

# Art trip: Canadian artists abroad

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**WHO**

27 Canadian female artists

**WHAT**

A New Light

**WHERE**

Canadian embassy in Washington

**WHEN**

Until April 30

About two years ago, the Canadian embassy in Washington conducted an inventory of the artworks displayed across its six floors. The audit showed that of the 180 total pieces assembled there, just one-third were made by female artists. The phenomenon is, sadly, typical of many institutional art collections, both at home and abroad. Fortunately, for institutions that care to address the problem, the remedy is painfully straightforward: Buy more work by women.

At their own discovery, embassy staff made it their goal “to get to parity,” public affairs counselor Denis Chouinard says. The exhibition A New Light – on view to the public through April 30 – presents 38 works by 27 Canadian female artists, drawn from the Global Affairs Visual Art Collection, the Canada Council Art Bank and the Scotiabank Fine Arts Collection. Afterward, the artworks will move from the embassy gallery space to their new homes, brightening the chancery’s halls and offices.

The initiative represents an update to the collection in more ways than one, addressing gender disparity, but also strengthening representation from every region of the country, by artists young and old, practising a range of dis-

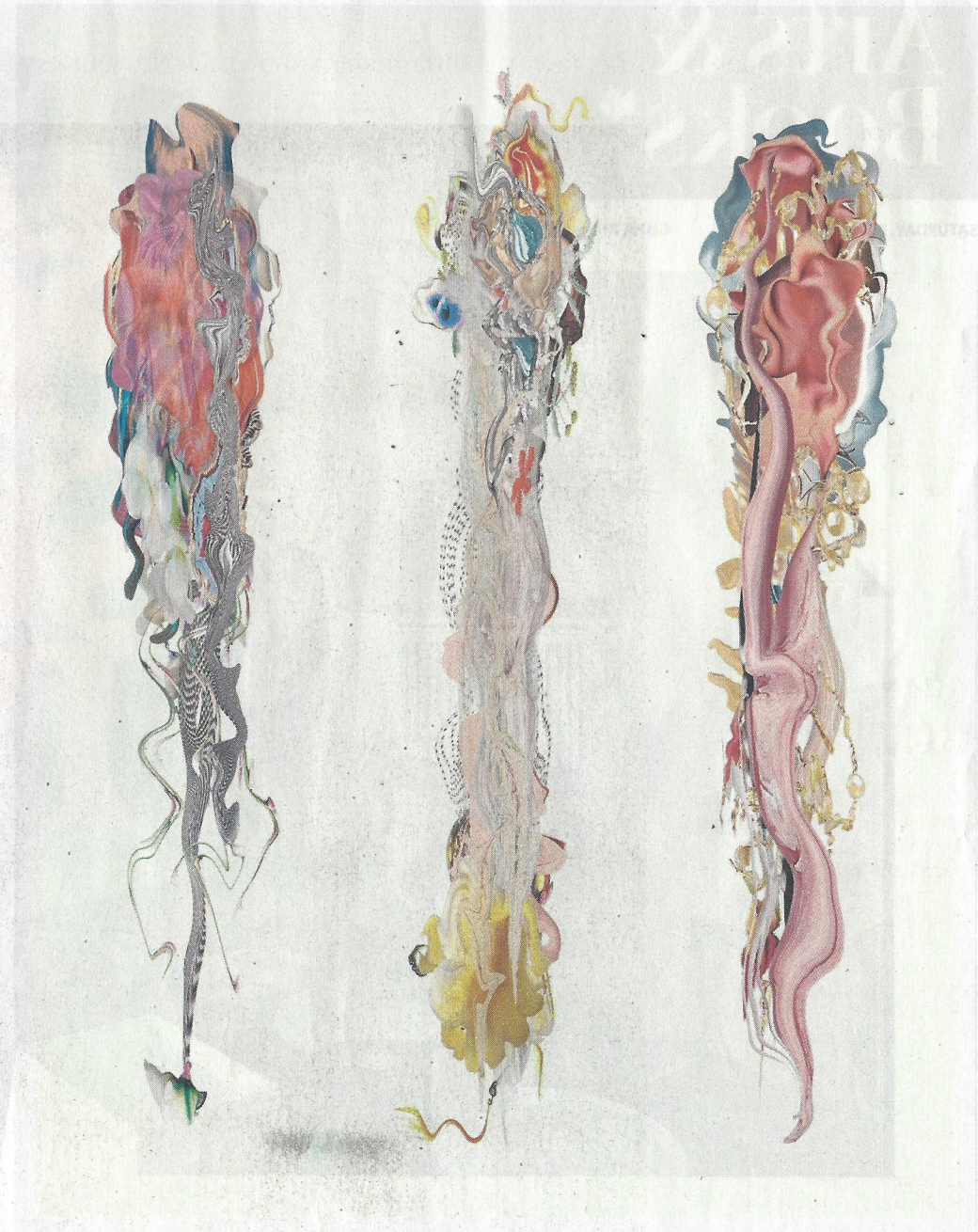
ciplines. A New Light includes landscape paintings by the likes of Jennifer Carvalho, Monica Tap and Sandra Meigs, portrait photography by Meryl McMaster, wet-plate collodion photography from Christine Fitzgerald, mixed media by Maria Hupfield, pencil drawing by Ningiukulu Teevee, the digital collage of AM Dumouchel and a quilted hanging by Joyce Wieland, to give just some idea of its variety.

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Ceramicist Kathy Kranias, whose two included sculptures recount stories of women in Greek myth, says the exhibition is “exemplary of this pro-active shift in gender equity” happening now within the world of museum collections. “It’s exciting and I think it’s long overdue.”

When asked what the assembled artworks tell us about Canada today, Chouinard points to a neon sculpture by Winnipeg-based artist Divya Mehra, which says “Enjoy Diversity,” and calls it “one of the key messages coming out from this exhibition.” The work shows a chocolate bar in toxic green. It’s meant to look “appealing and gross at the same time,” the artist says. It resembles store signage, and its message feels more sardonic than sincere. Diversity is easy to advertise, the sign suggests, but to truly support diversity, it takes action.

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A New Light, on display at the Canadian embassy in Washington, presents 38 works by 27 female artists, including this digital collage by AM Dumouchel.