



Capital! Ottawa favourites in visual arts 2015



PETER SIMPSON - THE BIG BEAT

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Installation view of Tyler Tekatch's video *Terrors of the Breakfast Table*, at Ottawa Art Gallery.

My highly subjective list of my favourite things seen in visual arts in the capital region in 2015, including art that was relatively new when seen in these parts, or art that was old and familiar but seen in a new light.

In no particular order . . .

Terrors of the Breakfast Table, Tyler Tekatch, Ottawa Art Gallery, June: Tekatch's video installation led to an isolated world, where the viewer's own breath influenced the life, or death, of people seen in the video. Impossible to adequately describe on paper, and impossible to forget. [Click here for the review.](#)

The enduring love of the Colvilles, at the National Gallery, May: This massive exhibition shed new light on the bond between Alex Colville and Rhoda, his wife of 70 years. Painting after painting revealed her not only as his muse, but as the heart and soul of his work, a presence without which his art could not exist. [Click here for the review.](#)



Alex Colville, Soldier and Girl at Station, 1953, glazed tempera on hardboard, 40.6 x 61 cm, The Thomson Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario,

Monet: Bridge to Modernity, National Gallery, October: Curator Anabelle Kienle Ponka's inspired focus on bridges in the work of Monet, painted over a decade or so, clearly demonstrated the Frenchman's journey from inspired realist to impressionist master. [Click here for the review.](#)



The Promenade with the Railroad Bridge, 1874, by Claude Monet on special exhibit at the National Gallery.

Big Bang, SAW Gallery, July: Curator Jason St-Laurent's gathering of local artists was a testament to the city, and the highlight — the best new painting I saw this year — was Gavin Lynch's *Not Yet Titled*. The painting, which like most of Lynch's work makes me think of Emily Carr on Ecstasy, is a sharply illuminated forest scene, clad in a thrusting wooden frame, purpose built by Gilles Gaudet. The effect is electrifying, a crafted symbiosis of rare power. [Click here for the review.](#)



Not Yet Titled, with explosive frame, by Gavin Lynch in **Big Bang** at SAW Gallery.

The red dog in *Body Worlds: Animal Inside Out*, Museum of Nature, April: The animals had been preserved and reduced to singular systems within the body. A playful dog, reduced only to its circulatory system and injected with a bright red polymer, was beautiful, contemplative and worthy of a gallery of contemporary art. [Click here for the review.](#)



Red dog in BODY WORLDS: Animal Inside Out exhibition of animal anatomy, Museum of Nature.

The Sandra Bland mural, Kalkidan Assefa and Allan Andre, Tech Wall, July: Assefa and Andre painted the mural to honour Bland, the innocent black woman who died in a Texas jail cell after a routine traffic stop. The mural, and another the Black Collectiv painted on Bank Street, was defaced by coward(s) who objected to the suggestion that “black lives matter.” The second mural was recreated at McNabb Community Centre in Centretown. Art perseveres.



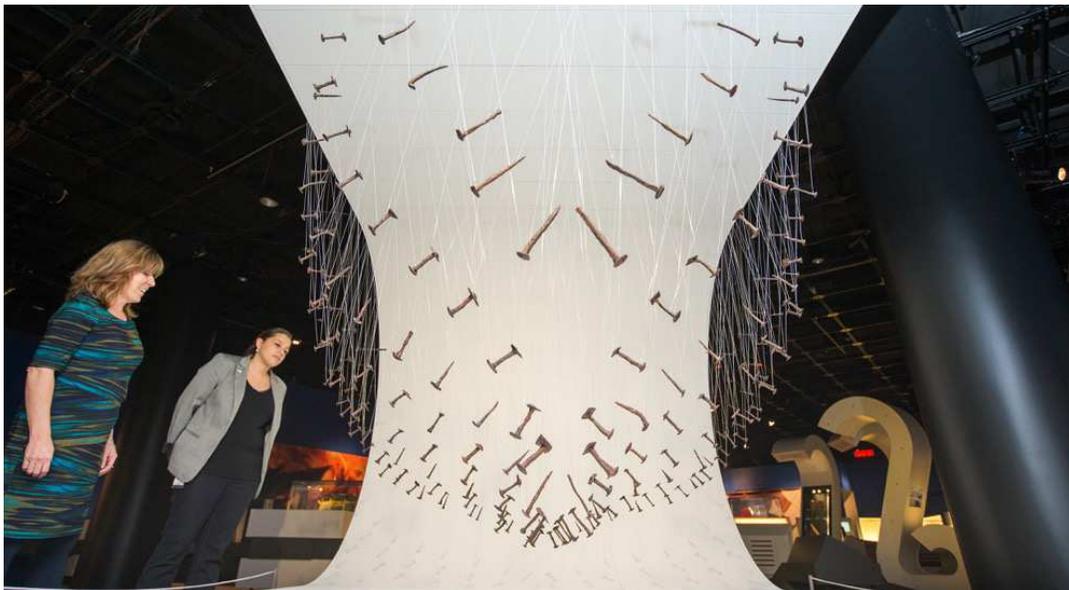
Kalkidan Assefa and Allan Andre with their Sandra Bland mural at the Tech Wall, before it was defaced.

Walking with our Sisters, Carleton University Art Gallery, September: Almost 2,000 pairs of vamps — the decorated upper part of a moccasin — were created in memory of missing and murdered indigenous women. The vamps were made by hundreds of people around the world, in response to a call from Métis artist Christi Belcourt, and the communal result was both sad and inspiring. [Click here for the review.](#)



A partial view of the memorial installation *Walking With Our Sisters*, at Carleton University Art Gallery.

The boat of rivets, Vikings, December, Museum of History: When a Viking longboat was found in a grave in Sweden, all that remained were the iron rivets, each in its original position, after the wood had long rotted into the soil. In the exhibition, a dense web of filament suspends the hundreds of rivets in those original positions, for a haunting recreation of a boat that no longer exists. [Click here for the review.](#)



A viking boat made only of rivets, in Vikings at the Canadian Museum of History. It is practically impossible to capture the effect in a photograph.

Tumbling Woman, by Eric Fischl, National Gallery and U.S. Embassy, September-October: "All hell broke loose" in 2002 when Fischl debuted his sculpture, modelled

after a victim falling from the World Trade Centre on 9/11. The tabloids railed, there was a bomb threat, and the sculpture was removed from public view. Thirteen years later, the work is celebrated as a sadly eloquent comment on history and our human vulnerability. Timing matters. [Click here for a Fischl interview.](#)



A study of Eric Fischl's life-sized Tumbling Woman, seen at the National Gallery.

Dogs Playing Poker, live and interactive, Leah Bartlett, Nuit Blanche, September: Take the icon of bad art — dogs playing poker (preferably on black velvet), and bring it to life with actors in dog costumes, and then invite passersby to sit in for a few hands as the dogs bark and growl when the cards don't go their way. A hilarious raising of the lowest thing.



Leah Bartlett's dogs playing poker, live and interactive, at Nuit Blanche Ottawa-Gatineau in September, 2015.

And how, 10 more things that I'll fondly remember from the art scene in the capital region in 2015 . . .

Sapsucker Sounds, Anne Dunning, Gallery 101

Luminere Tactile, by Dimo Ivanov and Sonia Stoeva, Maison de la Culture

Debutantes, Sharon VanStarckenburg, Wall Space Gallery

Witness, Nichola Feldman Kiss, Ottawa Art Gallery

Diorama, Drew Mosley, Ottawa Art Gallery

Pretty Lofty and Heavy All at Once, Andrew Wright, Ottawa Art Gallery

Locavore, Mary Anne Barkhouse, Carleton University

Inclusivity, David Fels, Carleton University

Distraction, Lilly Kolton, Studio Sixty Six

Injurious Nature, Tricia Middleton, AXENÉO7