

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday November 1, 2021

## THE BEAUTY AND ANGUISH OF WAR ART IN CANADA

### *War Art in Canada: A Critical History*

The new open-access online art book by Laura Brandon  
Publishing on Remembrance Day, November 11, 2021

For centuries, Canadian artists have recorded powerful images of military victories and defeats, political protest, and personal sacrifice. A new and richly illustrated book examines, for the first time, the profound role that conflict has played in shaping our nation's art, history, and identity—venturing far beyond familiar Western representations.



LEFT: Kent Monkman, *Miss Chief's Wet Dream*, 2018. CENTRE: William Ivor Castle, *Over the Top*, 1916. RIGHT: Molly Lamb Bobak, *Private Roy*, 1946.

**November 1, 2021, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**—In honour of Remembrance Day, the Art Canada Institute (ACI) is pleased to announce the release of [\*War Art in Canada: A Critical History\*](#) by the renowned art and military historian Laura Brandon, a new open-access online art book—available in both English and French. The book explores our nation's military history from the seventeenth century to the present through indelible works by well-known creators like A.Y. Jackson, Alex Colville, Molly Lamb Bobak, Rebecca Belmore, Kent Monkman, and Edward Burtynsky, and through pieces by previously unrecognized artists. The inaugural title in ACI's new [\*Canadian Art Library\*](#) series of thematic art books, [\*War Art in Canada\*](#) provides unprecedented insight into the dynamic and, at times, surprising visual legacies of conflict, encouraging readers to reconsider familiar narratives about our country's military past.

Deftly weaving together Indigenous and settler histories of war art in Canada, Brandon explores three main periods: the pre-contact era to the end of the South African War (1899–1902), during which Indigenous art objects were created along with colonial military art in both New France and British North America; the First and Second World Wars (1914–1945), when private and government-sponsored art

programs together yielded an astonishing six thousand artworks; and the postwar years to the present day, in which artists have documented, protested, questioned, and supported battles, offering important critical perspectives on Canada's relationship with combat.

"What makes [\*War Art in Canada\*](#) such a uniquely rich and comprehensive study is Brandon's expansive approach to the definition of war art," says Sara Angel, Founder and Executive Director of the Art Canada Institute. "Through her study of sculpture, graphics, film, photography, and digital media as well as craft, textiles, and carving, Brandon reveals not only the tremendous impact of conflict on Canadian art, but also the capacity of war art to broaden our understanding of cultural, military, political, and social evolution over thousands of years."

"Art, like history, tends to favour the victorious, so, until recently, the bulk of Canadian war art has exclusively reflected Western traditions and genres, overlooking Indigenous expressions," says Laura Brandon, author of [\*War Art in Canada\*](#). "This book attempts to redress the balance." Brandon delves into the extensive traditions of Indigenous war art, highlighting such wide-ranging examples as a seventeenth-century Haudenosaunee smoking pipe (calumet) used to formalize military alliances and peace treaties; an immense petroglyph battle scene from the late 1800s at Áísínai'pi / Writing-on-Stone Park in Alberta; and contemporary Saulteaux artist Robert Houle's abstract work *Kanehsatake*, 1990–93, responding to the Oka Crisis in 1990.

[\*War Art in Canada: A Critical History\*](#) advances ACI's mission to create a central digital resource that brings attention to and shares 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 49 expert-authored digital books that are available free of charge online. 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 online and serves more than 700,000 educators.

To explore the Art Canada Institute's open-access digital book [\*War Art in Canada: A Critical History\*](#) by **Laura Brandon**, please visit: <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/war-art-in-canada/>

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

- **Laura Brandon**, author of [\*War Art in Canada: A Critical History\*](#)
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### **About Laura Brandon**

Laura Brandon, CM, was the Curator (subsequently Historian), Art & War, at the Canadian War Museum from 1992 to 2015. She is an author, curator, and lecturer specializing in war art. Brandon has written and lectured on military art for nearly forty years and has curated more than forty-five exhibitions, in Canada and internationally. She is currently an adjunct research professor in the School for Studies in Art and Culture and in the History Department at Carleton University. In 2015 she was appointed to the Order of Canada.

## 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. The Art Canada Institute is a donor-supported registered Canadian charity.

To learn more about ACI and to access our open-access library, please visit us!

[aci-iac.ca](http://aci-iac.ca)

## IMAGES

Download image files here: <https://bit.ly/war-art-in-canada>



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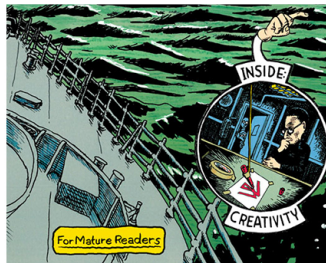
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## IMAGE CAPTIONS & CREDITS

1. Thomas Davies, *A View of Fort La Galette, Indian Castle, and Taking a French Ship of War on the River St. Lawrence, by Four Boats of One Gun Each of the Royal Artillery Commanded by Captain Streachy*, 1760, watercolour over graphite on laid paper, 38.3 x 58.9 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (6271). Photo credit: NGC.
2. Anonymous, *Ball-headed club*, mid-1800s, wood, 38 x 11 x 10 cm, The Chiefswood Collection, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Gift of Miss Evelyn H.C. Johnson (922.1.20). Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum.
3. Frederick Varley, *For What?*, 1918, oil on canvas, 147.4 x 180.6 cm, Beaverbrook Collection of War Art, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa, transferred from National Gallery of Canada, 1971 (19710261-0770). Courtesy of the Canadian War Museum.
4. Molly Lamb Bobak, *Private Roy*, 1946, oil on Masonite, 76.4 x 60.8 cm, Beaverbrook Collection of War Art, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa (CWM 19710261-1626). Courtesy of the Canadian War Museum.
5. J.E.H. MacDonald, *Canada and the Call*, 1914, colour lithograph on wove paper, 108 x 73.5 cm, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa (CWM 19940018-001). Courtesy of the Canadian War Museum.
6. William Ivor Castle, *29th Infantry Battalion Advancing over "No Man's Land" through the German Barbed Wire and Heavy Fire during the Battle of Vimy Ridge*, 1917, black and white photograph, variable dimensions, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (3233066). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/The Brechin Group Inc.
7. Walter S. Allward, *Canadian National Vimy Memorial*, 1921–36, Seget limestone and concrete, Parc Mémorial Canadien, Chemin des Canadiens, Vimy, France. Courtesy of Veterans Affairs Canada, Ottawa. Photo credit: Dean MacDonald, Veterans Affairs Canada.
8. Kent Monkman, *Miss Chief's Wet Dream*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 365.7 x 731.5 cm, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Gift of Donald R. Sobey, Stellarton, Nova Scotia, 2019 (2019.9). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. © Kent Monkman.
9. Anonymous, *Chief Oshawana (John Naudee)*, 1858, photograph, 11.9 x 19 cm, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (3358509). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/The Brechin Group Inc.
10. Gertrude Kearns, *What They Gave*, 2006, ink, acrylic, and coloured crayon on 4-ply board, 3 panels, each 152 x 102 cm, Beaverbrook Collection of War Art, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa (CWM 20120019-001). Courtesy of the Canadian War Museum.
11. Cover of David Collier, *CHIMO: Collier's Canadian Forces Artists Program Story* (Greenwich, N.S.: Conundrum Press, 2011). © David Collier.
12. Laura Brandon, author of *War Art in Canada: A Critical History*.