

# a View from the Atlantic

*History, it has often been said, is a tale told by winners. Of course, these days, we're more sensitive to airing many sides of many stories. Nevertheless, history is still as much a point of view as it is a factual reflection of the full complexity of actual events.*

**What's missing?** On these two pages I've inserted my work, *Atrium*, into the layout of page 6 and 7 of the last *Journal* (Winter 2009/2010). This text replaces the original by Director and CEO, Ray Cronin. The full-page photo is the same as the original, except for the white silhouette. The silhouettes in all the photos stand in for artworks that are representations of or by First Nations and Inuit peoples or objects of their invention, such as the canoe.

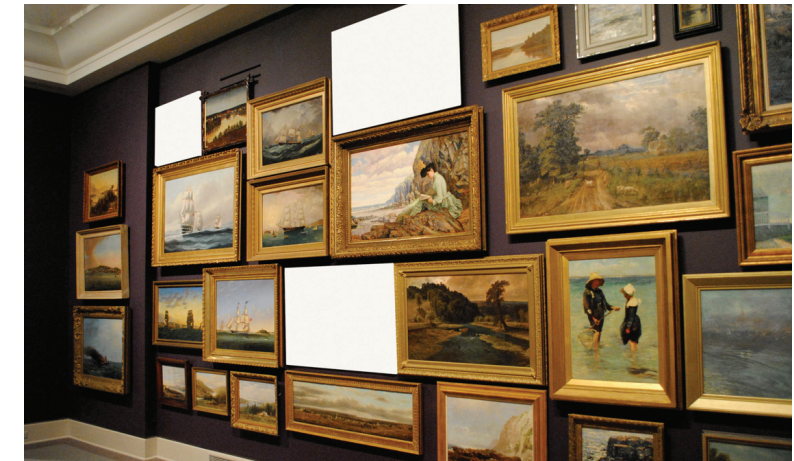
These photographs foreshadow my wall painting, *Atrium*, to open Summer 2010 on the four walls surrounding the staircase above the AGNS entrance lobby. This staircase leads to the First Nations Gallery and Inuit Art on the second floor. I will paint 48 silhouettes of artworks that meet the above definition as variously sized rectangles and other shapes. If the work is very small or will be changed during the exhibition period, I will paint a silhouette of its vitrine, shelf, or pedestal. These shapes will be painted the colour of the gallery wall they are on or near: light blue, dark purple, teal blue, yellow ochre, beige, dark gray. An informational folder and web presence will accompany *Atrium*.

The four walls and the First Nations and Inuit galleries were on the way to my artist-in-residence workspace on the second floor. This was a coincidence because issues related to First Nations people, were on my mind. One thread in my recent work has included the apology by the Canadian federal government to First Nations Indian residential school survivors (*We Are Sorry*, Laneway Commissions, Melbourne, 2009). Then last year I gathered and exhibited photographs from the Yukon Archives documenting life at the Carcross Indian residential school in the mid-1960s (*Taken*, Red Gate Residency, Beijing, 2009). This was a building I had lived in (1974-75) after it became the Carcross Community Education Centre. Most recently, I made a memorial narrative, *Harriet Nahanee*, to fill a storefront window at VIVO Media Arts Centre in Vancouver during the Olympics. Harriet Nahanee was a First Nations activist, who protested the Sea-to-Sky highway expansion for the 2010 Olympics, was jailed for not apologizing for her actions and died of pneumonia shortly after her release. So what could I contribute at the AGNS?

On one level, *Atrium* will be an artwork for viewers to puzzle over. Where is Alan Syliboy's *Earth and Water*, or A. J. Casson's *Indian Reserve*? What do they look like? At the same time, this work is about living histories and on-going debates. How do lingering racism, pain and confusion resulting from generations of colonization interface with display practices in an art gallery?

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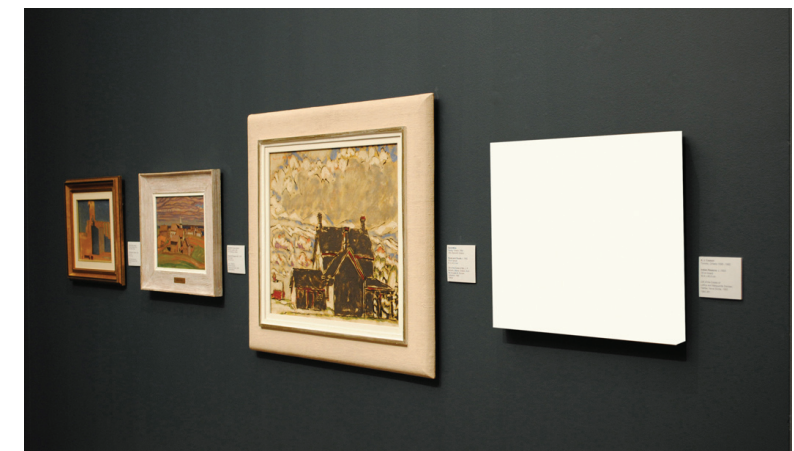
Left: *A View from the Atlantic*, silhouette replacing "*Mi'kmaq Keeled Tobacco Pipe*," argillite and wood, 1750-1850; "*Beaver Pipe*," Jacob Paul, soapstone, 2009. Original photo: *Journal*, Winter 2009/2010



*A View from the Atlantic*, silhouettes replacing "*Portrait of the MICMAC*," John O'Brien, 1853; "*River Scene with a Canoe*," Octavius White, c. 1875; "*Lake Ainslie*," Forshaw Day, 1875. Photo: Cathy Busby



*A Show of Hands*, silhouette replacing "*The Arms of Nova Scotia*," Hudson Langille, c.1920. Photo: Cathy Busby



*A View from the Atlantic*, silhouette replacing "*Indian Reserve*," A. J. Casson, 1933. Photo: Cathy Busby