Exhibiting Dual(ling) Narratives of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the complex goals behind the reinstallation of the Art Gallery of Ontario's (AGO) Canadian Wing, following the Gallery's 2008 building expansion. The AGO's Canadian Wing has been radically reshaped by the incorporation of the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art and by the Gallery's desire to create "new ways of seeing" Canadian art history with its existing collection. I examine how the different exhibition models selected – the modernist aesthetic installation of the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art, and the thematic and contextual installation of the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art – deliver disparate, even conflicting, narratives of Canadian art. I assess the installations of the two collections in terms of the divergent goals of the donor and the institution, and discuss the impact on the visitor. Through interviews, I demonstrate how the AGO's curators and interpretive planners have negotiated the goals and responsibilities of the twenty-first-century art museum.

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INTRODUCTION

The New Public Art Museum

In November 2008, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) in Toronto re-opened after a massive building expansion designed by Frank Gehry and the reinstallation of its collections. The project, entitled Transformation AGO, was inspired by the desire to address the changing role of the art museum in the twenty-first century, and was enabled by a large donation from Kenneth Thomson, a significant private collector and Canada's wealthiest man. With its institutional overhaul, the AGO sought to "form the imaginative centre of Toronto, attracting new audiences and engaging new communities."[1] In this thesis, I will evaluate the successes and failures of the reinstallation of the AGO's Canadian Wing, which now presents a two-part narrative: Thomson's collection of Canadian art alongside the AGO's own collection. As I will demonstrate, the new Canadian galleries exemplify the practical implementation of new museology and new art history in the public art museum. At the same time, the AGO's unprecedented relationship with a major donor complicates the outcome. Ultimately, the pairing of the two collections in the new Canadian Wing makes visible the challenges and contradictions the AGO negotiated with its Transformation project. As the title of this thesis suggests, the "duelling" installations in the Canadian Wing are contradictory in some ways, but may ultimately be productive for the AGO at the present time.

In many ways, Transformation AGO directly reflects the impact of new museology and new art history – postmodern scholarship that critically investigates the politics of representation in museums and in art history. Following poststructural, feminist, and

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[1] "Transformation AGO Leads to a New Future," http://www.ago.net/transformation-ago-project-goals.

postcolonial critiques, scholars in the 1980s began to turn their attention to museums as powerful and political institutions, with major visibility and significance for nations and their communities. The response to these critiques – what Ruth Phillips calls "the second museum age" – is visible in the current expansions and re-conceptualization of museums that were established in the first museum age, "during which the public museum became a normative institution of Western modernity."[2] Art museums, the AGO included, have up to now largely maintained the status quo established in this first modernist museum age.

Gail Anderson's table titled "Reinventing the Museum," in the anthology of the same name, charts a list of terms that represent the changing priorities from the "traditional museum" to the "reinvented museum." Especially pertinent are shifts from the museum as "collection-driven" to "audience focused," "reactive to proactive," operating under a "single visionary leader" to "shared leadership," having "good intentions" to maintaining "public accountability," being "open to the public" to being "visitor oriented," hosting a "voice of authority" to "multiple viewpoints," acting as a "keeper of knowledge" to facilitating an "exchange of knowledge."[3] The table represents the breadth of thirty years of discussion among North American museum professionals and museologists. With its Transformation project, the AGO has incorporated many, if not all, of these shifts in one way or another. As the AGO's new vision statement announces, the gallery endeavours to forge a "new model for art museums."[4]

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[2] Ruth B. Phillips, "Re-placing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age," *The Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 1 (March 2005): 83.
[3] Gail Anderson, "Introduction," in *Reinventing the Museum: historical and contemporary perspectives on the paradigm shift*, ed. Gail Anderson (Oxford: Altamira Press, 2004), 2.
[4] AGO Strategic Plan. [n.d]. I wish to thank Georgiana Uhlyarik, Assistant Curator of Canadian Art at the AGO, for bringing this document to my attention.

"Improving the visitor experience" is the AGO's primary objective, reflecting the major shift occurring throughout the twentieth century from the museum as a "temple" of high art, to a "forum" for dialogic knowledge between object and visitor.[5] Noted museologist Stephen Weil remarked in 1990 on a shift in the focus of the museum from collecting and conserving objects to creating new and complex relationships with its publics. Weil identified the increasing "inseparability of the museum's interpretive and exhibition functions," asserting that even this role of the museum must be re-imagined to reflect more than "human betterment."[6] More recently, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill and Andrew McClellan have both proclaimed that the relationship of the museum to its visitors is the issue of the moment for museums.[7] The new building project gave the AGO the opportunity to put these ideas into practice, using new curatorial and interpretive strategies to engage the public. An exception to this new institution-wide prerogative was made for Ken Thomson. In exchange for his donation, Thomson retained curatorial and interpretive control over the installation of his collection, now installed in a manner that reflects distinctively older museological and art-historical values. This is nowhere more visible than in the Canadian Wing, where his canonical collection is installed with almost no interpretive material, in contrast to the AGO's own highly-interpreted and contextual installation.

Exhibiting Historical Canadian Art: Imagining a New Critical Model

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[5] Canadian museologist Duncan Cameron recognized this shift as early as 1971. See "The Museum, a Temple or the Forum?" (1971) in *Reinventing the Museum*, 61-73.

[6] Stephen Weil, "Re-Thinking the Museum: An Emerging New Paradigm," in *Reinventing the Museum*, 77.

[7] See Andrew McLellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007) and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, "Studying Visitors," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 362-376.

Traditionally, the exhibition of historical Canadian art in public art museums has promoted a canon dominated by Euro-Canadian painting. The AGO's Chief Curator at the time, Dennis Reid,[8] posits that art museums create history (or historical records) through their carefully selected processes of collecting and display.[9] In Canada's public art museums, these historical records reflect the collecting priorities of the postcolonial period in which the museums originated.

New art-historical critiques of the exhibition of Canadian art have targeted the limitations of this canon, in particular, the systematic exclusion of Aboriginal art from its narratives, and, to a lesser extent, the work of women artists. As the literature on questions of Aboriginal inclusion in Canadian art museums is much more abundant than literature on the inclusion of women artists, I focus more on the former in this thesis. While temporary exhibitions and small changes to permanent installations have tried to address these exclusions, critics like Lynda Jessup and Lee-Ann Martin make a case for "hard inclusion" as opposed to "tokenism"[10] – what Ruth Phillips calls a "permanent museological revolution" rather than "a temporary ritual of reversal."[11] This recent discourse indicates the need to create structural change in the dominant narrative of Canadian art that still favours the nationalistic Euro-Canadian (male) artists working in the early twentieth century. The AGO's curators acknowledged this issue and sought to remedy it in the reinstallation of the Gallery's Canadian collection. According to Curator of Canadian Art Gerald McMaster, the

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[8] Reid, now retired, was the AGO's Chief Curator when the interviews were conducted.
[9] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[10] Lynda Jessup, "Hard Inclusion," in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, ed. Lynda Jessup with Shannon Bagg (Hull, Que.: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), xiii-xxii.
[11] Ruth Phillips, "Disrupting Past Paradigms: The National Museum of the American Indian and the First Peoples Hall at the Canadian Museum of Civilization," *The Public Historian* 28, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 80.

reinstallation is "not just about a 250-year history, and it is not just about men. It is about exploring the richness of Canadian art from different perspectives."[12]

The J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art, housing the AGO's collection of Canadian art, exemplifies the AGO's new institutional direction.[13] The galleries are organized thematically and feature a more diverse range of artists than ever before. For the first time, the work of women artists and First Nations artists has been given priority and is visible in all of the McLean Centre galleries. Throughout, the curators and interpretive planners have included provocative juxtapositions of historical and contemporary art, contextualized to elicit new ways of looking at Canadian art history.

In contrast, the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art, making up the other half of the Canadian Wing, takes an entirely different approach. The Thomson Collection presents a deep, but narrowly focused version of Canadian art, collected according to the tastes of one private collector. Hundreds of works by Canada's most canonical artists are exhibited in monographic rooms, alongside a few significant historical First Nations objects. The installation of the Thomson Collection is anomalous within the new AGO: where most of the galleries are installed according to a contextual model, the Thomson galleries feature little interpretation and no wall labels: a clean modernist hang for Thomson's modernist

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[12] Gerald McMaster, in a lecture at the AGO on February 18, 2009.

[13] According to Dennis Reid, the galleries housing the AGO's existing collection of Canadian art were named the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art, following a significant donation from the McLean family for Transformation AGO. Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009. J.S. McLean, a meat-packing magnate, was a dedicated trustee of the AGO and a major supporter of Canadian art in his lifetime. The McLean family has donated more than 200 Canadian paintings to the AGO, and the J.S. McLean Canadian Fund has enabled the AGO to purchase more than 150 more Canadian works. See Anna Hudson, *A Collector's Vision: J.S. McLean and Modern Painting in Canada* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1999) and Dennis Reid, "Canada Packers Donates 137 Works to the AGO," *AGO News* 12, no. 5 (May 1990): 1-2.

masterpieces. Thomson's curatorial vision has informed the installation throughout, and the pride of place given to the galleries ensures that they will be understood as a celebration of his unprecedented gift.

Comparing these starkly different approaches to narrating Canadian art history in a permanent exhibition provides a useful opportunity to discuss issues of representing Canadian art in public art museums. Though the AGO argues that the different installations can be complementary, the contradictions inherent in the two halves of the Canadian Wing indicate that the AGO may have attempted to foster two incongruent goals with its Transformation project. The display of the Thomson Collection emphasizes the importance of building a collection of canonical masterpieces and the glorification of the art object. These are the objectives of traditional museology, rather than the new museology the AGO espouses in re-thinking its purpose.

The heart of this thesis is the reinstallation of the J.S. McLean Centre, which is examined as the first instance of a major public art gallery incorporating new art-historical critiques thoroughly, from within the institution. I consider the Thomson Collection for the way it both complements and conflicts with the rest of the Canadian Wing. In doing so, I evaluate how public perception of Canadian art is shaped by exhibition strategies, and how these strategies are shaped by the motives of the exhibition-makers.

Throughout I explore the context of exhibiting Canadian art in an institution that is committed to reconsidering its role in twenty-first century, while being simultaneously motivated by the celebration of Ken Thomson. I conclude that despite the important and innovative changes in the J.S. McLean Centre, the compromises necessitated by the politics of working with private money and a powerful patron create a confrontation between the old

and new reality. The project is important at this time as museums everywhere are in the midst of enacting change to remain "relevant," to move beyond their modernist structures. At the same time, private funding is becoming increasingly important as the public funding of the modern era in Canada decreases. The tension between the two approaches, exemplified by the architectural division of the Canadian Wing into two halves, makes the AGO case study unique in Canada. Moreover, it introduces a question of feasibility, as the AGO attempts to promote two different ideological projects simultaneously. Can the museum promote new ways of seeing Canadian art if the old ways of seeing are celebrated alongside, and with the same fervour?

Literature Review

Because the 2008 reinstallation is so recent, no thorough critical discussions have been published yet. This thesis is thus supported by past discussions of the exhibition of historical Canadian art and First Nations objects, to establish the issues inherent in exhibiting Canadian art and the past precedents.

Anne Whitelaw's "'Whiffs of Balsam, Pine and Spruce': Art Museums and the Production of a Canadian Aesthetic" (2000) and her "Placing Aboriginal Art at the National Gallery of Canada" (2006) both address the reinstallation of the National Gallery of Canada's historical Canadian galleries. Douglas Worts' "Extending the Frame: Forging a New Partnership with the Public" (1996) examines the 1992 installation of the AGO's Canadian galleries, focussing on new pedagogical strategies. Lynda Jessup's "Landscapes of Sport, Landscapes of Exclusion: "Sportsman's Paradise" in Late Nineteenth-Century Canadian Painting" (2006) discusses the limitations of the AGO's early incarnation of a contextual

model of display in the Canadian wing's Salon gallery in 1992, while her "Art for a Nation?" (1996) examines the treatment of the Group of Seven in the 1995 blockbuster exhibition at the National Gallery and the AGO. Richard William Hill's "Meeting Ground: The Reinstallation of the Art Gallery of Ontario's McLaughlin Gallery" (2004) chronicles his efforts to include historical Aboriginal art in the AGO's permanent Canadian galleries for the first time in 2003. In a similar vein, "Our (Inter) Related History," written by the AGO's Curator of Canadian Art, Gerald McMaster, provides insight into his approach to the incorporation of Aboriginal art into the new Canadian galleries. This chapter is published in the collection *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery* (2002), which provides important AGO-specific discussions on the same topic. I have drawn on it extensively. To contextualize the approach to the Thomson Collection of Canadian art, two glossy volumes produced by the AGO in 2008, in celebration of the Thomson donation, give insight into the nature of the collection, and the way the institution wants to promote it to the public.

To further examine the incorporation of Aboriginal art into the Canadian galleries, postcolonial critiques of the museum by scholars such as Ruth Phillips and James Clifford have been most useful. Phillips and Christopher Steiner's analysis and questioning of the classifications in the art museum in "Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Colonial Encounter," in *Unpacking Cultures: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* (1999) acknowledges the established hierarchies of objects in Canadian art museums and Phillips' "How Museums Marginalize: Naming Domains of Inclusion and Exclusion" (1993) discusses the ways in which museums marginalize by naming, classifying and excluding. James Clifford's "Museums as Contact Zones" (1997) provides a framework for understanding the conflict of differing ideologies now present in the Canadian Wing.

New art-historical perspectives on Canadian art often mention the treatment of historical Canadian artists in exhibition and I have drawn from these examples to situate the AGO's new Canadian wing. Texts on the work of the Group of Seven by scholars including Dennis Reid, Joyce Zemans, and Lynda Jessup have been useful – the most important of these texts have been reproduced in *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art* (2007), a volume that brings together a wealth of literature detailing the complex relationship of Canadian art with the landscape. This is important for this thesis considering that the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art consists almost entirely of landscape paintings. The AGO as an institution has always been tightly connected to the Group of Seven, and landscape painting constitutes the heart of the Canadian canon. Marcia Crosby's "Construction of the Imaginary Indian" (1991) and Daniel Francis' "The Vanishing Canadian" (1992) discuss representations of Aboriginal people in the work of Emily Carr, Paul Kane and Cornelius Krieghoff, while the positioning of women artists in the Canadian canon has been discussed by Zemans (whose work influenced AGO curators Alicia Boutilier and Georgiana Uhlyarik)[14] in "A Tale of Three Women: The Visual Arts in Canada" (2001) and Monika Kin Gagnon's "Work in Progress: Canadian Women in the Visual Arts 1975-1987" (1987). These new art-historical texts following postcolonial and feminist perspectives are most useful, and correspond with the AGO's focus on women artists and Aboriginal artists as the primary changes to make in the Canadian Wing. *The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University* (2002), edited by Charles Haxthausen, provides a framework for understanding why new art-historical perspectives, like those outlined above, have posed a challenge for the art museum.

[14] Uhlyarik and Boutilier, in conversation with the author. Toronto and Kingston, July 5 and July 20, 2010.

From the enormous body of new museological theory in circulation, I have drawn most from the following five volumes: *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (2004), edited by Claire Farago and Donald Preziosi; *Art and its Publics: the Museum at the Millenium* (2003), edited by Andrew McClellan; *Re-inventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift* (2004), edited by Gail Anderson; *A Companion to Museum Studies* (2006) edited by Sharon Macdonald; and *Museums After Modernism: Strategies of Engagement* (2007), edited by Griselda Pollock and Joyce Zemans. I have selected these because they are among the most recent new-museological anthologies, and they reflect the breadth of issues that are pertinent for the twenty-first-century museum. I draw upon these new volumes to contextualize the Canadian Wing in relation to the continuing evolution of the art museum.

Svetlana Alpers' "The Museum as a Way of Seeing" (1991) and Mieke Bal's "The Discourse of the Museum" (1995) are valuable in my examination of how the installation of the AGO's permanent Canadian collection supports specific 'ways of seeing.' I have also drawn from texts that address the conventions of exhibitions and installations, to elucidate the impact of these strategies on the visitor. Although many of these texts specifically address temporary exhibitions and the exhibition of contemporary art, they are also useful in examining contemporary practices of curating permanent installations of historical art. Stephen Greenblatt's "Resonance and Wonder" (1991) introduces a critical recent curatorial debate between installations that rely on context, and those that rely on the experience of wonder. Brian O'Doherty's classic text "Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space" (1976) examines the "white cube" model that has dominated the modern art museum, and which is visible in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art. Ingrid Schaffner's "Wall Text" in *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* (2006) provides an incisive look at opposing

perspectives on the use of didactic material in exhibition. This is useful here given that the Thomson Collection features almost no wall text, whereas the McLean Centre provides plenty.

In my discussions of the visitor interpretation of the Canadian Wing, I draw primarily on the seminal work of Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. Her concepts of the museum's role in "shaping knowledge," "the power of museum pedagogy," and of the "polysemic" nature of objects, are useful in discussing the effectiveness of the new Canadian Wing for the visitor.[15] Hooper-Greenhill's visitor research corresponds directly with the AGO's imperative to promote "idiosyncratic meaning-making" on the part of the visitor. Andrew McClellan's chapter "The Public" in *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (2007) provides a thorough and recent analysis of the art museum's relationship to its publics, which I will draw upon to contextualize the AGO's interest in the visitor experience.

Methodology

Because of the diversity of new museological issues and the radically different installations of the two halves of the Canadian Wing, I have chosen to frame my thesis accordingly. I have chosen not to analyse the new Canadian Wing according to any particular theoretical model, but instead to demonstrate how the varied goals of new museology are (or are not, in the Thomson galleries) applied practically. The texts mentioned in my literature review have influenced my approach, setting up the complexities that accompany the AGO's

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[15] See Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2000); "Studying Visitors," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*; and "The Power of Museum Pedagogy," in *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-First-Century*, ed. Hugh Genoways (Lanham, Md.: Altamira Press, 2004), 235-246.

new project. Donald Preziosi's account of the "complexities of art, art history, and museology at the very locus of their convergence," exemplifies the way in which I bring together discussions of Canadian art history and new museology. Preziosi contends that this convergence sees,

> the uncanny semiotic nature of the (art) object, and the psycho-dramaturgy or "subjects" (in their various incarnations as viewers, visitors, or citizens) interacting with "objects" in museological and art historical (not to speak of more generally social and civic) space-time.[16]

This statement evokes the relationship between art history, the role of the museum, and the reception of the visitor in the museum experience, which is integral to this thesis. To elucidate the complexities of exhibiting historical Canadian art and the current state of the Canadian museum, the writing of Ruth Phillips provides the most significant context and background. Similarly, the new models of exhibiting Canadian art history promoted by Lynda Jessup, Richard William Hill and Gerald McMaster guide my approach. Finally, I evaluate the outcome of the pairing of the two halves of the Canadian Wing using James Clifford's notion of the "museum as a contact zone."

My approach to the importance of the changes to the AGO's Canadian Wing is inspired by statements like Preziosi and Farago's:

> One of our central concerns is with exploring alternatives to familiar 'histories' of the institution that are written either in a singular magisterial voice or in a deceptively anonymous 'It happened that…' mode that masks its own views.[17]

This statement makes clear the need for accountability in changing art museum practices, and the urgent need to put theory into practice. The principle of accountability in the institution

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[16] Preziosi, "Art History and Museology: Rendering the Visible Legible," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, 51.

[17] Farago and Preziosi, "What Are Museums For?" in *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum,* eds. Farago and Preziosi (Aldershot and Burlington Vt.: Ashgate, 2004), 8.

has been integral to my analysis. In a similar vein, Irit Rogoff's writing on the limits of criticality has also been important in shaping my approach, particularly in realizing the value of exploring the process through which new museological criticism can be applied practically in the art museum.[18] For this reason, my thesis relies most heavily on interviews to offer the perspectives of those within the institution who were responsible for implementing the reinstallation. The desire to have these interviews guide my thesis arose because I was interested in the fact that despite so much illuminating writing on museums, their problems and their possibilities, the institutions themselves have changed slowly. I have attempted to write about the process of creating a new way of seeing, the negotiations that accompany institutional change, and the curatorial and ideological considerations that make a difference.

I interviewed several curators and interpretive planners at the AGO, including both present and former staff. The interviewees were overwhelmingly generous with their time and willing to answer all of my questions in depth, no matter how minute the topic. The answers I received from different parties generally corresponded and complemented each other. Where discrepancies or obvious biases arose, I have made note. To supplement these interviews, archival research at the AGO's library provided me with internal press releases and press clippings to further contextualize the process of the reinstallation.

Chapter Breakdown

The first chapter introduces the AGO's goals with the Transformation AGO project, situating it as a "reinvented" museum. This chapter examines the primary changes to the institution, including its assertion of the importance of the visitor experience, and the

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[18] Irit Rogoff, "What is a Theorist?" in *The State of Art Criticism*, ed. James Elkins (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2008), 97-110.

specificities of the AGO's new relationship with Ken Thomson. Beyond these institutional changes, I discuss recent historical precedents for the installation of historical Canadian art at both the AGO and the National Gallery of Canada: the country's two largest art institutions. I focus my discussion on the inclusion of Aboriginal objects, and on the chosen models of exhibition, two issues that recur throughout this thesis. I look first at the previous installation of Canadian art at the AGO, curated by Dennis Reid in 1992, as well as the later "intervention" in the Canadian collection undertaken by Richard William Hill. His short-lived installation *Meeting Ground* in 2003 provided an innovative model for exhibiting shared Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian art histories in the art museum. I also briefly discuss the National Gallery of Canada's 2003 reinstallation of its Canadian Wing, the *Art of this Land* project. The National Gallery's installation inserted historical Aboriginal works within the pre-existing narrative of its permanent collection, following a different model of display from the AGO. These examples contextualize what makes the AGO's new reinstallation of historical Canadian art differ from the conventional narrative.

The second chapter examines the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art, discussing the terms of the new relationship between the AGO and the Thomson family, the nature of Thomson's collection and the unusual way in which it has been installed at the AGO. In this chapter, I will discuss the implications of the relationship between public institutions and private collectors and benefactors. Here I draw upon the work of Mieke Bal and Svetlana Alpers to elucidate the ways in which the Thomson Collection promotes the specific ideologies of the modern art collector as connoisseur. In my analysis, I examine the implications of a strictly "visual argument" in the Canadian Wing of a major art museum, in terms of the visitor experience. Ultimately, I ask how Thomson's traditionally canonical

collection fits with the AGO's stated intent to broaden the scope of its Canadian Wing. Finally, I examine the way the architecture and placement of the galleries and the exhibition strategies used in the Thomson Collection create a problematic spatial hierarchy in the Canadian Wing, and within the AGO as whole.

The final chapter looks at the installation of the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art, housing the AGO's existing collection of historical Canadian art. This chapter explores the impact of new museology and new art history on the Canadian galleries, through specific curatorial initiatives and interpretive planning. I draw upon the criticisms and challenges mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2 and posit what it means to create new ways of seeing and how this is enacted. In this chapter, I draw upon interviews with the curators of this section, Gerald McMaster, Alicia Boutilier and Georgiana Uhlyarik, to establish the process and intent of the reinstallation. Throughout, I refer to the suggestions put forth by Ruth Phillips, Lynda Jessup and James Clifford and others to demonstrate how new museological theory can be applied practically, offering alternative models for the display of historical Canadian art. Finally, I make comparisons between this installation and the one featuring the Thomson Collection, to elucidate the differences between Thomson's older museological project and the new one seen in the McLean Centre.

I conclude by drawing on James Clifford's concept of the museum as a "contact zone," to examine the meeting of conflicting ideologies in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art and the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art. While the reinstallation of the J.S. McLean Centre provides a break with many of the conventions of exhibiting historical Canadian art, the inclusion of the Thomson Collection ultimately complicates the impact of the AGO's commitment to "new ways of seeing" by reinforcing the traditional canon and

museological models. In my conclusion, I weigh the pros and cons of the donation, and imagine possibilities for the future of the AGO's Canadian Wing.

CHAPTER 1: The 'Transformed' AGO: Contextualizing the Canadian Wing.

Transformation AGO, the Art Gallery of Ontario's (AGO) massive 2008 expansion project, was the end result of over a decade of changes and initiatives undertaken by the Gallery. Newspaper magnate Kenneth Thomson's donation, and the Gallery's subsequent successful fundraising efforts, meant that the AGO was in a position to make major permanent changes in the Gallery. These changes had previously been impossible for financial reasons and limitations within the existing building. The AGO seized this rare opportunity to overhaul its collections, its operations, its exhibition tactics, and public programs – the Gallery's entire identity. In its publicity materials, the AGO has been vocal about its interest in the visitor experience. This shift toward public accessibility and diversity follows trends in new museology and curating since the 1980s. At the same time, the AGO was constrained, because of the unusually large amount of control exercised by Thomson.

In negotiating the complex tensions between public and private interests and obligations the AGO characterizes the challenges directed at the twenty-first century museum.[1] The coming together of diverse interests and ideologies has had a tangible influence on how the AGO's collections are presented to the public. This is particularly noticeable in the Canadian Wing. Donald Preziosi calls the museum "one of the most central and indispensable framing institutions of our modernity."[2] It is my intent with this chapter to show not only how the AGO frames Canadian art for its visitors, but how it has "re-framed" itself with Transformation AGO. This chapter will provide a contextual framework for the reinstallation of the Canadian Wing, exploring how permanent installations of Canadian art

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[1] See Nick Prior, "Having One's Tate and Eating It," in *Art and Its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, ed. Andrew McClellan (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 51.
[2] Donald Preziosi, *The Brain of the Earth's Body: Museums and the Framing of Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 71

were beginning to rethink the conventional art museum narrative prior to 2008 and how the AGO was embracing and initiating these shifts. I will also demonstrate how the AGO, with Transformation AGO, was striving to better reflect the interests of the public, and how necessary Ken Thomson's support was to the success of such a large scale project.

The process of Transformation AGO began unofficially in 1997 when three senior staff members (then-Director Glen Lowry, then-Curator of Canadian Art Dennis Reid and then-Chief Curator Matthew Teitelbaum) approached Canada's wealthiest individual, Ken Thomson, with the hope of acquiring his massive 2000-piece collection of art.[3] Thomson, who died in 2006, was Canada's most prolific collector, with a collection of highly-valued objects reflecting each of his focused collecting areas: nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canadian painting, early modern European miniatures, and historic ship models. Because of the considerable size of the potential donation (the largest yet in Canada to any cultural institution),[4] discussions between the Thomson family and the AGO continued for five years. On November 17th, 2002, an announcement was made to the public confirming the AGO's plans to begin a partnership with the Thomson family and issuing details of the Gallery's expansion project, designed by renowned architect and Toronto native Frank Gehry. It was agreed that Thomson would give the Gallery a total donation of over $370 million – his collection of art worth $300 million, as well as $70 million for the building expansion and an endowment fund. The AGO would seek additional funds to supplement Thomson's gift, so

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[3] Dennis Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[4] Art Gallery of Ontario. "New Art: The Thomson Collection," http://www.ago.net/new-art-thomson-collection.

that the donation of the Thomson Collection would coincide with an expansion and transformation of the institution as a whole.[5]

While the AGO's relationship with Thomson was a major component of its expansion, the AGO was also working to rebrand its institutional image in other ways, reflecting new museum standards and interests. The Gallery created the motto "New Art, New Ideas, New Building, New Future," positioning itself as a "reinvented museum," to use Gail Anderson's term. Relevance, according to Anderson,

> is at the heart of the current paradigm shift from the traditional museum (as elitist, exclusive, ethnocentric and paternal) to the reinvented museum (as equitable, inclusive, multicultural, open, welcoming and dialogic).[6]

The AGO's rebranding reflects broader changes in museum practice over the course of the twentieth century – most notably, the shift from object to public(s). As Hilde Hein states, museums have been profoundly changed by the "the placement of experience front and center as the objective of the museum, displacing the primacy of the collection.[...]"[7] Though art museums have always operated for the public, the recent changes denote the museum's primary role as engaging its public, rather than operating as a repository for objects. Stephen Weil calls it the "decentering of the collection as the museum's *raison d'être*," stating further

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[5] Though Thomson is credited for funding the expansion, several other donors gave more than $5 million each and Ottawa and Queen's Park each pitched in $24 million as part of a six-year, federal-provincial-municipal partnership to improve municipal infrastructure in Ontario. Thomson contributed $70 million of the $254 million price tag. See Richard Blackwell, "Koerner honoured for contributions to arts community," *Globe and Mail*, 16 May, 2005; Isabel Teotonio, "AGO draws a $5M donation for refit," *Toronto Star*, 24 February, 2006.

[6] Gail Anderson, *Re-inventing the Museum: historical and contemporary perspectives on the paradigm shift*, ed. Gail Anderson (Oxford: Altamira Press, 2004).

[7] Hilde Hein, *Public Art: Thinking Museums Differently* (Oxford: Altamira Press, 2006), x.

that the museum's "mission should shape the collection and not vice-versa."[8] This shift corresponds to further discourse on the nature of the museum's public, conceived of as a plurality with differing agendas rather than a monolithic group. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill calls this increased focus on the visitor "one of the greatest challenges for museums at the turn of the twenty-first century."[9] She observes that this requires new research, new professional skills, and new priorities and policies, along with a strategy to position visitors as "active interpreters and performers of meaning-making practices within complex cultural sites." In other words, it constitutes a shift from the 'expert-to-novice' paradigm to an open and forward-looking interpretive model.[10]

The New AGO: Reinvented For Its Publics

Building up to Transformation AGO, the Gallery had already positioned itself at the fore of new museum practices in Canada, particularly in the realm of the public. According to Canadian museologist Duncan F. Cameron, this was visible as far back as the 1960s:

> The gallery had decided that it was no longer simply a place where proved works of excellence should be exhibited and interpreted to the public. Rather, it was also to be a place where the unknown and the experimental should be given a chance to happen[...][11]

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the AGO was among the first art museums engaged in "visitor studies," a recent branch of museology, which, according to former AGO educator Judith Mastai,

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[8] Stephen Weil, "Collecting Then, Collecting Now: What's the Difference?" in *Re-inventing the Museum*, 290.
[9] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, "Studying Visitors," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 362.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Duncan Cameron, "The Museum, a Temple or the Forum," in *Reinventing the Museum*, 62.

> attempts to refocus the interpretive concerns of museums, away from authoritative curatorial and art-historical narratives and toward responding to the various questions which are raised by the presence of visitors in the museum and by the need to attract visitors to the museum.[12]

Public programming throughout the 1990s and early 2000s continually reflected the AGO's interest in engaging directly with its communities in innovative ways.[13] This directed and prioritized commitment to the visitor was not, however, institution-wide, and not fully reflected in the installation of the permanent collection. As Andrew McClellan has stated, "When you get past the temporary exhibitions and education programs, mainstream art museums appear to have changed very little in recent decades."[14] For 2008, it was decided that the focus on the visitor experience would thereafter be mandated throughout the institution. In an internal memo to staff in 2006, titled, "We're Bringing the Strategic Plan Alive," Director and CEO Matthew Teitelbaum expressed the AGO's new goals:

> The AGO undertook extensive research in the last year to better understand how our various communities perceive us, and their own ambitions for the transformed AGO. We talked to staff, volunteers, members, artists, students and neighbours...Three commonalities emerged and we have embraced them as distinctive attributes of the AGO in 2008: an excellent collection, compelling and innovative interpretation and an extraordinary visitor welcome. We're calling these our brand essence, but I think of them as the gist of what our visitors will say after their first visit in 2008: "the art was remarkable, I learned something about it and I felt welcomed in every way."[15]

For the first time in the history of the institution, the entire AGO staff was actively promoting this initiative: Chief Curator Dennis Reid, Curator of Canadian Art Gerald McMaster, Assistant Curator of Canadian Art Georgiana Uhlyarik, and Project Manager Iain

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[12] Judith Mastai, "There is No Such Thing as a Visitor," in *Museums After Modernism: Strategies of Engagement*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Joyce Zemans (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 173.
[13] See Janna Graham and Shadya Yasin, "Reframing Participation in the Museum: A Syncopated Discussion" in *Museums After Modernism*, 157-172.
[14] Andrew McClellan, "A Brief History of the Art Museum Public," in *Art and Its Publics*, 32.
[15] Matthew Teitelbaum, "We're bringing the Strategic Plan alive," 18 May, 2006.

Hoadley all stated in interviews with the author that improving the visitor experience was the primary goal of the new AGO. This departs from past examples in which curators at major art institutions relinquish responsibility for the "visitor experience" as the domain of educators and is emblematic of structural change in the Gallery's operations.

To implement these changes throughout the institution in preparation for Transformation AGO, a set of guiding principles was put in place. They were initiated by the AGO's senior management and created by a team selected from across several departments. The guiding principles are: Diversity, Responsiveness, Relevance, Forum, Creativity, and Transparency.[16] The principles directly address new museological critiques from the past thirty years, which have questioned the contemporary relevance of the art museum; the exclusionary nature of their collections; their distanced positions from the real communities in which they are situated; and their sometimes inaccessible modes of representation. The AGO's new guiding principles respond to such criticisms. Under Responsiveness, the Gallery states it will "listen to community input and feedback to incorporate needs and desires into programming"; under Relevance, the Gallery will "have the flexibility and agility to identify and make connections to emerging social issues through art"; under Diversity, the Gallery will "engage artists and audiences from a full spectrum of demographic and cultural groups" and so on.[17] As stated by Teitelbaum and the AGO's President Charles Baillie in the 2006-2007 Year End Review, the AGO wholly endorses these principles:

> Reaching out to new and diverse audiences is part of the AGO's strategic plan and its newly created guiding principles. We are already living these principles and our commitment to our visitor experience. In all that we do, we will now reflect diverse art, audiences and experiences; be relevant and responsive to our

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[16] Art Gallery of Ontario, Art Matters blog, "New Ideas: The AGO of 2008." http://artmatters.ca/wp/2007/05/new-ideas-the-ago-of-2008-what-do-you-think/.
[17] Ibid.

> communities; inspire individual creativity; contribute to institutional transparency and provide a forum for active dialogue about art.[18]

The AGO strove to implement these policy changes to welcome collaboration and participation on the part of the visitor, and largely remove the authoritative voice of the curator-as-expert. When installing the new gallery spaces at the AGO, the curators and interpretive planners worked in tandem to ensure that every one of the guiding principles was reflected in each gallery space.[19] According to then-Chief Curator Dennis Reid, the new 'team approach' to the Gallery's programming radically changed the process of the 2008 expansion. Under this model, curators took a step back. Reid states, "the curator was a leading voice, but only one voice among many."[20] This change reflects Anderson and Hooper-Greenhill's assertions that enacting the paradigm shift to a "new" museum requires change from within. On the decision to form a new team-based approach for the Transformation, Teitelbaum said, "Transformation AGO is not merely a building expansion project – it is a subset of our vision and our ambitions to bring art and people together in new and engaging ways."[21]

For 2008, the AGO aspired to break down the barriers that prevent people from visiting art museums.[22] The Gallery marketed itself as a gallery for the people, with slogans like "Gotta Go AGO!" and promotional material labelling the gallery "Your AGO." The Gallery also introduced several new public programs in an attempt to reach out to the broadest possible audience, within the diverse local communities. The 'Free After Three'

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[18] Art Gallery of Ontario, Year in Review 2006-2007, http://www.ago.net/assets/files/pdf/AGOyearReview2006-7.pdf.
[19] The Initial Plan for the McLean Centre of Canadian Art (the AGO's Canadian Wing) demonstrates that the galleries were organized around each of these principles, ensuring that each had been touched upon in every single gallery space.
[20] Dennis Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[21] Teitelbaum in an email to AGO staff. March 28, 2003.
[22] Koke, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.

program gives high-school students free admission to the gallery on weekdays after 3 pm; a new alliance with the Toronto Public Library allows Toronto residents to borrow a family day pass to the AGO from the library as they would a book; and the Citizenship AGO program allows new immigrants to Canada free year-long passes to the gallery so that they can learn about their new country and cultural heritage through art.[23] It is fitting that the AGO would be leading this initiative in Canada: not only is it situated in a postcolonial country, but in Toronto, Canada's most multicultural city. Reconceptualizing the Gallery's relationship to the community and the public was timely and necessary. Situated in the heart of downtown, in the city's Chinatown neighbourhood, the AGO desired to further integrate itself in the urban fabric of Toronto.[24] While the institutional mandate, public programs and marketing schemes changed the AGO from the inside, the new Frank Gehry-designed building is the most visible marker of the AGO as a "reinvented" museum.

The Transformed Gallery Spaces: Establishing a Site for New Ways of Seeing

Frank Gehry's new design made the Gallery easier to navigate, more visible in the Toronto and international community, and more inviting from its Dundas Street façade. Gehry, known internationally for his spectacular museum architecture, created a more humble design for the expansion of his hometown's art museum. Architecture critic Christopher Hume writes,

> Inside, Gehry called for Douglas fir wherever possible, not just because it's Canadian but because it adds warmth and a level of comfort to the interior.

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[23] Art Gallery of Ontario, Art Matters blog, http://artmatters.ca/wp/2009/11/matthew-teitelbaum-receives-award-from-canadian-centre-for-diversity/.

[24] Larry Wayne Richards, "Frank Gehry: Seeing the AGO Again (and Again)," in *Frank Gehry: Toronto*, ed. Dennis Reid (Toronto: AGO, 2006), 45.

> Never will the AGO, and the gallery-going experience, have been more welcoming. We need no longer fear art.[25]

Gehry's winding Douglas-fir ramp in the foyer immediately positions the AGO visitor in the Gallery's core, and from there one can find the necessary amenities (tickets, the gift shop, the coat check and restrooms) and begin exploring the galleries. This is a far cry from the often-criticized former building entrance to the AGO, which disoriented visitors from the outset. The historic Walker Court is once again the centrepiece of the redesigned institution, and the addition of a spiraling staircase ascending to the upper contemporary galleries provides an intriguing focal-point to pique interest immediately. Overall, the AGO's renovations allowed the gallery to unify the confusing mélange of sections that had accumulated over the course of smaller expansions.

According to Suzanne MacLeod, the trend in new museums is distinguished by shifts in museum architecture that create distance from the institution's "elitist" past. These changes, she writes, are "characterized as creating spaces for lifelong learning, spaces of mutuality and inclusive spaces, where physical, intellectual and cultural barriers to access may be overcome.[26] Gehry states, "the AGO should not overwhelm...can't be too pristine [and] must generate great relationships between the galleries, the art and the city."[27] The canopy of twisting titanium extended into Dundas Street West "embrace[s] the everyday activity of the street."[28] The street is literally attached to the Gallery by streetcar wires affixed to the façade. Gehry's building marks the AGO as a "new" museum and is the most visible symbol of the

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[25] Christopher Hume, "Gehry's AGO will dazzle for the right reasons," *Toronto Star*, 18 June, 2007.
[26] Suzanne MacLeod, *Re-Shaping Museum Spaces: architecture, design, exhibitions*, ed. Suzanne MacLeod (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2005), 2.
[27] Comments by Gehry at the AGO, Toronto, January 28, 2004. Quoted in Richards, 45.
[28] Richards, 39.

institutional changes.[29] These architectural changes distinguish the museum from the traditional modernist museum – the daunting, "secular temples" that proliferated in the twentieth century.[30] Gehry's building, integrated into the urban fabric of the city, embodies the goal of creating a more democratic space to address "the tension between iconic architecture and the agendas of access and inclusion that form the central tenets of the modern museum."[31]

The interior layout is more cohesive than before without imposing a traditional linear trajectory, or the "series of rooms *en filade*" of the classic museum.[32] The Gallery instead consists of groupings of hubs and thematic zones. The galleries vary in size and scale and are installed using a variety of exhibition tactics. Throughout the permanent collection, the AGO's curators employed a selection of curatorial strategies and types of hang: monographic, thematic, salon-style, cabinets of curiosity, and chronological, for example. The spatial variations are intended to "enable visitors to see and experience...art in surprising new ways."[33] The AGO's galleries are framed around multiplicity: multiple "points of entry," and multiple narratives in the place of one master narrative. The use of multiple narratives reflects the numerous branches of new art-historical methods, in place of the traditional, linear art historical narrative through which art museums are usually organized. Contemporary art has

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[29] For other examples and further discussion on new museum architecture see Douglas Davis, *The Museum Transformed: Design and Culture in the post-Pompidou Age* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), and Victoria Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1998).

[30] For a discussion of the "postmodern" museum, see Rosalind Krauss' "Postmodernism's Museum Without Walls," in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 1996). For a discussion of the traditional museum space, see Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," *Art History* 3 (December 1980): 448-69.

[31] MacLeod, 2.

[32] Krauss, 343.

[33] Richards, 39.

been interspersed throughout the historical galleries, eschewing the predominant chronology and periodization of the art museum and encouraging visitors to look differently at the past and the present. This rejection of a chronological categorization corresponds with one of the central tenets of new art history – the rejection of "a concept of linear evolution culminating with western European art." [34] The Gallery now presents a "contextual model" of display throughout the institution,[35] following visitor studies research that posits that visitors respond better to stories than to traditional art-historical methods.[36] Many of the AGO's new galleries are thus organized around the themes and issues of a socio-political visual culture, rather than traditional classifications of school, style or material. This organization supports the AGO's goal to bring work from different cultures and time periods together in conversation, drawing out accessible commonalities across time and place.

Responding to the new art-museum standard of providing for differentiated publics, the AGO's interpretive planners have included a range of educational materials throughout the galleries to account for diverse visitors with different motivations for visiting and with varied learning styles.[37] Linda Milrod, Director of Exhibitions, states, "If we want to succeed

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[34] Ruth Phillips, "What is 'Huron Art?' Native American Art and the New Art History," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 4, no. 2 (1989): 161. Phillips describes the aims of new art history succinctly here: "First, new art history replaces the notion of a universal 'history of art' with a number of discrete but overlapping 'histories of art' – the art of women, of different social classes, of different ethnic groups. Second, as a consequence new art history also seeks new, non-hierarchial redefinition of the term 'art' to include many forms of visual representation formerly excluded from the canon and relegated to the categories of craft, folk, and popular art." See also, Donald Preziosi, "Art History: Making the Visible Legible," in *The Art of Art History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[35] Dennis Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.

[36] See Hooper-Greenhill, "Audiences: A Curatorial Dilemma," in *Art in Museums*, ed. Susan Pearce (London: The Athlone Press, 1995) 143-163, and Duncan Cameron, "The Museum, A Temple or a Forum."

[37] According to Judy Koke, the AGO classifies visitors according to five "types" modeled after visitor research specialist John Falk's classifications: the explorer, the art aficionado, the

in engaging our visitor in the breadth and depth of the collections in our care, we need to offer multiple points of entry through various interpretive strategies."[38] Each type of visitor seeks out and uses interpretive material differently,[39] and the AGO's interpretive planners have responded accordingly. The interpretive material throughout the galleries includes the conventional tombstone and extended labels, but also handheld pamphlets, audio stations, video stations, and even drawing stations within the galleries where visitors can illustrate their responses to works in the collection. Music plays in some galleries to complement the works on display and wandering tour guides are ready to engage visitors in discussion at any moment.[40] The shift towards collaborative curatorial models initiated for Transformation AGO meant that interpretive planners and educators gained more agency to implement these strategies. While the curators came up with the premises for the panels, the interpretive planners would write them to maintain an accessible tone throughout the institution.[41] The interpretive labels and panels pose open-ended questions to elicit visitor response, straying from the conventional authoritative text of the curator as expert and arbiter of taste.

These new exhibitionary and pedagogical tactics constitute the new AGO standards for its permanent collections, and its strategies for visitor engagement. They are in place throughout the institution, except in the galleries housing the Thomson Collection. As a private patron, rather than a staff member, Thomson's personal vision guided the installation of his collection. The exceptional installation of the Thomson Collection thus reflects the

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facilitator, the experience seeker, and the recharger. See Falk's "An Identity-Centered Approach to Understanding Museum Learning," *Curator* 49/2, 2006

[38] Linda Milrod, in "Visitor Experience and the new AGO," a 2006 internal AGO memo.

[39] Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[40] These strategies will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, in discussion the gallery's Canadian Wing.

[41] Georgiana Uhlyarik, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.

AGO's new responsibility to nurture private interests, as well as public ones – ultimately, it was Thomson's donation that enabled the visitor-oriented changes mentioned above.

The Responsibilities to the Benefactor

The terms of the Thomson donation indicate the complex issues facing the Gallery at the time of Transformation AGO. As a collector and patron, he espoused significantly different values than the AGO. If the AGO's new operational, curatorial and pedagogical strategies reflect the values embedded in new museological theory, Thomson's wishes for the installation revert to an older museological model, rooted in modernist aesthetic values. The outcome of this partnership has a major impact for the AGO and for Canadian public museums: Thomson's collections now occupy 40 of the AGO's 110 galleries, more than a third of the nation's second-largest art museum. At the Gallery's grand opening in November 2008, Thomson's collection was on display in its entirety as a "celebration of the gift," and it will remain that way for years.[42]

According to many who knew him, Ken Thomson was a "humble" billionaire, and many I spoke with at the AGO reiterated that the donation was not motivated by his ego, nor intended to promote his wealth and importance. Instead, Thomson's donation was motivated by his desire to share his collection with the Canadian public.[43] Thomson's art advisor, Conal

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[42] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009. The agreement between Thomson and the AGO stated that the entire Thomson Collection would be exhibited – all 2000 works. Reid spoke cryptically of this arrangement, indicating that while there are no current plans for changes to the Thomson galleries, there are no plans not to.

[43] In a documentary on Thomson, "The Journey and the Man: the Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario," his wife Marilyn states that they always intended their collection to be public. Even before the donation to the AGO, Thomson exhibited his collection in public galleries above The Bay department store in downtown Toronto. The documentary

Shields has said, "Art really mattered to Ken. He was never a trophy-gatherer. The collection is not a piece of high-end consumerism. It's not a conspicuous display of wealth."[44] Thomson's donation was a coup for the AGO, giving it a major collection and making the new Frank Gehry-designed building possible. Without the donation, the AGO would not have been in a position to make such widespread institutional changes. According to Dennis Reid, Thomson was pleased that his donation would not constitute an isolated expansion for the AGO.[45] He intended his donation to operate as a catalyst for endless new possibilities at the AGO – a starting point for a reinvented museum.

The terms of the donation state that Thomson's collection will remain distinct within the AGO for a specific and undisclosed number of years. Although Thomson's galleries will remain autonomous during this period of time, the agreement also stipulates that the gallery will "constantly seek meaningful adjacencies with the rest of the AGO collection."[46] For the AGO, this meant placing Thomson's Collection of Canadian Art alongside their own Canadian collection on the second floor of the gallery, and his collection of early European objects and Renaissance paintings next to the AGO's European galleries. It was agreed that once the collection reached the AGO, the Thomson family would remain very involved. Reid revealed that the curatorial decisions for the installation of the Thomson Collection reflect Thomson's wishes: "We didn't have a team in the usual AGO sense because obviously a donor on that scale wants to be involved and wants it to satisfy him as well as the

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accompanies the book *Ken Thomson the Collector*, published by the AGO in 2008 to celebrate the donation.

[44] "The Journey and the Man: the Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario."

[45] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.

[46] Ibid.

institution."[47] Reid went on to state that architect Frank Gehry also had very high stakes in the project, giving "the designer a larger role than in normal in the project."[48] The "larger than normal role" assumed by Thomson and Gehry resulted in special Gehry-designed spaces for the Thomson Collection, installed according to the specifications of the Thomson family. The decision-making process for the Thomson Collection in the new AGO remains under the control of the Thomson family (his son David took over leadership after Ken's death in 2006), with Reid and other AGO staff members in supporting roles.[49] Art historian and former AGO curator Anna Hudson states that Thomson had a strong vision for his collection, more so than many private collectors do.[50] Though it was mediated through Reid, the installation largely presents one man's vision, instead of the AGO's team approach where curators, interpretive planners, educators and exhibition designers converge and collaborate.

Many take issue with the tendency to give private donors curatorial control in exchange for their gifts.[51] Curator and critic Richard William Hill, discussing the controversial shifting of power at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinberg, Ontario, warns of the potential conflict of interest that arises when public institutions pander too much to private collectors. He states, "If nothing else, this is a cautionary tale about the dangers of shackling public institutions to private interests, particularly a single, powerful private

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Iain Hoadley states that the AGO will not change anything in the galleries without the permission of the Thomsons. Hoadley, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[50] Anna Hudson, "Beauty is the Eye Discovering: Ken Thomson's Passion for Historical Canadian Art," in *Ken Thomson the Collector*, ed. Conal Shields (Toronto: Skylet/AGO, 2008), 109.
[51] See Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (New York: Routledge, 1995), and James Cuno's Introduction to *Whose Muse?: Art Museums and the Public Trust*, ed. Cuno (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). This has been especially problematic in the United States, to a lesser extent in Canada.

interest."[52] Hill followed this statement with a footnote: "A lesson that the Art Gallery of Ontario chose to ignore in its relationship with new best buddy Ken Thomson, who was also promised curatorial control over his new wing as well as the mother of all tax breaks." Perhaps more vexing than the conditions of the donation itself, are the ethical implications of handing over control in a major public institution to the donor. Melanie Townsend voiced similar concern:

> The extraordinary gift, argues AGO Director and CEO Matthew Teitelbaum, is 'destined to assure the Gallery's reputation as a preeminent art museum of our time…[and] boldly declares that art matters.' But whose art and to what end?[53]

Townsend's concern about the AGO's acquisition of the Thomson Collection echoes questions Donald Preziosi has raised: "What precisely can it mean, today, to presume that the function of a museum is to 'tell stories'? Whose stories, told for whom by whom, and to what ends?"[54] Incorporating Thomson's 2000-piece collection has undoubtedly shifted the narrative or story of art exhibited at the AGO.

Though such extensive collection-building may have been secondary to the AGO's new public-oriented goals, the AGO wanted the collection and needed the monetary donation to undertake its major institutional overhaul. When asked why the AGO actively sought out the Thomson partnership, Dennis Reid laughed, saying [of his Canadian Collection], "it's only the finest collection of Canadian art in private hands!"[55] Thomson's

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[52] Richard William Hill, "Graveyard and Giftshop: Fighting over the McMichael Canadian Art Collection," in *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art*, eds. John O'Brian and Peter White (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 2007), 213.
[53] Melanie Townsend, "Conspicuous Consumption," in *Obsession, Compulsion, Collection: On Objects, Display Culture, and Interpretation,* ed. Anthony Kiendl (Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2003), 22.
[54] Preziosi, "Philosophy and the Ends of the Museum," in *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-first Century,* ed. Hugh Genoways (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2006), 72.
[55] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.

immense Canadian collection features the country's best-loved artists. Yet an influx of canonical paintings, while valuable and important, may not support the AGO's stated goal of telling "a wealth of stories in multiple voices throughout the ages."[56] When Reid was the AGO's Curator of Canadian Art (until 2005), he inaugurated the AGO's contextual and educational model of display, and he has since been an advocate for the AGO's new ways of seeing, and policies of including Aboriginal art in the institution. Yet, as an art historian, he is a pre-eminent scholar of the work of the Group of Seven and Cornelius Krieghoff – among Canada's most iconic artists. Thomson thus found a like-minded partner in Reid and in Teitelbaum as well. The latter's comments in a 1996 paper give the impression of a curator with an interest in provocative and critical exhibitions, and in establishing the art museum as a place for cross-cultural interaction – foreshadowing the goals of Transformation AGO.[57] As a director, Teitelbaum now asserts that he considers the Thomson Collection to be the AGO's best asset.[58] This is telling of the split between public and private interests negotiated from within the institution, which is especially visible in the Canadian Wing. The two top figures at the AGO both have a strong interest in the canonical offerings of the collector, but are also motivated to broaden the scope of Canadian art history for the public.

Re-Inventing the AGO's Canadian Wing, Re-Thinking the Canon: Recent Precedents

The disjuncture between public and private interests comes to a head in the AGO's Canadian Wing, where Thomson's collection has now been installed, its presentation contrasting sharply with that of the AGO's own collection. Leading up to Transformation

[56] Art Gallery of Ontario, "Canadian Collection," http://www.ago.net/canadian.
[57] Teitelbaum, "Notes on the Meeting of Cultures," in *Naming a Practice: Curatorial Strategies for the Future* (Banff: Banff Curatorial Institute, 1996), 40-44.
[58] Teitelbaum, in interview with Sarah Milroy, "Arts and Crafts," *Toronto Life*, April 2001.

AGO, the Gallery had been steadily integrating new perspectives on Canadian art, and planned to continue this project in 2008. In doing so, it was responding to new art-historical critiques, which, since the 1970s (and earlier), have largely supplanted the old dominant "universal history of art" and questioned the "settler narrative" in Canada. As Phillips commented in 1992, observing the marginalization that occurs in museums, and the need to apply theory to practice:

> The named categories that structure the museum system are a residue of obsolete nineteenth-century ideologies…Second, they create domains of inclusion and exclusion that continue to inscribe colonial attitudes about race, patriarchal ideas about gender, and elitist notions of class…Third, our named categories will, until we change them, continue to have a representational force that overrides and undercuts the revisionist approaches to museum representation in which many academics and museum professionals are engaged.[59]

These issues are particularly important in relation to the AGO's Canadian Wing, which has long been the heart of the institution. The Canadian Wing is arguably the section of the AGO with the most political importance and the largest role in subject-formation. As a result, new art-historical criticism in Canada has directly targeted the issues of representation in permanent installations of Canadian art, more so than in other areas of the art museum.

In the Canadian Wings of public art museums, traditional narratives have largely begun in the period after European contact, highlighting artists, predominantly men of European ancestry, who worked in prescribed European styles. Anne Whitelaw, discussing the National Gallery of Canada's historical Canadian galleries, describes a linear, progressively moving narrative that reaches its pinnacle with the work of the Group of Seven and their

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[59] Ruth Phillips, "How Museums Marginalise: Naming Domains of Inclusion and Exclusion," *Cambridge Review* (February 1993): 6.

"distinctively" Canadian aesthetic.[60] The story of Canadian art is thus defined through modernist paradigms that until recently excluded the tradition-based production of Aboriginal artists: a correlation of stylistic and temporal progress, framed according to the nationalistic rhetoric of representing "Canada's emergent sense of itself as a nation."[61] Despite new art-historical criticisms and the claim that, as a multicultural nation, Canada has "no official culture" and no group "takes precedence over any other,"[62] Canadian art and national identity are most often presented as unified, and defined by Euro-Canadian painters. This much-repeated version of Canadian art history follows old art-historical and museological conventions, and excludes the work of artists that did not fit neatly within this template.

The AGO has been experimenting with alternative installations of historical Canadian art since 1988. At the time, then-Curator of Canadian Art Dennis Reid approached interpretive planners Douglas Worts and David Wistow to re-create the Group of Seven gallery, with new, experimental pedagogical strategies.[63] Reid's initiative was the first time at the AGO that a curator actively sought out a partnership with the educational team,[64] which

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[60] Anne Whitelaw, "Whiffs of Balsam, Spruce and Pine," in *Capital Culture: A Reader on Modernist Legacies, State Institutions, and the Value(s) of Art*, eds. Jody Berland and Shelley Hornstein (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-University Press, 2000), 123.

[61] Ibid.

[62] According to Pierre Elliott Trudeau's discussion of the 1971 Multicultural Policy in Canada, quoted in John O'Brian and Peter White's Introduction to *Beyond Wilderness*, 6.

[63] These included themed groupings, "flipper" labels, and an interactive computer used for the first time in a permanent collection. It provided visitors the opportunity to leave comments, creating a two-way line of communication. This interactivity is a major direction in work on museum visitors.

[64] Worts, in conversation with the author. Skype. January 29, 2010. According to Worts, Reid was the only curator committed to this approach at the time. There was backlash from the other curators, who felt their authority was being undermined, and the project was almost cancelled.

had traditionally been considered a separate domain.[65] The new approach proved successful with visitors, and a similar contextual model was introduced when the AGO completely reinstalled its Canadian galleries in 1992. The 1992 galleries additionally demonstrated a tentative shift away from a chronological arrangement, introducing a partially thematic exhibition model.[66] The galleries were constructed to evoke the historic context of viewing in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Canada, with the creation of "period" rooms and a reconstruction of an academic Salon. This new model challenged the alleged neutrality and self-sufficiency of the art object, a critical aspect of new art history and museology. But despite these innovations, the limited range of historical Canadian art on view was criticized.[67] Aboriginal artists and women artists were notably underrepresented. The 1992 galleries had provided a contextual environment, but did not address the inherent context of power relations, or rectify the exclusions identified in postcolonial and feminist critiques of the canon. While they do challenge the high modernist notion of the autonomous art object, the creation of "period" rooms and a salon gallery can have the adverse effect of re-creating a dominant version of the past in a more wholly immersive way.[68] The Canadian galleries

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[65] Andrew McClellan posits that the divide between curatorial and educational departments corresponded with the mid-twentieth century's curatorial shift to the white cube, with its "pure and 'neutral'" displays. See "A Brief History of the Art Museum's Public," in *Art and Its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, 24-27.

[66] Douglas Worts gives a detailed description of the interpretive strategies in the 1992 re-hang in "Extending the Frame: Forging a New Partnership with the Public," in *Art in Museums*, 164-192.

[67] Tom Hill and Robin Wright criticized the insufficient display of historical Aboriginal objects. See Hill, "A First Nations Perspective: The AGO or the Woodland Cultural Centre" and Wright, "The Cunningham Collection of Haida Argillite at the Art Gallery of Ontario," in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery,* ed. Lynda Jessup with Shannon Bagg (Hull, Que.: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002).

[68] See Nicole Lisus and Richard Ericson, "Authorizing art: the effect of multimedia formats on the museum experience," *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 36, no. 2 (May 1999): 199-216.

largely paid homage to the Group of Seven and their contemporaries, constituting another exhibition of a dominant art history. Sarah Milroy, reviewing the 1992 installation, hints at the extent to which artists like the Group of Seven painters have become entrenched in the Canadian collective consciousness:

> The parameters of the institution's collecting policy nonetheless reflect the prevailing ideology of the public. It is an ideology that cherishes [Frederick] Varley's *Dharana* – an image of enraptured spirituality painted in 1932, during the artist's stay in the Lynn Valley in British Columbia – more than it does those works of art created by the Salish carvers living in the next valley over [...][69]

Exhibiting Joint Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian Art Histories

> Periodic or "soft" inclusion...absolves the institution from a long-term commitment to the serious treatment of works by Native artists...This intermittent inclusion, or "tokenism," always guarantees consistent exclusion...and gives the impression that there is no problem of exclusion.[70]

The topic of Aboriginal exclusion has arguably been the most important one in Canadian art history since the 1980s, but curator Lee-Ann Martin's statement reflects the continuing lack of permanent commitment to the exhibition of Aboriginal art in Canada's public art museums until recently. Little change was made to the permanent historical collections at the AGO or the NGC until the early 2000s, although throughout the 1990s the AGO began to explore more seriously the incorporation of historical Aboriginal art in its galleries.[71] In March 2000, the AGO staged a series of workshops in conjunction with the Vancouver Art Gallery bringing together major Canadian scholars, artists and community members to discuss the

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[69] Sarah Milroy, "The Gracious Eye," *Canadian Art* (Winter 1992): 32-33.
[70] Lee-Ann Martin, quoted in Lynda Jessup, "Hard Inclusion," in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery,* xiii.
[71] The beginning of the AGO's active pursuing of First Nations art throughout the 1990s is evident from "Locating Cultures: Collecting First Nations Art," a roundtable discussion at the AGO with Gerald McMaster, Deborah Doxtator, Dennis Reid, Lynn Hill, and Tom Hill held on December 4, 1997.

prevailing lack of Aboriginal representation in galleries. The workshops and the resulting volume *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery* addressed the challenges presented in exhibiting Aboriginal art in Canada's public institutions. To begin with, major art institutions like the AGO owned almost no historical First Nations objects (having never considered it a priority for collecting)[72] and furthermore, the exhibition, conservation and storage of Aboriginal objects required different considerations than the Euro-Canadian objects that our art museums were historically built to house. Given the Eurocentric framework of the Western art museum, it is difficult to "add" Aboriginal works into the institutions.[73] That said, given the importance of art museums like the AGO in disseminating knowledge, ideas, and official culture, Aboriginal work must somehow be integrated into these narratives. The resulting paradox is outlined by Richard Fung:

> Ignoring Aboriginal work in the historical time line of Canadian art misrepresents the history of artistic production in this land, but including Aboriginal works within an already established and legitimated Euro-Canadian framework can reinscribe the processes of colonization and subjugation.[74]

After the pressure generated by *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery* (along with earlier critiques), in 2003 the National Gallery of Canada and the AGO both introduced new installations in their Canadian Wings, featuring historical First Nations objects.

The NGC inaugurated its ongoing *Art of This Land* project in April 2003. Prior to this, the NGC had not included Aboriginal work at all its historical Canadian galleries.[75] Its

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[72] Historical First Nations objects largely ended up in the hands of colonial collectors and missionaries, or in ethnographic museums, rather than art museums. See Ruth Phillips and Janet Berlo, "Our (Museum) World Turned Upside Down," *Art Bulletin* 77, no. 1 (1995).
[73] The same can be said of Canada's women artists given Canadian art history's patriarchal record.
[74] Richard Fung, "After Essay," in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, 38.
[75] The NGC had, however, been collecting and exhibiting First Nations work in its contemporary galleries since the mid-1980s.

Canadian Wing presents a conventional installation in the Western art-historical tradition, and though *Art of this Land* vastly expanded Aboriginal representation, it has been criticized for inserting the objects into an existing narrative that emphasizes Euro-Canadian art.[76] For example, the gallery entitled *Paul Kane and the Plains Artists* features Kane's nineteenth-century paintings of Aboriginal cultures alongside objects made by members of the Plains nations. This is a particularly weighty juxtaposition given the stereotypical depictions of Aboriginal cultures in Kane's paintings. And yet, the extended wall text glosses over the problematics of these colonial encounters and does not fully address the distinctiveness of the different cultural modes of artistic production; it gives Kane's work precedence over the Aboriginal works shown alongside it. The introductory panel states,

> In this gallery, the works of the Irish born, Toronto painter Paul Kane are grouped with objects from the northwest Plains cultures that he encountered on his travels across Canada in 1846-48. Inspired by American artist George Catlin ... Kane determined to make a visual record of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the Canadian West and their customs [...]

Though the final paragraph of the panel mentions Plains customs and aesthetic principles, it refers to the "Plains peoples whom Kane depicted." The panel thus frames the exhibit through Kane, as the "dominant and named artist," and the embroidered Métis jacket and the Blackfoot beaded tunic become props for understanding his work and travels. Anne Whitelaw notes that in some of the galleries, the Aboriginal objects are placed so as to force the viewer to move around them to get to other works, thereby giving the Aboriginal works primacy in the space. This, she argues, constitutes an effective rupture to the NGC's dominant narrative, but these instances of rupture are few.[77] In general, the installation

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[76] Anne Whitelaw, "Placing Aboriginal Art at the National Gallery of Canada," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 36, no. 1 (2006).
[77] Ibid.

privileges popular paintings such as those by the Group of Seven, which are placed in high-traffic locations. They are spotlighted, hung sparsely to honour each work, and are visible in advance, framed through archways across the gallery's inner courtyard. These spatial and exhibitionary tactics favour Western artistic production over the First Nations objects, which are often smaller, created to be worn or carried. It is a major indication of change when the National Gallery of Canada – the nation's foremost art institution – implements a new approach to Canadian art history. Still, the NGC's galleries remain relatively conventional authoritative spaces, conservative in their interpretive strategies.[78] As Lynda Jessup observes, in reference to the installations at the NGC and the AGO pre-Transformation,

> It is not a matter of placing Native North American art or history in the service of settler art or history. Rather, it is a matter of acknowledging that their very presence in the gallery troubles the existing narrative of settler art and the ways in which it is structured and understood. They demand revision of Western categories of aesthetic production and object valuation, a revision that cannot easily, or perhaps ever, be addressed by simply adding objects…to an ever-expanding and yet, by its very nature, hierarchical art-historical "canon."[79]

To contend with the challenges of collecting and exhibiting First Nations art, the AGO created an Aboriginal Consultancy Group,[80] and hired Cree curator Richard William Hill to work in the Canadian curatorial department.[81] Hill organized an innovative installation

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[78] It is important to note that the National Gallery of Canada was not in a position to radically alter the gallery spaces architecturally in 2003, as the AGO was with Transformation AGO.
[79] Lynda Jessup, "Landscapes of Sport, Landscapes of Exclusion: The Sportsman's Paradise in Late-Nineteenth-Century Canadian Painting," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 110.
[80] AGO Press Release dated January 29, 2003: "First Nations and Euro-Canadian art come together in a dramatic new installation at the AGO." The group consisted of "Denise Bolduc, Aboriginal Arts Officer at the Ontario Art Council, and William Kingfisher, Patricia Deadman and Jeff Thomas, who have careers as artists and curators. The group also included artist Rebecca Belmore and – and prior to his untimely death in January 2002 – scholar and activist Rodney Bobiwash."
[81] Hill was hired as part of the Canada Council's Aboriginal Curatorial Residency program, and later hired in a full-time permanent position. According to Douglas Worts, the AGO had

entitled *Meeting Ground*, which would prove to be influential in the subsequent 2008 reinstallation. With Hill's installation, the AGO publically stated its commitment to collecting and exhibiting historical First Nations art.[82] *Meeting Ground* presented several "firsts" for the AGO: it was the first time the Gallery exhibited a historical First Nations object it had purchased itself.[83] It was also the first time the Gallery had hired a First Nations curator (Hill); and the first time in the Gallery's permanent collection that First Nations and Euro-Canadian art were treated as mutually-influential and equally important.

Though it only targeted one gallery in the AGO (the McLaughlin gallery), *Meeting Ground* introduced the most thorough counter-narrative prior to Transformation AGO and was an important precursor. It was considered as a "pilot project" for the inclusion of Aboriginal art at the AGO. *Meeting Ground* focussed on the local, Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal art from the Woodlands/Great Lakes region between 1670-1845.[84] The AGO's historical Euro-Canadian works were juxtaposed with historical Aboriginal works borrowed from other institutions, creating a cross-cultural dialogue. Hill posits that the categorical separation of Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian art in exhibitions,

> silences these histories of cultural interaction, whether they are negative or positive. By having the objects in direct relationship in the room and supporting them with educational videos, these histories become very difficult to ignore.[85]

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put in its application for the Aboriginal Curatorial Residency several years prior. Worts, in conversation with the author. Skype, January 29, 2010.

[82] "First Nations and Euro-Canadian art come together in a dramatic new installation at the AGO."

[83] Ibid. *Meeting Ground* features "an early 19th century Anishnaabe (Ojibwe) gunstock style club, exquisitely carved with Great Lakes iconography, including classical Thunderbird motifs. Acquired in September 2002, this is the AGO's first purchase of historical Aboriginal art."

[84] Hill, "Meeting Ground: The Reinstallation of the Art Gallery of Ontario's McLaughlin Gallery," in *Making a Noise!: Aboriginal Perspectives on Art, Art History, Critical Writing and Community,* ed. Lee-Ann Martin (Banff: Banff International Curatorial Institute, 2004), 50.

[85] Ibid., 62.

Working with associate curator of Canadian art Anna Hudson, interpretive planner Douglas Worts and exhibition designer Tracy Myerson, Hill approached the installation at a structural level, tackling the "givens" of the art museum. First came the creation of cultural property guidelines for the handling of Aboriginal objects.[86] Hill and the team also wanted to address the particular history and context with which they were working, using the existing contextual model of the 1992 installation but pushing it further. He states, "with the McLaughlin gallery designed to suggest an upper-class, domestic interior, Aboriginal objects would inevitably appear to enter as a collector's trophies – perhaps items from his cabinet of curiosities." He continues, "It was clearly important to create a context that spoke to the creation and use of art in Aboriginal communities, not its history of being collected by European colonists."[87] Hill posed the question, "What sort of context could be created that would do justice to the Aboriginal art and also leave conceptual and aesthetic space for the European Canadian works?" The resulting exhibition incorporated Aboriginal cosmology, with "abstract skyworld patterns" on the ceiling and "underworld designs" on the floor, "so that the gallery space itself would be bracketed within an Aboriginal worldview."[88] The installation of objects themselves was thematic. Works by French-Canadian, Anglo-Canadian and Aboriginal artists were "brought into conversation," with a high level of interpretation, including audio and

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[86] Hill, "Getting Unpinned: Collecting Aboriginal Art and the Potential for Hybrid Public Discourse in Art Museums," in *Obsession, Compulsion, Collection*, 200. Hill writes, "The guidelines provide that it is to be left to the discretion of the community of origin of a work to set the terms by which that object might be collected or displayed."
[87] Hill, "Meeting Ground: The Reinstallation of the Art Gallery of Ontario's McLaughlin Gallery," 56.
[88] Ibid., 58.

video from Aboriginal community members.[89] The team brought in a youth community group (7th Generation Image Makers) to create a large Thunderbird design on the wall, challenging problems of scale since historical Aboriginal works are generally small. The Thunderbird also addressed the issue of differing "worldviews," providing a counterpart to a "near life-size wooden sculpture of a Madonna and Child from eighteenth-century Lower Canada."[90] The challenging pairings in Hill's exhibition create what Reesa Greenberg calls the "dialogic or discursive" exhibition, in which "the conversation generated...is designed to deeply disrupt or disorient rather than reenforce traditional aesthetics."[91] This "disruption" of the status quo is of critical importance for the integration of Aboriginal art in the narrative of Canadian art: ensuring that it "does not constitute an overheard conversation, but a direct form of address, impossible to avoid or drown out."[92]

Though this installation successfully addressed many of the challenges of inclusion and exclusion discussed in new museological literature, it was taken down with the closing of the Canadian Wing in the fall of 2003, indicating the degree to which such curatorial efforts remain at the mercy of institutional policies and limitations. Additionally, as Jessup notes, the installation was contained in one gallery, therefore not altering the authority of the dominant narrative elsewhere in the galleries.[93] Post-*Meeting Ground*, there remained the need for a full-scale structural reconsideration of the installation of historical Canadian art, though as Jessup

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[89] Hill noted that audience research at the time showed that most visitors would enter the Gallery with almost no knowledge of the Aboriginal history of the area.
[90] Ibid., 60-61.
[91] Reesa Greenberg, "The Exhibition as Discursive Event," in *Longing and Belonging: From the Faraway Nearby*, Site Santa Fe (New York: Distributed Art Publishers Inc, 1996), 118-125.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Jessup, "Landscapes of Sport, Landscapes of Exclusion," 109.

notes, a universally-accepted story of Canadian art would be unlikely. Foreshadowing the issue-based art history to come with Transformation AGO, Jessup writes,

> It may be time, instead, to conceive of a public history of art in Canada in terms of sequences of individual, issue-based displays isolated from the demands of a continuous national history – installations that encourage consideration of the ways in which that history has been written and visualized over time and space, and that allow expansion not of the history per se, but of the range of historical conditions of art production deemed worthy of consideration.[94]

Conclusion

With newly-hired Curator of Canadian Art, Gerald McMaster at the helm, the reinstallation of the Canadian Wing in 2008 represents both a continuation of Hill's efforts to disrupt the prevailing Euro-Canadian aesthetic paradigm and an attempt to engage visitors anew. It would be pushed further to address other pertinent issues including the exclusion of women artists, and the tensions between local and national in Canadian art. The Canadian Wing would also be radically re-shaped by the presence of the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art. The Wing would be split into two parts, one housing the AGO's own collection (the J.S. McLean Centre) and the other housing Thomson's extensive collection. Hill's discussion of the context of the installation provides an important way of considering the presence of the Thomson Collection:[95] how would the installation of the AGO's Canadian collection fare when exhibited alongside a private collector's canon? The combined goals of Transformation AGO and the canonization of the Thomson Collection provide new contextualization for the exhibition of historical Canadian art at the AGO.

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[94] Ibid, 110.

[95] For further discussion of the site-specificity of exhibitions and installations, see Reesa Greenberg, "The Exhibition Redistributed: a case for reassessing space," in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, 349-367, and "Defining Canada," *Collapse* 3 (1998): 95-118.

In many ways, the prestige of the Thomson donation has dominated the AGO's overall transformation. It was his donation that served as a catalyst for the new AGO, and once the agreement was made, the gallery was required to accommodate Thomson's wishes. The continued impetus behind collection-building in public art museums – and the institutional prestige attained when a museum possesses key works of art – means that many institutions will go to great lengths to secure an important collection, even if it means ceding some operational control. The Thomson donation eclipsed all previous donations and the AGO deferred to him in return, but not without angering other patrons who also gave significant sums and objects for Transformation AGO.[96] Given the scale of the Thomson donation, and the authority given to the Thomson family, it is critical to examine how the acquisition of the collection advances the AGO's overall goals for Transformation AGO and relates to its new guiding principles. As I have shown, the AGO is embracing new museological ideas with Transformation AGO. In the Canadian Wing, in particular, the AGO has been moving towards a new model of interpretation for its historical Canadian galleries. Chapter 2 will demonstrate how the installation and contents of the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art presents a distinctly older museological model, privileging a value system competing with that espoused by the "new" AGO. Thomson, as is evident in his donation,

[96] In fact, the AGO angered some donors when it was revealed that Gehry's plans for the expansion would diminish the size of Joey and Toby Tanenbaum sculpture atrium, the Tanenbaum Centre for European Art, and The Max and Anne Tanenbaum Gallery of 20th-Century Art, even though the Tanenbaums had donated close to $100 million to the AGO over 35 years. In the end, the AGO decided to work on design changes to preserve more of these spaces for the Tanenbaums, indicating the depth of the Gallery's reliance on and desire to please its donors. See "Philanthropist quits board," *Toronto Star*, 10 March, 2004; Sarah Milroy and James Adam, "Tanenbaum disputes AGO costs," *Globe and Mail*, 10 March, 2004; John Barber, "In the delicate realm of big-time patronage," 10 March, 2004; Eric Reguly, "AGO overhaul stokes donor friction," *Globe and Mail*, 13 March, 2004; Debra Black and Christopher Hutsul, "Tempest in the atrium leaves AGO scrambling," *Toronto Star*, 10 March, 2004.

wanted very much to help the AGO with its new project. However, the installation of his collection complicates the goals of the AGO's new Canadian Wing.

CHAPTER 2: Negotiating Public and Private Interests in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art

> *"As governments decrease investment in public art institutions, the relative power of collector donors within these institutions increases."* – Richard William Hill[1]
>
> *"I do not see how you can walk past these beautiful objects, look at them, and not see the glory of art and its creation."* - Ken Thomson[2]

Beyond the architecture, the most striking change to the new Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) is the incorporation of the massive Thomson Collection, now on permanent display in several areas of the Gallery. Kenneth Thomson's donation enabled the AGO's renovation, and in turn the AGO installed the collections according to Thomson's wishes, and dedicated prime gallery spaces to them. As Thomson's statement in the epigraph suggests, he had confidence in the power of the art object and installed his galleries to reflect the wonder he himself felt before art. The Thomson Collection of Canadian Art features the most iconic artists in Canadian art history and was clearly a desirable acquisition. Though the AGO (and almost all public galleries) rely to some extent on private patronage, the Thomson donation was much larger than any other and thus came with larger implications for the Gallery. Instead of the AGO's usual team of curators, interpretive planners and exhibition designers, Thomson, and later his son David, led the direction of the installation himself, working with Frank Gehry and then-Chief Curator Dennis Reid.

It is my intent with this chapter to demonstrate the complexity of incorporating such a donation into the AGO, ultimately assessing its implications for visitors to the Canadian

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[1] Richard William Hill, "Getting Unpinned: Collecting Aboriginal Art and the Potential for Hybrid Public Discourse in Art Museums," in *Obsession, Compulsion, Collection: On Objects, Display Culture, and Interpretation,* ed. Anthony Kiendl (Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2003), 198.
[2] Ken Thomson, quoted by Charles Baillie, in the introduction to *Ken Thomson the Collector*, ed. Conal Shields (Toronto: AGO and Skylet), 7.

Wing. I will discuss first the nature of the collection, and the ideologies communicated through its installation in the AGO. I argue that its aesthetic-based installation promotes a modernist project of glorifying a select few artistic heroes and privileges a "connoisseur's approach to the appreciation of art."[3] I question the effectiveness of this connoisseur's approach for the visitor, given the lack of interpretive material. Finally, I argue that the most crucial aspect of incorporating such a collection lies in making explicit the distinction between different paradigms of viewing Canadian art: the private collector's vision, not the public institution's vision. I conclude that while the Thomson donation has benefitted the AGO and will continue to do so, as it is installed now, according to Thomson's wishes, it continues to skew the AGO's Canadian Wing in favour of a dominant group of artists.

Ken Thomson, Collector and Connoisseur

In an interview with the AGO's Director and CEO Matthew Teitelbaum in 1997, it is evident that Thomson values the collector's "good eye" and the object's beauty – terms he mentions several times. When asked by Teitelbaum how he knows when an object is "good", Thomson replies:

> It is feeling and it is touch. When you find something that you love, you must touch it and hold it. That way you are getting as close to the person who made it as you will ever get. And when you get that close to something, when you feel it, when you look at it, if your heart is beating, you know it was made for you.[4]

Yet for Thomson, a collection must also be founded on tangible quality rather than sentiment:

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[3] Dennis Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010. Reid stated that the collection was very much about the "collector's eye."

[4] "A Conversation with a Collector," http://www.ago.net/thomson-teitelbaum-conversation.

> [I]f the object is not good enough, you had better let somebody else have it, even if the associations are pleasant. You have to focus on quality. On the other hand, objects can be fine and appealing without necessarily being important or expensive. But when you get something that is beautiful and the memories are good, then you have it all.[5]

Though he had no formal art-historical training,[6] the intensity of Thomson's interest in aesthetics marks him as a true connoisseur, evident in his emphasis on quality, craftsmanship and beauty. As art historian and former AGO curator Anna Hudson claims, "He constantly traded up, aiming to leave the AGO with the highest quality of Canadian historical art possible."[7] Despite his "indifferen[ce] to the fame of the person who made the work of art,"[8] his collection of Canadian art contains the most iconic artists. He focussed his attention on a small number of artists, collecting large numbers of works by those favourites – mainly significant nineteenth- and twentieth-century painters. The collection consists almost entirely of the genre scenes and landscape paintings of Cornelius Krieghoff, Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven, and David Milne, among them the Northern Ontario landscapes that reminded Thomson of his childhood.[9]

While canonical Euro-Canadian artists dominate Thomson's collection of Canadian art, the small collection of historical First Nations objects interspersed throughout the galleries is significant. Ken Thomson collected some pieces himself late in his life, while his family added others to the collection as a posthumous gift. Dennis Reid describes how historical First Nations works came to be included in the Thomson Collection:

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Anna Hudson, "Beauty is the Eye Discovering: Ken Thomson's Passion for Historical Canadian Art," in *Ken Thomson the Collector*, 116.
[7] Ibid., 115.
[8] As stated by the art dealer Sam Fogg, an acquaintance of Thomson's, in the documentary "The Journey and the Man: the Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario." The documentary accompanies *Ken Thomson the Collector.*
[9] Sarah Milroy, "For the Love of Art: The Collector," *Globe and Mail*, June 13, 2006.

> The whole idea of the Thomson Canadian Collection encompassing First Nations developed fairly late for Ken. And he had picked up a few pieces that he admired and obviously his interest in the European objects, you can see the taste involved in those, moved quite easily to Northwest coast material for instance. We had, back in 1984, declared that the AGO was going to begin collecting in the area of historical First Nations and that we believe in an integrated approach to the history. And so of course we were talking to Ken about that in terms of the Thomson Collection as well. He was quite interested, and began to acquire material, with a thought that it would be part of his Canadian galleries, but he didn't get too far.[10]

Thomson collected some historical First Nations work – as he collected Oceanic and African objects – but never with the passion and determination with which he collected his landscape and genre paintings. They can be seen in a tiny darkened room at the edge of the Thomson Wing which contains a mélange of Indigenous objects from around the world: Native North American objects, Oceanic, African, Australian and Asian. The objects in the cases are varied, from miniature Thule and Punuk animal effigies made of ivory, to weapons and human figures from the Republic of Congo. While not connected by time or place, the objects speak to Thomson's sensibilities – his fascination with miniatures and intricate carving, and his fledgling interest, nurtured by Reid, in broadening his collection of Canadian art to include First Nations work. The objects share similarities with the European miniatures he collected, which he selected above all because they are exquisitely crafted.[11]

The most significant First Nations objects in his collection were acquired, however, after Thomson's death in June 2006. In October of the same year, his son David and his niece Sherry Brydson bid on nearly 20 pieces from the renowned Dundas Collection of Native Northwest Coast objects at a Sotheby's auction in New York City. The objects had

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[10] Dennis Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009. Interestingly, though Reid states here that the AGO had made a commitment to integrating and collecting First Nations art in 1984, the fruits of this declaration were not visible until the early 2000s.
[11] Reid, in conversation with the author. July 5, 2010.

been taken from villages on British Columbia's Northwest Coast by the Scottish clergyman Robert Dundas in 1863 and had remained in private hands in the United Kingdom. "Nineteen pieces, including the most valuable – the shaman's mask, a carved antler club for $940,000 and a frog clan hat for $660,000 – were purchased for the Thomson cousins." [12] The Thomson family bid anonymously and at the last minute, amid fears that the collection would be lost to Canada forever. None of the country's major public galleries and museums was able to procure the necessary funds to purchase the majority of the collection, let alone the significant works selected by the Thomson family; the purchase marked their return to Canada after 150 years.[13]

Given that many of Canada's public art museums lack significant holdings of the historical First Nations objects they now wish to include in their Canadian wings, the influx of these important objects purchased by the Thomson family was of considerable importance for the AGO.[14] Although the AGO had earlier made a commitment to collect and exhibit historical First Nations art, it had few objects in its collection prior to Transformation AGO.[15] The inclusion of these objects in the Thomson Canadian galleries also serves to make further linkages between both halves of the Canadian Wing, as visitors will now see First Nations objects throughout.[16]

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[12] Heather Ramsay, "The Dundas Collection," *Northword*, February 2007, http://northword.ca/february-2007/the-dundas-collection.
[13] Ibid.
[14] According to Gerald McMaster, the AGO has had to borrow much of the historic First Nations art it exhibits because little was acquired throughout the 20th century. McMaster, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[15] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.
[16] Ibid. Reid states that this was important for the AGO.

The Installation of the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art

At the top of the AGO's main staircase, one finds oneself in the "hub" of the Canadian Wing, a foyer area intended to situate the visitor in each wing of the gallery.[17] An introductory panel in the hub tells visitors what to expect in the new Canadian Wing:

> Canadian art has traditionally been understood as starting with the arrival of Europeans in the mid-1600s. The AGO's Canadian galleries have been conceived to tell a more inclusive history by incorporating much older First Nations and Inuit objects. As you walk through the galleries, you will notice different ways of interpreting Canadian art. In the Thomson Collection, up the stairs to your right, most of the galleries provide an in-depth look at the work of individual artists. The rest of the Canadian galleries feature artists of different periods to explore broad ideas and issues – how art is shaped by institutions and beliefs, how it reflects our shared and personal memories, and how it communicates cultural stories.[18]

From this hub, visitors can choose to veer left down a narrow corridor leading into the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art (fig. 1), housing the AGO's own collection of Canadian art, but the bright open spaces of the Thomson Collection at the top of the stairs beckon powerfully (fig. 2). This is an important, high-traffic area of the AGO: the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art is next to the special exhibitions space and is bordered by the Galleria – a windowed walkway popular with visitors looking out over the Toronto cityscape. The Thomson Collection of Canadian Art thus occupies the most impressive (and one of the largest) sections of the AGO; in terms of space, architecture and art, the importance of the collection and the donation is made explicit.

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[17] In an internal memo titled "Toward 2008 – Hubs," the AGO's Director of Education, Kelly McKinley states: "Hubs represent one of the big, new ideas for the Transformed AGO. The hubs respond to the AGO's three strategic priorities and the cornerstones of the Gallery's brand – excellence in collections, leadership in interpretation and exceptional visitor experience."

Whereas the rest of the Canadian Wing remained in its existing, albeit renovated, spaces, Frank Gehry built completely new galleries to suit the Thomson Collection.[19] Gehry and Thomson worked closely together during the expansion,[20] and Thomson generally deferred to Gehry, stating "I know you'll make it special."[21] Gehry designed grand, light-filled spaces: the walls are all painted white, with thick Douglas-fir moldings running along the bottom. They are the brightest galleries in the new AGO, with skylights providing natural light. In art museums, lighting has traditionally been used to symbolize the pinnacle of artistic progress.[22] Large, light-swept rooms like Thomson's also have the effect of instilling a sense of awe and grandeur. The Thomson galleries are spacious, and are laid out in a legible, linear grid. These features turn these galleries into the institution's most majestic spaces, automatically lending importance and giving the Thomson Collection an immediate attraction for visitors over the darker, maze-like galleries in the rest of the AGO's Canadian Wing.

The Thomson galleries have been chiefly installed as monographic rooms. Whereas in most permanent collections of historical Canadian art the focus is on displaying a wide range of artists, monographic installations are often used in temporary exhibitions and retrospectives featuring a single artist or a small number of artists whose work can be

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[19] Iain Hoadley, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[20] In a biography of Gehry, Gillian MacKay notes that Gehry was indeed close with the Thomsons, observing that he was seen out and about with "Ken and Marilyn Thomson, with whom he was photographed arm-in-arm." See *Frank Gehry: Toronto*, ed. Dennis Reid (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2006), 8.
[21] Matthew Teitelbaum, "Ken and Frank: Admiration, Friendship and the Realization of Dreams," in *Frank Gehry in Toronto: Transforming the Art Gallery of Ontario*, ed. Teitelbaum (Toronto and London: AGO and Merrell, 2009), 17.
[22] Tony Bennett, "The Politics of the Invisible," in *The Birth of the Museum* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 167. Architecture historian Anthony Vidler has argued that the modern museum is set up so that as the visitor moves chronologically through the galleries, they become lighter, "symbolizing man's journey from darkness towards the light."

exhibited in large quantities.[23] The huge volume of works (over 700) by very few artists (mainly eleven painters) in Thomson's Canadian collection meant that a monographic installation was almost inevitable. And because Thomson advocated coming to one's own conclusion about the work,[24] there is almost no interpretive material in the Thomson galleries. Straying from art-museum conventions, there are no labels beside each work, so as not to mar the experience of looking at Thomson's canonical collection.[25] Each gallery contains just one introductory panel with a short statement about the artist. Instead of labels, handheld pamphlets are provided, giving the "tombstone" information: artist, name, date, medium. As the brief statement in the Canadian "hub" hints, the "in-depth look at the work of individual artists" is consistent with the aesthete's vision that Thomson espoused: the work must stand on its own. The monographic and sparsely interpreted galleries suit this project, aiming to inspire visitors to marvel at the beauty and craftsmanship of the objects, providing visitors with a plethora of works to visually compare and contrast.[26] The path from the east to the west end of the Thomson Collection galleries moves chronologically from the mid-nineteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century, giving a clear, though very selective, narrative

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[23] For discussions of the merits and drawbacks of the monographic exhibition, see Robert Storr, "Show and Tell," in *What Makes a Great Exhibition?*, ed. Paula Marincoli (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, 2006) and Mark Rosenthal, "Telling Stories Museum Style," in *The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University*, ed. Charles Haxthausen (London and New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003).

[24] Hudson, 116.

[25] Reid, in conversation with the author. November 11, 2009. According to Reid, he and Thomson felt there would be no room for labels with Thomson's entire collection on display.

[26] According to Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, the three notions central to connoisseurship are "style/manner," "artistic character," and the "metaphysics of individuality." These tenets are evident in Thomson's focus on aesthetic interpretation and the artistic achievement of the individual artist. See Hatt and Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 43.

of artistic progress through Canadian art history, and giving each artistic hero his own separate space.[27]

Thomson collected more than 200 paintings by Cornelius Krieghoff (his favourite artist) in his lifetime and nearly 150 are exhibited in three large galleries arranged according to recurring themes in Krieghoff's oeuvre: "Images of Canada," "Scenes in Quebec," and "Habitant Scenes in the Quebec City Region." While Krieghoff painted in a similar style throughout his career, evoking seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting traditions, the paintings in the Thomson Collection trace the different themes and scenes he depicted as he moved throughout Quebec. They have been hung closely in a single row at eye level, and the ornate original gold frames stand out impressively (fig. 3). The rich landscapes, still lifes and genre scenes seem to continue indefinitely. Introductory panels – one in each gallery – give brief introductions to Krieghoff as an artist, discussing, for example, the market for his work among British military officers stationed in Canada; his celebration of the Canadian landscape; his highly detailed depictions of the lifestyles of the Quebec habitants and his dramatic renderings of the daily activities of the First Nations populations. The "Images of Canada" gallery, reserved for Krieghoff's finest,[28] is particularly striking, bathed in light from a large skylight, which augments the air of grandeur in these rich paintings of colonial Canada (fig. 4).

In contrast to the abundance of Krieghoff paintings, the tiny Emily Carr gallery (fig. 5) displays just four of her paintings: *Yellow Moss* (1932-34), *In a Circle* (1931), *Thunderbird* (1942) and *Gitwanjak, Queen Charlotte Island* (1912). Carr was the most significant woman artist of her time and is the only woman artist in the Thomson Collection. Her paintings were

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[27] Or *her* own separate space – although Emily Carr is the only woman artist represented.
[28] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.

exhibited at the National Gallery of Canada and internationally, and she was a close affiliate of the Group of Seven. Given the large numbers of similarly significant painters acquired by Thomson, four paintings is not many for an artist of Carr's stature. The stark juxtaposition of so many Krieghoffs and so few Carrs illustrates the different priorities in private collecting and institutional collecting. Though we cannot be certain why Thomson selected Carr's contemporaries over her work, it serves as a reminder that we are looking at a private collection, subject to the idiosyncratic taste of one individual.

As in several of the Thomson galleries, the Carr gallery features notable First Nations objects. A case in the centre of the gallery displays three nineteenth-century Native Northwest Coast portrait masks from the same region in British Columbia where Carr herself worked and from which she drew inspiration. There is no introductory panel in the Emily Carr gallery,[29] and entering this gallery makes one realize how much visitors rely on both panels and labels to situate themselves in the space: one immediately looks for markers to indicate whose work is on display but finds none. A handheld pamphlet tells what the summary panel would have, presenting Carr as a contemporary of the Group, a close friend of Lawren Harris, and stating her interest in the spiritual qualities of art, and in the culture of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. The handheld also briefly contextualizes the portrait masks in the room, speaking of the "great spiritual power" they held for the communities from which they came.

The centrepiece of the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art is the impressive Lawren Harris room, the largest of the Thomson galleries (fig. 6). Here, the focus is on Harris's

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[29] There was a panel when the gallery re-opened in 2008, but it has since been removed. Reid calls it "an oversight encouraged by spatial limitations." Personal correspondence with the author. August 25, 2010.

signature stylized Northern landscapes: dozens of paintings present scenes from his travels to Northern Ontario, the Rocky Mountains and the Arctic. "Light quality provokes passionate reactions," as Victoria Newhouse observes,[30]and here the Northern light from Gehry's custom-built skylights complements and dramatizes Harris's Northern scenes, in a harmonious pairing of art and architecture. The summary panel in this gallery introduces Harris's interest in the North, as well as his spiritual devotion to Theosophy. Despite its title, "Lawren Harris and Gems from the Northwest Coast," the panel makes no reference to the three significant First Nations objects: a prominent Tsimshian portrait mask and rare elk antler club, and a Nuu-Chah-Nulth salmon rattle.

Beyond a small room of paintings by Paul-Émile Borduas paired with Northwest Coast Shaman objects, the majority of the galleries are devoted to paintings by the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson. Five galleries contain hundreds of landscape paintings by Tom Thomson, Frederick Varley, J.E.H. MacDonald, Arthur Lismer, Franklin Carmichael, A.J. Casson and A.Y. Jackson (figs. 7 and 8). Though some of the artists of the group did work in portraiture and abstraction during their careers, the works in the Thomson Collection consist almost entirely of the landscape paintings for which they earned their fame.

The final four galleries of the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art are dedicated to David Milne, exhibiting more than 100 of his works. Milne, considered an avant-garde artist in his time, has proved less popular with the Canadian public than his contemporaries, the Group of Seven, but has been lauded by critics and curators nonetheless. His landscapes are spare, pared down to emphasize line, form and colour. Living and exhibiting in upstate New

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[30] Victoria Newhouse, *Art and the Power of Placement* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2005), 250.

York as well as rural Ontario, his work exemplifies a modernist ideology – a very different endeavour from the nationalistic agendas of the Group of Seven.

From the Milne galleries, one exits the Thomson Collection into the AGO's own Canadian collection (in what is now called the J.S. McLean Centre), immediately into the AGO's newly-created David Milne Study Centre, which links the two collections of Canadian art (fig. 9). The differences between the Milne galleries in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art, and the David Milne Study Centre in the J.S. McLean Centre reveal the different curatorial approaches undertaken by Thomson on one hand, and the AGO's curators of Canadian art on the other. Whereas the Thomson Collection galleries give only superficial information about where Milne lived and the techniques with which he experimented, the study centre goes much further in depth. It offers video and audio stations, several summary panels pinpointing certain aspects of his career, commentary from his son and from his former art dealer, an NFB video, a timeline of his life, and drawers of prints for further study. The dual installations of Milne's work indicate the way in which the Thomson Collection relies on the rest of the Canadian Wing to make up for its shortcomings, and vice versa. The interactive and multi-faceted installation of Milne's work in the study centre serves a reminder of the very different project happening in the rest of the Canadian Wing, and the rest of the AGO.

The Visual Argument in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art

The model of display selected for the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art refers back to 1929, when Alfred Barr, founding director of the Museum of Modern Art introduced "a particular type of installation that has come to dominate museum practices, whereby the

language of display articulates a modernist, seemingly autonomous aestheticism."[31] In this modernist installation, "all the walls were neutral, and the pictures were hung intellectually… [T]he idea was to let the pictures stand on their own feet."[32] According to Dennis Reid, the Thomson galleries were meant to make a "visual argument,"[33] and the decontextualized, monographic installation of the Thomson Collection creates a similar experience to Barr's "autonomous aestheticism." Many earlier exhibitions of historical Canadian art encouraged what Bruce Braun has called "rhetorics of unmediated vision," implying that the work does not require the historical contextualization that other work does: it "transcends the particular" and visitors are expected to recognize this difference.[34] Braun uses this phrase to describe the work of Emily Carr, but it could easily be extended to the other iconic artists in Thomson's Collection. Historian Stephen Greenblatt makes a distinction between resonance and wonder in the art museum, wherein wonder is the,

> power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, and resonance refers to the power of the object to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged.[35]

Most contemporary museologists agree that the ideal exhibition combines both elements but the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art, with its expansive galleries and limited didactics, aims for pure wonder. "Wonder" is one reason why people visit art museums, but for a major Canadian art institution to make wonderment the main strategy in a display of Canadian art

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[31] Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1998), 61.
[32] Ibid., 62. Staniszewski is quoting Barr's wife, Margaret Scolari Barr here.
[33] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[34] Bruce Braun, "BC Seeing/Seeing BC: Vision and Visuality on Canada's West Coast," in the *Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 165.
[35] Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 42.

assumes that these Canadian icons require no contextualization, and that they are national symbols for visitors to marvel at unequivocally. Such a seemingly "neutral" installation imagines an "ideal, standardized viewer,"[36] and "stands for a community with common ideas and assumptions."[37] Not only is this impossible in a diverse city like Toronto, this contradicts the AGO's conceptualization of its visitors as diverse and differentiated, with unique imperatives for visiting the museum. As indigenous scholar Jolene Rickard states, "A museum space is not neutral; the Art Gallery of Ontario…is one of many cultural faces of the Canadian state."[38]

Edward Fry, discussing the rise of public art institutions from private collections in the eighteenth and nineteenth century posits that art acquires a symbolic status when it moves from private to public realms, becoming a "physical embodiment of a nation's history."[39] Ken Thomson was reportedly "fascinated by the works themselves, not their academic or nationalist discourse,"[40] but the works in his collection become part of nationalist discourse when exhibited in the Canadian Wing of a public art institution. They cannot be emancipated from nationalist implications. The panel for the Group of Seven, Canada's "national school" of painters, simply states, "As artists, they shared a common belief that Canada had to develop its voice in art before it could truly become a nation." Without delving more fully

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[36] Staniszewski, 66.
[37] Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 79.
[38] Jolene Rickard, "After Essay: Indigenous is the Local," in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, ed. Lynda Jessup with Shannon Bagg (Hull, QC: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), 115.
[39] Edward Fry, "The Dilemma of the Curator," in *Museums in Crisis*, ed. Brian O'Doherty (New York, G. Braziller, 1972), 104.
[40] Hudson, 116.

into the nationalistic motivations behind the work, the collection can seem to promote a universal or essentialized notion of Canadian identity.

The monographic installation furthers the impact of this modernist project by honouring the individual artist, a convention of Western art history. Svetlana Alpers states,

> The work of an individual artist is a characteristic form our culture takes. Therefore, setting out the lifetime production of one individual makes sense as visual culture. It makes sense to look even if the order that emerges from viewing seems to be obsessional...rather than developmental in nature.[41]

The monographic installation allows visitors to compare many examples. On the downside – as Alpers hints when she describes monographic exhibitions as "obsessional" – using the monographic hang in a permanent exhibition runs the risk of perpetuating antiquated art-historical tropes, unavoidably reinforcing the notion of the artistic genius or hero. In the permanent collection of a major public art gallery, the monographic hang heroizes the nation's dominant artists, to the exclusion of others, including the diverse range of artists so carefully considered in the rest of the AGO's Canadian Wing.

The short statements on the single summary panels in each gallery promote the artists' positions as Canadian artistic heroes. Krieghoff is celebrated for documenting a romantic Canadian past and is touted as the first real Canadian artist; Lawren Harris captured the "spirit of the great North" with his stylized Northern landscapes; Tom Thomson had little formal training but "connected with nature like no other artist did" to create his moody and passionate landscapes; A.Y. Jackson was an explorer and J.E.H. MacDonald a poet. Such anecdotes, which tie the work's meaning to certain biographical facts or character traits, follow a traditional art-historical agenda, linking artistic greatness to stories of perseverance

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[41] Svetlana Alpers, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing," *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 28.

and heroism on the part of the artist. Feminist art historians have argued, however, that such biographical interpretations cannot be applied to women artists in the same way as they can men. Nanette Salomon writes,

> Whereas Vasari used the device of biography to individualize and mythify the works of artistic men, the same device has a profoundly different effect when applied to women. The details of a man's biography are conveyed as the measure of the "universal," applicable to all mankind; in the male genius, they are simply heightened and intensified. In contrast, the details of a woman's biography are used to underscore the idea that she is an exception; they apply only to make her an interesting case. Her art is reduced to a visual record of her personal and psychological makeup.[42]

This installation tactic is then telling of the narrow scope of Thomson's collection, as this biological, evolutionary interpretation only truly supports canonical male artists. Indeed, in the Thomson Collection, Carr, the only woman artist, is contextualized by her friendship with Lawren Harris. Furthermore, the biographical interpretation cannot apply to the Dundas objects in the collection: the names and histories of the individual artists have not been recorded, nor do Aboriginal cultures celebrate the cult of the individual in this way.[43]

Despite the inclusion of First Nations objects, the installation reverts to an older model of the display of Canadian art history that creates hierarchies along the lines of race, gender and medium. Thomson's collection represents a moment in time in thinking about Canadian art, a historical perspective that is rapidly being revised by art historians and museologists. In Thomson's collection there are, after all, only four paintings by one woman

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[42] Nanette Solomon, "The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission," in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 351.

[43] Ruth Phillips, "How Museums Marginalise: Naming Domains of Inclusion and Exclusion," *Cambridge Review* (February 1993): 6. Anne Whitelaw also mentions how such narratives favour "named" artists in her discussion of the National Gallery of Canada's Canadian galleries. See "Placing Aboriginal Art at the National Gallery of Canada," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 36, no. 1 (2006).

artist, and the art of Euro-Canadian men is given far more importance and attention than the First Nations objects. The canonical collection features almost entirely white, male landscape painters, exhibited to honour "the glory of art and its creation," to echo Thomson's statement in the epigraph. According to Mieke Bal, repetition produces a blinding effect. She writes: "By seeing what one already knows one cannot see what one doesn't know (yet)."[44] She goes on to state "What is destroyed then, is the educational function of art which is so central to the museum's self-image."[45] There are also distinct political implications. The installation of the Thomson collection employs what Bal identifies as one of the greatest strategies of cultural imperialism: repetition.[46] By repeating a huge volume of work by a select few Canadian artists, without new contextualization, the installation communicates that these are Canada's most important artists.

Historical First Nations Objects, Complicating the Narrative.

For better or worse, the First Nations objects complicate a straightforward understanding of the visual arrangement in the Thomson Collection. The tiny room of non-Western objects located off the Krieghoff galleries is itself anomalous within the Thomson Collection, and has been organized as a "collector's cabinet" – a repository for the objects collected over the course of Thomson's travels (fig. 10). Reid acknowledges that this old-fashioned colonial model may be problematic, stating, "It's a bit of a reach, but [...] we

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[44] Mieke Bal, "The Discourse of the Museum," in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 1996), 205.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

wanted to have all of the [Thomson] collection out, so that people could see what this was. That was the way we positioned it."[47]

The rest of Thomson's First Nations objects are interspersed with his Euro-Canadian paintings. They are displayed in a similar modernist aesthetic manner, in display cases, on white pedestals, and without labels. Throughout the galleries, where Euro-Canadian paintings are paired with First Nations objects, the contextual material usually encourages visitors to make links according to aesthetic similarities. Reid comments that because the First Nations objects were added to the collection after the fact, the visual argument was effectively the only way to connect Thomson's entire collection together coherently.[48] This installation thus evokes early inclusions of First Nations objects in Western art museums, in which they were valued for their aesthetic similarities to Western masterpieces.[49]

The objects themselves are among the most important of their type in existence: a hardwood-and-hide Tsimshian mask from 1820 purchased by the Thomson family for $1.8 million (fig. 11), set a record for the highest price ever paid for a Native North American object.[50] This fine mask and a rare Tsimshian elk antler club from 1750 are exhibited in the Lawren Harris gallery (fig.12). However, the introductory panel in the gallery focuses exclusively on attributes of the paintings and their reflection of Harris's spiritual beliefs, making no mention of the Tsimshian objects. Could spirituality have provided a reasonable linkage between Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal cultural production? In this case, the

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[47] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009. Since the terms of the Thomson donation stipulated that all of the collection must be on display, it was clearly a struggle to find a logical and cohesive exhibition model.

[48] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.

[49] See James Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[50] "Canadians acquire part of coveted native artifact collection," *CBC News*, October 6, 2006, http://www.cbc.ca/arts/story/2006/10/06/dundas-collection-auction.html

opportunity is ignored; the discussion focuses on Harris's interest in Theosophy – a very different type of spiritual engagement from that of the Northwest Coast artists. The short summary panels introducing each gallery always focus on the Euro-Canadian artists, rather than the First Nations artists. In the Emily Carr Gallery, for example, the summary panel (when it was in place) discussed Carr's interest in painting the First Nations culture on B.C.'s coast, but gave no further information on the Tsimshian, Tlingit and Haida masks in the centre of the room. The masks thus become props – the objects that Emily Carr depicts in her paintings, rather than the creations of important First Nations artists. Similarly, in the Borduas gallery, the wall text speaks of the Automatiste movement dominated by Borduas, but ignores the Shamanic traditions influencing the Northwest Coast amulets, rattles, and combs. Discussion of the First Nations objects is relegated to the handheld pamphlets, which are not always readily available or visible. For all intents and purposes, the First Nations objects were added to galleries already established for a completely different artist, suggesting that paintings are of primary importance and the First Nations objects secondary.

In an AGO documentary celebrating Thomson's gift, art dealer Don Ellis states, "The Dundas mask stands alone with anything....people will get it when they see it."[51] It may not be so simple, however, as to insert historical First Nations art into a display that favours a Western aesthetic and assume that visitors will glean the cultural, as well as the aesthetic, importance of the mask. Museum visitors have long been taught the importance of painting (thus learning how to "look" at paintings), but First Nations objects have only recently been

[51] From the documentary, "The Journey and the Man: the Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario."

included in permanent collections.[52] Discussing how the Western art museum traditions encourage certain ways of looking, Ruth Phillips writes, "This way of seeing is now so thoroughly naturalized that it requires a significant jolt to imagine another way of thinking about and seeing artistically-elaborated objects made by indigenous peoples."[53] The Western-aesthetic-based installation of the Thomson Collection privileges a specific kind of visuality and obscures the distinctive visual and cultural significance of the First Nations objects.[54]

As Rickard writes of the emphasis on the visual, "The seamless inclusion of indigenous art in a first-world national museum with no opportunity to contextualize it...will undermine the survival of First Nations communities."[55] Six Nations curator and historian Tom Hill states even more urgently, "a non-context exhibit is a form of appropriation and therefore constitutes an exploitation of the peoples whose work is being displayed. In other words, to display Aboriginal art out of context is immoral."[56] To exhibit the work of First Nations peoples as art objects as opposed to anthropological specimens was a major initiative of the late-twentieth century,[57] but recent critiques like Rickard's and Hill's confirm that First

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[52] Though contemporary Aboriginal work was acquired in the 1980s, the National Gallery of Canada first included historical First Nations objects in its Canadian Wing in 2003, and, until 2008, the AGO had only a small collection of model argillite totem poles on display.
[53] Phillips, "A Proper Place for Art or the Proper Arts of Place?," 62-63.
[54] Hill, "Getting Unpinned," 200. Hill states, "Given the history of exclusion and dismissal, the temptation seems very strong to buy into the authority of the museum and use it to celebrate Aboriginal art on modernist terms: as autonomous aesthetic masterpieces, alone and uncontextualized in their own precious jewel cases. Of course we want to celebrate them, but I think their potential is enormously richer if we imagine ways to contextualize them and bring them into dialogue with other objects."
[55] Rickard, 121.
[56] Tom Hill, "A First Nations Perspective: The AGO or the Woodland Cultural Centre," in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, 12.
[57] According to Anne Whitelaw, *Land Spirit Power* at the National Gallery in 1992 was lauded as being the first time First Nations (albeit contemporary) art was given the same stature of "high art" as the Western art that occupies most of the gallery. See "Land Spirit Power: First

Nations objects (and the museum-going public) benefit from a contextual installation. A counter-argument might claim that the objects represent "the best" of historical Indigenous art, displayed in the same way as the "best" of Euro-Canadian art. But, as Richard William Hill suggests, "our new Aboriginal art collections need to function as more than just a hastily written new chapter in the canon of Canadian art."[58] Moreover, the Dundas objects, like many others, bear the weight of a complex history. As objects acquired by a missionary during a period of erasure of First Nations cultural production, they have been passed from one collector to another. To present them as the jewels of a private collection – "gems from the Northwest coast," as the panel in the Harris gallery states – frames them through the lens of the collector, as primarily aesthetic objects. As Charlotte Townsend-Gault puts it,

> As curators we never settled whether giving what we considered to be magnificent works by First Nations artists the opportunity to be seen to their best advantage, professionally installed, without distraction, and by a wide public, could compensate for the consequent sanitizing, (the term is Robert Houle's), and de-racination.[59]

According to Curator of Canadian Art Gerald McMaster, the Dundas Collection is one of the most important collections of North American First Nations objects in existence,[60] but that importance is not communicated. Where the value of the Western paintings may be recognizable to visitors, the unfamiliar First Nations objects may not be so easily readable. Though there is great value in an aesthetic reading of First Nations objects, to insert them uncritically into an existing narrative of Western artistic achievement is of obvious concern.

Nations Cultural Production and Canadian Nationhood," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 12 (Fall 1995): 31-50.

[58] Richard William Hill, "Getting Unpinned," 198.

[59] Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Translation or Perversion? Showing First Nations Art in Canada", in *Cultural Studies*, Tony Bennett and Valda Blundell, ed., 9, no. 1 (1995): 95.

[60] "One of a Kind Collection of First Nations Art Returns to Canadian Soil," AGO internal press release, 27 May, 2007.

The Visitor Experience in the Thomson Collection: Where are the labels?

The "visual argument" in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art meant eliminating almost all wall labels, a surprising and unorthodox move. As Victoria Newhouse states, "Eliminating wall labels can be liberating, encouraging a more personal, and often more sensual viewing...But this is not a practice espoused by the education departments in most museums."[61] Wall labels are an accepted and expected art museum convention. They generally serve two functions: first, to explain the concept or rationale of the installation, and second, to situate the visitor, elucidating what is on display. As Eilean Hooper-Greenhill writes, "if [visitors] do not recognize specific associations and any accompanying texts do not supply them, then alternative (or no) links will be made."[62] Given the thorough attention to implanting "multi-faceted or 'layered' approaches that offer the visitor a variety of interactions"[63] in the rest of the Gallery, the lack of labels and interpretation in the Thomson Collection and deviation from the institutional "standard" is hard to understand. In fact, in the AGO's strategic plan, under the goal "To engage visitors in a compelling and innovative museum experience," the AGO states: "We will articulate a comprehensive standard for the museum experience throughout the institution and document the rationale for each element of the standard."[64] That the Thomson galleries feature almost no interpretive material is a visual reminder of the concessions made to Thomson.

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[61] Newhouse, 231-232.
[62] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. "The Power of Museum Pedagogy," in *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Hugh Genoways (Lanham, Md.: Altamira Press, 2006), 237.
[63] Linda Milrod, the AGO's Director of Exhibitions, in an undated internal memo.
[64] AGO Strategic Plan. n.d. Forwarded to me by Georgiana Uhlyarik on July 5, 2010.

The AGO's Deputy Director of Interpretive Planning, Judy Koke, spoke to me at length about the AGO's commitment to its visitors, the audience research and pedagogical methods supporting this commitment, and the interpretive strategies implemented in the galleries. When asked about the Thomson Collection, however, she stated

> We didn't do the interpretive planning in the Thomson Centre, so that takes that out of the loop. You can see immediately that they are very different spaces, very different philosophies. The donor and the donor's son worked with Gehry's office and with Dennis Reid, and had strong personal opinions about how they wanted those spaces installed.[65]

It does not, however, take it "out of the loop" for the public, considering that the Thomson Collection constitutes half of the Canadian Wing. Wall labels are, as Ingrid Schaffner states, "a curator's responsibility."[66] According to Reid, the omission of wall labels in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art was not a prior decision; fitting the entire Thomson Collection into the galleries at once meant that there was little wall space remaining after the paintings were hung. Thomson and Reid worried that the installation would appear cluttered, like "measles" on the wall.[67] However, the handheld pamphlets provided instead have been the source of considerable criticism. Reid and Koke both indicate that the handhelds have not worked as planned, and need to be more user-friendly.[68] Handhelds can allow the opportunity to delve into further detail, giving visitors the option of learning more.[69] With the exception of intermittent statements about the First Nations objects, the Thomson pamphlets reiterate the statement already made on the summary panels, rather than providing any further depth.

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[65] Koke, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[66] Ingrid Schaffner, "Wall Text," in *What Makes a Great Exhibition?*, 156.
[67] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[68] Reid and Koke, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[69] Schaffner, 163-64.

Dennis Reid, when asked what "the visitor experience" truly meant, spoke of giving visitors more than just the "isolated work of art on the white wall," stating that it was about giving visitors the whole experience, including information and context.[70] When asked how the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art, with its isolated works of art on white walls, responded to the AGO's focus on the visitor experience, Reid replied, "135 Krieghoffs, that's an experience you can have nowhere else." He continued,

> The key to it was arranging the material in a way that each room wasn't just an accumulation of individual objects. The Harris room is phenomenal. We've had curators come in from Europe and say this is one of the great art experiences anywhere. They knew nothing about Harris but they felt that.[71]

The value of this experience, of "looking in-depth," epitomizes the connoisseur's formal, art-historical analysis. This kind of art-historical "looking" and valuation is familiar to curators and collectors. Visitor research demonstrates, however, that few visitors are educated in art-historical visual analysis.[72] It thus creates one of the barriers Koke identifies that prevent people from visiting art museums – the expectation that it requires existing knowledge.[73] Without guidance, are visitors aware of this connoisseur-inspired project, and prepared to benefit? Koke states that no surveys have been done to specifically gauge visitor satisfaction in the Canadian Wing but she indicates that visitors have been confused by the installation:

> We did do a little bit of work in Thomson around the lack of labels because we had some complaints.... Most people want to know why there are no labels, and once you tell them, they're comfortable with it, and happy to support it. But they want to know why because it's just weird.

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[70] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Douglas Worts and Koke, in conversation with the author. On Skype and in Toronto, January 28, 2010 and November 11, 2009.
[73] Koke, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.

There are, however, other indications that visitors are dissatisfied with the Thomson Collection's limited interpretation.[74] As Koke's comments indicate, there is a lack of clarity surrounding the installation of the Thomson Collection, putting visitors at a disadvantage.

Situating the Collection: Making the Distinction between Public and Private

Given the very specific parameters of the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art, it is imperative that the collection be recognizable as Thomson's. To what extent is the public conscious that it is one man's vision? Though the two halves of the Canadian Wing are meant to be considered as distinct entities, many will wander through the galleries without noticing the separation between the collections; only simple titles at each end of the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art indicate the distinction. Even the titles may not be sufficient, considering that every gallery in the AGO is "named" for a donor. Most of the other galleries, however, do not present the donor's collection and vision in such unmediated fashion. The adjacent J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art is named after the donor,[75] but McLean did not guide the installation as Thomson did. How will visitors know this difference? Reid thinks people recognize the differences in the collection, but visitors cannot know of the difference in process behind the scenes:

> I think people are very aware of the differences, and I think they recognize why. And again I can't stress strongly enough that it was very clear to us that if we didn't make the experience different, then the bulk of our visitors would not know that they were in the Thomson Canadian galleries. What would be the

[74] There were market researchers from an outside company at the AGO on August 12, 2010. I met with one, who told me that many visitors expressed that they wanted more information (via labels, etc) and many expressed confusion about the lack of labels in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art. Additionally, an anonymous source in the AGO's administrative offices indicated that the Gallery has received many letters of complaint about the Thomson Collection.

[75] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.

> point of even having that material altogether like that? It would just be confusing. In order for the whole thing to work, it was important that the experience be clearly different.[76]

Seven months later, Reid admitted that the "hub" at the entrance of the Canadian Wing has failed to orient visitors the way the AGO staff had hoped.[77] There is little else provided to guide viewers into thinking of it as *a* collection, rather than *the* collection of Canadian art. While Thomson controlled the space, he himself is barely present in the installation: he is not referred to beyond the minimal signage and summary panels in the two galleries that exhibit highlights of the collection. The summary panels in these galleries state, simply,

> Toronto's Ken Thomson built one of the most important private collections of Canadian art during his lifetime. Over the course of fifty years, he passionately pursued the work of several prominent Canadian artists. His generous donation of over 700 works is displayed in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art.

Nowhere else are visitors impelled to think of the collection's origins. It is likely a sign of Thomson's humility that he did not want the galleries to be overwhelmed with his name and his voice, but as a result the silence naturalizes the installation's place within the AGO. Moreover, the use of the modernist aesthetic installation further obscures the recognizability of the private origin of Thomson's collection. The spare installation method dominated the art museum throughout the twentieth-century; by adopting this strategy, the Thomson Collection thus resembles an institutional collection. There are no visible markers of the individual. The collection thus projects the authority (and subject-formation) of the public art museum while retaining the narrowness and idiosyncratic selection of the private collector. In

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010. In fact, when the AGO re-opened in 2008, the summary panel in the "hub" did not mention the distinction between the Thomson galleries and the rest of the Canadian Wing at all. It has since been changed to the statement repeated on page six of this chapter, indicating that the AGO's staff are making amendments.

the past, visitors to a collector's cabinet would rely on the expertise of the collector to explain the objects.[78] Here, the Thomson Collection retains the ideology of the collector's cabinet, but without the voice of the collector.[79]

If visitors do recognize the collection as Thomson's, it will be nonetheless difficult to see the complex implications of this. The collector's and the institutional curator's motives and responsibilities are often fundamentally different. While the collector amasses works and may exhibit for his or her own pleasure or ideas about art, the curator is contractually bound to organize exhibitions for the gallery and the gallery's public. Institutional curators are necessarily guided by the gallery's or museum's collecting mandate,[80] which its exhibits usually reflect. The AGO's curators justified the narrow scope of the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art by comparing it to the AGO's own collection. Where one collection comes up short, the other compensates. Gerald McMaster stated in interview:

> I think the management and the curators...thought that the Thomson Canadian would be really about a particular way of looking at art, from a monographic perspective, and people could go get their hit, and consumption; they're satiated with rooms full of Kurelek or Krieghoff or [Tom] Thomson and that's it. And then they come into the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art and then they start to see something that's not there.[81]

Dennis Reid echoes this position,

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[78] See Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008) and Arthur Macgregor, *Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and collections from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007) for discussions of the public museum's roots in the cabinet of curiosity, or collector's cabinet.

[79] Before his death, when part of his collection was on loan to the AGO, Thomson reportedly enjoyed this role very much. Catherine Corsiglia, the AGO's curator of European art, "recalls finding him giving incognito tours of his donations to passersby in the gallery. When it came time for him to leave, he would always say, 'I hope you enjoy the collection.' They had no idea who he was." Quoted in Milroy, "For the Love of Art."

[80] Stephen Weil, "Collecting Then, Collecting Today: What's the Difference?" in *Re-inventing the Museum: historical and contemporary perspectives on the paradigm shift*, 290.

[81] McMaster, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.

> We thought that institutionally, since people are going to be able to have a really big hit of the Group of Seven, Tom Thomson, Krieghoff, etc, that it kind of takes pressure off of the rest of the Canadian Wing to satisfy that too. And so we were able to push the thematic approach [in the rest of the Canadian Wing] further than we had taken it in 1992.[82]

While McMaster argues that visitors may then explore other possibilities, the central placement of the Thomson Collection within the AGO, and within the Canadian Wing, still tells visitors that the pre-established canon of Canadian art, and especially the Group of Seven's modernist landscape painting, is the paragon for Canadian art. In his review of the new AGO for *Canadian Art*, art critic Daniel Baird writes,

> It is both inevitable and appropriate that the AGO's defining collection, the one that Frank Gehry's architecture thematically alludes to throughout, is the Thomson Collection.[83]

Public museums' collections are often built upon private collections, but should the new AGO be defined by the Thomson Collection? Is it in fact inevitable and appropriate as Baird suggests? Although the Thomson donation enabled the expansion of the entire institution, is it justifiable to hand over such a large, prime location for an excellent but narrow collection?

The Thomson Collection is effective as a celebration of Thomson's gift – an homage to a man who enabled new possibilities for the AGO. And despite the questions raised by its installation in the AGO, Thomson's collection features some of the most beloved and historically significant works of Canadian art – the reason the AGO sought out the Thomson donation to begin. The sheer number of works in the Thomson Collection gives the public the rare possibility to delve in depth-into Canada's iconic artists. It requires, however, further attention to remain in line with the AGO's institutional goals, particularly when it comes to

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[82] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[83] Daniel Baird, "What Are Museums For?" *Canadian Art* (Spring 2009).

visitor education and broadening the scope of Canadian art history. It seems unlikely that the installation will change dramatically, given the custom spaces Gehry created for Thomson. However, one can certainly imagine the galleries continuing indefinitely to display the Thomson Collection, while adopting interpretive strategies more in keeping with the AGO's approach elsewhere. Since Thomson's entire collection is on display, it would suit the AGO's mandate to present the collection itself as a historical document; this would contribute greatly to the AGO's project of "ways of seeing art history," through both a Torontonian and Canadian lens. To consider the collection in this way would contextualize its mid-twentieth-century exhibition model and art-historical values. More importantly, it would make it clear that one is viewing art history according to Thomson, not art history according to the AGO – a crucial distinction. Such an installation would still give the public access to important canonical works, without silently reverting to a mid-1950s view of Canadian art. As it stands, the public gets no sense of the man who so radically shaped the AGO.

Conclusion

Ken Thomson's donation enabled the institution to move forward with the expansion and major institutional change, and no other public institution contains such large numbers of canonical works. Reid makes clear that the AGO wanted to express the merit of the gift, hinting that the current installation is only temporary:

> I think it's safe to say that we felt that the challenge with the Thomson Collection was that we wanted people to understand the magnitude and just the incredible generosity of this man. It's a huge collection and we felt it was necessary that it all be displayed and we wanted to display it as effectively as possible so that the merit of the gift could be clearly understood and this was all in the understanding that the Thomson Collection would be displayed separately for a period of time, a number of years, and then it will be absorbed into the collection as a whole.[84]

[84] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.

However, as it is currently installed, in the most central location in the Canadian wing, the inclusion of the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art speaks to the current difficulty of striking a balance between public and private interests. (How) can the AGO operate in the best interests of its public when it puts its patron first? With all of the pomp of the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art, how does the rest of the Canadian Wing fare in relation?

The pride of place for his collection and the curatorial control given to Thomson and his heirs, demonstrate the power he held as the AGO's most important patron. It makes clear that the AGO, and all public galleries, rely heavily on private support – perhaps now more than ever. This potentially complicates new museological endeavours like Transformation AGO as the donations shape the narrative of Canadian art presented by the institution.

Dennis Reid seems to have anticipated this criticism in 1992 at the time of the AGO's first major reinstallation of its collection:

> If you approach [curating] with too much of an eye to even-handedness, you run the risk of not responding to the richness of a collection. Instead, you are bringing out a sense of what history *should* be.[85]

Since then, the Gallery has furthered its commitment to diversifying its Canadian collection. When asked in 2009 if he still felt the same way, Reid confirmed that he did, stating,

> I'm not certain that my colleagues in the Canadian department would feel as strongly about that as I do, but yes I feel that still very strongly. I would go even further at this point, I think that collecting, institutional collecting, is writing history. [...] Every institution should strive to reflect the history as it is understood from where they are. The history of art is not just about artists, it's about collectors, it's about art institutions, [...] increasingly, it's about society as a whole. And so that's why I feel that it is very important for a place like the Art Gallery of Ontario to represent the history of art as we see it here in Toronto.[86]

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[85] Milroy, "The Gracious Eye," *Canadian Art* (Winter 1992): 32.
[86] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.

That the AGO (originally the Art Gallery of Toronto) was founded in 1900 by Toronto's most influential citizens, and that Toronto's elite continues to shape the institution's historical record is important. This is the historical context that frames the Gallery's efforts to re-shape the institution and create a new way of seeing Canadian art. As Ruth Phillips aptly states,

> Although today many Canadian museums are committed to a representational process that is sensitive to alternate understandings of the object and of "art," the weight of tradition hangs heavily over the art gallery.[87]

Chapter 3 will examine the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art to explore how the reinstallation negotiates these issues. Where Thomson's collection of Canadian art errs conservatively, the J.S. McLean Centre introduces new perspectives, a new narrative of art history and new interpretive material, creating a very different experience of historical Canadian art.

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[87] Ruth Phillips, "A Proper Place for Art or the Proper Arts of Place?" in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, ed. Lynda Jessup with Shannon Bagg (Hull, Que.: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), 67.

CHAPTER 3: New 'Ways of Seeing' in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art

> *We inherit histories which position us; but we can think about them, deconstruct their terms, and displace the boundaries in a constant work that neither idolizes nor decries but reworks the inherent possibilities of the museum as a public space.* – Griselda Pollock[1]

Situated in galleries adjacent to the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art, the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art displays the AGO's own collection of historical Canadian art. In these galleries, the AGO's curators and interpretive planners sought to create "new ways of seeing" Canadian art. The new ways of seeing unfolded in several critical aspects of the installation: in a new thematic and contextual framework; in unexpected juxtapositions of historical and contemporary work; in exhibiting a wider range of artists than ever before; and in the widespread use of engaging interpretive strategies. Perhaps most notably, the reinstallation presents a thoroughly integrated Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian art history for the first time, and the work of Canadian women artists is featured in every gallery in the McLean Centre. The reinstallation is even more remarkable in that it represents entirely different, even opposing, premises from the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art. Where the Thomson Collection represents a canonical art-historical project in the traditional sense, the J.S. McLean Centre represents a break from these traditions, encouraging visitors to consider the underlying assumptions of the discipline of art history.

This chapter will explore the new critical narrative of Canadian art history in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art, highlighting the curatorial strategies that give the changes resonance for the visitor. I look specifically at the treatment of First Nations artists, women artists and the "canon" – the work of the Group of Seven, Emily Carr, Cornelius Krieghoff

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[1] Griselda Pollock, "Unframing the Modern: Critical Space/Public Possibility," *Museums After Modernism: Strategies of Engagement*, eds. Griselda Pollock and Joyce Zemans (Malden Ma: Blackwell, 2007), 2.

and Paul Kane – to show how the installation of the J.S. McLean Centre challenges some of the prevalent conventions in permanent installations of Canadian art, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Using the installation of Carr's work as a case study, I examine the impact of a collaborative curatorial process and the use of new interpretive strategies to bring out the "polysemic" meanings of objects, in keeping with the AGO's goal of encouraging "idiosyncratic meaning-making." Throughout, I show how the curators worked within the parameters of the institution, maintaining certain traditions, but giving them a "twist."[2] I also show how the inclusion of the Thomson Collection sets new parameters for the institution, which impact the installation. Finally, I question what it means to present the multiple voices of a new critical art history alongside the canonical installation of the Thomson Collection.

The Contextual, Thematic Model of Exhibition

In her seminal discussion of the persuasive framing power of the museum, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing," art historian Svetlana Alpers argues that museums necessarily remove objects from the cultures from which they were produced – decontextualizing them to then recontextualize them to suit the museum's "way of seeing." Writing of the art museum convention of organizing displays chronologically and by the individual artist, Alpers states, "there was no visual evidence offered that the categories or the change over time was part of the enterprise of those making the pictures."[3] There was "contrary visual evidence," she continues, that the artists "had other things on their minds than these proposed types and

[2] Alicia Boutilier and Gerald McMaster, in conversation with the author. Kingston and Toronto, July 5, 2010 and November 11, 2009. In both instances, these curators mentioned their intent to give old favourites a "twist."

[3] Svetlana Alpers, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 28.

their sequence."[4] It is in this vein that the reinstallation of the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art presents a new way of seeing the history of Canadian visual culture. Rejecting a chronological "meta-narrative" of Canadian art history, the installation is organized according to a contextual and thematic framework, giving visitors a sense of the socio-political context of the work's production. Moreover, the reinstallation turns the act of looking in the museum into a conscious act.

As discussed throughout this thesis, conventional installations of historical Canadian art based on traditional Western concepts of art history have tended to overlook the work of women and the artistic traditions of Aboriginal peoples, thus inscribing a colonial and patriarchal canon. Moreover, art-historical "looking" can be challenging for visitors, requiring previous knowledge to make sense of a work's importance. The AGO was at the centre of critical discourse in the early 2000s, seeking ways to change this narrative in its Canadian Wing. As discussed in Chapter 1, the AGO had been gradually integrating changes to its Canadian Wing since 1992, focussing specifically on the issue of Aboriginal representation and the incorporation of new interpretive strategies to engage visitors. At the same time, many art historians, curators, and interpretive planners were advocating for a new model of Canadian art history, putting forth ideas for curatorial practice that challenged the traditional Western art-historical categories. Lynda Jessup suggested an "issue-based" art history writing against the nationalist narratives in exhibitions of Canadian art;[5] Richard William Hill called

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Lynda Jessup, "Landscapes of Sport, Landscapes of Inclusion: The Sportsman's Paradise in Late-Nineteenth-Century Canadian Painting," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 110.

for a "critical visual culture" instead of traditional connoisseurship;[6] Anna Hudson and Jeff Thomas proposed a new "transcursive" curatorial language in place of the canon's "monoculture;"[7] and Ruth Phillips asserted that museums needed to enact "socially responsible research and representation."[8] With its reinstallation of the J.S. McLean Centre, the AGO is making a case for a new engagement with Canadian visual culture, responding to new museological criticism. Assistant Curator of Canadian Art Georgiana Uhlyarik calls the reinstallation a "proposition" to the public.[9] The "contextual model," as Dennis Reid has called it, engages critically with the act of seeing in the art museum, encouraging visitors to look beyond the normative arrangement of gallery spaces.

The Curatorial Process: Putting Theory into Practice

With Transformation AGO, the possibility of redoing the Canadian galleries from the ground up, combined with the initiative of a willing team of curators and interpretive planning, meant that the AGO was in a position to put new museological and art historical theory into practice. The hiring of Cree artist and curator Gerald McMaster in 2005 constituted the first time a person of Aboriginal descent had been hired as the Curator of Canadian Art at a major public art gallery. Previously a curator at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa and Chief Curator at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC, McMaster had been advocating for an interrelated Aboriginal and Euro-

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[6] Richard William Hill, "Into the Institution," in *13 Conversations About Art and Cultural Race Politics* (Montreal: Artexte Editions, 2002), 69.
[7] Anna Hudson and Jeff Thomas, "Bridging Art and Audience: Storytelling in the Presence of Historical Canadian Art," http://curatorsincontext.ca/transcripts/hudson%20thomas.pdf.
[8] Ruth Phillips, "Re-Placing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age," in *The Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 1 (March 2005): 85.
[9] Georgiana Uhlyarik, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.

Canadian art history. Like Richard William Hill's impetus with *Meeting Ground*, McMaster proposed "a new art history created through the historical analysis of interrelations, the result of which will be a new discursive space."[10] McMaster imagined a "double-helix model" of cultural production; of mutually-important encounters between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadians throughout.[11] One of his major initiatives with the reinstallation was to make the importance of this shared history apparent to all visitors to the Canadian Wing.[12] Assistant Curators Alicia Boutilier and Georgiana Uhlyarik, feminist art historians, were also committed to this new critical, collaborative approach, and prepared to put theory into practice.[13] McMaster states that the desire and possibility for this new project in the Canadian wing was clear on his arrival at the institution in 2005:

> That kind of intensity of newness and possibility really attracted me to what the art gallery could be and it dawned on me that...I could bring a new way of looking at the collection, a new way of thinking about the collection. And I had some curators who were...wanting to do the same things, and we realized quite quickly that part of the process would be to try to do away with the usual art historical approach in which you periodize rooms, you look at styles, you look at moments in history.[14]

Several years prior to the reinstallation, a team of curators, educators, exhibition designers, and senior management met numerous times a week to determine the new direction for the Canadian Wing. They initiated the process with the idea of clearing the galleries – if they could do anything, what would it be?[15] No major public gallery in Canada has been able to do this recently, the AGO and the NGC having last done complete

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[10] Gerald McMaster, "Our (Inter) Related History," in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, ed. Lynda Jessup with Shannon Bagg (Hull, Que: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), 6.
[11] Ibid.
[12] McMaster, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[13] Boutilier and Uhlyarik, in conversation with the author. Kingston and Toronto, July 20 and July 5, 2010.
[14] McMaster, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[15] Uhlyarik, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.

reinstallations of their Canadian Wings in 1992 and 1989, respectively. Therefore, to re-imagine the Canadian collection for the twenty-first-century audience, and to have the (relative) freedom to implement it was a rare opportunity. The curators worked closely with interpretive planners at all times, and kept the visitor and the institution's guiding principles in mind. Speaking with the author on separate occasions, they all emphasized the importance of the guiding principles and the interpretive planners in shaping the curatorial process.[16] Deputy Director of Interpretive Planning Judy Koke describes the collaborative curatorial process as follows:

> The team got together and [asked], what's the big idea, what are we trying to do in this space? The curator for the most part generated what art would support that question or issue...Well what about the so and so? Or, here are all the things that we can use, let's talk about what tells a really interesting story. That was done by the team. Then, the curators wrote a text brief on each piece, how each piece supports the 'big idea.' And then the interpretive planners planned [the interpretive support], in conversation with the team, because it was very labour-intensive, [stating, for example,] I think this should be an audio station in which we tape Gerald talking about this, and that would work for this reason.[17]

Koke's statement indicates the collaborative nature of the project, elucidating as well that this narrative of historical Canadian art would very much be based on issues, rather than art history in the traditional sense.

The planning was also guided by a series of critical questions about historical Canadian art in the institution. The team questioned how to make historical art relevant in the present (relevance being an institutional guiding principle), asking, how does an object function today?[18] Uhlyarik states that the meetings were a very safe space, in which participants felt able to put forth possibly radical ideas. One of these ideas was to ask what

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[16] Koke, McMaster and Uhlyarik in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009 and July 5, 2010. Boutilier, in conversation with the author. Kingston, July 20, 2010.
[17] Koke, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[18] Uhlyarik, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.

the Canadian Wing would look like if it did not include a dedicated space for traditional favourites, the Group of Seven, installed as a national school.[19] After presenting an initial proposal to Dennis Reid and Matthew Teitelbaum (members of the Senior Advisory Committee who ensured each section of the gallery fit the institution as a whole), the team came away with two requirements: the Group of Seven was to remain a 'destination point' within the Wing, and the popular Salon gallery from 1992 would remain as well. They represented markers of the traditionally conceived installation of Canadian art from which the team was attempting to create distance, prompting Uhlyarik to ask, "What does it mean to have these two things stay?"[20] These were, however, the only "rules," though according to McMaster, senior management had pinpointed two particular areas that needed attention – the inclusion of more women artists and Aboriginal artists.

In a February 2009 lecture, McMaster outlined the finalized conceptual framework of the reinstallation of the J.S. McLean Centre. According to McMaster, there were three main goals for the installation: first, the AGO's senior management insisted that the curators recognize the visitor, the viewer of the work; by refocussing on the visitor, they felt the art would come to life. Second, the AGO was "wholly aware that changing times require many voices," understanding new ways of seeing. And finally, constructing the galleries on various thematic ideas enabled the curatorial team to examine existing narratives, making new connections.[21] The reinstallation was framed around the idea of "seeing the past through the lens of the present." In place of conventional chronological model, the galleries of the

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] McMaster, in lecture at the AGO. February 18, 2009.

McLean Centre are now organized thematically around notions of myth, memory and power.[22]

Addressing Cultural Memory in Canadian Visual Culture

The J.S. McLean Centre begins in the Bovey Gallery – a narrow room curated by McMaster and devoted to the theme of Ancient Memory. The gallery, featuring entirely Aboriginal art, explores how memory is recorded, cultural memories erased, and how art has been used to preserve memories. The summary panel states "Memories are recorded, altered and sometimes even omitted. What you choose to remember (or forget) takes place consciously and subconsciously." The *1000 Points Project* is the first work one encounters (fig. 13). An installation of a "critical mass" of projectile points (stone arrowheads), the project is a way of communicating that the "visual traditions [in this country] are ancient. They're not just 200 years old, but they're hundreds and thousands of years old."[23] To present Canadian art as beginning with Aboriginal ancestors, and to present this as a shared history is a new concept for the AGO. The projectile points were a radical idea in the planning process – designed to force a re-imagining of the art object, of sculpture and of art history. According to Uhlyarik, the points are a "ubiquitous and familiar" material that did not necessarily belong in an art gallery. McMaster states,

> In my previous positions in other museums, I had always thought of projectile points as a way of doing something just visually fantastic, an installation with thousands of them...But at the same time when we started thinking and talking to folks at the art gallery about using projectile points they got a little nervous, because it's not something you see in art museums...Well, a lot of them became quite an interesting debate. How do you look at this as art? It's not art, you know, it's not created as art. But I said if we take it, and yes it's not art, it wasn't considered art, because it's thousands of years before the word ever came to be.

[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

> But the idea that people used skill to create wonderful objects… that's really the foundations of art. So you have these objects that are all different from each other. There's no two arrowheads or points that are the same, and so they have this cultural element to them. There's the thing of beauty if you look at them, and I said if we do an installation with them, people might see them in a different way. So I said we just can't have a handful of them, like museums usually do. You have to have a lot, a critical mass, and I said you have to be able to surprise people, you know they look at it and they go whoa, look at this, and then they see it differently.[24]

The projectile points establish from the outset that the reinstallation of the McLean Centre will challenge traditional conceptions of the art object. The points are paired with a looped video in which members of the AGO and the community provide their opinions of the new Canadian Wing, and answer the question "Why are the projectile points art?" This video brings in both the subjectivity of the curator and the public, and encourages visitors to give their own judgments. The video plays loudly, resonating through the hallways, and making it impossible to miss.

The Bovey Gallery presents Aboriginal works from thousands of years ago through to the present, showing the trajectory and resilience of Aboriginal artistic production throughout time. They are categorized according to the Ancestral Period, the Historic Period, the Erasure Period, and the Modern Period, tracking Aboriginal presence from pre-contact, colonization, the "erasure" and repression of Aboriginal culture, and the regrowth and recovery that has since taken place. Extended labels discuss the context of Aboriginal culture during these time periods, while display cases present corresponding objects. This display contextualizes the piecemeal and problematic history of collecting and displaying First Nations objects, introducing the period of colonial collecting as well as the period of the potlatch ban, and accounting for the lack of cultural objects in institutions between the periods of ancient and

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[24] McMaster, in conversation with the author. November 11, 2009.

recent memory. Along with historical objects (borrowed from other institutions), video and sculptural work by Zacharias Kunuk, Brian Jungen and Bill Reid are also displayed here (fig. 14).[25] Norval Morriseau's *Man Changing Into Thunderbird* paintings from 1977, hang on the opposite wall; along with the modern and contemporary work by Kunuk, Reid and Jungen, it reminds visitors of the continuing vitality of Aboriginal art in the contemporary period.

The Signy Eaton Gallery – the largest in the McLean Centre – parallels the Bovey Gallery but presents "recent memory" in historical Canadian art (fig. 15). This gallery features art of the 1960s and 1970s. Under previous rules, it was included in the Contemporary Department but under Dennis Reid's initiative it is now part of the historical Canadian galleries.[26] The Signy Eaton Gallery was curated by Dennis Reid and Georgiana Uhlyarik, and it addresses several major challenges for the new Canadian Wing in broadening the scope of Canadian art. The 1960s and 1970s introduced new artistic practices that provided a distinctive break from the past, such as performance art, multiples, posters, textile art, and video art. These practices had not yet had a place in the historical Canadian galleries.

Given the relative recentness of this work compared to the much older work elsewhere in the collection, framing this period of recent collective memory presented a challenge for the curators. The AGO's director Matthew Teitelbaum suggested presenting the collection as seen through the lens of the Coach House Press – a notable publishing house affiliated with artists and art galleries in Toronto in the 1960s and 1970s, and of which Dennis Reid was a member.[27] All of the work in this gallery is related to Coach House Press one way or another, creating a vision of an interdisciplinary art scene. The middle of the large gallery

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[25] Notably, all male artists.
[26] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.
[27] Ibid.

space features contextual materials not usually found in the art gallery, including dozens of posters, event invitations, and other artist materials. This ephemeral material gives a sense of where and when the works were originally exhibited, often in commercial galleries in downtown Toronto. Throughout the space, audio and video guides feature former Coach House Press members recalling key artists, exhibitions and happenings from the time. Exhibiting this recent work through a nationalizing perspective would have ignored the intricacies and specificities of the local – of the Toronto art scene in the midst of rapid change. The use of the regional, very specific focus of the Coach House Press, though unorthodox, fits into the AGO's perspective of "looking at Canadian art from 'here'."[28] The narrowed focus brings out new contexts for looking at the work. For example, videos by Marien Lewis, Robert Bowers, Stephen Cruise and John McEwen are framed through their participation at A Space gallery, one of Canada's first artist-run centres. A summary panel introduces A Space's creation in 1970 as an important community studio, meeting place and gallery, and a video features Coach House Press member Victor Coleman remembering the importance of A Space for artists at the time. The network of artist-run centres in Canada was a major influence for artists in the 1970s when they emerged, and is unparalleled elsewhere in the world. Still in existence today, Canada's artist-run centres are not well-known to most museum visitors.

To use such a framework parallels feminist scholar Griselda Pollock's push for new museum practices, freed from the "tyranny of chronology that functions traditionally as the monitoring art-historical superego." She writes, "My concept of exhibition as encounter in space attempts to allow for the more chaotic and dialogic interaction between works that

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[28] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.

resembles the way artists think about art and the ways even nonartists absorb and remember their experiences with art."[29]

In her role as co-curator of the Signy Eaton Gallery, Georgiana Uhlyarik has taken up feminist critiques like Pollock's of the art museum's continued patriarchal legacies. Uhlyarik points out that much of the AGO's collection from the 1960s and 1970s is made up of large, colourful paintings by such male artists as David Bolduc, Richard Gorman, Les Levine, Greg Curnoe, Nabuo Kubota, and Michael Snow, which make an immediate visual statement. These works look the same now as they did when they were made thanks to their hardy materials, like the acrylic paint that gained popularity in the 1960s. These paintings occupy roughly half of the Signy Eaton Gallery, whereas the rest is comprised of tiny contact sheets and difficult material. Notably, the decades represented in this gallery correspond with the rise of feminist art practices – practices that favoured the uncharted territory of performance and video, or introduced traditionally female domains of textile-based work to the realm of high art, for example.[30] Uhlyarik included several significant feminist artists in the installation, including Suzy Lake, Barbara Astman, Grace Jones, and Joyce Wieland, who worked in performance, video and new media. These media were less historically connected to patriarchal lineages and traditions than painting and sculpture, but they are also less easily incorporated into historical exhibitions. They sometimes have less immediate visual impact, are less "known" to visitors – and thus are more challenging – and the sometimes fragile

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[29] Griselda Pollock, "A History of Absence Belatedly Addressed: Impressionism with and without Mary Cassatt," in *The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University*, ed. Charles Haxthausen (New Haven, Ct: Yale University Press, 2003), 130-131.

[30] Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock address the way women's artistic production has been marginalized by divisions of fine art and craft in *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (Sheffield: Pandora, 1981).

material can only remain on display for short periods of time. Uhlyarik questioned, "How can you make something ephemeral make a presence?"[31]

Although several works by Wieland were included in the initial installation of the Signy Eaton Gallery, many have since been removed, providing a key example of the difficulties encountered in curating this gallery. Wieland is highly esteemed in Canadian art history; she was one of few women artists to receive solo exhibitions in her lifetime and to achieve widespread recognition. There was a need to be "big" with ephemera and moving images to create a presence for artists like Wieland. Uhylarik chose, for example, to hang Wieland's flags high on the wall, and to project her films on a large-scale, creating a cinematic experience.[32] It is, however, a continuing struggle: Wieland, Astman and Lake's works have since been removed due to their fragile nature, making it difficult to give them a sustained place in the institution, while the acrylic paintings continue to occupy the space. A similar struggle exists for the exhibition of historical First Nations objects, given that almost all in the McLean Centre have been borrowed from other institutions and must be returned. However, providing frequently changing exhibitions was part of the AGO's new mandate to incite repeat visitors to the permanent collection and to present Canadian visual culture as constantly shifting, never static.[33]

Myth-Making and Meaning-Seeking

The second major thematic area in the McLean Centre is framed around the idea of "Mythmaking and Meaning-Seeking," pointing out that while "Myths are the stories and

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[31] Uhlyarik, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.
[32] Ibid.
[33] McMaster, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.

symbols that humans create to bring meaning to their lives," these mythologies are indeed constructed, and continuously repeated in the creation of national identity. As historian Daniel Francis has argued, myths are often created to serve very specific purposes for distinct groups, though we are taught to adopt them unquestioningly; and while myths idealize, they also demonize those who obstruct and oppose the goals of the community.[34] This idea is essential in understanding how the common mythologies of Canadian art history are perpetuated. Here the galleries introduce the icons of our national cultural identity while reflecting on the present-day complexities of these mythologies, rather than celebrating a homogenized, monolithic Canadian identity.

The large (though smaller than before) Group of Seven gallery questions the dominance of the Group's work in the nation's art and identity, and it exposes the conditions of their rise to fame (figs. 16 and 17). The summary panel poses the question, "Does the Group of Seven Reflect Your Canada?" acknowledging that we might not all identify with the Group's work as our national symbols. The panel states:

> While the Group's landscapes have become symbols of Canada, many in the art world have questioned the mythology that has developed around them. Are these landscapes a true representation of Canada? In response to this question, this gallery offers the work of other artists who were active at the time of the Group of Seven. Their work, presented on the dark grey walls, challenges the Group's mythology by providing different perspectives on Canadian art and identity.

In major museum installations of the Group's work, at the National Galley of Canada, the McMichael Collection of Canadian Art, and in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art, the painters have been praised for their creation of a distinctly Canadian art, firmly establishing landscape painting as a national product. As the panel states, new art-historical writing since

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[34] Daniel Francis, "Introduction," in *National Dreams: Myth, Meaning and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), 11.

the 1970s has called this distinction into question.[35] The landscape plays a major role in Canadian mythologies, linking the nation's "imagined communities," to use Benedict Anderson's concept.[36] But, as the summary panel suggests, the landscape is not always adored and shared equally. Nor is it, as many exhibitions and installations of Canadian art communicate, the only subject matter Canadian artists were exploring in the early twentieth-century.

The current Group of Seven gallery at the AGO has been installed to emulate the original exhibition of the Group's work at the AGO in 1920.[37] This historicist installation intersperses the work of the Group (all from the exhibitions of the Group's work at the AGO in the 1920s) with other artists working in Canada at the same time, including Beaver Hall Group members Lilias Torrance-Newton and Sarah Robertson, Bertram Brooker, and Kenneth Forbes. These artists espoused different ideas of national artistic production than the Group's modernist landscapes, or chose not to engage with nationalism at all. Paintings by the Group are hung on light grey walls, and paintings by their contemporaries hang on dark grey panels, calling attention to the different approaches.

In the middle of the gallery, against a dividing wall, two small cases present pop-cultural material chronicling the rise and branding of the Group of Seven as national icons (fig. 18). In a decidedly self-reflexive move, the AGO's own role in the promotion of the Group of Seven is pinpointed, both in the recreation of the original 1920 exhibition, and in the display of material from the AGO's gift shop. This highlights the role of the institution in

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[35] See *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art*, eds. John O'Brian and Peter White (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007) for the most comprehensive and current discussion of this topic.
[36] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 1983).
[37] Boutilier, in conversation with the author. Kingston, July 20, 2010.

writing and producing the narrative of art history.[38] The inclusion of the postcards was inspired by Boutilier's reading of Joyce Zemans' text on the National Gallery of Canada's wartime reproductions of the Group's work, which were instrumental in establishing their popularity across Canada.[39]

While the Group's work is recognized as iconic in this installation, they are not positioned to be read solely as authoritative icons of Canadian art history, as they are in the Thomson Collection. Instead, the origins of the Group and their contemporaries are recalled and their current status as icons is discussed. As Joyce Zemans has pointed out, the "Group members argued that there should be no single way of looking at Canadian art."[40] Moreover, Jessup posits that the excitement lies in engaging in a critical discussion of these national icons, stating "that's what the Group of Seven deserves."[41] This critical discussion, does not, however, take away from an enjoyment of the Group's popular paintings: they hang conventionally on the wall (as in the 1920 exhibition), with accompanying labels, well-spaced and well-lit for ease of viewing. Boutilier indicates as well that the revisionist, idea-based installation of the McLean Centre does not mean devaluing traditional object knowledge. The installation of the Group of Seven Gallery, she states, is based in in-depth provenance and research of early exhibition history.[42]

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid. Boutilier refers to Joyce Zemans' "Establishing the Canon: Nationhood, Identity and the National Gallery's Reproduction Programme of Canadian Art," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 16, no. 2 (1995): 7-35.
[40] Zemans, "What Would the Group Say?" *Globe and Mail*, 2 October 2000.
[41] Jessup, "Art for a Nation?" *Fuse* 19, no. 4 (Summer 1996).
[42] Boutilier, in conversation with the author. Kingston, July 20, 2010.

Marketing Canadian Identity for Tourism Through Visual Culture

"Constructing Canada" depicts the ways in which the Canadian landscape and groups such as the rural Quebec *habitants* and First Nations communities have been mythologized, both at home and abroad (fig. 19). Stereotypical interpretations have been constructed, reproduced and marketed, and this section of the gallery shows some of the popular imagery that perpetuated these perspectives, including several paintings by Cornelius Krieghoff, presented in a very different light from his celebration in the Thomson Collection. Also in this section, a collection of argillite model totem poles by Charles Edenshaw and his follower Isaac Chapman are exhibited in a display case. The miniature poles were also included in the 1992 installation of the Canadian Wing, but their exhibition, next to the Salon gallery, was found to be problematic then because of the history of exclusion in Salon exhibitions, and because Salon exhibitions were considered to be the arbiters of taste according to Western aesthetic values. Having the totem poles follow the Salon, according to Six Nations Seneca curator and historian Tom Hill, meant that that they would then be seen through the same Western lens.[43]

The postmodern conflation of anthropological and art-historical classifications is key to interpreting these model poles, and has been addressed by scholars like Ruth Phillips, Christopher Steiner and James Clifford. Clifford's art-culture system, delineated in his "On Collecting Art and Culture," posits that hierarchies of objects have been established largely according to notions of authenticity; tourist art, like the model poles, were until recently deemed inauthentic and lesser. But as Phillips and Steiner have argued, one of the most important features of such objects has been "their role as commodities circulating in the

[43] Tom Hill. "A First Nations Perspective: The AGO or the Woodland Cultural Centre?" in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, 11.

discursive space of an emergent capitalist economy."[44] In the 2008 reinstallation, an extended label contextualizes the poles to show how their makers capitalized on burgeoning tourism on the Northwest coast, building model poles for the tourist trade; this creates an important distinction about the circumstances of their creation that was previously ignored. Omitting this information, Hill argued, could lead visitors to think that the poles were meant to be "toy-like" and "that their miniaturization was the result of some (unexplained) function they served in Native life."[45]

In the current installation, the argillite poles still sit beside the Salon gallery, but the additional context provided clarifies the distinctive circumstances of their creation, purpose and dissemination.[46] Additionally, in the earlier installation of the AGO, the fifty poles were the only historical First Nations objects on display. Because of the lack of related material, as Robin Wright warned, they were in "danger of representing metonymically the whole of Northwest Coast Art."[47] Now, with historical First Nations art throughout the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art and the McLean Centre, the distinctiveness of the poles is more thoroughly communicated. The extended label beside the poles cites art historian Aldona Jonaitis, establishing their importance in North American art history. It states: "The works these Haida masters produced for sale duplicated the quality used within the community, and thus constitute a major body of nineteenth-century northern art." Furthermore, as in the Signy Eaton Gallery and the Bovey Gallery, the curators included books, postcards, and maps

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[44] Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner, "Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Cultural Encounter," in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, eds. Phillips and Steiner (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 3.
[45] Tom Hill, 12.
[46] The new Salon gallery, while it now acknowledges the exclusion of women artists from Salons does not in fact acknowledge the exclusion of First Nations artists.
[47] Robin Wright, "The Cunningham Collection of Haida Argillite at the AGO," in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, 163.

– objects of "low culture" that are generally left out of "high" art museums – again challenging classifications of fine art that have historically kept First Nations objects in ethnographic museums. Most importantly, the pairing in this "Constructing Canada" gallery, of the model poles with paintings by Krieghoff, photographs by William Notman, picture books, and maps, demonstrates a range of visual culture all made for the tourist trade. Phillips, discussing the inclusion of First Nations objects in the gallery, writes of the importance of pairing objects made for similar purposes:

> To display First Nations articles of dress or ritual use adjacent to European paintings or sculptures merely because of their contemporaneity is to present Aboriginal and Euro-North American populations as two solitudes. However, the juxtaposition of objects with other items made for the same kinds of uses, particularly in light of a historical relationship, reveals patterns of contact and exchange.[48]

Grouping objects around their common participation in the colonial tourist trade succeeds in creating a sense of historical contact and exchange in Canada, demonstrating the possibilities introduced by a thematic arrangement. Such contextualization, enabled by the breaking down of hierarchical classification of objects introduced by Clifford and Phillips, means that the model poles retain their cultural importance in the installation. Clifford states,

> While the object systems of art and anthropology are institutionalized and powerful, they are not immutable. The categories of the beautiful, the cultural, and the authentic have changed and are changing. Thus it is important to resist the tendency of collections to be self-sufficient, to suppress their own historical, economic, and political processes of production. Ideally the history of its own collection and display should be a visible aspect of any exhibition.[49]

This kind of institutional self-reflexivity regarding its processes of collection and display has rarely been undertaken in permanent installations in public institutions, but is addressed

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[48] Phillips, "A Proper Place for Art or the Proper Arts of Place?," in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, 62.
[49] Clifford, "On Collecting Art and Culture," in *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 229.

directly in the final "zone" of the McLean Centre of Canadian Art, which dissects the role of power in art and art institutions.

Art and Power in the Art Institution

The third thematic zone in the McLean Centre explores the notion of Art and Power, specifically probing the power relationships at play in the production and exhibition of art. Sub-themes in these galleries organize works around "Establishing and Questioning Power," and ask "Is Seeing Innocent?" following scholarly discourse that positions art and the act of viewing art in museums as politicized and representative of often imbalanced socio-political power relationships. The Georgia Ridley Salon Gallery (fig. 20) has been one of the AGO's landmarks since it was created for the 1992 installation. The introduction of the Salon hang in 1992 was part of the AGO's early efforts to create a revisionist narrative of art history, in which contextual material recreated for visitors the experience of looking at art (and being looked at) in the academic salons of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[50] In keeping with the conventions of dominant art history and the reality of Salon exhibitions, dozens of paintings were hung with frames touching, and they were almost entirely by male artists. There were only two women represented in the gallery, although women were in fact active in the Canadian art community at the time. With the 2008 reinstallation, the Salon features a large selection of women artists whose work the AGO had in its collection but had never exhibited.

The Salon is the only truly chronological space in the McLean Centre; it works here, according to Boutilier, to show the trajectory of different time periods when women had

[50] Jessup, "Landscapes of Sport, Landscapes of Exclusion," 76.

more and less freedom.[51] Whereas more than half of the paintings on the east wall of the gallery are by women artists, the west wall features only one tiny painting by Harriet Ford, *Boy Lying in the Grass* (1891), to demonstrate that at the end of the nineteenth century women artists were not as visible. Additionally, the chronology corresponds to changes to exhibition practices as modernism's influence entered the gallery space in the twentieth century: where the west wall is tightly hung, the east wall is hung more sparsely to convey how the work would have been exhibited.[52]

In a Salon hang paintings are hung tightly together leaving no space for wall labels; here booklets, like in the Thomson Collection, give basic information. The booklets, here, however, go beyond the tombstone information, discussing the Women's Art Club in Toronto, and the acquisition of Sydney Strickland Tully's *The Twilight of Life* (1894) – one of the first Canadian works to be acquired by the Art Gallery of Toronto. This gives further insight into the lives of early women artists in Toronto and demonstrates their active involvement in the city's art scene.

Because there is no room for even tombstone labels beside the paintings, the installation obscures any immediate delineation between genders, making it difficult to discern which works are by male or female artists. As this installation shows, artists like Paul Peel were exploring domestic subject matter and artists like Mary Wrinch were engaging in the avant-garde by painting industrial scenes. Pairing Wrinch's industrial view of the Muskoka region, *Saw Mill* (1906) with J.E.H. MacDonald's similar industrial painting, *Tracks and Traffic* (1912) demonstrates that she was working with this new subject matter before he did. Kathleen Munn's *Untitled (Cows on a Hillside)* stands out, further along the east wall. As

[51] Boutilier, in conversation with the author. Kingston, July 20, 2010.
[52] Ibid.

Uhlyarik and Boutilier were both eager to show, Munn was a truly innovative Canadian artist;[53] her colourful abstract/cubist painting looks positively avant-garde in a room of largely academic painting. A contemporary of the Group, Munn had a similar mission to change the possibilities of art, though her work was not widely recognized until recently.[54]

That the Salon gallery – a "destination point" and popular favourite at the AGO – has been turned over to women artists indicates that women artists are no longer treated as marginal in this installation. Joyce Zemans, writing on the place of women artists in Canadian art history, stated her intent to "examine the degree to which the 'real' history of art has been altered and, as a corollary, pose the question of whether that history is, except at the margins, essentially inalterable."[55] Boutilier and Uhlyarik were both committed to the project of acknowledging the central place of women artists in Canadian art history, as these strategies show. Uhlyarik also revealed a personal choice that has had an impact in making room for new iconic Canadian artists: in preparation for the unveiling of Transformation AGO, she made a silent vow that, whenever she was asked by the marketing team to provide images from the Canadian Collection, she would give them only works by women artists.[56] This initiative familiarizes visitors with works by women artists before they enter the institution, creating new icons that will then stand out in the gallery.

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[53] Uhlyarik and Boutilier, in conversation with the author. Toronto and Kingston, July 5 and July 20, 2010.
[54] Zemans, "A Tale of Three Women: The Visual Arts in Canada/A Current Account/ing," *RACAR* 25, no. 12 (2001): 103.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Uhlyarik, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.

Visitor Engagement in the McLean Centre

Because the lack of exhibition didactics is striking in the Thomson Collection, it is important to consider how the (relative) proliferation of didactics in the McLean Centre contributes to a different experience of Canadian art history. In the McLean Centre, the text panels challenge visitors for their own opinions and leave interpretation open-ended. The labels and audio-visual material do not provide one definitive perspective of Canadian art history; to speak of it critically and to encourage visitors to speak back is indicative of a self-reflexive and participatory curatorial practice in which the focus shifts from the authority of the curator to that of the viewer. The few summary panels in the Thomson Collection generally dispense biographical facts, anecdotes and descriptions of stylistic devices of traditional art history, encouraging aesthetic contemplation and impressions of the artist-as-genius. The issue-based and open-ended labels in the McLean Centre guide visitors to embark on a different project, re-thinking assumptions about Canadian art.

Other strategies, such as audio and video stations supplement the wall texts in the McLean Centre, including several instances where the curators speak about the objects and their reasoning for certain juxtapositions or models of display. Though one could argue that this constitutes an "expert-to-novice"[57] mode of communication the AGO's interpretive planners endeavoured to avoid, it also provides transparency, revealing to the public the people and perspectives responsible for the installation. Several of the video stations feature artists "remembering" encounters with other artists, giving visitors the perspective of those who were there. Barbara Astman, for example, speaks of Joyce Wieland, recalling her importance in initiating a feminist dialogue in Toronto in the 1970s. Along with the audio and

[57] Hooper-Greenhill, "Studying Visitors," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Oxford and Malden, Ma: Blackwell, 2006), 362.

video stations, samples of argillite and chert are provided beside the argillite model poles and the chert projectile points, allowing visitors to get a feel for the materials used. Drawing stations in three of the galleries provide crayons and paper, inviting visitors to draw responses to favourite works in the collection. On every visit throughout the past year, the drawing stations have been covered with personalized responses. The focus at the AGO remains on the visual, but the inclusion of sound and touch provide subtle devices for getting at new ways of 'knowing,' and engaging visitors via different learning methods.

Museologist Eilean Hooper-Greenhill refers to the polysemic nature of objects, and the responsibility of museums to tell multiple stories according to the objects' multiple interpretations. She writes:

> There is no necessary correspondence between meaning and artifact – no essential meaning, no small signification. Objects are spoken; they are given meaning through ideological frameworks and, in museums, through linked objects, texts, and images that focus the direction of signification.[58]

Referring back to Ruth Phillips' argument that museums necessarily exclude by naming and classifying, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's polysemic model offers the alternative of not naming rigidly. Objects, she posits, never serve one purpose, and never fit into only one classification.[59] Hooper-Greenhill's approach can be extended to examine how the use of a variety of interpretive approaches, with different themes and educational material, draws out multiple readings of an art object.

The treatment of work by Emily Carr in the McLean Centre provides an excellent example of the possibilities of deriving multiple meanings that arise in this thematic installation. Paintings by Carr are hung in four different locations in the McLean Centre, and

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[58] Hooper-Greenhill, "The Power of Museum Pedagogy," in *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Hugh Genoways (Lanham, Md: Altamira Press, 2006), 236.
[59] Ibid.

are contextualized differently each time. Under the sub-theme of "Origin and Creation" in the "Mythmaking and Meaning-Seeking" section, Carr's *Indian Church* (1929) is paired with another canonical Canadian painting, Tom Thomson's *West Wind* (1917). The two paintings are juxtaposed with Anishnaabe and Odawa beaded pouches, reflecting the common mythologies of the Canadian landscape (fig. 21).[60] The accompanying extended label states:

> In *The West Wind*, Tom Thomson captures the drama of a building thunderstorm. The storm and tree reflect the link between sky and earth, in much the same way as the images in these First Nations pouches. According to these First Nations cultures, storms were a result of a violent struggle between the upper and lower worlds as symbolized by the Thunderbird and the Underwater Panther, or Mishipishoo.

With this pairing, the First Nations symbolism of the Thunderbird and the Mishipishoo as creators of stormy weather becomes the frame for looking at the Thomson work, rather than the conventional tactic of evaluating First Nations work according to Western criteria. Carr's *Indian Church*, which references Christianity's two worlds of heaven and earth, benefits from this comparison to First Nations spiritual worlds.

In the same gallery, Carr's *Red Tree* (1938) is paired with Rodney Graham's *Stanley Park Cedars 4* (1991-1993), a Photo Conceptualist work of an upside-down tree – one of the AGO's new pairings of historical and contemporary work in the Canadian Wing (fig. 22). An audio-station provides commentary from Uhlyarik and Curator of Contemporary Art Michelle Jacques, wherein they ask each other to comment on the ideas that come through in juxtaposing the historical and contemporary work. The discussion raises questions of place in the artists' work, unpacking the conception that, as scholar Bruce Braun states, "for many

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[60] McMaster, in a lecture at the AGO. February 18, 2009.

Canadians, Carr *is* BC."[61] In the adjacent Group of Seven gallery, Carr's *Kispiax Village* (1929) presents her as one of the Group's contemporaries: she was a friend of Lawren Harris's and exhibited in some of the same exhibitions. Carr's *Red Tree* and *Indian Church* are hung on either side of the main entrance to the Group of Seven gallery, perhaps acknowledging that she, as a woman, was never actually invited to join the Group.[62]

The McLaughlin Gallery – the final gallery in the McLean Centre – is titled "Is Seeing Innocent?" and challenges the colonial gaze (fig. 23). The idea, according to McMaster, is to question, following Lacan, how we look at each other through subjective screens.[63] Here Carr's work is presented alongside Edmund Morris and Paul Kane – artists who chose First Nations communities and people as their subject matter, and, as Daniel Francis points out, attempted "to becomes the chief interpreters and preservers of Native culture."[64] This gallery (and the entire reinstallation of the McLean Centre) makes clear that "there is power in looking," to quote bell hooks, and power in looking back.[65] Aboriginal cultures have often

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[61] Bruce Braun, "BC Seeing/Seeing BC: Vision and Visuality on Canada's West Coast," in *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 160.

[62] Paul Hjartarson, "'Virgin land,' the settler-invader subject, and cultural nationalism," in *Gender and Landscape: renegotiating morality and space*, eds. Lorraine Dowler, Josephine Carubia, and Bonj Szczygiel (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 217. Hjartarson states, "While the Group of Seven represented its members as cultural pioneers, socially and politically they did little to support the women's movement: their Toronto home, the Arts and Letters Club, restricted its membership to men."

[63] McMaster, in a lecture at the AGO. February 18, 2009.

[64] Francis, "The Vanishing Canadian," in *The Imaginary Indian* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 24.

[65] See bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze," in *The Feminist Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 94. The full passage reads: When thinking about black female spectators, I remember being punished as a child for staring, for those hard intense looks children would give grown-ups, looks that were seen as confrontational, as gestures of resistance, challenges to authority. The "gaze" has always been political in my life. Imagine the terror felt by the child who has come to understand through repeated punishments that one's gaze can be dangerous. The child who has learned so well to look the

been visible and invisible to many Canadians in a paradoxical relationship where the signs and symbols of Aboriginal histories have been appropriated for self-serving interests. The construction of the "imaginary Indian," as discussed by critics such as Marcia Crosby and Daniel Francis, further serves to remove First Nation's people's lived reality from many Canadians' understanding.[66] As Francis states, "for most of us, the Indian of nineteenth-century Canada is Paul Kane's Indian,"[67] largely because for most of the twentieth century, these stereotypical representations were the only images of First Nations people circulating amongst the general public. Instead creating a one-way historical record, McMaster has also included works by Aboriginal artists who have challenged these Euro-Canadian representations of their cultures, and examples of the way Aboriginal people looked at and depicted Canadians of European descent. This idea of First Nations artists looking back at European artists is radically different for the exhibition of historical Canadian art. An extended label describes the names First Nations cultures used to describe the foreign and unusual Europeans, reversing the usual pattern of stereotyping. One pairing places contemporary Inuit artist David Ruben Piqtoukun's sculpture of Queen Elizabeth from 1998 alongside a Haida argillite sculpture of a European sailor from c.1900-1925 – McMaster's first acquisition of historical First Nations art for the AGO's collection (fig. 24).[68] These works introduce compelling new readings of the Krieghoff, Kane, and Carr paintings hanging on the

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other way when necessary. Yet, when punished, the child is told by parents, "Look at me when I talk to you." Only, the child is afraid to look. Afraid to look, but fascinated by the gaze. There is power in looking."

[66] Marcia Crosby. "Construction of the Imaginary Indian," in *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*, ed. Stan Douglas (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1991), 266-291.

[67] Francis, 22.

[68] McMaster, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.

opposite wall of the gallery. Through these juxtapositions, Emily Carr's work can be evaluated in relation to this exchange of gazes in early twentieth-century Canada.

Between the four different placements of Carr's work in the McLean Centre, visitors acquire a rich understanding of Carr as an artist – stylistic differences throughout her career, her choice of subject matter, as well as her placement within a critical history of Canadian art. This kind of installation honours Carr as a multifaceted and complex artist, more so than the summary introduction to her work in the Thomson Collection. By removing a single authoritative perspective, polysemic interpretations can be more challenging for visitors, but they address the current complexities of presenting history by resisting the privileging of certain systems of art interpretation and knowledge over others.

Evaluating the Outcome: What 'Ways of Seeing' Are Produced?

There is no preordained pinnacle in the installation of the J.S. McLean Centre – no heroizing tale of Canadian art history reaching its apex, no modernist progress-oriented trajectory. One could argue that no artist or work of art is treated as more iconic than any other, whereas it would be difficult to say the same of most other installations of Canadian art. To return to Griselda Pollock's statement in the epigraph, the installation does not decry any ways of seeing, nor does it idolize any particular artists. It does, however, rework the narrative of Canadian art considerably. It creates a multi-authored narrative of juxtapositions and dialogic pairings, capable of generating discussion and critical thought, and keeping with the sensibilities and expectations of the twenty-first-century museum and museum audience. Importantly, while much of the earlier historical work is that of Canada's patriarchal Anglo-Canadian colonial past, in the reinstallation Canadian national identity is not defined by these

artists. The narrative of Canadian art is not framed according to the rhetoric of display that positions some work as more representative of a "Canadian aesthetic" than others. Rather, it recognizes the unlikelihood of creating a universal vision of Canadian identity. As Eva Mackey writes, "Modern identities such as national identity, many argue, function through the erasure of difference and the construction of a singular, unified, homogeneous subject."[69] The reinstallation of the J.S. McLean Centre adheres closely to Mackey's assertion that "the complex patterns of colonisation and cultural and economic development that created Canada have resulted in a situation … in which the boundaries, inclusions and exclusions of identity are unstable and constantly changing."[70] The curators dealt with this complexity by avoiding authoritative value judgments, and by creating frequently changing exhibitions to reflect the fact that Canadian national identity is not fixed. According to Koke, "there was not an intent to say 'this is Canadian.' It was more, this is how art participates in our ideas of Canada."[71] Where the nationalistic framing is somewhat undone, the AGO's civic role is expressed more clearly, as seen in the Signy Eaton Gallery's exploration of the local.[72] With this thematic and contextual model, the variety of Canadian artistic production and differing voices and perspectives are expressed more clearly. Interpretive planning engages but not in an ostentatious way – again, suiting the needs of multiple visitors.

The success of the J.S. McLean Centre's project of creating "new ways of seeing" lies in its criticality. As Irit Rogoff posits, "'Criticality' as I perceive it, is precisely in the

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[69] Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 85.
[70] Ibid, 13.
[71] Koke, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[72] Prior to Transformation AGO, local artists had complained about the lack of local representation in the AGO. See Peter Murray, "Artists Voiced Mixed Feeling about the AGO," *Toronto Star*, November 8, 2008 and Murray White, "Don't forget us, local artists say," *Toronto Star*, November 10, 2008.

operations of recognising the limitations of one's thought for one does not learn something new until one unlearns something old, otherwise one is simply adding information rather than rethinking a structure."[73] The subtle politicization of the installation encourages visitors to "unlearn" the assumptions underlying the conventional paradigm of valuing in Canadian art history. But, importantly, the application of new art-historical critiques in open-ended and participatory ways throughout the installation keeps it from alienating the visitor.

There is, as with any installation, room for improvement. Two anonymous sources I spoke with, both from within the AGO, found that the installation did not go as far with "visitor engagement" as it could have, and not as far as the 1992 installation had gone. Additionally, although women artists and Aboriginal artists are represented more broadly, other groups may not be. More importantly, evaluating the successes of the J.S. McLean Centre in destabilizing the canonical narrative of Canadian art must also take consideration of its relationship with the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art. Together they form the AGO's Canadian Wing, and, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, the distinction between the two collections is not necessarily legible. Considering the differences in approach and the different ideologies put forth, it is important to question how visitors might negotiate between the two collections, and ultimately, what visitors will come away from the AGO thinking about Canadian art history.

Iain Hoadley, the Project Manager for the reinstallation of the Canadian Wing, was responsible for overseeing the implementation of both parts of the new Canadian Wing. He comments on the difficulty of ensuring that the McLean Centre stand out beside the Frank Gehry-designed Thomson Collection:

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[73] Irit Rogoff, "What is a Theorist?" in *The State of Art Criticism*, ed. James Elkins (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2008), 99.

> One of the things we did to try to establish was continuity between the McLean Centre for Canadian Art and the new adjacent spaces. The 'McLean Centre' used to be a fairly dark space with carpet throughout and dropped ceilings in many of the galleries. We knew from the outset that the design of the old Canadian wing was going to be at odds with the rest of the building given that Frank Gehry was introducing open, light-filled spaces into the new building, including the adjacent galleries in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art. As such, the decision was made to gut the old Canadian galleries and introduce elements that were in keeping with Gehry's design – open spaces, new floor, expose windows where possible, etc. For the visitor, the end-result is an experience that is entirely different from what it used to be. Obviously we were limited because we were renovating an existing space, unlike [the Thomson Collection] which was a brand new space, but we still feel we achieved a seamlessness between the old and new spaces.[74]

The McLean Centre remains much dimmer, however, than the bright and spacious Thomson galleries – there is only one window in one small gallery. The winding trajectory of galleries and variety of gallery sizes corresponds with the variety of experiences, and visitors will encounter objects in narrow corridors, spacious bright galleries, tiny alcoves and dead ends. The relative complexity and lack of a singular centralized narrative can be challenging and may ultimately work against the McLean Centre, in comparison to the simplicity and linearity of the Thomson Collection galleries. Similarly, the problematizing of the existing narrative in the McLean Centre galleries may be demanding for the unprepared visitor, leading some to favour the comparatively straightforward presentation in the Thomson galleries.

The real challenge for the visitor lies in negotiating the two simultaneous and divergent narratives at the AGO. When asked how visitors are intended to make sense of the disparate sections of the Canadian wing, McMaster responded, "I think people need to go on tours to find out what is being said by the gallery guides."[75] Koke stated later, however, that the tour guides are trained in the AGO's pedagogical methods, but are meant to create tours

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[74] Hoadley, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2010.
[75] McMaster, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.

according to their personal preferences.[76] Tour guides may not be entirely reliable for the task of reconciling two very different approaches to Canadian art history.

While the AGO is working in the McLean Centre to challenge the exclusionary nature of the Canadian canon and to broaden the scope of representation, the Thomson Collection reinforces the importance of that very canon. That the Thomson Collection holds the primary place in the AGO, and is the first space visitors will encounter, upholds the existing hierarchy. The AGO's intensive interpretive planning program indicates the Gallery's desire to clearly orient its visitors, but it fails to do so by expecting visitors to negotiate these conflicting approaches with little guidance. It is a lot to ask of a visitor.

The statements made by the AGO staff in Chapter 2 and again in this chapter indicate that they were aware and were attempting to deal with these issues. Ultimately, however, the AGO imagined that they could successfully present both collections, and that the Thomson donation would be worth the concessions made to the donor. Now that the AGO has reopened, it is important to assess the outcome for the visitor. When asked recently if the AGO knew how visitors were reacting to the two-part Canadian Wing, Koke gave a terse reply: "No work has been done with the Canadian Wing specifically."[77]

Despite any criticisms, the reinstallation of the J.S. McLean Centre goes further than any other major public institution has as of yet in thoroughly incorporating a wide range of responses to the critiques of exclusion and elitism directed at museums in the latter half of the twentieth century. The AGO is and must remain committed to this project. One way they

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[76] Koke, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.
[77] Koke. Personal correspondence with the author. August 11, 2010.

are doing so is by continuing to actively collect the work of historical First Nations artists and women artists: as Uhlyarik states, there is no point in collecting without displaying and vice versa.[78] Initiatives like this indicate that the new McLean Centre constitutes a structural rather than surface change for the AGO.

[78] Uhlyarik, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.

CONCLUSION

The Museum as a 'Contact Zone'

From a critical standpoint, the two parts of the AGO's new Canadian Wing seem to be unlikely bedfellows. Whereas the "visual argument" in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art glorifies the Canadian canon, the issue-based installation in the J.S. McLean Centre challenges the assumptions and hierarchies embedded in that very canon. With this pairing the AGO has made it clear that it is willing to take risks. The reinstallation of the AGO's new Canadian Wing can teach a great deal about the current issues at stake for public art museums and the exhibition of historical Canadian art. It indicates the challenges of negotiating the traditional and canonical with new ways of seeing, and balancing private interests with a responsibility to, and interest in, the public.

James Clifford's notion of "museums as contact zones" is useful in elucidating the complex relationships between the two halves of the Canadian Wing.[1] He writes, "When museums are seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship – a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull."[2] This set of exchanges occurs at the AGO, but, as is often the case in contact situations, there is an imbalance of power. Clifford cites anthropologist Mary Louise Pratt's idea that,

> a 'contact' perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. [It stresses] copresence, interaction, interlocking

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[1] Though Clifford is referring to ethnographic museums in this text, the concept is equally useful in discussing the bringing together of disparate viewpoints in art museums, as seen in the AGO.

[2] James Clifford, "Museums as Contact Zones," in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 438.

> understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.[3]

In the present pairing, the central location of the Thomson Collection in the new Gehry-designed galleries communicates importance, emphasizing the canon over the multiple voices in the J.S. McLean Centre. The pairing risks turning the J.S. McLean Centre into the Thomson Collection's "necessary other." Eva Mackey refers to the importance of "necessary others" in articulations of Canadian identity: historically, English-Canadians needed French and the Aboriginal populations to establish what they were not.[4] One could reasonably extend this analysis to the persistent hierarchies in the exhibition of Canadian art history: the McLean Centre legitimates the importance of the Canadian artistic canon, so powerfully installed in the Thomson Collection. As Christopher B. Steiner posits in his important text on canonicity, "...the canon is meaningful only if it can be juxtaposed to whatever is noncanonical,"[5] a statement that can elucidate how the two halves of the Canadian Collection relate to one another. The "marginal" work presented in the J.S. McLean Centre may have the negative effect of confirming the importance of the work in the Thomson Collection when the collections are contrasted.

Throughout this thesis I have reiterated that the conventional narratives of Canadian art history in art museums are in need of revising. The canon of historical Canadian art favours certain artists and modes of cultural production over others, as any canon does. New museology teaches us to be critical of museums: to question who is representing whom, whose voices are privileged and whose are excluded. Art museums especially are rooted in the

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[3] Ibid.
[4] Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 2.
[5] Christopher B. Steiner, "Can the Canon Burst?" *Art Bulletin* 78 (1996), 213.

practice of classifying and valuing based on hierarchical concepts. New museology and new art history ask a lot of museums, and the AGO has responded. What happens when these new museological critiques come from within the institution? With its Transformation Project, the AGO has prioritized its publics more than ever before. It has introduced a new collaborative structure throughout the institution and it is clearly visible in the installation of the collections. Given the art museum's dual role to preserve heritage and reflect the current demographics, exhibiting historical Canadian art is especially difficult. As a postcolonial, officially multicultural and bilingual country, adequately representing the Canadian public is near-impossible.

The installation of the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art accomplishes this goal more thoroughly than has been done yet in Canadian art museums. The reinstallation gives focussed attention to, especially, many women artists and many Aboriginal artists, demonstrating a wide range of artistic practices, and introducing a wealth of interpretive strategies to communicate these changes to visitors. The critical, contextual model of display enables this project, by shedding the exclusive legacy of traditional art-historical methods. But while the new art history challenges the dominance of canonical artists, no one denies their importance in Canadian art history.

When the AGO closed its Canadian Wing in 2003, as a cost-cutting measure in preparation for Transformation AGO, public outcry focussed specifically on the shuttering of the Group of Seven gallery. Critics in the press (Margaret Wente and Joe Fiorito, among others) were outraged that the Gallery would deny the public their right to see the Group's paintings – it was specifically the lack of access to the Group's work that provoked ire –

stating that the Group's paintings were absolutely central to Canadian national pride.[6] These objections serve as reminders that, despite the desires of many for a more pluralistic version of Canadian art history, traditional favourites likes the Group of Seven continue to maintain popularity for many visitors. This is where the value of pairing the two parts of the Canadian Wing becomes clearest. While the J.S. McLean Centre necessarily shifts its focus to other artists, the Thomson Collection provides the canonical masterpieces beloved by many. The AGO's curators all spoke of this as liberating, providing more freedom to go further with the reinstallation in the McLean galleries. The two sections of the Canadian Wing ultimately allow the AGO to preserve existing traditions while introducing new ones, without, in theory, impinging upon each other. In this respect, the duality in the Canadian Wing is productive, rather than antagonistic. While the fundamental differences between the Thomson Collection and the J.S. McLean Centre indicate conflicting ideologies, their pairing ultimately represents the myriad demands placed on the Gallery. Processes of change in the art museum are slow and subject to complex institutional limitations and expectations, which the AGO has clearly negotiated carefully and thoughtfully.[7]

The positioning of the contrasting narratives in the Canadian Wing demands questioning: what, at the end of the day, is the twenty-first-century art museum's role? As Anna Hudson and Ruth Phillips have pointed out, museums are important for the objects

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[6] See Margaret Wente, "Masses, Classes and the AGO," *Globe and Mail*, December 9, 2003 and Joe Fiorito, "AGO deep-sixes Group of Seven," *Toronto Star*, December 1, 2003.

[7] While beyond the scope of this thesis, the literature on change theory can provide an important discussion on incremental versus radical change in the museum, in relation to the exhibition of Canadian art. This approach may be useful in the future in examining the impact of these changes at the AGO for visitors.

they hold.[8] But as Phillips states, the Canadian museum in the "second museum age" must articulate, "the accommodations we are prepared to make in fulfillment of our national commitment to the accommodation of difference."[9] The AGO's acquisition of the Thomson Collection, then, fulfills the first goal in the AGO's strategic plan: "to build, preserve and share one of North America's great art collections." The reinstallation of the J.S. McLean Centre fulfills the second goal more clearly, "to engage visitors in a compelling and innovative museum experience."[10]

A constant "push and pull" operates in institutions founded to preserve tradition, and in need of support from donors. Though the concessions made to a private patron are controversial for a public art museum, the AGO likely imagines the future possibilities it has initiated with the Thomson partnership and with Transformation AGO. As Reid states, regarding the Thomson Collection, the AGO did not "agree to anything it didn't agree with."[11] The terms of the Thomson donation will not last forever, but the "transformed" AGO will remain in place, and the AGO's collection of historical Canadian art will be strengthened. The Gallery has taken big risks with both the Thomson donation and with the experimental reinstallation of the Canadian Wing, and, as Matthew Teitelbaum has suggested, "curating is the process of learning in public."[12] While the two-part narrative of Canadian art creates a challenge for the visitor, it ultimately succeeds in breaking with the conventions of

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[8] See Ruth Phillips, "Re-Placing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age," *The Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 1 (March 2005) and Anna Hudson, "Beauty is the Eye Discovering: Ken Thomson's Passion for Canadian Historical Art," in *Ken Thomson the Collector*, ed. Conal Shields (Toronto: AGO/Skylet, 2008).
[9] Phillips, 110.
[10] AGO Strategic Plan. Undated. Forwarded to me on July 5, 2010 by Georgiana Uhlyarik.
[11] Reid, in conversation with the author. Toronto, July 5, 2010.
[12] Matthew Teitelbaum, "Notes on the Meeting of Cultures," in ed. Peter White, *Curatorial Strategies for the Future* (Banff: Banff Centre Press, 1996), 40.

exhibiting Canadian art history, and in negotiating public and private interests. Both the successes and failures in this unusual divided Canadian Wing will foster critical discourse, informing the exhibition of historical Canadian art in the future.

Having spoken with the curators and interpretive planners responsible for the major changes, I think it is clear that they are engaged in critical debates in Canadian art history, passionate about creating a meaningful experience for the visitor, and excited about the possibilities for the new AGO. Given the initiative of those within the institution, one can imagine the AGO of the future as an even more innovative art museum. It is possible to imagine that the AGO's thoughtful curators and interpretive planners will integrate parts of Thomson's spectacular collection into the Canadian Wing in meaningful ways. Communicating new ways of seeing requires more than adding new artists to an existing structure, but ultimately we can only build on the existing history of Canadian art. It is clear that the AGO has the resources and impetus to continue doing so. As Gerald McMaster says,

> [L]ooking at the history of Canadian art, it's always going to be the same, it's never going to go away. I guess the challenge to seeing, to looking, can be done through curatorial practice by taking works of art and getting people to see them in new ways. And I think it's a...kind of a post-post-colonial, if you will, or post-post-modern way of looking at the world. I think that's a part of the practice that's going on today, and...it is really the right moment to look at Canadian art differently.[13]

[13] Gerald McMaster, in conversation with the author. Toronto, November 11, 2009.

ILLUSTRATIONS

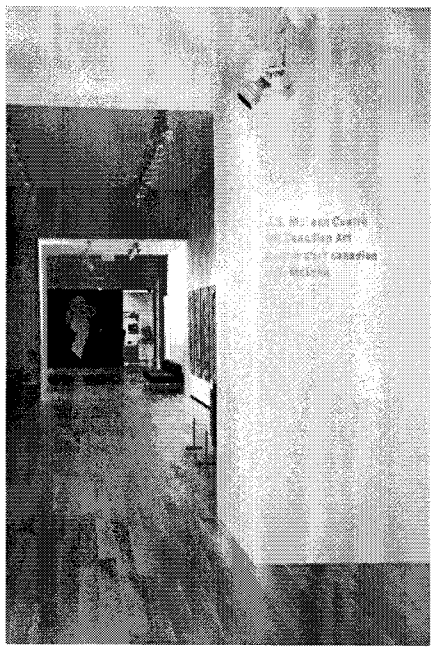

Figure 1. Entrance to the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2010

Figure 2. Entrance to the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art in the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2010

Figure 3. Krieghoff paintings in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

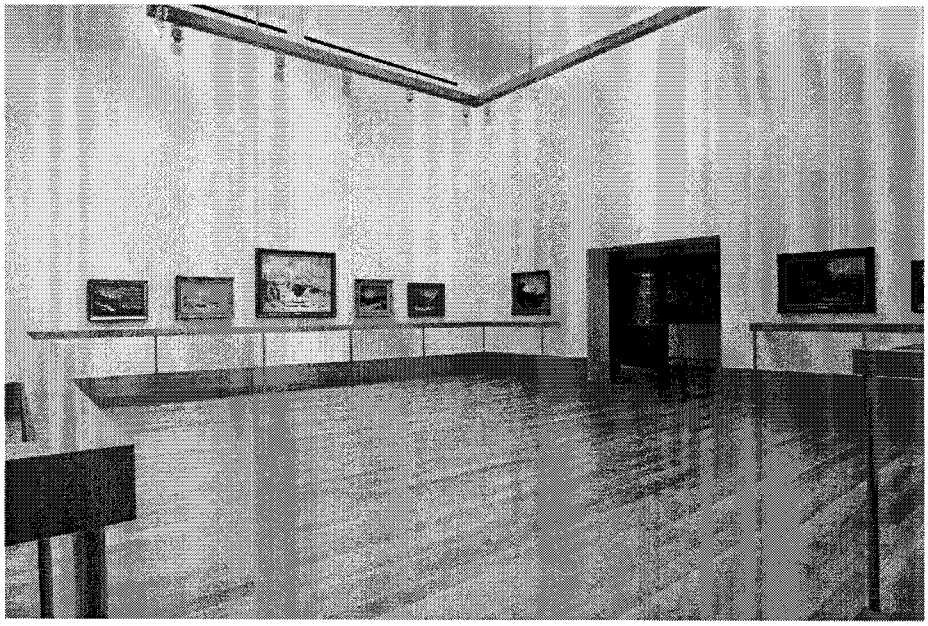

Figure 4. Krieghoff's "Images of Canada" gallery in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

Figure 5. Emily Carr gallery in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

Figure 6. Lawren Harris gallery in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

Figure 7. Group of Seven gallery in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

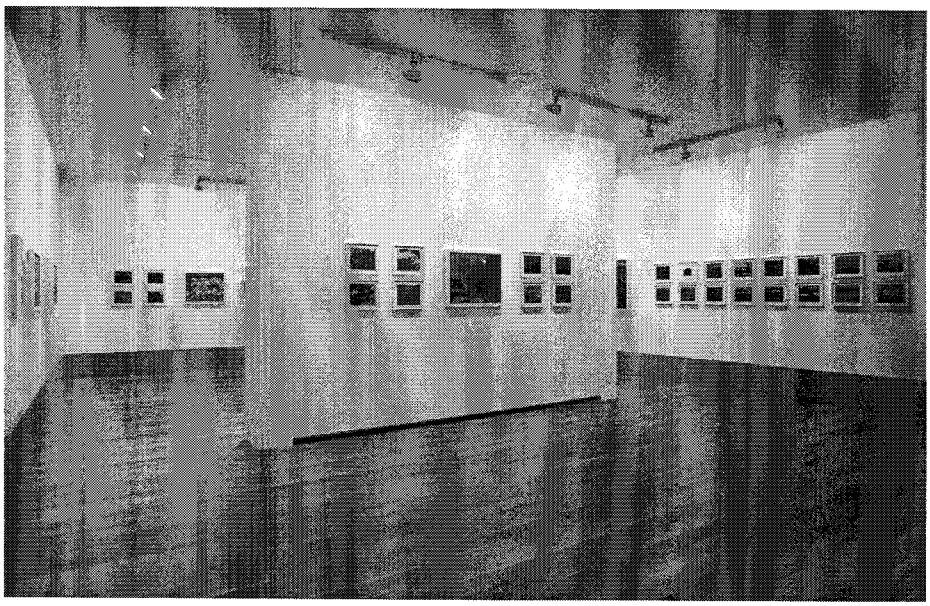

Figure 8. Paintings and sketches by A.Y. Jackson and J.E.H Macdonald in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

Figure 9. David Milne Study Centre in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

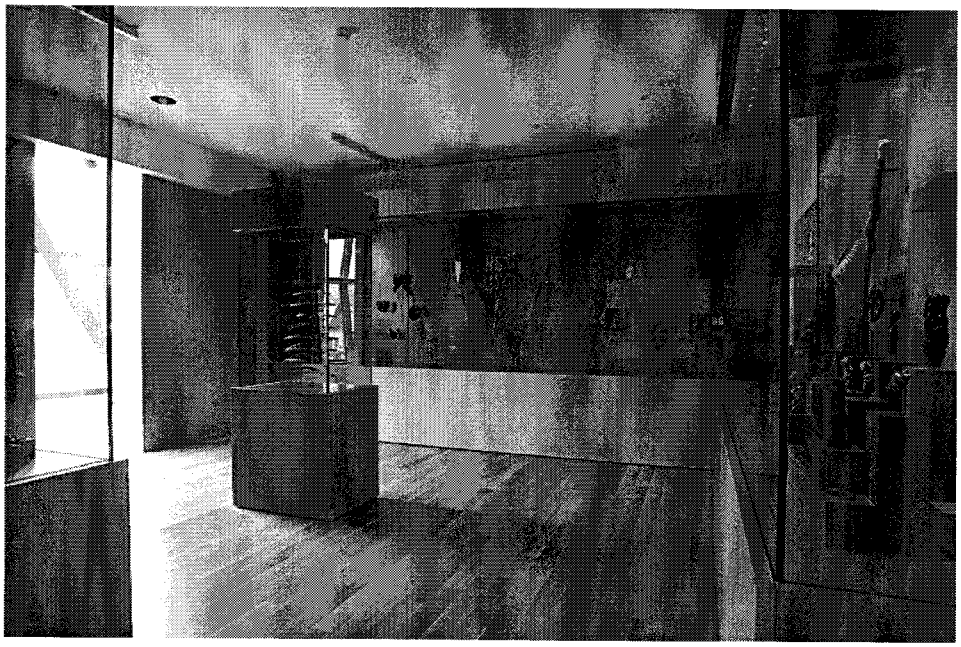

Figure 10. Non-Western objects in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

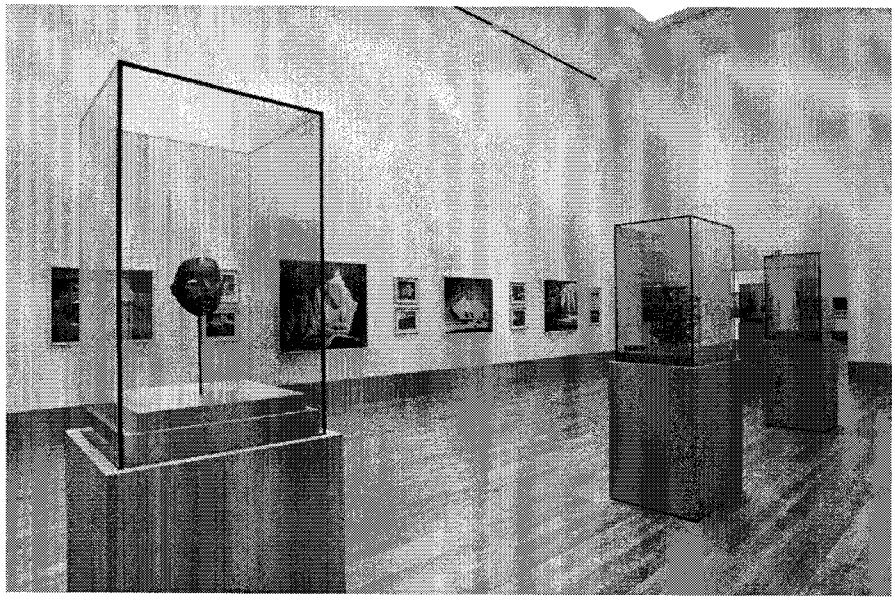

Figure 11. Tsimshian mask and Nuuh-chah-nulth salmon rattle, with Lawren Harris paintings. Installed in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

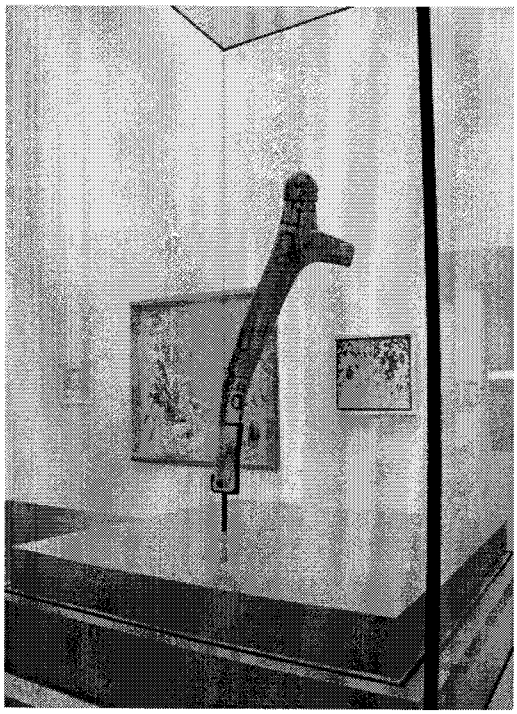

Figure 2. Elk antler club (c.1750) from the Dundas Collection, in the Thomson Collection of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

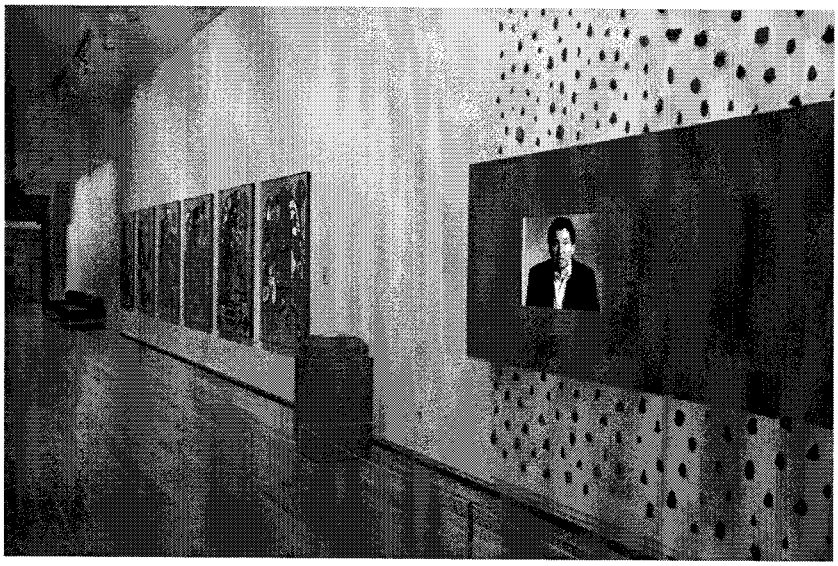

Figure 3. Projectile points in the Bovey Gallery, in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

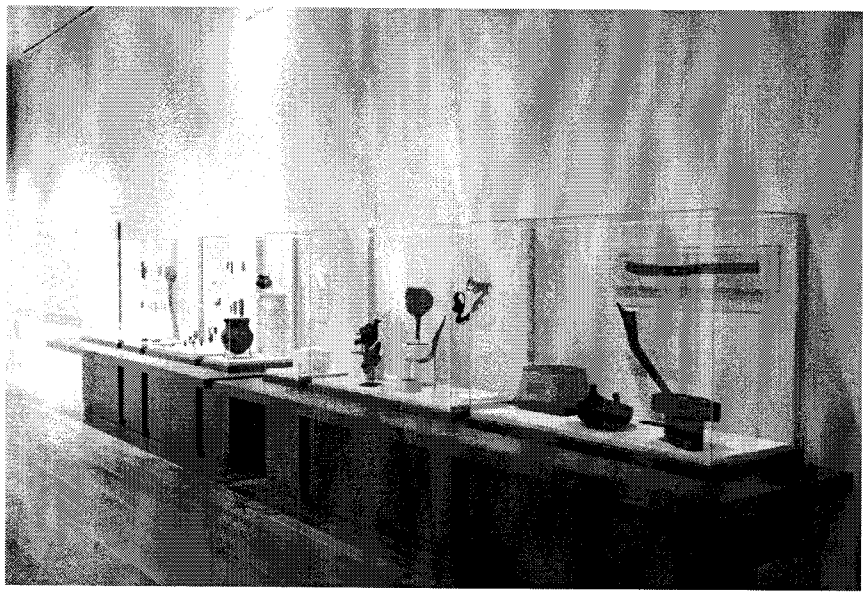

Figure 4. Historical First Nations objects in the Bovey Gallery, in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

Figure 5. Signy Eaton Gallery in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

Figure 6. Group of Seven gallery in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

Figure 7. Group of Seven sketches in the Group of Seven gallery, in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

Figure 8. Contextual material in the Group of Seven gallery, in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

Figure 9. "Constructing Canada" gallery in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009

Figure 10. Georgia Ridley Salon Gallery in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009.

Figure 11. Emily Carr's *Indian House* (1929), Tom Thomson's *West Wind* (1917), and Anishnaabe and Odawa beaded pouches. Installed in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009.

Figure 12. Emily Carr's *Red Tree* (1938) and Rodney Graham's *Stanley Park Cedars 4* (1991-1993). Installed in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009.

Figure 13. McLaughlin Gallery in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009.

Figure 14. Haida argillite sailor figure (c. 1900-1925) in the McLaughlin Gallery, in the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 2009.

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