

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, May 27, 2022

## GATHIE FALK

### BOUNDLESS BEAUTIES OF THE EVERYDAY FROM A WEST COAST ICON

*Gathie Falk: Life & Work*  
The new open-access online art book by Michelle Jacques  
Publishing on May 27, 2022

An artist of unprecedented reinvention, Gathie Falk has mesmerized the Canadian art world for more than six decades with works in painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramic, installation, and performance. With diverse materials but a distinctly personal vision, she transforms everyday items like fruit, shoes, and furniture into objects of wonder. From modest Mennonite beginnings, Falk rose to fame in Vancouver in the mid-1960s and has continued to garner international acclaim. A new book explores her fascinating life and groundbreaking contributions to contemporary art.



LEFT: *196 Apples*, 1969–70. CENTRE: Photograph by Tom Gould. RIGHT: *Pieces of Water #10—El Salvador*, 1982

**May 27, 2022, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**—One of Canada’s most captivating artists, Gathie Falk (b.1928) is a stalwart of the Vancouver scene who radically transformed West Coast art with her eclectic and innovative work. A pioneer of performance and installation art in the 1960s, Falk found early success as she challenged audiences with playfully surreal experiences and environments. Throughout her long career she has created countless series of works dedicated to simple subjects that are personally significant, like piles of fruit, cement sidewalks, night skies, and picnics. Her handcrafted explorations of the world around her have earned her a pivotal place in Canadian art history. In celebration of this beloved artist, the Art Canada Institute (ACI) is pleased to announce the release of *Gathie Falk: Life & Work* by Michelle Jacques, a new open-access online art book—available free of charge, in both English and French.

Now in her ninth decade and still devoted to making art, Gathie Falk was born in what she describes as “the little sheep town” of Alexander, Manitoba, in 1928. Her parents were German-speaking Mennonites who had fled Russia to settle in Canada two years earlier. After her father died of pneumonia while she was still an infant, the family struggled financially. Since her early teens Falk picked strawberries, cleaned houses, worked in factories, and eventually embarked upon a short-lived teaching

career to help support her mother before following her dreams in pursuit of a life in art. Her humble upbringing and the Mennonite belief in simplicity are reflected in Falk's singular artistic approach, which she characterizes as the "veneration of the ordinary."

"Falk has spent her career transforming everyday objects that we often ignore into transcendent and iconic artworks," says Sara Angel, Founder and Executive Director of the Art Canada Institute. *196 Apples*, 1969–70, is one of the most admired and recognizable of Falk's creations. Each ceramic fruit is individually handcrafted and slightly different than the next. Together they are carefully arranged into a glistening red pyramid, like one we might encounter in a grocery store. Falk made more than two dozen of these "Fruit Piles," and the series can now be found in public and private collections across the country and around the world. All bearing the mark of her hand and translated through her mind's eye, Falk considered these "fleshy, sexy" stacks of produce to be the apotheosis of beauty.

As Michelle Jacques reminds us, Falk's remarkable facility in sculptural ceramics is matched by her "painterly and compositional prowess," her mysteriously symbolic works in performance, and her infinitely evocative environments or installations—she has created a body of work that "has never veered from her playful, purposeful, and unapologetically personal vision."

***Gathie Falk: 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 51 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 ***Gathie Falk: Life & Work*** by **Michelle Jacques**, please visit: <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/gathie-falk/>

For media requests or for interviews with:

- **Michelle Jacques**, author of ***Gathie Falk: Life & Work***
- **Sara Angel**, Executive Director, **Art Canada Institute**

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### **About Michelle Jacques**

Michelle Jacques is a curator, teacher, and art historian. She is currently the Head of Exhibitions and Collections and chief curator at the Remai Modern. She has co-curated two major retrospectives of the work of the Canadian artists Anna Banana and Jock Macdonald. Jacques has also held various roles in the Contemporary and Canadian departments of the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, was the director of programming at the Centre for Art Tapes in Halifax, and has taught courses in writing, art history, and curatorial studies at NSCAD University, University of Toronto Mississauga, and OCAD University.

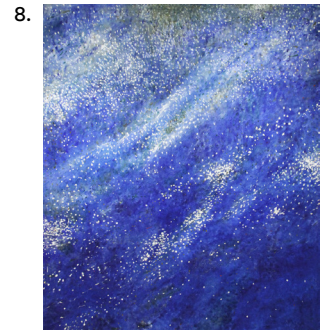
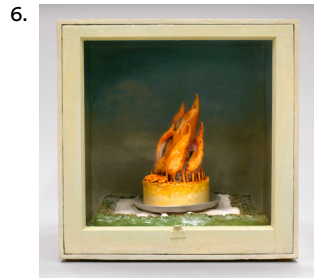
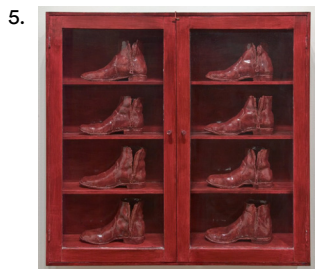
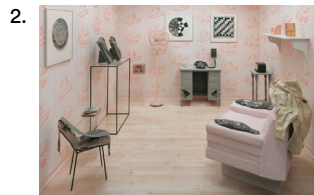
### **About the Art Canada Institute**

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

## IMAGES

Download image files here: <https://bit.ly/gathie-falk>



## IMAGE CREDITS

1. Gathie Falk, *The Staircase*, 1962, oil on Masonite, 78.7 × 99.1 cm, Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Michael Gibson Gallery. © Gathie Falk.
2. Gathie Falk, *Home Environment*, 1968, ceramic, paint, flock, polyester resin, silkscreen print, paper, Plexiglas and steel, 244 × 305 × 305 cm. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund, Gift of Abraham Rogatnick, Gift of Douglas Christmas (86.32). © Gathie Falk.
3. Gathie Falk, *196 Apples*, 1969–70, ceramic and Plexiglas stand, 40.6 × 88.3 × 66.7 cm. Promised gift of the artist to the Vancouver Art Gallery. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery. © Gathie Falk.
4. Gathie Falk, *26 Blood Oranges*, 1970, glazed ceramic, 40.6 × 25.4 × 20.3 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Equinox Gallery. © Gathie Falk. Photo credit: SITE Photography.
5. Gathie Falk, *Eight Red Boots*, 1973, red-glazed ceramic in painted plywood and glass cabinet, 101.2 × 105.7 × 15.5 cm (cabinet); boots: 17 × 28 × 10 cm each (approx.). Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (18157). © Gathie Falk. Photo credit: NGC.
6. Gathie Falk, *Picnic with Birthday Cake and Blue Sky*, 1976, glazed ceramic with acrylic and varnish in painted plywood case, 63.6 × 63.4 × 59.7 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (18772). © Gathie Falk. Photo credit: NGC.
7. Gathie Falk, *Red Angel*, 1977, 35 mm slide. Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Morris/Trasov Archive. © Gathie Falk.
8. Gathie Falk, *Pieces of Water #10—El Salvador*, 1982, oil on canvas, 198.2 × 167.4 cm. Collection of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Women's Committee Cultural Fund & Canada Council Matching Funds (1983.066.001). © Gathie Falk.
9. Gathie Falk, *Cement with Fence #1*, 1982, oil on canvas, 198 × 123.2 cm, Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Equinox Gallery. © Gathie Falk.
10. Gathie Falk, *Dress with Insect Box*, 1998, papier mâché, acrylic paint, varnish, 90 × 55 cm. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund (98.63). © Gathie Falk.
11. Gathie Falk, *Standard Shoes, The Column* (detail), 1998–99, papier mâché, acrylic paint, varnish, and cardboard boxes, 139.7 × 21 × 33.7 cm (overall). Collection of Oakville Galleries, purchased with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program, the Corporation of the Town of Oakville and the Elizabeth L. Gordon Art Program of the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, 2000 (2000.03). © Gathie Falk. Photo credit: Isaac Applebaum.
12. Gathie Falk, *Dreaming of Flying, Canoe*, 2007, papier mâché, acrylic paint, 60 × 456 × 68 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (42343). © Gathie Falk. Photo credit: NGC.
13. Gathie Falk, *The Problem with Wedding Veils*, 2010–11, papier mâché, rocks, 180.3 × 162.2 cm, Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Equinox Gallery. © Gathie Falk. Photo credit: SITE Photography.
14. Michelle Jacques, author of *Gathie Falk: Life & Work*.