

BYTOWN NEWS

FALL/WINTER 2010

Museum on the Edge

For those of you who think community museums are dusty old places, take a second look at the Bytown Museum, and you just may be surprised at what you see!

by Henriette Riegel

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Many Guises: Contemporary Self-Portraits

The leaps of time represented in these two photograph exhibitions echo with the stories of Ottawa residents, many not yet fully told.

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New Acquisitions

The Bytown Museum's collection of historic artefacts and cultural property continues to grow. We rely on the generosity of donors to help us fulfill our mission of preserving Ottawa's heritage for future generations and have done so since the collection was founded in 1898. Our vast collection of furniture, photographs, ceramics, tools and silver is nearing 7,000 artefacts, and each year it grows through the kindness of local donors.

Our most recent donation is an exquisite 19th century travel writing desk, or box compendium that was acquired through the generosity of Lyn Taylor of Ottawa. Taylor inherited this family heirloom from her mother; it had previously belonged to her father Dr. Archibald Maclean Campbell, a general physician who lived in Cumnock, Scotland. Taylor, a Canadian resident, brought the writing desk to Ottawa in 1995.



19th Century Travel Writing Desk (detail)
Photo: Bytown Museum

Dating from around 1840-1880, or possibly earlier, and made from mahogany and rosewood, when closed this rectangular desk measures 23 cm (depth) x 38 cm (width) x 30.5 cm (height), and is in excellent condition. Its superior design and craftsmanship is reflected in the high quality materials, the elegant but simple

exterior which contrasts with its intricate, detailed interior.

This portable compendium opens and unfolds to reveal many compartments and functions, including three drawers, two semi-hidden drawers with original gilt brass handles. Decorative dark green Morocco leather covers a surface writing area, lines several small drawers, and covers four small books with the following titles: Letterbook, Cash Account, Diary, and Addresses (that contains addresses which are not written in Dr. Campbell's handwriting, and are presumably from the previous owner), a large book to store papers, a heavy cut glass ink bottle, an original key to lock the exterior, and an engraved copper plate used for printing calling cards with the name, in mirrored writing, "Miss Kate E. Edwards".

(see TRAVEL WRITING DESK on PAGE 3)

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear friends and supporters,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Bytown Museum, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our volunteers, partners and staff that helped make this past summer a truly successful one. Please take a look at the [slideshow](#) on our facebook page to review the past few months.

I am delighted to announce that the Museum will remain open, once again, during the fall and winter months. I'm excited about our line-up and I invite you to visit our new exhibitions: *Many Guises: Contemporary Self-Portraits*, accompanied by *Likeness: Historic Photographs from the Bytown Museum Collection*, and *Preserving our Past: A Conservation Project*. Please join us for one of the programs that are presented as part of the exhibitions.

If you are not already a member of the Museum, I encourage you to join now and become a part of this exciting new chapter in our history.

Make yourself at home here and visit often! I look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,



Mike Steinhauer
Director

Please join us on facebook:
www.facebook.com/bytown



Museum on the Edge

Fun, edgy, cosmopolitan...those were the words that came to my mind at the Bytown Museum's vernissage of the exhibition: *Many Guises: Contemporary Self-Portraits/Likeness: Historic Photographs from the Bytown Museum Collection*. I was pleased to see so many talented and interesting people at the Museum. And what a mix of people it was – artists, collectors, families, staff, and community partners mingled throughout the exhibition, [the photo booth](#), and of course the refreshments table!

It's an exciting time for the Bytown Museum. As a member of the Museum's Board of Directors, I'm delighted to see our new Strategic Plan – with its emphasis on reaching local audiences with relevant, historical and contemporary programs – being implemented so successfully. The Museum is transforming itself before our very eyes, with a significant shift from being about the early years of Bytown, to being for and by the residents of Ottawa. There really is something for everyone here. The Museum has expanded its hours of operation year-round, and has been doing some remarkable community-based projects that bring in more visitors, locals as well as tourists.

The Museum has increased its new and innovative programming, ranging from the *Evocative Objects: Artefacts Unfolding Neighbourhoods* exhibition, which gave us new insights into Ottawa's many great collections by juxtaposing new and historical artefacts, to a strong virtual presence through the Capital Neighbourhoods website. And this is due to the talent, motivation, and

professionalism of the Bytown Museum staff, committed to making the Museum a model for the "new" community museum movement.

Increasing its reach into the community, the Museum has also opened itself up to groups showcasing their own projects. Several joint projects, such as the *Open Windows* exhibition of photographic work by tenants of supportive housing in Ottawa, allowed us to gain new perspectives on our community. This was a joint project conducted by HousingPlus the Ottawa Supportive Housing Network, the School of Psychology and the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Ottawa. By showcasing such relevant and contemporary projects, the Museum is starting to solidify its position as the place to learn and reflect on issues that are important to our community. The Museum is linking the "where we come from" statements to the "where we are going" thinking – and that is a good thing.

For those of you who think community museums are dusty old places, take a second look at the Bytown Museum, and you may just be surprised at what you see! The oldest stone building in Ottawa may just have one of the most vibrant cultural scenes around. Come and visit the Museum in person or online to keep up with all the new programs.

Henriette Riegel
Member of the Bytown Museum
Board of Directors



19th Century Travel Writing Desk; Photo: Bytown Museum

Travel Writing Desk

(Continued from PAGE 1)

Original and additional writing instruments such as a ceramic plaque, a bone/ivory folder and pencils are also included.

The writing desk is quite elaborate, of very high quality and contains "all the bells and whistles" that a member of the gentry or well-to-do owner could wish for. It was the equivalent to a top quality lap top computer in its day. This exquisite 19th century travel writing desk is a handsome and much-appreciated addition to

the Bytown Museum's furniture collection.

Why donate?

Donating to the Bytown Museum, or any local museum allows you to entrust the care and preservation of your artefact to museum professionals. It also affords you the opportunity to share your artefact and its story with visitors and researchers from across Canada and around the world. The Bytown Museum has a limited acquisition budget, and your generosity helps us preserve

our local history and its unique stories. Your donation can also be a tax deduction.

Want to know more?

If you have any questions, or have an object that you think might be of significance to the museum's collection, please contact Grant Vogl, A/Collections Manager at (613) 234-4570 ext. 222 or at grantvogl@bytownmuseum.ca

Co-authored by Judith Parker, Guest Curator and Grant Vogl, A/Collections Manager.



Justin Wonnacott, *Three Way Portrait Experiment – Justin Wonnacott and Caleb Abbott with Jazmin Lazdins*, 2007, inkjet print (detail). Artist's collection.



R.C.W. Lett, "Qui appelle" Stoney Indian Woman [sic Squaw] and Child at Noolke Lake, Nechoaco Valley, 1910, hand-tinted gelatin silver print (detail), Bytown Museum, P2625.

Many Guises: Contemporary Self-Portraits

This past summer was filled with the excitement of organizing an exhibition of photographs by six of Ottawa/Gatineau's most renowned artists - Rosalie Favell, Pedro Isztin, Chantal Gervais, Marie-Jeanne Musiol, Jeff Thomas and Justin Wonnacott - several of whom have international reputations.

As the exhibition developed it evolved into two parts. *Many Guises: Contemporary Self-Portraits* is the main exhibit that comprised the museum's participation in Festival X 2010, Ottawa Photography Festival that took place from September 24 to October 3, 2010. A second smaller

historical exhibit *Likeness: Historic Photographs from the Bytown Museum Collection* showcases eleven exceptional photographic portraits dating from the 1840s to 1910, selected to compliment the contemporary self-portraits and also to show intriguing examples from the early history of photography. Also, I could not resist including several beautiful silhouette likenesses - which I call 'pre-photographic' portraits, for example *Mary Haines*, 1800. Silhouettes are created by casting the shadow of a person's facial profile on paper and painting it with black ink.

The diverse self-portraits in *Many Guises* engage us in thinking about complex ideas and stories, which emerge while looking at the combination of the human face juxtaposed with another image. Who could have imagined such a wide range of approaches, techniques and topics could be addressed through six works of art?

The various subjects addressed in *Many Guises* include the ritual of the art gallery opening and a web of relations between professor and students seen in Wonnacott's colour double-image photograph, *Three Way Portrait Experiment – Justin*

Wonnacott and Caleb Abbott with Jazmin Lazdins, 2007, while Isztin's colour diptych explores the creative process and life's journey addressed through the symbolic presence of life and death in *Now Here and Nowhere*, 2003-07.

The Eurocentric legacy of museum collections seen from a First Nations perspective is examined in Métis artist Favell's *The Artist in Her Museum: The Collector*, 2005, a digital photo-montage that re-imagines a historic self-portrait by Charles Willson Peale *The Artist in His Museum*, 1822, made by the American painter and natural history collector. Thomas, a self-defined urban Iroquois, encounters public art in Ottawa's downtown core in *Reconciliation: Scouting for Indians #3*, 2010, a blogger style self-portrait that questions the presence of statues depicting First Nations people as romanticized stereotypes.

Gervais employs advanced medical imaging technology - MRI scans - to create self-portraits that question the representation of the human body in her series *Les maux non dits* series. In one work *Untitled*, 2008, a double self-portrait in one picture, she is seen in a colour photograph holding a miniature black-and-white MRI image of her body in the palm of her hand. In Musiol's *Self-Portrait*, 2003, two large grainy black-and-white photographs show her face floating in an expansive field of darkness, conjuring a metaphor for the immaterial energy present in all living matter.

Likeness, the accompanying display of early photographic portraits from the Bytown Museum, includes *Daguerreotype of a Middle Aged Man*, c. 1840s, produced using one of the first magical photographic processes.

The daguerreotype was dubbed 'the mirror with a memory' as the photograph was made on a highly reflective sheet of metal. Another early photograph, *Portrait of MacDonald from the Isles who visited Bytown in the early days*, an ambrotype dating from c. 1850s, is enchanting for its title alone. Some entertaining and socially revealing group portraits include a Victorian fancy dress role-playing enactment, such as *The Discovery of Canada by Jacques Cartier, 1524-1536, (Historical Ball)*. This photograph depicts society from Ottawa's top echelons costumed for an opulent historical ball held in the Senate Chamber, Ottawa, in 1896. A trio of photographs in the museum's collection record three of the nine historical groups attending The Historical Ball that was given by the Earl and Countess Aberdeen (the Governor General of Canada and the Viceregal Consort) with the purpose of stimulating national consciousness and pride in Canadian history. Who knew that Ottawans over a hundred years ago had such imagination and fun? Another group portrait depicting staff at the Jarvis [Photographic] Studio, taken around 1892, captures a moment from the early history of Ottawa's commercial photography, and includes a self-portrait of Jarvis. Quaintly, the photograph includes an artist's palette, suggesting the desire for photography to be considered a high art form.

A rare minuscule portrait commemorates a dark incident in Ottawa's early history, the mourning ribbon with tintype photograph from the funeral of Thomas D'Arcy McGee. McGee, a politician and father of Confederation, was assassinated in Ottawa, in 1868.

Another undiscovered gem from the museum's collection is a delicately hand-tinted black and white photograph depicting a lakeshore scene of a First Nation's woman and child. Research has identified this work as "Qui appelle," *Stoney Indian Woman [sic Squaw] and Child at Noolke Lake, Nechaco Valley*, from the *Photograph Album of R.C.W. Lett's Expedition from Edmonton, Alberta to Victoria, British Columbia in 1910*, by Mr. Lett, Colonization Agent of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad. The scene shows a young woman and a child, both carrying baskets on their backs, standing on a shoreline looking out over the water. The title "Qui appelle" suggests that the scene might be a staged version of the Cree legend "Qui appelle?" or "Who Calls?" which typically tells the story of a young Indian man and his true love, made popular in a poem by E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake), the nineteenth-century Mohawk-English author.

The leaps of time represented in these two photograph exhibitions echo with the stories of Ottawa residents, many not yet fully told. They have found new life and new interpretations on the walls of the Bytown Museum, and I hope that you will bring your own memories and perspectives, and find new connections and interpretations between them when you next visit the museum.

Judith Parker
Guest Curator

Both exhibitions, *Many Guises: Contemporary Self-Portraits* and *Likeness: Historic Photographs from the Bytown Museum* are on view at the Bytown Museum until December 31, 2010.



Photo: Ottawa Museum Network



Photo: Bytown Museum © Fidoodle Inc.



Photo: Bytown Museum

Preserving our Past: A Conservation Project

New Exhibition

The new exhibition documents the conservation work recently undertaken by a number of Ottawa's local museums and showcases the conservation process of several artefacts. The exhibit includes before and after images of the artefacts conserved and information about the science of conservation.

As part of the exhibition, several artefacts from the Bytown Museum's own collection will be on view for the first time.

The project is an initiative of the Ottawa Museum Network (OMN) in collaboration with the Bytown Museum. The OMN represents local museums charged with the stewardship of Ottawa's stories. The conservation project presents an innovative model for Ottawa's museum community on how to forge strategic partnerships to address common challenges.

The Bytown Museum will be the first venue to host the exhibition. *Preserving our Past: A Conservation Project* is scheduled to tour for the next two years. The project was made possible, in part, through a contribution from the City of Ottawa, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Canadian Heritage and Parks Canada.

The OMN Conservation Project received the Award of Excellence from the Ontario Museum Association on October 7, 2010.

Presented at the Bytown Museum from October 15 to January 9, 2011.

Café & Boutique

The Bytown Museum Café & Boutique offers a wide selection of original gift ideas, exhibition catalogues and a collection of books relating to the construction of the Rideau Canal and the history of Ottawa. The Café & Boutique is open year-round during regular museum hours. The following items are available exclusively at the Bytown Museum Café & Boutique:

Ottawa Blocks Building Blocks & Puzzle

The Ottawa Blocks are comprised of a set of nine building blocks including the Peace Tower, the Bytown Museum and the Ottawa Locks – even one of our groundhogs has his own block. On the back, you'll find a beautiful puzzle of Canada. The blocks are made from locally sourced hardwood maple (unused off-cuts) using non-toxic inks. The perfect gift for your little ones! Created by [fidoodle](#). (\$29.95 + tax)

Exhibition Catalogue

Many Guises: Contemporary Self-Portraits | De multiples facettes : autoportraits contemporains
R. Favell, C. Gervais, P. Isztin, M-J Musiol, J. Thomas and J. Wonnacott

This catalogue analyses the works of six artist-photographers from Ottawa/Gatineau who create self-portraits paired with a second image to expand a narrative reading of their photographs. Accompanied by *Likeness: Historic*

Photographs from the Bytown Museum, a selection of 19th c. portraits that compliment the styles and issues raised in the contemporary photographs.
Author: Judith Parker, 2010.
Bilingual publication, 76 pages, 20 colour illustrations. (\$45.00 + tax)

Winter Hours 2010/11

October 12, 2010 – May 20, 2011

- Open Tuesday to Sunday from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm
- Open on Remembrance Day from 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm (free admission)
- Open on Easter weekend
- Closed Mondays, Christmas Day, Boxing Day & New Year's Day

Free Admission:

- Nov 11, Remembrance Day (open from 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm)
- May 18, International Museum Day

Bytown News

Editor: Francesco Corsaro
Contributors: Francesco Corsaro, Diane Martin, Judith Parker, Henriette Riegel, Mike Steinhauer, Grant Vogl

Send address changes, letters and story ideas to:

Bytown News
1 Canal Lane | P.O. Box 523, Station B
Ottawa, ON K1P 5P6
(613) 234-4570 x225
francescocorsaro@bytownmuseum.ca

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Victoria Alexander
Judith Burns
Susan Coxford
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Every effort is made to keep this list up to date and accurate. If you notice an error or omission, please contact Francesco Corsaro, Director of Development.

Go to www.bytownmuseum.ca and click DONATE NOW. Make a secure, tax-deductible donation to the Bytown Museum through www.canadahelps.org or fill out a donation form and send it by mail to the attention of Francesco Corsaro.

Membership & Fundraising

The Bytown Museum is a unique institution in the National Capital Region. Nestled in a valley between upper town and lower town next to the first 8 canal locks, the Bytown Museum is a destination for both locals and tourists who seek to connect with the people and stories that helped to form the Ottawa we know today. People, and the stories that come with them, are what most distinguish the Bytown from any other institution; those people include members and donors like you.

With your membership and your donations, you add to the stories told at the Bytown Museum. Member-exclusive programmes open up a window of discovery and your donations help to ensure that the Bytown Museum can continue to deliver valuable programming that connect people with Ottawa's history and future!

If you are not yet a supporter of the Bytown Museum, please consider showing your support by [becoming a member](#) and/or by making a [donation](#) today! The Bytown Museum explores the stories of an evolving Ottawa; your support helps the Museum to continue engaging visitors and the community in discovering Ottawa and fostering an understanding and pride of place.

Francesco Corsaro
Director of Development

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Bytown Museum Staff

Mike Steinhauer – Director
mikesteinhauer@bytownmuseum.ca ; x224
Francesco Corsaro – Director of Development
francescocorsaro@bytownmuseum.ca ; x225
Grant Vogl – A/Collections Manager
grantvogl@bytownmuseum.ca ; x222
Brandon McDonald – A/Program Manager
brandonmcdonald@bytownmuseum.ca ; x226
Diane Martin – Boutique Manager
dianemartin@bytownmuseum.ca ; x223
Judith Parker – Guest Curator
judithparker@bytownmuseum.ca ; x228



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 Canada Summer Jobs, Canadian Heritage, Canadian Heritage Information Network, Council of Heritage Organizations in Ottawa, National Capital Commission, Ottawa Museum Network, Parks Canada and Young Canada Works

Many Guises: Contemporary Self-Portraits and Likeness: Historic Photographs from the Bytown Museum

Gallery talk with guest curator, Judith Parker, who will discuss each of the six contemporary artists, the historic photographs and the connections between these two parts of the exhibition.

Friday, October 29 at 12:00 noon. Free admission.

A New Lease: Recently Conserved Artefacts from the Bytown Museum Collection

Conservators Pilar Hernandez-Romero (independent) and Janet Mason (Canadian Conservation Institute) will discuss conservation issues arising from the conservation of 19th century photographs and prints of Ottawa, and the historic Mayor's Chair, c.1854.

Thursday, November 18 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm.

Open to Bytown Museum Members, Donors and Volunteers.

Visit the Bytown Museum website to become a member or make a donation.

BYTOWN MUSEUM

FALL/WINTER 2010

1 Canal Lane
P.O. Box 523, Station B
Ottawa, ON K1P 5P6

