

Realize. It starts with you.

Carmen Robertson is on a mission to understand why Anishnaabe artist Norval Morrisseau's work has been largely overlooked in the history of contemporary Canadian art until recently.

Robertson, an associate professor in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Regina, says that discussions about Morrisseau's work have been eclipsed despite the fact that in 2006 he became the first aboriginal artist to have work shown at the National Gallery of Canada. He was also the first contemporary artist to have work shown in mainstream galleries in Toronto.

Morrisseau, who died in 2007, created contemporary paintings that drew on indigenous aesthetics to explore issues surrounding colonialism, spirituality, and politics. "When you look closely at his work you see some amazing narratives," explains Robertson. "His work is controversial and it is multi-layered; that is what drew me to Norval Morrisseau."

Still, Robertson explains that despite the many achievements of this artist, the media typically framed him as a noble savage. At times the press fashioned him as a shaman who was deeply connected to nature yet in the next breath cast him as a drunkard. As a result Morrisseau emerged in popular culture as a stereotypical character.

"Morrisseau understood that if he played the part of the shaman, Canadians would be intrigued," says Robertson, who contends he embraced the shaman identity, in part, as a marketing device. It is as the shaman artist that he is best known, yet that is only one aspect of who he was as an artist. "His art pushes boundaries."

Robertson explains that Morrisseau's work was accepted more readily internationally than in his own country. In France, for example, in the late '60s he held an important exhibition attended by both Matisse and Picasso.

As part of her research, Robertson will access archives in Paris, Ottawa, Vancouver, and Red Lake, Ontario to complete a book project. As a board member for the Norval Morrisseau Heritage Society (NMHS), she is also engaged in the creation of a catalogue raisonné of Morrisseau's substantial body of work.

"I think his importance within Canadian art history has been undermined and underappreciated because of racialized baggage; so I believe that my project is an opportunity to rethink his role within Canadian art history, not just Canadian aboriginal art history. In fact, it is easy to make a case that Norval Morrisseau was Canada's greatest artist."

Robertson's research is funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.



- Carmen Robertson

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Wednesday, January 20 12:00 p.m.
Nourishing Thoughts at the Foodbank Lecture Series
Speaker: Yolanda Hansen, Community Research Unit, U of R

The lecture series is a joint initiative sponsored and coordinated by the Centre for Continuing Education and First Nations University. The public is welcome at no charge and lunch will be provided.

Location: Adult Centre for Employment and Readiness, 425 Winnipeg St.

For more information, contact Kathy Buitenhuis, Centre for Continuing Education, at 585-5764.

Wednesday, January 20 7:30 p.m.
Philosophy Café: an open exchange of philosophical ideas led by a University of Regina philosophy professor.
Speaker: Béla Szabados
Location: Connaught Library - 3435-13th Ave.

Refreshments will be served. For more information call 585-4332.

Thursday, January 21 7:30 p.m.
2010 Woodrow Lloyd Lecture
"Transforming Power: New Paths to Social and Political Change"
Speaker: Judy Rebick, social justice expert and activist
Location: Riffel Auditorium, Campion College, U of R main campus
Parking available in the "M" area of Lot 3. Reception and book signing to follow.

For more information, contact Milagros Charriez, Faculty of Arts, at 585-4226 or milagros.charriez@uregina.ca.

Monday, January 25 7:00 p.m.
"No Child Left Thinking: Democracy at Risk in Canadian Schools."

Join Faculty of Education professors and guests in an engaging conversation about issues affecting our schools. Share your thoughts, concerns and ideas in an informal atmosphere.

Location: La Bodega Restaurant, upper level. 2228 Albert St., Regina

For more information, contact Marc Spooner, Faculty of Education, at 585-4538 or marc.spooner@uregina.ca.

Friday, January 29 3:30 p.m.
Biology seminar
"Ecological Implications of Prairie Restoration"
Speaker: Holly Hennin, Department of Biology, U of R
Location: Classroom Building, room 125, U of R main campus

For more information, contact the Department of Biology at 585-4145 or visit www.uregina.ca/biology/.

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