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The Best of Canadian Art 2013

by Sky Goodden 30/12/13 6:24 PM EST

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Paterson Ewen, "Silhouette of an Artist," 1999. The work appeared in Michael Gibson's "Curnoe Ewen Falk Moppett" exhibition, Spring 2013.

(Credit: Michael Gibson Gallery and private collection.)

Commercial Curating

It was a good year for artful presentation, and the commercial sector was no exception. We saw galleries across Toronto, Montreal, and smaller centers like Regina and London approach their stables with an inventiveness more typically associated with a Kunsthalle, the programming sometimes dispensing with commercial viability altogether. Special attention was paid at **Michael Gibson**, where [the veteran gallerist recreated "Curnoe Ewen Falk Moppett"](#) after 31 years (its initial installation curated by Mayo Graham at Regina's MacKenzie Art Gallery). **Clint Roenisch** transformed his narrow space into a dark garden for Dutch artist **Marcel van Eeden** to play out his noir narratives, while **Pierre-François Ouellette** veritably gave his keys to **Kent Monkman**. A final nod goes to Montreal's **Galerie Samuel Lallouz**, where an all-important **Carolee Schneeman** survey reminded us that recent history still bears new fruit.

Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal's International Agenda

Let it be known: we will miss you, **Marie Fraser**. Inside one calendar year, the **MAC's** [recently departed](#) chief curator (along with former director **Paulette Gagnon** and curator

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Lesley Johnstone) brought **Tino Seghal**, **Laurent Grasso**, **Elizabeth Price**, and **Omer Fast** across the threshold, never for a moment underestimating her audience's intelligence, nor the institution's capacities for transformation through an ambitious form of constancy. Canadian luminaries like **Michel de Broin**, **Pierre Dorion**, and **Lynne Cohen** shared the billing, and programs like [Montreal / Brooklyn](#) showcased fresh talent and continued exchange.

de Sarthe gallery

Hong Kong

NGC @ MOCCA + TIFF

When the [Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art](#) ushered the **National Gallery of Canada** into its side gallery for a rotating demonstration of its wares, a few of us tittered nervously. Was the city's least institutionalized museum ballasting itself to the country's most governed art establishment? Further still, MOCCA continued its alliance with the [Toronto International Film Festival](#), putting the museum's focus on contemporary art at risk of dilution, or something akin to a branding eclipse. But these collaborations have only brought consistently good art to the fore, and with improved production values the clear result of banded powers. Just this year we've been treated to **Camille Henrot's** Venice-laureled "Grosse Fatigue," **Phil Collins**, **Louise Bourgeois** (who, anomalously, went outshone by Canada's own **David Armstrong Six**), and, well, [rather a lot](#) of **David Cronenberg**. But we give this last two-parter a pass, because it's been a good year for unique institutions demonstrating the possibilities of dynamic collaboration.

The Net Artist

Their chosen medium lacks most understood parameters (objecthood, temporality, salability, and viability through traditional exhibiting platforms) but net artists are winning the day — and a cast of Canadians is particularly triumphant this year. The artworld's first major exhibition of GIF, digital, and net art, [the Wrong Biennial](#) (hosted by the São Paulo contemporary art organization **ROJO**) enlisted Canada's **Lorna Mills** to curate one of its thirty pavilions; she did well to shift the biennial's focus from abstract experimentation to conceptually-bent interventions by **Jennifer Chan**, **Rea McNamara**, **Émilie Gervais**, and **Jeremy Bailey and Kristen D. Schaffer**. Elsewhere, we've seen the **AGO's** [David Bowie](#) exhibition decorated with [local artists' GIF projections](#); artist-run **Eastern Bloc** highlighting **Jennifer Chan and Jennifer Cherniack's** Web 1.0, pre-DSL aesthetics; **Jeremy Bailey** confirming his self-ascribed title of "Famous New Media Artist" by [presenting at the New Museum](#); artist **Jon Rafman** make a logical progression from Google Street View to the [darker realms of video-gaming](#); and Montreal's **DHC/Art** and Toronto's **TIFF Lightbox**, respectively, engaging in presentations of leading net artists **Cory Arcangel** and Chicago's [GIF-happy Eric Fleischauer and Jason Lazarus](#). We fear that soon enough, we won't have to leave the house to get our fix.

Itinerant Curating

From Montreal's [Vidéographe exhibition](#) in a window to prairie curator **John G. Hampton** [making public art on private billboards](#), Canadian curators have happily resisted the white cube, this year. Gallery exchanges like that between **Battat and Erin Stump Projects** have also taken shape, while Toronto artists **Nadia Belerique and Lili Huston-Herterich** and **LUFF Art + Dialogue** have respectively squatted in vacant apartments and soon-to-be demolished mansions for 24-hour guerilla curating. Consider our pulses piqued, and our laces tied.

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