.2 x 29.8 cm, Collection of CFFI Ventures Inc. as collected by John Risley. Courtesy of CFFI Ventures Inc.
3. Maud Lewis, *Oxen in Spring [Two Oxen with Yoke]*, c.1960s, oil on pulpboard, 30.2 x 35.5 cm, private collection, Nova Scotia. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.
4. Maud Lewis, *Winter Sleigh Ride*, c.1960s, oil on pulpboard, 33.0 x 35.5 cm, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Gift of Alan Deacon, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1994. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.
5. Maud Lewis, *Yellow Birds*, c.1960s, oil on board, 27.3 x 30 cm, private collection. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.
6. Maud Lewis, *Three Black Cats*, 1955, oil on pulpboard, 30.5 x 30.7 cm, private collection. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.
7. Maud Lewis, *Everett Plowing*, 1960s, oil on board, 45.8 x 61 cm, Collection of CFFI Ventures Inc. as collected by John Risley. Courtesy of CFFI Ventures Inc.
8. Maud Lewis, *Maud Lewis's Painted House*, n.d., Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, purchase, 1984. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.
9. Maud Lewis, *Model T Ford*, c.1955–65, oil on board, 29.8 x 34.8 cm, Collection of CFFI Ventures Inc. as collected by John Risley. Courtesy of CFFI Ventures Inc.
10. Maud Lewis, *Nova Scotia Harbour in Autumn*, n.d., oil on board, 22.5 x 30.5 cm, Collection of CFFI Ventures Inc. as collected by John Risley. Courtesy of CFFI Ventures Inc.
11. Maud Lewis, *British Kingfisher & Apple Blossoms*, 1963, oil on pulpboard, 23.0 x 30.2 cm, private collection. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax.
12. Ray Cronin, author of *Maud Lewis: Life & Work*.