



LEGACIES

TERI DONOVAN
ALEXANDRA LUKE
GWEN MacGREGOR
ISABEL McLAUGHLIN

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CURATED BY MARGARET RODGERS
THE ROBERT McLAUGHLIN GALLERY
OSHAWA

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INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

by DONNA RAETSEN-KEMP
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

It is fitting that the final exhibition in The Robert McLaughlin Gallery's 50th anniversary year should celebrate two of its most important benefactors: Alexandra Luke and Isabel McLaughlin. We invited local artist, curator, and writer, Margaret Rodgers, to invite contemporary artists to respond to the work of Luke and McLaughlin. Rodgers was a particularly fitting choice as Luke had been the subject of her Master's thesis at Trent University, a subject recommended to her by former RMG Director Joan Murray. Her thesis would be published by ECW Press as *Locating Alexandra*.

Margaret Rodgers invited two Toronto-based contemporary women artists to examine and respond to work in the RMG's permanent collection. Teri Donovan and Gwen MacGregor have repositioned both Luke and McLaughlin by shining a contemporary lens on both their personal and professional lives through their individual practices. We are grateful for their contribution to the success of this project. In her essay Rodgers points out the importance of both Luke and McLaughlin to the larger Canadian art world, as well as their importance to the RMG through their generous donation of funds and works from their personal collections.

Both women have, indeed, been instrumental in shaping what the RMG has become over the past 50 years. Rodgers and guest writer Sky Goodden speak to historic inequities in the perception and treatment of women artists while Donovan and MacGregor respond in kind by creating work that connects these women to, not only ours, but broader artistic communities. I would like to thank Margaret Rodgers for curating this exhibition, as well as for her and Sky Goodden's insightful and thoughtful essays.

I would also like to thank the City of Oshawa, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Ontario Arts Council for their ongoing support.

A CELEBRATION

A CELEBRATION

by MARGARET RODGERS
GUEST CURATOR

THE PROBABILITY OF SEPARATE WORLDS MEETING IS VERY SMALL. THE LURE OF IT IS IMMENSE.

Jeanette Winterson, *Gut Symmetries*¹

LEGACIES explores the art and lives of Alexandra Luke and Isabel McLaughlin, two very different artists, through the lens of two equally diverse contemporary artists: Teri Donovan and Gwen MacGregor. Site specific work by MacGregor and Donovan elaborate on the historical and cultural contexts of Luke and McLaughlin with insight and affection.

From a local perspective, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery (RMG) would not exist had it not been for the initial art collection of Alexandra Luke and financial support of her husband Ewart in 1967, and the subsequent donations provided by Isabel McLaughlin for its extensive building expansion that opened in 1987. While the significance of the wealth derived from two wings of the General Motors McLaughlin family cannot be overstated, it is also their contributions to our artistic heritage that is the focus of this exhibition. Luke and McLaughlin were only two years apart in age, but their career trajectories were fundamentally different.

History is one thing and memory quite another. The history of the gallery and of contributions

to a larger body of information about Canadian art is clearly significant. However both Luke and McLaughlin can also be remembered within a local context.

McLaughlin, like her famous father Colonel Sam, lived to a great age, and like him she was a no nonsense and down to earth aristocrat. After attending school in Oshawa she studied abroad, then at the Ontario College of Art and the Art Students' League in Toronto. Among her friends and mentors were A.Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer, and League members Yvonne McKague Housser, Doris McCarthy, Norah McCullough, Audrey Taylor, and Gordon Webber.²

She hosted parties in her two apartments on Avenue Road and was a loyal friend to less privileged artists (most others). When the Group of Seven evolved into the Canadian Group of Painters she was a founding member, and in 1939 became its first woman president. A keen supporter of her contemporaries, she bought generously in the limited marketplace for Canadian art, eventually leaving her extensive collection and much of her own work to the RMG.





Donovan has created two mixed media paintings on Mylar that depict McLaughlin in characteristic settings. In *Designing Nature* she sits at a makeshift easel in what is probably the sumptuous garden of the McLaughlin family home, Parkwood. She is surrounded by flowers, with fragments of floral imagery from her art floating above, along with her words “our own vitality & growing rhythm moves us.” Her interest in and respect for nature is a theme evidenced not only in paintings such as *Bermudiana* and *Swirl*, but also in her apartment studio, a cabinet of curiosities rich in samples saved for study and incorporation into her drawing and painting.

McLaughlin’s second apartment was also well stocked with paraphernalia required for the many parties she hosted for her wide circle of friends. Donovan’s *Friend of the Arts* shows her subject beaming a wide smile across an ornate desk, wearing the Orders of Ontario and Canada that signify her contributions within Canadian society. Her gaze is cheerful and straightforward. Elements from her life as an artist are before her and she is interpreted in this aptly titled piece as the extrovert that she probably was. The incorporation of McLaughlin’s use of patterning and focus on design become prominent aspects in each of the Donovan pieces. In *Designing Nature*, the handwritten phrase “flow and movement over the whole” are words gleaned from researching her notes, revealing that facility with design was something McLaughlin herself felt to be one of her strengths.

For the local community, McLaughlin is a recognizable memory, still familiar to senior gallery staff and volunteers. Conversely, Luke’s persona takes on a mythical semblance, given her late entry into Canadian art circles, her engagement in esoteric theories, the drama in her life story, and then her early death. Still, there are one or two elderly gallery members who can recall taking a workshop that “Marg McLaughlin” arranged at her Thickson Road studio in the early 1960s, or one of the pottery classes at Greenbriar, the family home.³

When the first Oshawa gallery was opened above a store in the downtown core, Luke wrote that she wished she could put her shoulder to the wheel.⁴ A year after her death her husband Ewart

turned the sod to begin construction on the RMG, commenting that he didn't think much of modern art. The gallery was named for his grandfather Robert and financed by the family. But the collection of Painters Eleven art and other modernist works came from Luke, and the prominence of the gallery today, that which raises it above a regional institution, is its collection of art by influential representatives of abstraction in Canada.

Luke did not have formal art training, and while she had always been "artistic," she originally trained as a nurse. As early as 1933 she wrote an eloquent defence of modern art in the Oshawa press.⁵ Enrolment in the Banff School of Fine Arts in 1945 gave her the traction she needed as a professional artist. Friendships there with A.Y. Jackson and Jock Macdonald, plus her own determination, offered support against a fundamentally resistant domestic scene. In subsequent years she travelled to Hans Hofmann's art colony, absorbing his theories eagerly and persuading other artists such as William Ronald and the young Ron Lambert to go as well. *Homage to Hofmann* is a special inclusion in the *LEGACIES* exhibition, loaned by her late son Dick, who felt it to be her best work.⁶ A deluge of golden platelets are flung outward from an off-centre vortex in this splendid painting that is rarely shown in public.

McLaughlin also attended the Provincetown classes but did not find Hofmann's teaching amenable to her practice. While he espoused observance of nature, the manner in which it translated into painting was very different from what she was doing. One may conjecture that her long career positioned her within an earlier approach to art making. The Canadian Group



of Painters was closer to the modernism that the Group of Seven espoused, rather than the abstraction that Hofmann taught in the U.S.. Luke embraced his ideas, wrote passionately on the subject, and used her skill and influence as a society matron to actively organize and advocate for this new kind of art.

Donovan refers to the importance of Hofmann in Luke's development with titles *Push/Pull 1* and *2* since his theories included this mantra for creating shifting planes of colour and form. In similar pose to McLaughlin, she is depicted at a table. Before her are books, notes and drawings, possibly of mathematical illustrations on Ouspensky's fourth dimension or planetary influences. Suggestions of those explorations in esoteric thought that fired an immersion into abstraction, and her manifested determination against many barriers are clearly implied.

In contrast to the McLaughlin portrait, Luke looks interrupted from her thoughts. A toile-like background tries to engulf her. Replacing a standard rococo motif is the wallpaper of her life: the society matron with a tea set, the Painters Eleven group photo, the mother and wife, in fact the many contradictory factions that she navigated.

In *Push/Pull 1* she strides forward, empowered by her art but shadowed by family obligation as Ewart's hand pulls at her arm. Her glorious *Yellow Space* watercolour is on an easel and she is carrying one of her leather collages. Donovan's play on words implies both the influence of Hofmann and the conflicting aspects of her life.

In 1971 Linda Nochlin articulated many issues for women artists in "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" and indeed many issues have emerged beyond her original thesis.⁷ But in her ground-breaking feminist essay, the author makes the connection between aristocratic busyness and the lack of so-called "great" artists, comparing aristocrats and women in terms of the paucity of famous artists from either camp.

Or rather, is it not, that the kinds of demands and expectations placed before both aristocrats and women—the amount of time necessarily devoted to social functions, the very kinds of activities demanded—simply made total devotion to professional art production out of the question, indeed unthinkable, both for upper-class males and for women generally, rather than its being a question of genius and talent?⁸

Both societal and gender-specific issues make this idea particularly apropos to Luke's life,

circumscribed as it was by her role as Margaret McLaughlin. The other side of this however is that connections and organizational skills also provided advantages that other artists may not have had. William Ronald, requesting a recommendation for a Guggenheim Fellowship, asks which of her names to use.⁹ Perhaps, at the time, her status as a McLaughlin family member would be a more powerful cachet than her name as an artist?

Luke vigorously advocated for abstract art, using her considerable energies to organize the 1952 *Canadian Abstract Exhibition*, the first to travel throughout Ontario and into Quebec and New Brunswick. Archives reveal her reports to the YWCA board, her meticulously tallied expenses, and correspondence with various artists and curators, notably Lawren Harris Jr. asking "Mrs. McLaughlin" if the show could come to Sackville. The project was undertaken via the YWCA at Adelaide House, itself a former McLaughlin family mansion. Both McLaughlin and Luke had been exhibiting there since 1946, when it was the principal exhibition space in Oshawa. As both surnames were McLaughlin, Luke decided, in 1947, to use her middle and maiden names for her art practice to distinguish herself from her husband's cousin.

Today Adelaide House is part of YWCA Durham's support system for women and children. In her series *Message Threads*, MacGregor interpolates art history and the current function of the place by embroidering Luke and McLaughlin's words on garments from Adelaide's Attic, an on-site thrift shop. The apparel is returned to the shop, while the photographs are part of *LEGACIES*.

Several residents provided their own clothing, choosing the artists' words and generously agreeing to participate in a photo-op sporting their Gwen-enhanced garments. Eleonore has chosen "Never stand still" and Susie, who likes to paint, has chosen "seem to be trying too hard to make an acceptable painting." Luke's diary excerpt "I saw a wonderful storm" borders a cozy red wool scarf, while McLaughlin's practical "I don't want to see a ghost" is embroidered with orange thread on the bottom of an orange top.¹⁰

MacGregor acknowledges her mother's influence as an avid embroiderer, saying that

there is a kind of muscle memory I have with embroidery that comes from time I spent with my mom as a child, she was always embroidering or knitting or making clothes and embroidering was one of the things I liked to participate in. I hadn't tried it for many years but my fingers knew what to do before my brain engaged."¹¹

A link is established between the Adelaide House YWCA and the family and artistic histories of women. Luke and McLaughlin would undoubtedly be pleased at the reconnecting of their lives and work with this site. Through some residents and the Adelaide House thrift shop, MacGregor engages a community that may not have previously been aware of the relevance their home has to Oshawa's cultural history. The artists' words are added to clothing placed in a context where broader and more radical issues have affected the women who live there.

Although the reference comes to my mind, MacGregor does not subscribe to a connection

with the needlework in Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* or that of Canadian artist Joyce Wieland in her 1971 exhibition *True Patriot Love*, saying

My work speaks more to a kind of artistic labour that I want to insert into the YWCA community, rather than bringing the embroidery into the gallery to legitimate the craft within a 'fine art' context, which I think Chicago's and Wieland's work was engaged in.¹²

In *Message Threads* the craft of fine embroidery is given over to a basic stitch that clearly imparts each artist's words while eschewing decorative flourish.

In *Alex and Us*, MacGregor addresses the imbalance in the careers and histories of women and trans or non-binary artists. Luke was appreciated by her contemporaries for her substantial talents, but her reputation has languished while that of the so-called "young lions" of Painters Eleven has flourished. "It was not in the press that Alexandra Luke became lost"¹³ states Dr. Janice Anderson, referring to an abundance of positive reviews. However Jack Bush is quoted as saying "God the way she has been treated in this town makes us weep blood all over the floor."¹⁴ Opinion aside, the unfortunate truth is that today neither Alexandra Luke nor Isabel McLaughlin are as well-known as are some of their equally talented male contemporaries.

In MacGregor's video installation, a procession of artists interacts across and in front of a well-known 1957 Painters Eleven group photograph by Peter Croyden, the piece a meaningful connection between Luke, her peers, and her instrumental

role in contributing to the history and development of both the RMG and visual art in Canada. The projection includes those who have exhibited at the Oshawa gallery and those with interest in doing so. The iconic original is employed as backdrop to a looped rotation of artists while a second channel projects a group photograph of the inclusive and diverse participants who agreed to be part of the project. In 2011 the same Painters Eleven photograph was interpreted by B.C. artist Douglas Coupland as a configuration of abstract discs to represent each Painters Eleven member. In contrast to this permanent installation attached to the exterior of the building, the MacGregor time-based art functions as societal commentary and inserts over thirty artists into the narrative.

On the day of the shoot, there is a festive atmosphere at Northern Contemporary gallery, with a “green room,” vanity area, and an expansive groaning board of hummus, chocolate, fruit, and all manner of goodies. The event echoes countless projects where working together includes celebration. Posing with images of the two Painters Eleven women artists Luke and Hortense Gordon, interlopers block the better-known males. For a time women, trans, and non-binary artists dominate the image, hamming it up in various poses and dress, clearly engaging in a collective good time. Through the video projection, all are now part of the RMG’s larger community. While essentialist rhetoric has become discredited, this is a very female-centred kind of art making.

Luke’s life story and its dramatic potential are counterpointed against McLaughlin’s long and productive career with the Canadian Group of Painters and other associates. Inspired by their

legacy, Donovan and MacGregor have employed a wide range of contemporary practices to speak to the lives and work of the RMG’s singularly important female artists. Donovan makes reference to McLaughlin’s extensive and deep affection and interest in the natural world, and a life lived in friendship and support of her colleagues, while she portrays Luke in many of the conflicting and absorbing aspects of her life. MacGregor’s two channel video addresses Luke’s underrepresentation in cultural memory while speaking up for other artists. In the embroidered YWCA garments she reveals the sometimes whimsical, often revelatory thought processes of both Luke and McLaughlin. Art as a transformative endeavour is gently inserted into each project.

In the heady conclusion to her well-known essay on greatness, Nochlin suggests a positive and empowering strategy that each of the artists in *LEGACIES* might claim:

...women can reveal institutional and intellectual weaknesses in general, and, at the same time that they destroy false consciousness, take part in the creation of institutions in which clear thought—and true greatness—are challenges open to anyone, man or woman, courageous enough to take the necessary risk, the leap into the unknown.¹⁵

Looking both forward and back, the exhibition features two contemporary women artists while remembering two with major impact locally and arguably also within the history of Canadian art. Donovan depicts each woman as larger than life, a strategy which emphasizes their historic influence.

The MacGregor photography and time-based works document previous events that, in their expansive, inclusive, and ongoing implications function as a way toward empowerment beyond the exhibition. The strategies work in concert, circling and elaborating on the memories while moving forward to celebrate contemporary women and art.

Endnotes

- 1 Jeanette Winterson, *Gut Symmetries* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 25.
- 2 Joan Murray, *Part 1: The Isabel McLaughlin Gift* (Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1987), 3.
- 3 Pottery workshops ended when Ewart complained about the hydro bill (Margaret Rodgers interview with daughter Mary)
- 4 Joan Murray, *Alexandra Luke: Continued Searching* (Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery 1987), 9.
- 5 Alexandra Luke, "Defends Modern Art" *Oshawa Daily Times*, (April 1933).
- 6 "Interesting that you would want to show 'Homage to Hofman [sic]'. I think it is my mother's best work..." Email E.R.S. McLaughlin to Margaret Rodgers 02/01/16.
- 7 Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" *ARTnews* (January 1971), 22-39, 67-71.
- 8 Linda Nochlin, Retrospective, June 2015, Women in the Art World from 1971: "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" ARTNews.com POSTED 05/30/15 4:00 PM.
- 9 William Ronald, Letter to Margaret McLaughlin, 28 September 1955, RMG Archives, Oshawa.
- 10 We are also invited to have their texts embroidered on a piece, and wear it to the opening reception. YWCA staffer Cynthia has contributed something as well, and is featured in the *Portraits*.
- 11 Email Gwen MacGregor to Margaret Rodgers 06/17/17.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Janice Anderson, Review of *Locating Alexandra* by Margaret Rodgers, *Journal of Canadian Art History* 18, no.1 (1997), 118.
- 14 Quoted in Luke's notes on P11 meeting at Jock Macdonald's home, 9 May 1957, RMG Archives, Oshawa.
- 15 Maura Reilly, "Linda Nochlin on Feminism Then and Now" *Art Media*, ARTNews.com, (June 2015), 71.

CHANGE
THE RECORD

WHEN ADDRESSING OR
DENOTING A “LEGACY,”
THE TEMPTATION TO BRAID
DISPARATE GENERATIONS
TOGETHER, OR DISPARATE
FIGURES AND THEIR UNIQUE
POLITICS TO THOSE THAT
CAME AFTER, IS PRESENT
AND DANGEROUS.

As an art historian and critic, it's both my prerogative to conceive of these connections, and to caution against their easy formation. Skepticism about pat narrative construction is a talisman of the historical moment we occupy now, of course. And it's accompanied by the urgent imperative, lately, to walk through the rooms we thought we'd shut the door to, and do a headcount of who's missing.

The *LEGACIES* exhibition, organized by The Robert McLaughlin Gallery (RMG) to commemorate the women who made its founding and expansion possible, Alexandra Luke and Isabel McLaughlin, performs a similar function: in the rooms of its history it shines a light on those who've been seated too long.

Under the direction of guest curator Margaret Rodgers, this consecrative effort to promote two influential women to their rightful place in the canon is both amplified and complicated by two contemporary artists—Teri Donovan and Gwen MacGregor—who've been brought into dialogue with the histories and paintings of McLaughlin and Luke. As such, the framework around this exhibition is contemporary, interventionist,

forthright, and memorial. It unsettles and repositions two key players in Canadian art history, while making room for more to move in.

It's hard to articulate a feminist art history without reverting to the opinions of men. In Joan Murray's preface to the RMG's 1987 exhibition catalogue *The Isabel McLaughlin Gift* (one of two commemorative shows that then-director Murray organized to highlight McLaughlin's bequeathed collection), references to men abound. In the first two paragraphs alone, mention of Hans Hofmann, William Ronald, Harold Town, Clement Greenberg, as well as a nod to McLaughlin's father stud the narrative of this formidable mid-century female artist and collector.¹ Admittedly most of these citations are powerful ones, helping confirm, at the outset, the reputation and laurels of McLaughlin and her friend and cousin-in-law, also an artist and collector—Alexandra Luke. But still, this essay repeats something so familiar as to appear benign: the confirmation of a woman's position through the assessments of men.

In history writing, this is a difficult habit to break. Men's voices are the ones on record—and therefore, the ones of record. Curator Rodgers contrived a smart work-around to this habitual framing, inviting two women artists to respond to the legacies of McLaughlin and Luke. In this, she produced a conversational structure that rendered these historic subjects more visible and more complex.

Donovan and MacGregor's respective approaches to McLaughlin and Luke's work as painters—and as spearheads and ground-breakers in the formation



of mid-century Canadian abstract painting and design—form a prism through which light and narrative refract, intersect, and ring with colour.

Through an empathic vantage point, Donovan's mixed media paintings serve as emotional portraits of McLaughlin and Luke, marking biographical and stylistic elements in their lives and work while complicating the clean lines we tend to draw between a woman's interior and exterior selves. We're met with Donovan's unique interplay of patterning and figuration, and a tonal register that observes the challenges and isolation of ambition. In *Push/Pull 1*, an affecting portrait of Luke, our heroine artist swings out towards us with a painting under her arm and the breeze in her coat. Another painting sits atop an easel behind her, and another one, still, sits to the right. But Luke's family is in the picture, too—in more than one sense. And though her children sit sweetly, and her husband bears a smile, his hand is outreached, and enclosing Luke's arm. Donovan encircles the choices we make. And though this image stirs busily with options, its beat is one of a certain loneliness as Luke makes the effort to push out, and march on.

In conversation about this work, Donovan observes that, "in a number of ways, the obstacles faced by Alexandra [Luke] as a female artist still linger today."² Representing "Alexandra's determination

in the face of her family life that discouraged her career as an artist," Donovan also made a point of referencing "some of her artistic and spiritual influences." These include Hans Hofmann, the leading Abstract Expressionist painter who taught Luke at his school in Provincetown, Massachusetts in the late 1940s, and had a significant impact on her able embrace of abstraction.³

Indeed, important to any portrayal of Luke is her increasing orientation towards abstraction by mid-career. The author Iris Nowell explains this as Luke seizing on the form's ambiguousness and capacity for feeling: "A fundamental reason for changing course is that painting in abstraction offers the artist greater satisfaction of rendering deeply felt emotions than does copying external realities."⁴ This is an argument more aggressively made by Susan Sontag in her famed 1964 essay "Against Interpretation," in which she seizes on the permission abstraction grants us to simply feel rather than interpret a work.⁵


When Luke's assimilation to abstraction is considered alongside her mid-century exploration of spiritual texts and practices—including those of mystic George Gurdjieff—it becomes clear that a shift, however internal, occurred in her forties, and that we have very little to understand it by. (It's worth noting that Luke even changed her professional name around this time—from Margaret McLaughlin—to avoid confusion with Isabel McLaughlin, with whom she was beginning to exhibit in 1946.) What little we *do* have, largely from Luke's correspondences and diaries, only works to reflect an artist in transition, and moving through new and streaming light:



To live spiritually means contemplating and finding pleasure in the self, welcoming what comes from without and rejoicing in what lies within Art, then is a spiritual act committing body and spirit together. It is man expressing himself at his highest but most fragile level where matter and the unknown unite.⁶

In her signature patterning and collaged painting style, Donovan works to underscore Luke's unknowability, and the creased and received images we cast on our own walls and in our own work, when interpreting another's legacy and influence. For women, especially, history remains a closed room filled with so many projections and shadows.

Enter Gwen MacGregor, who sought to complicate and make more meaningful the notion of "artistic labour" in responding to Luke and McLaughlin's efforts and work. MacGregor took up the important citation of Oshawa's Adelaide House YWCA, where Luke (with Dorothy Van Luven) hung 69 exhibitions. It's "one of the few social agencies in the city whose purpose, from its 1855 origins, was to support the healthy development of young women," writes Nowell.⁷ MacGregor maintains the institution's focus across two projects



that variously involve the community, women, non-binary and trans persons, and contemporary methods of feminist revisionism and small-scale intervention. The first of these saw MacGregor returning to a skill she learned from her mother: embroidery. She embroidered cryptic, evocative quotes from the diaries and correspondence of our central subjects (“seem to be trying too hard to make an acceptable painting,” one writes; “start from the middle and work out,” says another) on used clothing that she then returned to the Adelaide House thrift store from which they’d come, or from local women who’d loaned her their items. The second involved MacGregor pulling women artists together, including from the trans, non-binary, and queer artist communities, to form a filmed portrait before that of a famed, large-scale Painter Eleven photograph. The contemporary subjects crowded out the historic portrait’s men, and singularly framed Alexandra Luke’s beaming visage. MacGregor employs a simple conceit here, and yet, to watch this community of women and queer artists jostle for position—variously peacocking, laughing, and attending to one another—is to be profoundly moved. It is a living portrait of the contemporary moment responding to the past, swinging doors open and scanning for those who’ve been seated.

While critics like Sontag steer us to sit with the “what” of an artwork, certain unknowable stirrings in the painting and recorded experiences of McLaughlin and Luke should galvanize our asking “how” and “why,” as well. Because while we can read into the interior motivations and closeted esotericisms of these flickering legacies, our

curiosity is eventually met with the space between lines. So much of our art history began in the closed mouths of women. Our questions should become sharper. Our interventions and interpretations, like those of Donovan and MacGregor, should be emotional *and* political, and there should be less distinction between the two. It’s the work ahead for us, to perform a contemporary reckoning of a picture that has yet to stand still.

Endnotes

- 1 Joan Murray, *The Isabel McLaughlin Gift, Part 1* (Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1987) v.
- 2 From an email correspondence between Teri Donovan and Sky Goodden, August 9, 2017.
- 3 Joan Murray, *Alexandra Luke: Continued Searching* (Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1987), 7.
- 4 Iris Nowell, *Painters Eleven: The Wild Ones of Canadian Art* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010), 104.
- 5 Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation,” from *Against Interpretation* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1966), 3-15.
- 6 Joan Murray, *Alexandra Luke: Continued Searching* (Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1987), 2.
- 7 Nowell, 102.

TERI DONOVAN





Teri Donovan

Left: ISABEL McLAUGHLIN, FRIEND OF THE ARTS

Right: ISABEL McLAUGHLIN, FRIEND OF THE ARTS (details)





Teri Donovan

Left: ISABEL McLAUGHLIN, DESIGNING NATURE
Right: ALEXANDRA LUKE, PUSH/PULL 1





ALEXANDRA
LUKE





Alexandra Luke
Left: HOMAGE TO HOFMANN
Middle top: REFLECTION
Middle bottom: ROCKY SHORELINE
Right: MOONLIGHT - BANFF





Alexandra Luke
Left: SYMPHONY
Right: YELLOW SPACE



Alexandra Luke

Left: LEATHER AND STRING COLLAGE
Right: JOURNEY THROUGH SPACE



GWEN
MacGREGOR













ISABEL
McLAUGHLIN











Isabel McLaughlin
Left: CAMOUFLAGE
Right: SWIRL

EXHIBITION















LIST OF WORKS

TERI DONOVAN

ALEXANDRA LUKE, PUSH/PULL 1

2017
oil, watercolour, collaged prints on inkjet film, pencil, sand, collaged print on paper, double-sided tape, on Mylar
177.8 × 213.4 cm
Collection of the artist

ALEXANDRA LUKE, PUSH/PULL 2

2017
oil, collaged prints on inkjet film, double-sided tape, on Mylar
168.9 × 213.3 cm
Collection of the artist

ISABEL McLAUGHLIN, DESIGNING NATURE

2017
oil on Mylar
203.2 × 182.9 cm
Collection of the artist

ISABEL McLAUGHLIN, FRIEND OF THE ARTS

2017
oil, collaged prints on inkjet film, double-sided tape, on Mylar
213.4 × 189.2 cm
Collection of the artist

ALEXANDRA LUKE

MOONLIGHT-BANFF

1945
oil on canvas board
60.9 × 50.2 cm
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. E.R.S. McLaughlin, 1971

REFLECTION

c. 1947
oil on Masonite
32.9 × 40.4 cm
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. E.R.S. McLaughlin, 1971

ROCKY SHORELINE

1947
oil on panel
32.6 × 40.8 cm
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. E.R.S. McLaughlin, 1971

JOURNEY THROUGH SPACE

c. 1956
oil on canvas
210.7 × 148.5 cm
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;
Gift of the artist, 1967

SYMPHONY

1957
oil on canvas
246.7 × 208.3 cm
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. E.R.S. McLaughlin, 1972

YELLOW SPACE

1961
watercolour on paper
78.3 × 56.7 cm
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;
Purchase, 1969

HOMAGE TO HOFMANN

c. 1965
oil on canvas
193 × 137.2 cm
Private Collection

LEATHER AND STRING COLLAGE

1967
cardboard, leather, string, laid down on canvas
87.3 × 68.8 cm
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. E.R.S. McLaughlin, 1971

GWEN MacGREGOR

ALEX AND US

2017

two channel looped HD video

Collection of the artist

Participants:

Samay Arcentales, Karolina Baker, Janet Bellotto, Nour Bishouty, Carolina Brown, Bonnie Devine, Sarindar Dhaliwal, Teri Donovan, lwrds duniam, Kaé Égalité, Michelle Gay, Laura Hair, Catherine Heard, Marla Hlady, Yreka James, Gwen MacGregor, Hillary Matt, Catherine Mills, Aemilius Milo, mel monoceros, Heather Nicol, Anne O'Callaghan, Rosemary Oliver, Kiké Otuije, Sandra Rechico, Amanda Robertson-Hébert, Margaret Rodgers, Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh, janet romers-leiva, jes sachse, Tiffany Schofield, Dainty Smith, Asma Sultana, Monica Tap, Sally Thurlow, Elinor Whidden, Yovska

MESSAGE THREADS (PORTRAITS)

2017

(with Eleonore)

(with Susie)

(with Cynthia)

3 Giclée digital photographs

Each photograph: 140 × 85 cm

Collection of the artist

MESSAGE THREADS (CLOSEUPS)

2017

8 Giclée digital photographs

Each photograph: 65 × 50 cm

Collection of the artist

ISABEL McLAUGHLIN

SKETCH FOR TREE

n.d.

charcoal on paper

54.8 × 48.6 cm

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;

Gift of the estate of Isabel McLaughlin, 2003

FLYING IMPRESSIONS

c. 1947

oil on canvas

68.9 × 91.9 cm

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;

Purchase, 1984

CAMOUFLAGE

c. 1948

watercolour, graphite on paper

44.1 × 31.8 cm

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;

Gift of the estate of Isabel McLaughlin, 2003

BERMUDIANA

1950

oil, graphite on canvas

63.8 × 66.2 cm

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;

Gift of Alexandra Luke, 1967

SWIRL

1963

oil, graphite on canvas

60.8 × 81.4 cm

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;

Purchase, 1984

LATE IN THE YEAR

1967

oil, graphite on canvas

76.4 × 101.7 cm

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery;

Purchase, 1984

ARTIST
BIOGRAPHIES

TERI DONOVAN

Teri Donovan lives and works in Toronto and uses mixed media to address patterns that shape awareness, thoughts, and behaviours. Through her work, she examines agency, perception and memory, and social impacts on identity. She graduated from York University, and the University of Toronto, and studied at OCADU, Toronto School of Art, and The Maryland Institute, College of Art in Baltimore. She is represented by The Red Head Gallery, Toronto. Recent exhibitions include: *Predicament*, The Red Head Gallery, 2017, *Inside/Outside*, Homer Watson House and Gallery, Kitchener, and Cambridge Centre for the Arts, Cambridge 2016, *Circa*, The Red Head Gallery, 2014, *Inside/Outside*, ARC Gallery, Chicago, 2014. Donovan's work was also featured in *Carte Blanche Vol. 2: Painting*, a survey of contemporary painting in Canada.

ALEXANDRA LUKE

Margaret Alexandra Luke McLaughlin (1901–67) was born in Montreal but lived in Oshawa for most of her life. Married to Ewart McLaughlin, she was a prominent society matron and organizer. By the mid 1940s her interest in art had galvanized and her art career emerged. Classes in Banff and associations with Jock Macdonald and A.Y. Jackson in 1945 were followed by Hans Hofmann's workshops in Provincetown Massachusetts. A staunch defender of abstract art, she organized its first Canadian travelling exhibition from Oshawa's YWCA in 1952. She exhibited with the nascent Painters Eleven group in the Simpson's *Abstracts at Home* show in 1953, and held their formative meeting shortly thereafter. Professional memberships followed in the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour in 1958, the Canadian Group of Painters in 1959, and the Ontario Society of Artists in 1960. From the late 1950s to her death she was a follower of the Georgian mystic Gurdjieff, travelling to centres in New York and Toronto to engage in what was referred to as "the work". A complicated multidimensional figure, Luke navigated through the demands of family and society while pursuing her vision as an artist. Her gift of her personal collection, as well as funds from her husband Ewart helped establish The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

GWEN MacGREGOR

Gwen MacGregor is a Toronto-based artist with an extensive body of work in installation, video, photography, and drawing. Her artworks are in a number of collections including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Oakville Galleries, Artbank, and the Royal Bank Collection. She is represented by MKG127 in Toronto. MacGregor has a BA from York University and an MA in Cultural Geography from the University of Toronto, and she is a PhD candidate in Geography at the University of Toronto. Her dissertation is on the relationship between constructions of citizenship and nationhood and how this is both represented and contested in contemporary art. She has a forthcoming chapter on Nuit Blanche coming out in the publication *Geographies of Urban Public Art* published by Ashgate.

ISABEL McLAUGHLIN

Isabel Grace McLaughlin (1903–2002), born in Oshawa, was a Toronto-based artist with a long career and great associations with most of the principal figures in mid-century Canada, including Arthur Lismer, Yvonne McKague Housser, Lawren Harris, and A.Y. Jackson. Her studies in Paris and the Ontario College of Art from 1921–7 led to her participation in the student-run Art Students League and into the Canadian Group of Painters, where she was a founding member in 1933 and its first woman president in 1939. A generous supporter of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, she not only contributed financially to its major expansion in 1987 but also donated much of her collection of works by other Canadian artists. Her own paintings and drawings of landscapes, plant studies, and urban scenes are characterized by her lively sense of design and keen interest in nature. As the daughter of the founder of General Motors of Canada President Col. R. S. McLaughlin, her links to Oshawa remained strong throughout her life. She received the Order of Ontario in 1993 and the Order of Canada in 1997.



The
Robert
McLaughlin
Gallery

LEGACIES: Teri Donovan, Alexandra Luke, Gwen MacGregor, and Isabel McLaughlin,
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The Robert McLaughlin Gallery

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Camouflage (detail); Teri Donovan: *Push Pull 1* (detail); Gwen MacGregor: *Alex and Us*
(detail, video still)



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