



# TAKAO TANABE

Life & Work

By Ian Thom

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## Contents

03

**Biography**

23

**Key Works**

49

**Significance & Critical Issues**

60

**Style & Technique**

73

**Where to See**

84

**Notes**

91

**Glossary**

106

**Sources & Resources**

112

**About the Author**

113

**Copyright & Credits**



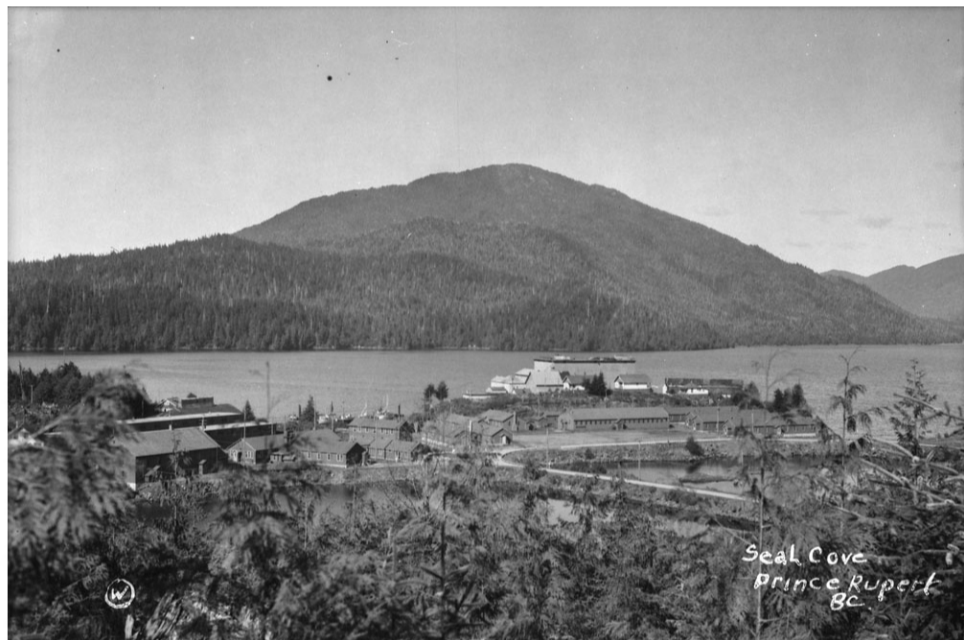


# BIOGRAPHY

Growing up in a Japanese Canadian family, in the tiny hamlet of Seal Cove, British Columbia, Takao Tanabe (b.1926) had no meaningful access to art or the possibilities it offered. But through a combination of serendipity, tenacity, and inspiration, the events of his extraordinary life sparked Tanabe to discover in painting both a true vocation and a catalyst to learn more about Japanese culture. He overcame early hardships to transform the history of Canadian art, reframing this country's most distinctive landscapes through his wholly singular vision. As a painter, printmaker, teacher, philanthropist, and advocate, Tanabe has forged a path for new generations of artists.

### EARLY YEARS AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Given Takao Tanabe's humble roots, and the hardships that coloured his formative years, it is nothing short of extraordinary that he grew up to paint landscapes that transform the way we see Canada. The fifth of seven children, Tanabe was born to Japanese immigrants Naojiro Izumi and Tomie Tanabe in 1926 in the tiny coastal village of Seal Cove, B.C. Now part of Prince Rupert, Seal Cove was a predominantly Japanese Canadian community, and most residents made their living as fishers. Tanabe's father operated a commercial fishing boat and his mother worked in the local cannery.<sup>1</sup> In 1937, the family moved to Vancouver, where the then eleven-year-old Tanabe continued his schooling. He was midway through high school when, in December 1941, Japanese airplanes attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii—a watershed moment in the Second World War, and an event that dramatically altered the course of Tanabe's life.



LEFT: Takao Tanabe in Seal Cove, B.C., 1935-36, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Seal Cove showing Canadian Fish & Cold Storage in Prince Rupert, B.C., c.1930, photograph by Jack R. Wrathall, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King immediately responded to the attack by declaring war on Japan. Officials in B.C. quickly seized all fishing boats owned by Japanese Canadians, implemented a strict curfew that limited their freedom of movement, and shuttered all Japanese language newspapers and schools. In early 1942, the federal government designated a wide strip along the B.C. coast as a "protected area" and declared that all "persons of the Japanese race" living within this area, which extended approximately 160 kilometres inland, would be relocated and their properties and businesses seized.<sup>2</sup>



Between 1942 and 1949, approximately 22,000 men, women, and children were displaced from their homes and sent to incarceration sites, including labour camps, roadwork sites, and sugar beet farms, across Canada. To authorize this mass uprooting, King invoked the War Measures Act that granted the federal government the authority to suspend the basic rights and freedoms of Canadian citizens. Efforts to dispossess and intern Japanese Canadians, who were deemed “enemy aliens,”<sup>3</sup> were framed as measures of national security.



Relocation of Japanese Canadians to internment camps in the interior of British Columbia, 1942, photograph by Tak Toyota, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

In 1942, Tanabe and his family were forced to leave the coast for Lemon Creek in southeastern B.C.,<sup>4</sup> where they, along with other Japanese Canadians, were expected to build their own internment camp. For Tanabe, then a teenager, this meant the end of his schooling and the beginning of intense labour. He helped his father build and weatherproof the camp structures and was assigned the specific task of applying tar to the roofs. He and his father also harvested logs from the forest to create an extension for their small cabin. “The alternative,” Tanabe has recounted, “was to go to a farm on the prairies and be indentured for one or two years, which is what two of my older brothers and one sister who was married chose.”<sup>5</sup>

It was a profoundly difficult time. During this period, a British military officer visited Lemon Creek looking to recruit agents for the war effort in Asia. Several of Tanabe’s friends were eager to enlist, thinking it would be an adventure even if they weren’t fluent in Japanese. They encouraged Tanabe to join them, but he refused because this proposition was tantamount to aiding his oppressors. Later, after the war had ended, he made a conscious decision to release his anger about his internment so that he could move forward with his life.



LEFT: Takao Tanabe at Lemon Creek Japanese Internment Camp, B.C., 1943, photographer unknown. RIGHT: View of Lemon Creek Camp, c.1940-49, photographer unknown, Japanese Canadian Research Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia Library, Vancouver.

### ART SCHOOL

After the Second World War ended, Japanese Canadians who had been forced to leave the Pacific coast were also prevented from returning home. Their options were limited: resettle east of the Rocky Mountains or be deported to Japan, a nation unfamiliar to the majority of those interned during the war. So, in 1944, Tanabe joined some of his older siblings in Winnipeg, where they worked as indentured farm labourers. He did a stint in a warehouse, cut peat in southeastern Manitoba, and then spent a summer toiling in an iron foundry, but he soon realized that he was not fit for a life of physical labour.

By 1946, Tanabe was contemplating his future, acutely aware that his career prospects were limited by his truncated education. As he has noted, while he reflected on how to save up money, Tanabe also realized he had to figure out where to finish high school: "I don't know how, but somebody pointed me in the direction of the art school as an alternative."<sup>6</sup> He discovered that the Winnipeg School of Art was willing to accept prospective students who had not completed high school. Although he had no experience with fine art, Tanabe landed on sign painting as a



Takao Tanabe, *Christmas Card*, c.1948, linocut on paper, 11.6 x 15.6 cm, Winnipeg Art Gallery.



practical course of study, one that would provide him with employable skills. He enrolled in an evening class, and this decision would prove to be pivotal. Although the course was part of a commercial program, the school also held drawing and painting sessions in the evenings. Tanabe was fascinated by the idea that art could exist outside of a commercial context. Although he had grown up surrounded by magnificent landscapes, Tanabe had never considered trying to capture or reflect that beauty in any way, as the notion of creating art for art's sake was not something he had encountered during childhood.<sup>7</sup>

He applied to the art school and was accepted, and then spent the next three years as a full-time student. During his first two years, Tanabe offset tuition costs by working in the foundry on weekends. In his final year he took a part-time job as the janitor at the art school. In the mid-1940s, the Winnipeg School of Art was the domain of Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald (1890-1956), but the distinguished landscapist and teacher was preparing to take his leave.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately this meant that Tanabe never took a class with FitzGerald. But serendipitously, in 1947, the school hired the artist Joseph (Joe) Plaskett (1918-2014), who had just completed a period of study with German American painter Hans Hofmann (1880-1966) in New York.



LEFT: Joe Plaskett, *Old Cemetery, Provincetown*, 1948, watercolour on wove paper, 39 x 56.2 cm, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.  
RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *West of Winnipeg*, 1949, watercolour on paper, 29.8 x 45.6 cm, private collection.

Plaskett endeavoured to bring the narrative of New York modernism to the Prairie school. He introduced students to the work of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), and Henri Matisse (1869-1954); he also tried to explain the dynamics of Hofmann's approach to painting, although that kinetic quality could not be captured in visual aids. Crucially, for Tanabe, Plaskett became a lifelong friend. Early on, he recognized something special in the young student and encouraged Tanabe to trade sign painting for fine art. In Plaskett's words, Tanabe was "the star" of the school: "He had the real talent.... He was my best pupil. Outstanding."<sup>9</sup>

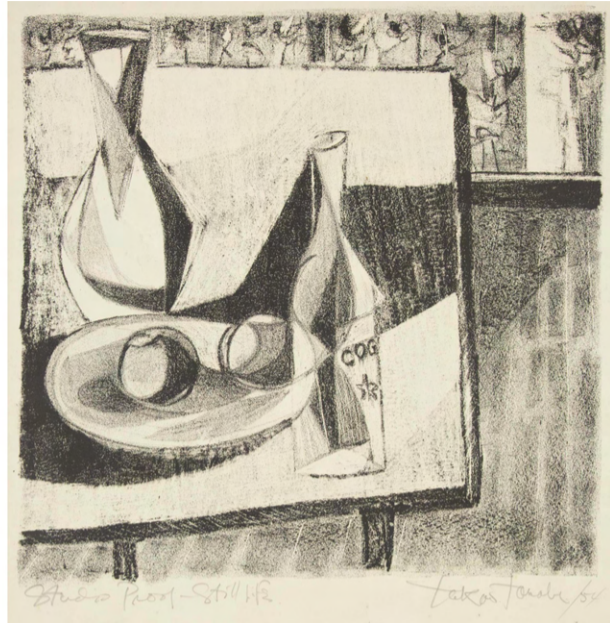
Tanabe graduated from the Winnipeg School of Art in 1949, and that summer heralded a series of key moments in his early career as an artist. First, he mounted a solo exhibition at the Hudson's Bay store in Winnipeg (though sadly there is no record of what was shown). Tanabe and a few fellow graduates, including artist Don Roy, then set up a short-lived summer art school in Gimli, Manitoba. Primarily intended to be a money-making endeavour, the school focused on instructing students in the fundamentals of landscape painting. For Tanabe, it provided an early introduction to the demands of art education; he soon realized that teaching was not his natural forte.



Takao Tanabe (second row, far right) with his graduating class from the Winnipeg School of Art, 1949, photographer unknown.

Even so, after he left Gimli, Tanabe spent the summers between 1950 and 1954 in Banff because he had heard that jobs might be available at the Banff School of Fine Arts (now the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity). Tanabe took a job not as a teacher but as a handyman, and he had a fortuitous meeting with the artist Walter J. Phillips (1884–1963). Although their encounter was brief, Phillips invited Tanabe to his studio and showed him how to make a woodblock print. After pulling an image, Phillips gave it to Tanabe, and it remains in the artist's collection to this day.<sup>10</sup> Tanabe would later develop his own distinguished printmaking practice, working primarily with master printmaker Masato Arikushi (b.1947).





LEFT: Walter J. Phillips pulling prints off a woodblock, 1934, photographer unknown, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *Still-Life*, 1954, ink on paper, 35.9 x 31.4 cm, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver.

### TRAVELS AND LAUNCHING A CAREER IN ART

Following his graduation from the Winnipeg School of Art in 1949, Tanabe gave himself five years to make it as an artist.<sup>11</sup> Inspired by the enthusiasm of Joseph (Joe) Plaskett and with the encouragement of his friend and teacher John Kacere (1920–1999), Tanabe decided to go to New York in 1951. Prompted by Plaskett's endorsement, he was eager to study with Hans Hofmann, but was dismayed to discover all the painting classes were full. He settled for evening drawing lessons at the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts and daytime classes at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, working with the American landscape painter Reuben Tam (1916–1991).

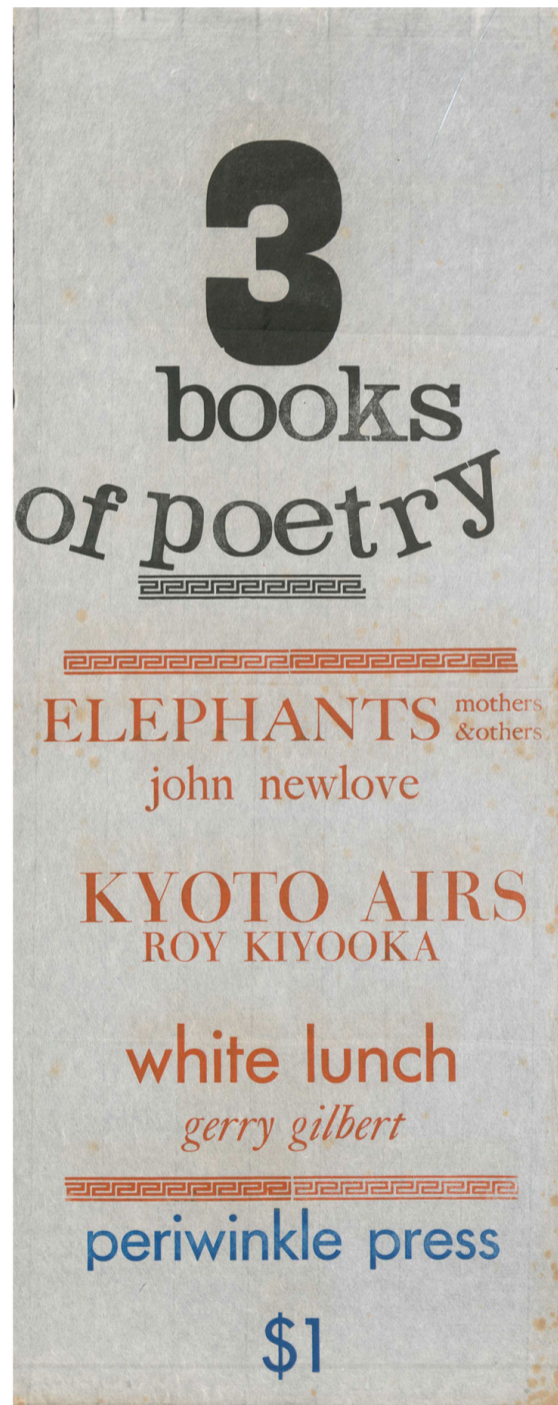
In the early 1950s, New York was exhilarating. Tanabe absorbed emerging trends in abstraction and produced works like *Fragment 41*, 1951, a canvas resembling a grid-like structure composed with overlapping rectangular slabs of colour. During his year in the city, Tanabe befriended American artist Paul Brach (1924–2007) and his wife, Canadian-born artist Miriam (Mimi) Schapiro (1923–2015). Brach took Tanabe to the Cedar Tavern in Greenwich Village, a hangout for many prominent Abstract Expressionist painters and Beat Generation writers and poets. At the tavern he encountered notable artists, such as Philip Guston (1913–1980) and Ad Reinhardt (1913–1967), and listened to them talk and argue. While in New York, Tanabe supported himself by working at odd jobs, but by 1952 he was back in British Columbia.



LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *Fragment 41*, 1951, oil on canvas, 110.5 x 61 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Philip Guston and Nicolas Carone at the Cedar Tavern, New York City, c.1957–60, gelatin silver print, 20 x 24.4 cm, photograph by Arthur Swoger.



In Vancouver, Tanabe took up mural painting, and he completed his first commissioned work—titled *The World We Live In*—for the University of British Columbia Art Gallery (now the Belkin Gallery) in 1953.<sup>12</sup> By chance, the artist also encountered his old teacher, Joe Plaskett, who introduced Tanabe to the printer and graphic designer Robert Reid (1927–2022).<sup>13</sup> Through Reid, Tanabe discovered the world of printing and graphic design, and soon after the two met, they began working together. Tanabe’s fascination with printing and book design led him to form his Periwinkle Press in 1953, through which he published a series of poetry chapbooks and broadsides, bookmarks, and, later, postcards of his work.<sup>14</sup> But even as he supported himself by producing beautifully designed announcements and ephemera through the print business, Tanabe continued to paint.



LEFT: Takao Tanabe and Periwinkle Press (printer), *Self Portrait*, 1957, linocut on paper, 28.1 x 18.1 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, A broadside advertising the release of three books of poetry from Periwinkle Press, 1964, Special Collections and Rare Books, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby.



Tanabe's painting efforts did not go unnoticed. In 1953, he received a telephone call from Group of Seven member Lawren S. Harris (1885-1970)—one of the trustees of the Emily Carr Estate—informing him that he had been awarded an Emily Carr Scholarship. This grant allowed him to travel to England, where he enrolled in the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London and created *Study for a Landscape*, 1955, the first in what would become a long series of paintings dubbed by Joe Plaskett as Tanabe's "White Paintings." Tanabe's sojourn in England led to further travels in Denmark (where his friend Don Roy was living at the time), Sweden, Italy, Spain, and Greece.



LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *Study for a Landscape*, 1955, casein on paper, 34.9 x 27.6 cm, Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe sketching in Venice, 1955, photographer unknown.

On his return voyage to North America in 1955, Tanabe met educator Patricia Anne White (1925-2017). They were married the following year, eventually settling in Vancouver. Tanabe resumed working as a printer while continuing to paint and became more involved in the Vancouver arts community.<sup>15</sup> After a successful one-man show at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1957, he was invited to submit a proposal for the Canadian pavilion at the 1958 World's Fair in Belgium (Brussels International Exhibition). Tanabe's vision, *Study for Mural for Brussels World's Fair*, 1958, showcases the painting style he was beginning to develop, with bold strokes of colour on a white ground.<sup>16</sup> Like the Brussels mural, his works from this time in Vancouver often blurred the lines between abstract and figurative paintings, as in *Nude Landscape I*, 1959, and between abstract and landscape paintings, as in *Interior Arrangement with Red Hills*, 1957.





LEFT: Art Gallery, Canadian Pavilion, Brussels International Exhibition, 1958, photograph by Graham Warrington, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *Study for Mural for Brussels World's Fair*, 1958, oil on wood, 40.9 x 60.9 cm, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver.

In 1959, Tanabe received a Canada Council grant and used it to visit Japan for the first time. As he has explained, "the whole war and after-war experience of being considered a foreigner in what I thought was my own country... it was time I found out whether I really was Japanese or not."<sup>17</sup> Interested in learning calligraphy and *sumi-e*, Tanabe enrolled in classes at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. There he studied with Ikuo Hirayama (1930–2009), a respected educator and artist working in *Nihonga*, or modern "Japanese style" painting, and received private calligraphy lessons from Yanagida Taiun (1902–1990). Tanabe produced many works on paper, including *Hillside (Tokyo)*, 1960, which involved techniques that helped him develop his quick, precise signature style. Tanabe's time in Japan culminated with a solo exhibition in Tokyo at the Nihonbashi Gallery in 1960.



Takao Tanabe, *Hillside (Tokyo)*, 1960, sumi ink and watercolour on paper, 45.3 x 91.5 cm, Museum London.



### THE RETURN TO VANCOUVER AND NEW YORK

Tanabe returned to Vancouver from Japan in 1961 and once again began working with Robert Reid. The following year he built a house in West Vancouver, designed by his architect friend Peter Baker (1924-2009). To save money, Tanabe did much of the building himself, drawing on skills that he had first developed during his internment in Lemon Creek. He began teaching part-time at the Vancouver School of Art (now the Emily Carr University of Art + Design), eventually receiving an offer for full-time work at the school as the Head of the Commercial Art Department. Along with teaching and working with Periwinkle Press, Tanabe produced abstract paintings, creating both large-scale works on canvas like *One Orange Strip*, 1964, and small-scale works on paper like *Marsh, Magenta*, 1964, that each mark a notable transition away from the Abstract Expressionist influences he had absorbed during his time in New York. During this period, Tanabe also began his association with gallerist Mira Godard (1928-2010), first in Montreal and later in Toronto and Calgary.

Tanabe had a wide circle of artistic friends and contacts. Perhaps the most celebrated artist in Tanabe's circle was Ilijuwas Bill Reid (1920-1998), whom Tanabe met in Vancouver in the early 1960s. The two men got on well and Tanabe eventually became fascinated with the Haida aesthetic that Reid was refining during this period. Their friendship prompted Reid to create a wire-sculpture portrait of Tanabe. Reid's example also encouraged Tanabe to try his hand at carving and, under Reid's guidance, Tanabe produced a small totem pole, a mask, and several soapberry spoons.



LEFT: Ilijuwas Bill Reid, *Portrait of Takao Tanabe*, 1961, wire, 22.5 x 12 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe carving in Skidegate, B.C., 1976, photograph by John Alexander.

Although Tanabe seemed well-positioned and had gained considerable respect in the Canadian art world,<sup>18</sup> he was uneasy, feeling that his life was too settled, too predictable. This is despite an extraordinary episode in 1964, when he showed a series of paintings at the New Design Gallery in Vancouver. Among these works was *Emperor, Spring Night*, 1964, an abstract and vaguely suggestive oil and graphite painting evoking the form of the bollards situated at the dockyards on Burrard Inlet.<sup>19</sup> A couple complained that the exhibition was obscene and local police contemplated charges against Tanabe.<sup>20</sup> However, this did not undermine his public reputation, and he received another commission to produce an eighty-foot paper collage mural for the Department of Agriculture's Sir John Carling Building in Ottawa in 1966. (This was followed by a set of three-storey-high silk banners commissioned by the Centennial Concert Hall in Winnipeg in 1967; nylon banners for the universities of Alberta and Regina in 1973; and a group of five eighteen-foot banners for the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City in 1980.)



LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *Emperor, Spring Night*, 1964, oil and graphite on canvas, 137 x 86.3 cm, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax.

RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *Untitled (Banners)*, 1973, eight printed nylon banners and brass weights, 914.4 x 76.2 cm each, University of Regina President's Art Collection.

Although life in Vancouver was stable, Tanabe was keen to move elsewhere. Patricia, his wife, had decided that she wanted to pursue academic studies in the United States, and so, in 1968, the couple moved to Bryn Mawr near Philadelphia so she could attend university. Tanabe quickly realized that he wanted to live in New York and found a studio that he began renovating. To earn extra money, Tanabe helped fellow artists convert their lofts into studio spaces, leaning upon the skills he had developed while working as a handyman in Banff. While he continued to commute to Philadelphia to be with Patricia, Tanabe's creative energy was focused in New York.

The next four years were a period of great activity for Tanabe. His work was in tune with the prevailing trends of abstraction, as can be seen in his hard-edge paintings like *Skeena #2*, 1970. According to Tanabe, the hard-edge paintings were a complete reaction against Abstract Expressionism: "It was hard, after twenty years of doing the Hofmann thing to realize I could do whatever I wanted, as complicated as I wanted, as irrational as I wanted."<sup>21</sup> He continued to work odd jobs in order to supplement his art income, but, in 1971, Mira Godard came to visit him in New York and offered to pay him a small monthly stipend in return for exclusive rights to his paintings. This financial assistance provided significant additional support and the opportunity for Tanabe to focus on his painting.





LEFT: Takao Tanabe and Mira Godard at an exhibition opening at 22 Hazelton Avenue (Mira Godard Gallery), Toronto, n.d., photographer unknown. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *Skeena #2*, 1970, acrylic on canvas, 86.4 x 85 cm, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

### NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN BANFF

In 1972, Tanabe's wife, Patricia, accepted a teaching position in Halifax, but he realized that the community would not provide the type of artistic stimulus he required. That same year he was offered a summer teaching position at the Banff School of Fine Arts, and he hitchhiked across the country to take up his post. Although Tanabe did not regard himself as a teacher, others—notably the painters William Townsend (1909-1973) and Gordon Smith (1919-2020) and the critic David Silcox—felt that Tanabe was the ideal candidate to run the art program in Banff. He quickly accepted the position of Head of the Painting Division and Artist-in-Residence but then tried to turn down the job later that summer when it became clear that his inclusion in a 1972 exhibition at Mira Godard's Toronto gallery was a great success.<sup>22</sup> Happily for the program in Banff, Tanabe was held to his contract and took up the position in 1973.

When Tanabe arrived, the program at Banff was a six-week summer course run by H.G. Glyde (1906-1998). Along with the summer course, Tanabe instituted a winter program focused on painting and printmaking that allowed students to prepare for a Bachelor of Fine Arts program elsewhere. His primary goal was to professionalize the program and he did so by improving the level of teaching and bringing in new people to instruct professional-level artists. He recruited staff, including Roy Kiyooka (1926-1994) and IAIN BAXTER (b.1936), and students through extensive travels across the country. Although he was in charge, Tanabe had only a single class to teach, and the position came with a studio for his exclusive use the year round. The downside of this move to Banff was that it underlined the deterioration of his marriage. Patricia and Takao separated in 1976 and divorced in 1983.



Instructor Takao Tanabe and summer painting class, Summer School of Visual Arts, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1962, photograph by Peter Holborne, UBC Archives Photograph Collection, Vancouver.



Though Banff is surrounded by exceptional mountain scenery, Tanabe didn't address his immediate surroundings in his work despite hiking regularly in the area, organizing weekly hikes for the students and faculty during the summer, and cross-country skiing and ice-fishing on the Bow River in the winter.<sup>23</sup> Instead, this time in Banff saw Tanabe produce a long series of prairie landscape paintings that were celebrated in the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery's touring exhibition, *Takao Tanabe, 1972-1976: The Land*.<sup>24</sup>

Tanabe saw the prairie in a manner unlike any previous painter. Using acrylic paint, Tanabe produced visions of enormous prairie skies, rolling fields, and the foothills of the Rockies without reference to human intervention. Works like *The Land 31/75, 1974*, *The Land 4/75 - East of Calgary, 1975*, and *The Land 22/77, 1977*, illustrate the maturation of Tanabe's characteristic "one-shot" painting technique that he had developed while learning calligraphy and *sumi-e* in Japan. The prairie paintings produced in Banff, and indeed most of Tanabe's works since 1970, were executed with the canvas stretched across a flat surface in a manner similar to how a calligrapher works, rather than upright on an easel. This allowed Tanabe to thin his paint considerably and to apply it in quick, sweeping strokes. In Tanabe's own words, "I want the paint to be put on [the canvas] as though it just arrives without visible brush marks. So the surfaces are, generally speaking, quite flat."<sup>25</sup> Stripping both his subject matter and his materials to their bare essentials, Tanabe wanted the composition to seem as if it had simply appeared from the ether. This seeming effortless belied the amount of work and planning involved in every composition.



LEFT: Takao Tanabe painting with ink, Vancouver, early 1960s, photograph by Tess Boudreau. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *The Land 31/75, 1974*, acrylic on canvas, 106.7 x 182.9 cm, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Edmonton.

While in Banff, Tanabe was fiercely supportive of his students and staff and sought to better the lives of artists across the country. In addition to substantially upgrading the quality of teaching at the Banff School of Fine Arts, Tanabe's leadership at the school also saw the inauguration of the Walter Phillips Gallery in 1976. As a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA)—Tanabe was elected an Academician in 1973—he lobbied the organization in 1978 to protest the removal by ministerial order of a public artwork by John Cullen Nugent (1921-2014) from the front of the Canadian Grain Commission building in Winnipeg. Nugent had won a commission to produce *No. 1 Northern, 1976*,



but the abstract steel sculpture proved unpopular and was cut up and removed in 1978. When the organization failed to act, Tanabe resigned from the RCA in 1979 and, with several friends, formed the Marquis of Lorne Society as an alternative.<sup>26</sup>

### THE WEST COAST BECKONS

Although Tanabe had taken a sabbatical in 1977, by 1980 he thought that he had accomplished what he could in Banff and felt the need for a change of location and painting subject. He had also met Anona Thorne (b.1948) in the mountain community and started a relationship with her. For Tanabe, it was a time for a new beginning.

Tanabe has said, "I was born on the coast and feel most at home here."<sup>27</sup> He had considered returning to British Columbia since 1978 and was looking for property on Vancouver Island. A visit with an old friend, the artist and designer Rudy Kovach (1929-2006), led to the purchase of an acreage near Parksville.<sup>28</sup> Here Tanabe built a house and studio, at once remote yet close enough to Vancouver for easy commuting into the city.



Takao Tanabe in his Vancouver Island studio, 1987, photograph by Eliza Massey.

Although Tanabe never advertised himself as such, he had experience in building, and he had helped several artists convert their lofts into workable studio and living spaces. This experience served him well when it came to building his home on Vancouver Island, which he largely constructed himself. As he said, "I built a big studio with a small living area."<sup>29</sup> Although the property is not on the coast, water is important for Tanabe, and so he had a large pond excavated behind the house and studio. In 1982, Anona Thorne moved to B.C. to join Tanabe, and together they divided their time between an apartment in Vancouver and the acreage on Vancouver Island.

The move back to the West Coast meant a dramatic shift in Tanabe's subject matter and a return to the natural world of his childhood. The lack of administrative and teaching duties and the ability to devote himself exclusively to his painting led to a substantial increase in his output. The paintings for which he is most renowned—the majestic, misty canvases of West Coast shores and islands such as *Barkley Sound 1/93: in Imperial Eagle Channel*, 1993—soon emerged from his new studio home.





Takao Tanabe, *Barkley Sound 1/93: in Imperial Eagle Channel*, 1993, acrylic on canvas, 121.9 x 182.9 cm, University of Lethbridge Art Collection.

Throughout the more than four decades that Tanabe has lived on Vancouver Island, he has developed his style away from the “one-shot” paintings that had characterized his work of the prairies to more detailed studies of the landscape. However, conceptual links to the prairie paintings remain, especially in the artist’s desire to make his misty, rain-obscured vistas appear effortless despite the tremendous amount of labour necessary to produce them. Like his prairie paintings, these coastal works are devoid of human presence, substantially detailed, rendered with thin applications of paint, and often require months of work to complete. In his works based on photographs such as the diptych *Low Tide 5/89 Rath Trevor*, 1989, and *Strait of Georgia 1/90: Raza Pass*, 1990, Tanabe pares away what he regards as extraneous detail to get at the essence of his subject matter.

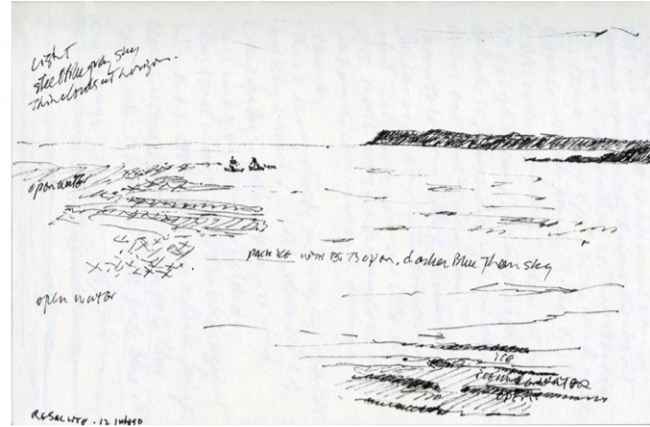


Takao Tanabe, *Low Tide 5/89 Rath Trevor*, 1989, acrylic on canvas, each panel: 139.7 x 243.8 cm, Bank of Canada Collection, Ottawa.

Tanabe’s life in B.C. is characterized by a rich artistic production and the creation and nurturing of an idyllic semi-rural retreat, a cherished home for both Tanabe and Thorne. He maintains contact with the world, but a certain isolation is important to his artistic process.

Lack of a formal education turned Tanabe into an autodidact, and he educated himself through extensive reading and, perhaps more importantly, his travels. Together and separately, Tanabe and Thorne have visited Europe, Japan, Peru, India, and Australia, to name just a few destinations, and Tanabe has travelled extensively in Canada. Sometimes these trips, which Tanabe documents with photographs, lead to new works, such as *High Arctic 1/90*, 1990, and *Tunisia 1/96: Near Nefta*, 1996. Education is the key motivation for his travels.<sup>30</sup> Tanabe is constantly looking at art, architecture, and the landscape—the latter, wherever it might be, often providing the spark for a work of art.





LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *High Arctic 1/90*, 1990, acrylic on canvas, 114 x 216 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, Landscape sketch, Resolute Bay, July 12, 1990, Takao Tanabe sketchbook, Arctic 1990, Takao Tanabe fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

### LEGACY, COMMUNITY, GENEROSITY

Tanabe's work is widely admired and collected, and his contributions have been recognized by some of Canada's leading institutions and top prizes. Tanabe has received three honorary doctorates—from the University of Lethbridge (1995), the Emily Carr University of Art + Design (2000), and Vancouver Island University (2014). He received the Order of British Columbia in 1993, the Order of Canada in 1999, a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts in 2003, the Paul D. Fleck Fellowship at the Banff Centre in 2007, and the Audain Prize for Lifetime Achievement in the Visual Arts in 2013. Although these awards are appreciated, his focus is on the art itself. As Tanabe recently commented, "It is about the painting."<sup>31</sup>

Since moving to B.C., Tanabe continues to exhibit widely and has had dealers and regular exhibitions in Vancouver, Toronto, and Calgary.<sup>32</sup> In 2005, Tanabe was the subject of a retrospective, organized jointly by the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, which travelled to Vancouver, Victoria, Halifax, and Kleinburg. This retrospective was a revelation to most viewers because few were familiar with the breadth of Tanabe's work as both an abstract and landscape painter. A second retrospective featuring his works on paper, *Chronicles of Form and Place: Works on Paper by Takao Tanabe*, was organized and circulated by the Burnaby Art Gallery and McMaster Museum of Art in 2011.<sup>33</sup>



Takao Tanabe in his studio, n.d., photograph by Equinox Gallery, Vancouver.



As his success has grown, Tanabe has given back to the art community prodigiously and continues to believe in the importance of the voice of the individual artist. Beginning in the 1990s, Tanabe hosted a series of painting retreats for himself and younger artists, organizing expeditions to Shuttleworth Bight (at the northern end of Vancouver Island) and to Boat Basin (near

Tofino and the site of the garden of Cougar Annie<sup>34</sup>). Two Vancouver artists who went on those trips were Landon Mackenzie (b.1954) and Renée Van Halm (b.1949). Mackenzie has noted that at Shuttleworth Bight, "Tak's mighty generosity was in full force along with his experience with food, wine, boats, tides, crabbing and sea fishing."<sup>35</sup> Mackenzie also remarked upon Tanabe's social support of the younger generation through gatherings including artists, writers, and curators that he hosted at his Vancouver apartment, which she described as "really special and intergenerational."<sup>36</sup> He would extend this goodwill to students, bringing books and materials to local schools and studios.

Similarly, Van Halm is appreciative of Tanabe's friendship and support. She recalled one of the trips she made with Tanabe and a group of other artists and critics to Shuttleworth Bight in 1993: "Tak and some buddies had built a fishing lodge up there. There was nothing there [except] the house, a rustic west coast modern they had built in the middle of nowhere, accessible only by boat from Port Hardy. It wasn't so much a residency as a retreat; most of us didn't do any artwork. It was mostly social with lots of hiking in an area Tak knew well and long talks over meals."<sup>37</sup>



LEFT: Renée Van Halm, *Crossover (AA)*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 121.9 x 152.4 cm, Equinox Gallery, Vancouver. RIGHT: Landon Mackenzie, *Gabriel's Crossing to Humbolt*, 1994, synthetic polymer on linen, 228.6 x 312.4 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.





Takao Tanabe, *Shuttleworth Sunset*, 1993, woodcut on paper, 42.5 x 61.2 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Overall, Tanabe was keen to provide the opportunity for artists—most of whom worked in ways that were dramatically different from his own practice—to associate and socialize and, if appropriate, to produce artwork. Believing that the visual arts were under-recognized within Canadian culture, Tanabe campaigned for more than five years to secure the establishment of the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts. This involved extensive lobbying of politicians and possible donors across Canada. These efforts were finally successful when the award was established in 1999, with the first laureates in 2000 including art historian and curator Doris Shadbolt (1918–2003), and artist Michael Snow (1928–2023). As noted, Tanabe was honoured in 2003. More recent recipients include Rita Letendre (1928–2021) in 2010, Robert Houle (b.1947) in 2015, and Ken Lum (b.1956) in 2020.



In 2016, he established the Tanabe Prize to be awarded to outstanding emerging painters based in British Columbia. This \$15,000 annual prize is awarded by a jury of artists and is administered through the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. In 2022, Robert Burke (b.1944) and Rain Cabana-Boucher were the recipients. In 2018, the Takao Tanabe Purchase Prize in Painting for Young Artists was established at the National Gallery of Canada (NGC). The \$15,000 annual prize enables the NGC to acquire a work by an emerging artist—a significant early career achievement. That year, works by lessLIE (b.1973) and Cynthia Girard-Renard (b.1969) entered the NGC collection.



Robert Burke, *Looking Through the Institution*, 2014, acrylic on canvas. Burke and Rain Cabana-Boucher were the 2022 Tanabe Prize winners..


Tanabe has also provided scholarships for young artists at OCAD University, NSCAD University, the University of Manitoba, the Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Victoria, in addition to some scholarships in other disciplines, and he donates widely to arts organizations. Supplementing these more public gifts, Tanabe has, over the years, regularly purchased the work of younger artists and donated it to museums.

Tanabe continues to advocate on behalf of artists, expand his philanthropy, garden his acreage on Vancouver Island, and, above all, paint. Despite some eye problems that have troubled him since his late eighties, he produces canvases of immense sensitivity and beauty. He does what he feels he needs to do as an artist, with little thought to the market or critical reception. This sterling integrity in pursuit of his artistic goals is the distinguishing characteristic of his more than seventy-year career. As he noted in 2009, "If you are painting a landscape, you are a dinosaur. But I don't let it stop me from painting the kind of painting I want to paint."<sup>38</sup>



Takao Tanabe and Anona Thorne on their Vancouver Island property, 2022, photograph by Rachel Topham.





# KEY WORKS

Throughout a career that has spanned more than seventy years, Takao Tanabe has embraced a variety of approaches to artmaking. The works presented here were chosen with input from the artist and demonstrate his remarkable range and skill. From the hints of landscape in his early abstract explorations to his groundbreaking interpretations of the Prairies and magisterial images of the West Coast, these selections showcase Tanabe's masterful command of drawing, design, colour, and light.

## INTERIOR ARRANGEMENT WITH RED HILLS 1957



**Takao Tanabe, *Interior Arrangement with Red Hills*, 1957**  
Oil on canvas, 68 x 126.5 cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

The vibrant and powerful *Interior Arrangement with Red Hills* reads as both a landscape and an abstract composition, beguiling the eye and the mind of the beholder. The work is lyrical, expressive abstraction that references our ideas of landscape. Even the title toys with our perceptions: how does an “interior arrangement” come together with “red hills”? There is both spatial depth and flatness, calligraphic elements (in the repeating black lines) and smooth areas of colour. The red hills are not depicted, but conjured out of the shapes that Tanabe has applied to the canvas. In this early work, Tanabe bridges two artistic traditions, demonstrating that he had already found a creative path of his own.

Following his training in Winnipeg, New York, and London, and his travels throughout Europe between 1953 and 1955, Tanabe’s artistic allegiances were divided. Although he viewed himself as an abstract painter, he also found himself drawn to landscape painting. He chose to explore the landscape of rural Denmark in a series of watercolours, although his depictions were rarely explicit. However, when discussing the artist’s more abstract work from the early 1950s, the Irish painter William Scott (1913–1989), who met Tanabe in Banff, did refer to his paintings as “landscapes.”<sup>1</sup>





LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *A Region of Hills*, 1957, oil on canvas, 90.2 x 96.6 cm, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *Nude Landscape I*, 1959, oil on canvas, 101.5 x 84.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

In 1957, the year he painted this composition, Tanabe had a large exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Although *Interior Arrangement with Red Hills* cannot be definitively placed in this group of works, it surely belongs to a series that Tanabe's friend and mentor Joseph (Joe) Plaskett (1928–2014) called "The White Paintings," which includes the work *A Region of Hills*, 1957. As Plaskett wrote:

Why all this white? You may think it is snow, or just light. The artist had no such intention. He describes his use of white as a "cleaning up." In reaction against full and opaque colour he began using white sparingly and thinly, playing it off against the white of the canvas and producing this lightness of touch and technique. The effect of sparkling light is a by-product. Yet you, the viewer, are right. The artist's intentions never count. The white paint turns into light, and light is the secret of landscape, indeed of all painting. What counts is the expression, not the means. These luminous nuances of colour, this impeccability of craftsmanship, this daring and dazzling composition produce a lyrical expression...<sup>2</sup>

These works "came out of the free play of the brush, the calligraphy that had been Tanabe's abstract style," he said. Crucially, Plaskett also explained, "they often began non-figuratively and were seen as landscapes after the fact."<sup>3</sup> In early paintings such as this one, Tanabe was seeking an innovative way to adapt the forms of Abstract Expressionism to his strong and evolving interest in landscape.

## STORM 1960



Takao Tanabe, *Storm*, 1960  
Sumi ink and watercolour on washi paper, 67 x 34.5 cm  
Vancouver Art Gallery



A work with remarkably contained energy and spirit, *Storm* is a highly abstracted landscape with trees below and cloud above. The cloud in the upper portion of the composition contains saturated black pigment in the brush strokes on the left and paler grey passages on the right. The shimmering pigment suggests the atmospheric movement that storms bring, and yet a complex series of painterly actions can be seen in the work. There is both depth and flatness; the three small spots of pink and blue hint at three-dimensionality.

Tanabe created this work with the newfound confidence he developed during his first, influential trip to Japan in the late 1950s. For this work Tanabe uses Japanese sumi ink and paper, but the vigorous calligraphy of the brush strokes evokes the work of Abstract Expressionists like Franz Kline (1910–1962) rather than Japanese painting traditions. Sumi ink, made of either burned rapeseed or pinewood soot, is thinned with water and allows for an almost infinite variety of shades between deep black and pale greys. In *Storm*, the range of sumi ink shades are clearly seen.



LEFT: Franz Kline, *Cupola*, 1958–60, oil on canvas, 198.1 x 269.9 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe painting in Japan, c.1960, photographer unknown.

In 1959, Tanabe had received a Canada Council grant that allowed him to travel to Japan, and he stayed in Tokyo between 1959 and 1961. The artist had two reasons for visiting the country. As a person of Japanese ancestry uprooted from his home and placed in an internment camp during the Second World War, Tanabe was unsettled in his relationship to his heritage. In his own words he asked, "Was I Japanese?"<sup>1</sup> He believed that this trip would help determine that. The second and artistically important reason for Tanabe's journey was to study *sumi-e*, black ink painting, and Japanese calligraphy with master teachers Ikuo Hirayama (1930–2009) and Yanagida Taiun (1902–1990), a calligrapher who worked in the Zen tradition and was known for his large-scale works rendered with a single stroke.

While in Japan, Tanabe produced paintings in more traditional formats, such as *Blossoms*, 1960, and in more experimental forms, such as *Raked Sand and Stones*, 1960. Lessons with Hirayama included the copying of specific paintings that showed a certain kind of brushwork, which allowed Tanabe to get a real feel for Japanese brushes and the medium itself. In both *sumi-e* and calligraphy, the artist must be decisive in their actions. The extreme absorbency of the paper means that no correction is possible. If a mistake is made, the work is ruined.



LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *Raked Sand and Stones*, 1960, sumi ink, 46 x 90 cm, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, Ink sketch, 1960, Takao Tanabe sketchbook, Japan 1960, Takao Tanabe fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

In 2002, during the process of gifting *Storm* to the Vancouver Art Gallery, Tanabe wrote:

The primary challenge while in Japan... was to study the *sumi-e* (sumi ink on a very absorbent paper) and the calligraphic methods of working. What influence, if any, was there on someone like Franz Kline of the Japanese ways of calligraphic works? The very expressionistic, running grass style of calligraphy does have much in common in a superficial way. However, one must remember that no matter how abstracted the strokes of the word, there is still a basic ideogram imbedded in the finished work in calligraphy. To the Japanese there is a meaning, but for us in the west, it is quite devoid of the meaning that begins the process, the ideogram. We see them as abstract work.<sup>2</sup>

This passage reveals that Tanabe was aware of the influence that East Asian calligraphy and ink painting had on American abstract painters such as Kline and Mark Tobey (1890-1976), who actively promoted the works of modern calligraphers. Tanabe understood that it was precisely because these artists could not read Japanese writing that they were drawn to calligraphy in the first place; they viewed abbreviated and expressionistic styles as nonrepresentational forms. Though Tanabe could not read Japanese calligraphy either, his interest in looking beyond surface-level formal affinities moved him to explore these practices and their contemporary applications.

Although the *sumi-e* paintings Tanabe produced were, for the most part, confined to his time in Japan, the decisive approach required by the medium afforded him a creative assuredness that would be significant in the execution of his later prairie landscapes.



### 3 BLACK BARS 4 1964



Takao Tanabe, *3 Black Bars 4*, 1964  
Acrylic on paper, 59 x 79.7 cm  
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax

In the 1960s, after returning to Vancouver following a trip to Japan, Tanabe continued to explore contemporary abstraction in a series of works on paper, including the accomplished and enigmatically titled *3 Black Bars 4*. It is a mark of Tanabe's skill that a composition of only twelve painted elements and two colours beyond black and white has such vivid presence. The artist establishes a plane with the two white horizontals at the top and base of the page and then uses the advancing black verticals and the retreating yellows to deny that plane. However, we do not read all these elements the same way: the second black vertical from the left seems to retreat and the yellow rectangle containing the white element at the right seems to advance.

As he explained, this series of works were "somewhat like watercolours thinned with much water, on watercolour paper."<sup>1</sup> As with *Storm*, 1960, these works were quickly and decisively done, but not related to the landscape. Tanabe had absorbed lessons from Japanese masters in *sumi-e* and calligraphy while

studying abroad. Here he adapts that acquired knowledge to expand his abstract works with acrylic, a quick-drying medium he began to use more extensively while living in Vancouver in the early 1960s.

Tanabe is playing with our perceptions of space and concepts around the materiality of the paper itself. There is at once a sense of flatness and depth. The static verticals are offset by the burst of blue pigment at the left, which seems to expand outward. Indeed, the whole composition is visually lively and the eye leaps from one element to the next.



Takao Tanabe, *White-Eyed Monster*, 1952, oil on canvas, 61 x 121.9 cm, University of Lethbridge Art Collection.

As Tanabe later explained, during this period he “was interested in trying ways of working, trying to get out of the Ab[stract] Expressionist look and ways of seeing.”<sup>2</sup> At the same time, we clearly see the influence of German American artist Hans Hofmann’s (1880–1966) ideas around pictorial “push and pull”<sup>3</sup> that Tanabe had learned about, first indirectly through his mentor Joseph (Joe) Plaskett (1918–2014) and then directly through taking drawing classes with Hofmann himself. *3 Black Bars 4* rejects the gestural mark of Tanabe’s earlier abstract works like *White-Eyed Monster*, 1952, and *Nude Landscape I*, 1959, and instead emphasizes hand-drawn geometry and flat applications of colour. It is a pivotal transitional work that anticipates the more hard-edge works he would explore in the later part of the 1960s.



## ONE ORANGE STRIP 1964



Takao Tanabe, *One Orange Strip*, 1964  
Acrylic on canvas, 40.8 x 86.4 cm  
Museum London

This work reveals the significant contribution Tanabe has made to the story of abstraction in Canada. The palette, composition, and spirit of the work are unmistakably of the period and undeniably his own. *One Orange Strip* is remarkably vivid in its use of colour, but our reading of the space is conflicted. Though we know that the work is flat, spatial depth is also suggested. The single strip of the title is one of the smaller elements of the composition, but it is a perfect complement to the blues that surround it. An abrupt visual truncation of the V-shapes, in both the orange/green and the two green vectors, surprises the eye and animates the whole work. The flatness of the surface is also contradicted by the two large red elements—the left one seems to retreat and the right one advance, suggesting a torquing of the whole image. The boldness of the orange leaps out from the blues around it, giving the illusion of space.

Curator and art historian Roald Nasgaard states that Tanabe “devoted himself to geometry and colour” in the 1960s, as did many other abstract artists in Canada—especially Montreal-based painters such as Guido Molinari (1933–2004) and Yves Gaucher (1934–2000)—and in the United States. But Nasgaard suggests that Tanabe did so idiosyncratically, “with an irreverence” toward the prevailing trends at home and abroad. Under the influence of American critic Clement Greenberg (1909–1994), who championed a formal approach to painting throughout the decade, many abstract artists valued line, colour, texture, and composition over narrative or other contextual elements, as Tanabe also appears to do in *One Orange Strip*. However, Nasgaard reminds us that for Tanabe, “formalist purity was never the issue, perhaps because [he] always has

been an image maker, dedicated to the narrative possibilities of what happens inside the frame and within the enigmatic space of illusion."<sup>1</sup>

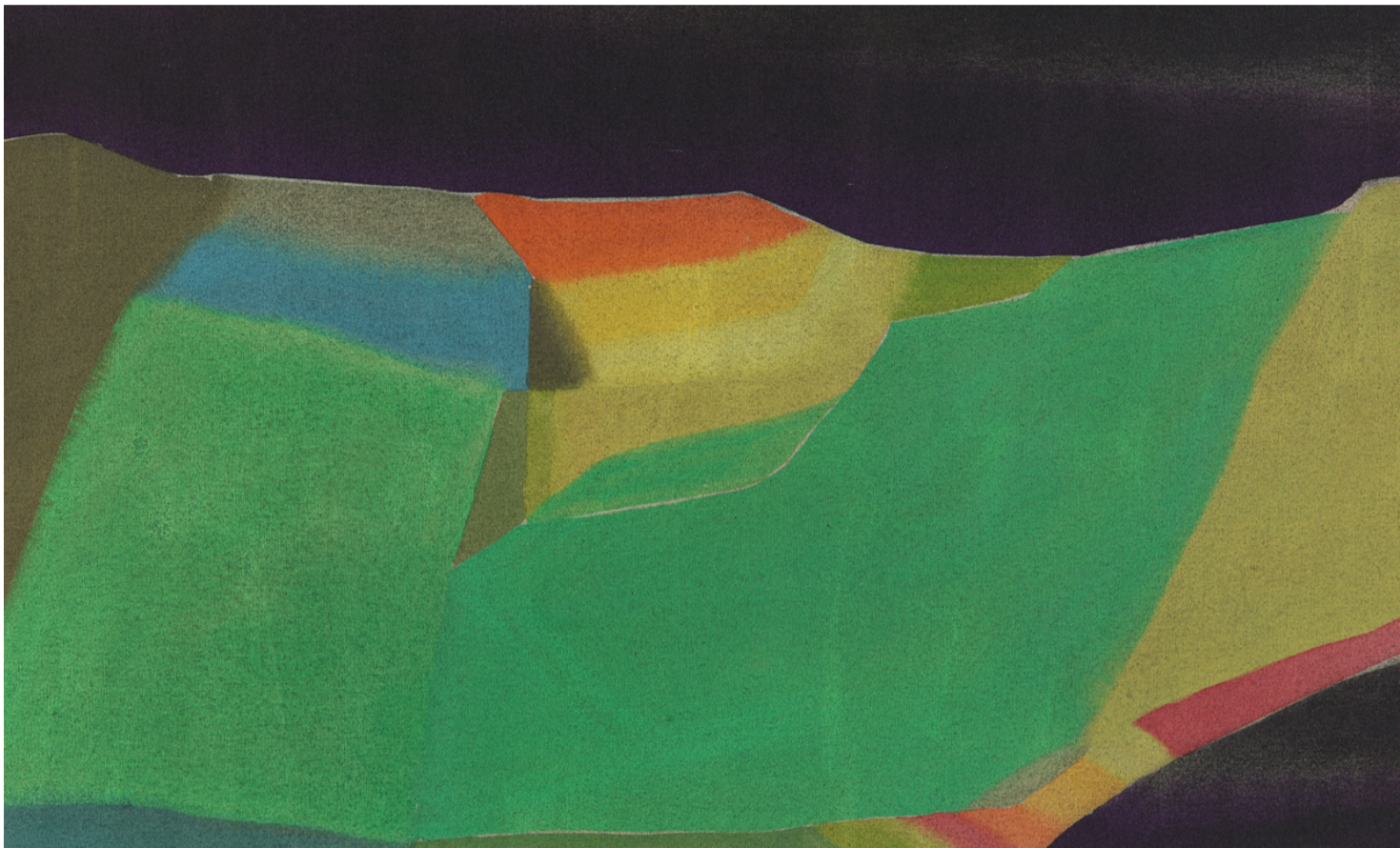


LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *Kitseias*, 1970, acrylic on canvas, 86 x 85.6 cm, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax. RIGHT: William Pehudoff, *Nanai #6*, 1969, acrylic on canvas, 189.5 x 173, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

During this period, Tanabe was painting in a manner that was absolutely current, but he clearly wanted to define the work as distinctive. Although there are certainly affinities with the work of Jack Bush (1909-1977), William Pehudoff (1918-2013), and others, Tanabe's geometry is, as Nasgaard has noted, "eccentric" and illustrates the disparate ways Canadian artists took up abstraction in the mid-1960s. Tanabe's eccentricity is rooted in his composition, which suggests "illusions of inward space and outward projection."<sup>2</sup> This is clearly seen in *One Orange Strip*. Along with hard edges, the "colours turned high-keyed and commercial and were laid down flat and unmodulated,"<sup>3</sup> a testament, perhaps, to Tanabe's early interest in sign painting.



## THE LAND III 1972



Takao Tanabe, *The Land III*, 1972  
Acrylic on canvas, 78.7 x 88.9 cm  
Vancouver Art Gallery

*The Land III* is one of the earliest of Tanabe's canvases of a landscape—in this case, of the Pennsylvanian countryside. Like his earlier works on paper such as *Waterview*, 1965, it eschews detail. We see no buildings, trees, or roads, but rather massive landforms and broad patches of vibrant colour—green, yellow, blue, and orange—that delineate the land but are muted by a thin wash of black paint that gives unity to the whole composition. The black of the sky is deep and only barely modulated in the upper right. The horizon line is crisply delineated but less so than in Tanabe's earlier hard-edged abstractions, like *Kitseias*, 1970.

What is equally striking about this work is the lack of brushwork. The colour appears to meld with the canvas, but this is not a stained painting, as in the manner of American artist Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011). Tanabe has carefully primed his surface and thinned his paints so that there is little sense of the artist's touch. This is a deliberate strategy on Tanabe's part. As he explained: "The idea is to be as anonymous as possible as an artist."<sup>1</sup> This approach was to become the hallmark of his future landscape work. The image is there, apparently having magically appeared on its own. This sense of lightness and transience is what



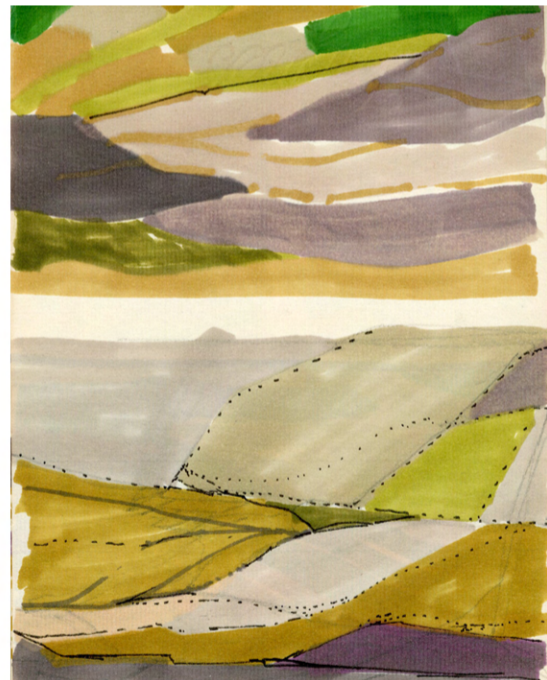
LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *Waterview*, 1965, acrylic on paper, 78.7 x 58.4 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe in his New York studio, 1970, photograph by Charmian Reading.



Tanabe was seeking, and he achieves it. The mark of Tanabe's genius is that the image has a resonance and power that is both profound and lasting.

In 1968, Tanabe and his wife, Patricia Anne White (1925–2017), left Vancouver for the eastern United States. White had enrolled in graduate studies at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. Tanabe initially lived in Philadelphia, but soon moved to New York where he got a studio space. At this time, although he had previously painted landscapes in Europe in the 1950s, Tanabe was focused on his abstract paintings, many of which were hard-edged. Tanabe often travelled to Bryn Mawr from New York to visit White, and he became interested in the topography of the region.

He began to do landscape studies on paper in the early 1970s, as with *Mirror Image*, 1971, and *Landscape Study #4*, 1972, which also suggest a sky and horizon. As Tanabe has noted: "I began deliberately trying my hand at various ways I might approach the landscape. Most of the works are high-colour and abstracted, but very definitely it is the landscape that is at the core of the works. Then, when I did decide to move into the landscape as subject, there are a number of paper works that are much related to the first landscape paintings I did in 1972."<sup>2</sup>



LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *Landscape Study #4*, 1972, acrylic and watercolour on paper, 59.5 x 80 cm, Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa.  
RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *Landscape sketch*, 1972, Takao Tanabe sketchbook, NYC, Banff 1972, Takao Tanabe fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

Tanabe has explained why these works—despite their accomplishment—are lesser known and rarely exhibited: "The reason I did not show the paper works may be that I always wanted to show the oil or acrylic paintings on canvas that I was doing. They were the hard and important works I thought."<sup>3</sup>



## THE LAND 22/77 1977



Takao Tanabe, *The Land 22/77*, 1977  
Acrylic on canvas, 140.3 x 229.9 cm  
University of Lethbridge Art Collection

*The Land 22/77* is a landscape that has virtually no subject other than the remarkable light and the track leading into the distance. As such it is a quintessential example of one of Tanabe's most significant bodies of work. As critic Nancy Tousley writes, "The Prairie Paintings are landscape at its most fundamental: sky and land divided by a horizon line, representational images that come very close to abstraction."<sup>1</sup>

One of the most satisfying aspects of this remarkably rich and subtle image is that wherever the eye falls there is movement and visual excitement. The slight lightening of the sky just above the horizon is easy to miss at first glance, but essential to the spatial depth of the image. The whole work vibrates with an almost electric energy despite the lack of subject. This effect is not accidental. As Tanabe has commented, "In my compulsive way, once I get started I feel I have to get every little movement of the surface."<sup>2</sup> No one else painted the prairie this way. As Tousley also notes, these works approach abstraction, and yet for many viewers, they are the Prairies.



Tanabe began this important phase of his artistic career in the summer of 1972. That year, he was invited to lead the art program at the Banff School of Fine Arts (now known as the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity). His journey across the continent from the East Coast took him through long stretches of the Prairies. The vast expanses of relatively empty landscape appealed to him, and when he was offered a full-time position in Banff he accepted. Although Banff has a magnificent mountain setting, Tanabe's attention was drawn

elsewhere, specifically to the prairies and foothills. Alongside his administrative and teaching duties, Tanabe began to focus his attention on a series of prairie paintings that would redefine the image of that landscape. These paintings include *The Land 3/75, Banff, 1975*, and *Foothills Looking West 3/83, 1983*.



Takao Tanabe, *The Land 3/75, Banff, 1975*, acrylic on canvas, 66 x 111.8 cm, University of Lethbridge Art Collection.



Takao Tanabe, *Foothills Looking West 3/83, 1983*, acrylic on canvas, 50.5 x 152 cm, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton.

In a 2011 interview, Tanabe said that the creation of these expansive landscapes may appear “so simple, but it’s very complicated. It’s not putting in mountains here and little bumps here—it’s absolutely flat with a little bit of plough lines, especially in the summer, the different colours of the field... and then there’s a big empty sky. It’s a challenge.”<sup>3</sup> From 1973 to 1980 he produced more than two hundred paintings in this series. The sense of seriality was important to Tanabe, but this does not mean that the works are the same. Though the canvases share the artist’s desire to depict the landscape with as little evidence of his own hand as possible, they are, ironically, very much Takao Tanabe’s paintings.



## THE DARK LAND 2/80 1980



Takao Tanabe, *The Dark Land 2/80*, 1980  
Acrylic on canvas, 115 x 546 cm  
Max Bell Building, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity

Beginning in the 1970s, Tanabe painted an exceptional series of canvases of the prairie landscape during different seasons, like in *Summer Foothills 8/79*, 1979, and during different times of day. *The Dark Land 2/80* is perhaps the most majestic of these works. He has succeeded in making a seemingly bleak landscape—bereft of human activity—visually exciting through his use of colour and the remarkable skill used to apply the transparent washes of pigment. The sky, like that above the land itself, is alive with movement and energy, and the terrain below is subtly and richly modulated. The image is pared down and minimal but has an astonishing impact and marks Tanabe as a landscapist of the first order, but also as an artist who works on his own terms.

Many of Tanabe's paintings of the prairies, such as *The Land 22/77*, 1977, were large in size, but with *The Dark Land 2/80*, Tanabe dramatically increased the scale of his pictorial ambition. Tanabe produced *The Dark Land 2/80*, his first landscape triptych, after leaving Banff for Vancouver Island. Although he was physically removed from his prairie subject matter, his works became grander, extending his vision outward. Following *The Dark Land 2/80*, Tanabe produced *Southern Alberta Foothills*, 1982, his largest painting to date.



Takao Tanabe, *Southern Alberta Foothills*, 1982, acrylic on canvas, 71.1 x 533.4 cm, Glenbow Museum, Calgary.



Although many Canadian artists, such as Tanabe's contemporary Dorothy Knowles (1927-2023), have taken the prairie landscape as a subject matter, no one has consistently painted it on such an epic scale as Tanabe. As Nancy Tousley writes, these are works that require an enormous amount of preparation and, in their execution, the exceptional degree of control that the artist refined during his stay in Japan. Tousley saw in these works a confluence of influences from Asian art, Abstract Expressionism, and realism, and declared, "never has a series of simple prairie landscape images seemed so nuanced and complex, or so unlike any others."<sup>1</sup>



## STRAIT OF GEORGIA 1/90: RAZA PASS 1990



Takao Tanabe, *Strait of Georgia 1/90: Raza Pass*, 1990  
Acrylic on canvas, 142.7 x 186 cm  
Audain Art Museum, Whistler

*Strait of Georgia 1/90: Raza Pass* is one of the finest of Tanabe's coastal works, even though it is extremely difficult to choose a single work to represent this remarkable series of paintings. Reviewing the Tanabe retrospective in 2006, critic Robin Laurence wrote, "it's almost impossible to look at Tanabe's heroic landscape paintings without acknowledging their romantic grandeur."<sup>1</sup> This is certainly true of this majestic work.

Raza Pass or Passage is a stretch of water off the island of the same name at the northern end of the Strait of Georgia. In common with many of Tanabe's landscapes of the West Coast, this is an image wreathed in mist. We are placed high above the water and look into an empty but profoundly rich landscape. The composition leads your eye into the distance, an effect that is accomplished by subtly lightening the colour of the ocean's surface as it recedes. The overlapping islands move from dark to light, brilliantly marking a visual and

psychological journey.<sup>2</sup> With this and other coastal works, the artist makes a dramatic shift from the way he approached his prairie subjects—the paint is applied more slowly and methodically, but the results never seem laboured.

By 1980, Tanabe felt that he had accomplished what he could at the Banff School of Fine Arts and wanted to return to British Columbia where he was born. Even though he had not lived in B.C. for more than a dozen years, he was still gripped by its geography. Tanabe and his new partner, Anona Thorne, whom he had met in Banff, moved to an acreage near Parksville, on Vancouver Island, and began to build a house and studio. The studio was ready in 1982 and that year saw the artist begin a series of canvases of West Coast landscapes, work that continues to the present (although Tanabe has travelled to the B.C. Interior and elsewhere in Canada and the world).

One of the realities of living on Vancouver Island is that you often travel to the mainland by ferry. This was true for Tanabe and Thorne, who began making regular trips across the Strait of Georgia on the B.C. Ferries. Tanabe never travels without a camera, and he took many images on these journeys, upon which the paintings in the series are based.



LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *Inside Passage 1/89: Burke Channel*, 1989, acrylic on canvas, 66 x 121.9 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Lawren S. Harris, *Maligne Lake, Jasper Park*, 1924, oil on canvas, 122.8 x 152.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Although many of Tanabe's coastal landscapes, such as *Inside Passage 1/89: Burke Channel*, 1989, are not peopled, they have an intimacy to them that is not seen in the equally empty vistas rendered by Group of Seven member Lawren S. Harris (1885-1970). This is likely due to the richness of Tanabe's atmospherics, "the damp grey light of the coast."<sup>3</sup> As with Tanabe's images of the prairie, *Strait of Georgia 1/90: Raza Pass* is an authentic vision of coastal British Columbia. Few artists can claim to have so completely captured two such diverse topographies.



## RIVERS 2/00: CROOKED RIVER 2000



Takao Tanabe, *Rivers 2/00: Crooked River*, 2000  
Acrylic on canvas, 114.3 x 304.8 cm  
Vancouver Art Gallery

While Tanabe is known primarily for his majestic images of the coast, from 2000 to 2001, the artist decided to embark on a series of six paintings that took the rivers of British Columbia as their subjects. These complex works, including *Rivers 2/00: Crooked River*, are the result of lengthy trips to the interior of the province, where he documented significant sites with his camera and then returned to his Vancouver Island studio to paint them. The composition of *Rivers 2/00* differs from some of the other paintings in the series, such as *Rivers 1/01: Jordan River*, 2001, in that the body of water is seen in middle-ground and is a less assertive element within the composition. Tanabe devotes attention to the dark foreground rather than to the river itself or to the luminous cloud-strewn sky. The whole composition is bathed in a cool, revealing light, and everywhere the eye goes there is something to delight and interest. We feel as if we are there by the banks of the Crooked River, a small stream in northern British Columbia whose waters eventually flow into the Peace River. What more could a viewer ask of a landscape painting?

Though Tanabe is still working with the canvas on a horizontal plane, as he did previously with his prairie and coastal paintings, his application of paint is different than that seen in *The Dark Land 2/80*, 1980, for example. Instead of reducing the landscape to its minimal elements, in *Rivers 2/00* Tanabe creates a dense wealth of visual information on the canvas



Takao Tanabe, *Rivers 1/01: Jordan River*, 2001, acrylic on canvas, 114.3 x 304.8 cm, private collection.

that is achieved by his repeated painting of the subject. This work required at least six different rounds of painting over several months to build up the dense and complex surface that the artist sought. At a distance the work appears almost as fundamental as the prairie pictures, but closer examination reveals that it encompasses a myriad, detailed world, and a densely complex pattern of brush strokes.

The work is derived from a photographic source—the starting point for Tanabe’s paintings. The process of deciding what is important within the image is a slow one, and part of the enormous planning that Tanabe brings to all his large-scale landscapes. The success of the work relies on his ability to take us into the world as he sees it. Of expansive scale, more than three metres wide, *Rivers 2/00: Crooked River* requires that the viewer join Tanabe in exploring the natural world.



## DAWN 2003



Takao Tanabe, *Dawn*, 2003  
Acrylic on canvas, 137.5 x 304.7 cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

In *Dawn*, a monumental and dramatic vista of two lone islands beneath a dark sky, Tanabe captures several awe-inspiring shafts of light breaking through the moody clouds and reflecting off the ocean. The artist and curator Jeffrey Spalding (1951–2019), who was a long-time friend of Tanabe, saw this work as the quintessential example of the artist's more recent paintings of the British Columbia coast, which demonstrate his intimate knowledge of that province's magnificent geography. In Tanabe's words: "If you know B.C., you know the variety of landscapes and seascapes with all the big waters all around, island, mountains, and valleys... I have painted in the Arctic and in Newfoundland. But nothing holds a candle to the variety of views that B.C. offers."<sup>1</sup>

Spalding describes the operatic effect of this composition, noting how Tanabe has expertly employed one of the tropes of the Romantic tradition—"the crack in the cloud"—to great dramatic effect. "A clearing in an otherwise overcast sky allows the penetration of a shaft of light that bathes all in a theatrical spotlight: a note of divine promise amidst troubled waters."<sup>2</sup> *Dawn* offers a counterpoint to Tanabe's penchant for misty, foggy, and rain-



LEFT: Emily Carr, *A Rushing Sea of Undergrowth*, 1935, oil on canvas, 112.8 x 69 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *Gulf Islands, Grey Morning 5/82*, 1982, acrylic on canvas, 110.1 x 140.1 cm, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton.



obscured landscapes, composing an image of how quickly the weather can change. There is a certain artifice to this image, but it is a magnificent and convincing artifice, and indeed it does speak to the experience of living on the coast—to witnessing the majestic passages through the Strait of Georgia from Vancouver Island to the mainland.

Tanabe has found, like his predecessors Emily Carr (1871–1945) and E.J. Hughes (1913–2007), a distinct and highly individual approach to the B.C. landscape. Whereas Carr explored the forests of Vancouver Island as a transcendent subject, and Hughes painted with a deep affection for the Cowichan Valley, Tanabe’s approach has a rightness and authenticity to it that transcends the moment and reminds us of the eternal wonder of the natural world.



## MALACCA STRAIT: DAWN 2004



Takao Tanabe, *Malacca Strait: Dawn*, 2004  
Woodblock etching, 59.9 x 151.8 cm  
Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

Although Tanabe is predominantly known as a painter, he has had a rich career as both a draughtsman and a printmaker. His earliest prints date from his studies at the Winnipeg School of Art in the late 1940s and he has produced prints throughout his career. Always keen to explore new aesthetic ideas, he has used silkscreen, etching, monotype, lithography, woodblock, and various combinations of media. The subjects of his prints include an early self-portrait, dynamic abstractions—which suggest unusual spatial configurations—and more recently, as seen here, the landscape.

*Malacca Strait: Dawn* is perhaps Tanabe's most ambitious print and a tour de force of the printmaker's art. This work references two of his paintings, *Inside Passage 3/98: In Malacca Pass*, 1998, and *Inside Passage 1/04: Malacca Strait*, 2004.

Though the printed image resembles the latter of these

paintings most closely, albeit in reverse, in this print Tanabe has chosen to dramatically enhance the effects in the sky. Where there is an evocative but modest orange-pink blush in the right of the painting, in the print the whole of the sky is suffused with a dramatic and emotive pink glow, which is echoed in the reflections on the waters of the Malacca Strait.<sup>1</sup> The reading of the image is quite different than the canvas and demonstrates how much care has gone into the print.



LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *Inside Passage 3/98: In Malacca Pass*, 1998, acrylic on canvas, private collection. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *Inside Passage 1/04: Malacca Strait*, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 132 x 304.8 cm, private collection.

One of the glories of the painting is the remarkable rendering of the variegated ripples on the surface of the water. For the print, Tanabe needed to work extensively on the massive plate, creating a network of etched lines that emulate but do not copy the shimmering surface of the sea in the painting. The sky is depicted using an aquatint plate to give the richer texture Tanabe sought, while the woodblocks provide the subtlety of colour and ethereality of water.

As the largest print Tanabe has made—the image being over one and a half metres in width—*Malacca Strait: Dawn* is one-half the scale of the canvas (*Inside Passage 1/04: Malacca Strait*) and required collaboration with a number of partners. Tanabe worked for several years with the master printer Peter Braune of New Leaf Editions in Vancouver, a company that specializes in intaglio printing processes. Requiring plates and woodblocks, the image was printed on a sheet of paper larger than the presses of New Leaf could provide, and so Tanabe and Braune used the presses at Capilano College (now Capilano University) in North Vancouver to complete the work. The precision required in the printing was demanding and there are only fifteen prints in the complete edition, although there are several trial proofs, artist's proofs, and printer's proofs. Braune sums up the arduous process of its creation as "one of the most challenging prints I have done."<sup>2</sup>

To say that this image is magisterial is an understatement. The enhanced drama that you see in the artist's painting *Dawn*, 2003, is still present, but this print is richer. *Malacca Strait: Dawn* is an image that gives succour to the mind and spirit and is an appropriate work to represent Tanabe's exceptional career as a printmaker.



## CORMORANT ISLAND, LOOKING SOUTH 2015



Takao Tanabe, *Cormorant Island, Looking South*, 2015  
Acrylic on canvas, 102 x 185 cm  
Private collection

*Cormorant Island, Looking South* is a depiction of the land and seascape of the island, which is home to the Kwakwaka'wakw village of Alert Bay (Yalis). In a late work such as this one, Tanabe uses his artistic skills to perfection and continues to make an indelible mark on the history of landscape painting in Canada.

Given the shadows that fall from the right side of the canvas, it is perhaps early in the day. We see a deserted beach with overlapping land and water masses, the whole image permeated by cool sunlight. The composition is masterful, and the viewer takes a journey into the landscape, beginning on the beach in the foreground where there are multiple elements to interest them. The beach is dotted with stones and enlivened with shadows. At the right there is the large boulder, the three-dimensionality of which is enhanced by the dark shadows and light entering the image from the right. The middle ground is defined by a large gravel-strewn spit, which extends into the composition from the right edge of the painting. In the distance we see more islands and open waters.

Tanabe's depictions of the coast of British Columbia are in essence visual essays about the relationship between the land, the water, and the sky. So too are these works animated by an exceptional sensitivity to the quality of light that pervades the limpid atmosphere of the coast. It is the atmosphere of Tanabe's childhood, a land of mists and fogs rather than brilliant sunshine. Tanabe is more interested in the subtleties and hidden elements of a vista than the simple

drama of light and dark. His landscapes are often composed of myriad shades of grey, blue, and sand. Although often painted in subdued rather than high-key colours, these images have a remarkable resonance and rightness to them.

As with most of Tanabe's later landscape work, *Cormorant Island*, *Looking South* is an image of a specific locus, but it is also an image of a place that we can all identify with even if we have never been there. True to form, Tanabe shows us no trace of human activity in this landscape. The decision to exclude the human presence, except by implicating us in looking, gives the image a universal and timeless quality. The natural world is depicted richly and searchingly. We feel that we are present on the island. The image is, as Tanabe defines it, one of enormous artifice and skill that feels, paradoxically, completely natural.



Takao Tanabe, *Low Tide 2/94, Hesquiat Bay*, 1994, acrylic on canvas, 137.2 x 304.8 cm, private collection.





# SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

Takao Tanabe's career is largely defined by how he has rethought the landscape genre through reinventing his technique. Although his early years were characterized by his focus on abstraction, he went on to produce paintings that changed the way Canadians viewed the Prairies and the Pacific coast. He was a pivotal figure in arts education as Director of the Banff School of Fine Arts and, more recently, is a tireless proponent for emerging Canadian artists. Now considered one of the country's foremost landscape painters, Tanabe has produced an expansive body of work that holds deep resonance for anyone who connects with the landscape of Canada.



### IDENTITY AND ANCESTRY

Takao Tanabe's early childhood was spent in Seal Cove, a small fishing village in British Columbia that was a predominantly Japanese Canadian community throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In 1937, at the age of eleven, Tanabe moved to Vancouver with his family, where they lived until they were forcibly relocated inland during the Second World War along with more than 22,000 other Japanese Canadians on the West Coast. The wrenching events of Tanabe's internment in the Lemon Creek camp throughout the war exposed him to overt racism that affected every aspect of his life and his family. His identity as a Canadian citizen was suddenly called into question and he had to reassess his place in the world.

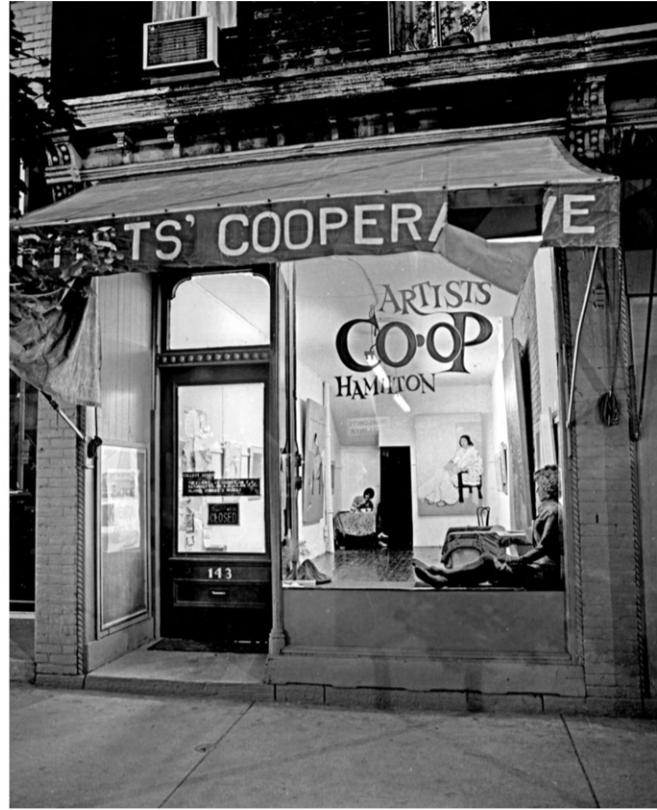


LEFT: Takao Tanabe and his sister, Meiko, in Seal Cove, B.C., 1937, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Fishermen's Reserve rounding up Japanese Canadian fishing vessels in Steveston, B.C., December 10, 1941, photograph by the Canadian Department of National Defence, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

Born and raised in Canada, Tanabe did not consider himself Japanese despite his ancestry. However, the experience of forced relocation and internment suddenly made him consider his role as the "Other." Like many other *nisei*, or "second generation" Japanese Canadians (many of whom were youths during the war), Tanabe has held complicated feelings about his heritage and his experience of the internment. He was not encouraged by his parents to speak Japanese, nor was he encouraged to learn about Japanese cultural traditions. In turn, he has often vocally resisted the labelling of his art with ethnic or cultural signifiers.

Reflecting on his interaction with Tanabe while organizing the 1987 exhibition *Shikata Ga Nai: Contemporary Art by Japanese Canadians* at Hamilton Artists Inc., curator and artist Bryce Kanbara (b.1947) notes: "When I asked Takao Tanabe to take part, he replied, 'It is not the most thrilling idea, another ethnic grouping.... You give no cogent reason for organizing such an exhibition at this time, is there any?'"<sup>1</sup> Despite this response, Tanabe did send Kanbara a painting to be included in the show.





LEFT: Installation view of *Shikata Ga Nai: Contemporary Art by Japanese Canadians* at the Burlington Cultural Centre, 1987 (Foreground: Louise Noguchi, *History can kill you*, 1984–85), photographer unknown. RIGHT: Exterior view of the Hamilton Artists Co-op (now called Hamilton Artists Inc.), c.1976, photograph by James A. Chambers.

Early in his career, Tanabe began to travel extensively, spending time in New York and Banff and roaming all over Europe. These travels allowed him to produce a significant body of work—notably including drawings like *Moni Vatopedi*, *Mount Athos*, 1955—but they did not influence critical thinking about his identity. Still, as early as 1953, when he was creating abstract works, Tanabe's teacher and mentor Joseph (Joe) Plaskett (1918–2014) remarked that Tanabe was beginning to develop a painting style that had “entered a region of calligraphy,” which Plaskett attributed to “Tanabe’s Japanese ancestry.”<sup>2</sup>

As he was beginning to gain recognition, in 1959 Tanabe received a Canada Council grant that enabled him to travel to Japan for the first time. There, over the course of two years, he would confront his identity. The trip provided him the opportunity to experience Japanese culture, see much of the island nation, and, more importantly, study both calligraphy and *sumi-e*. This training was valuable in that it equipped him with new tools as an



Takao Tanabe, *Near the Sea*, 1960, sumi ink on paper, 46.9 x 90.8 cm, Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, Burnaby.

artist and he produced numerous works on paper, such as *Forest and Sun*, 1960, and *Near the Sea*, 1960, that were presented together in a 2016 exhibition at the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre in Burnaby, B.C. His time in Japan also led him to question the racialized borders placed between “Japanese” and “Canadian” within a new context. As Tanabe later said, “I realized that my attitudes, my beliefs, everything, I’m a Westerner. I’m a



foreigner [in Japan].”<sup>3</sup> He was first and foremost an artist; secondly, he happened to be a person of Japanese Canadian ancestry.

Despite his feelings of foreignness in Japan and his conviction that his ancestry was not overtly significant to his art, Tanabe’s achievements as an artist are deeply meaningful to members of the Japanese Canadian community. Bryce Kanbara has identified Tanabe, Kazuo Nakamura (1926–2002), and Roy Kiyooka (1926–1994) as the “triumvirate of senior Japanese Canadian artists”<sup>4</sup> and the 2022–23 exhibition he organized at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, *Start Here: Kiyooka, Nakamura, Takashima, Tanabe*, paid tribute to Tanabe’s and his peers’ accomplishments. Kanbara is mindful that these artists are not creatively affiliated, nor were they deeply aware of one another’s work, but together “they set the bar high for succeeding generations of Japanese Canadians in the arts... and provide all of us with inspirational examples of what it takes to make a difference.”<sup>5</sup>



Takao Tanabe, *Spanish Banks*, 1988, woodblock print, 48 x 72 cm, Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, Burnaby.

### INNOVATIVE AND MAGISTERIAL LANDSCAPES

Takao Tanabe has gained national renown for two bodies of work. The first is his long series from the 1970s that took the Canadian Prairies as subject matter. Tanabe’s drawings and paintings of the prairies, such as *The Land #6*, 1974, have been described by curator Darrin J. Martens as “some of the most challenging, thought provoking, and evocative [works] based on the prairie landscape ever created.”<sup>6</sup> The second body of work includes his depictions of British Columbia’s interior and coast, such as *South Moresby 2/86: Kunghit Island*, 1986. These subjects have been in production ever since the artist moved to Vancouver Island in 1980. Together, these two series have forged Tanabe’s reputation as one of Canada’s foremost landscape painters.





LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *The Land #6*, 1974, acrylic wash on canvas, 84 x 142.5 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *South Moresby 2/86: Kunghit Island*, 1986, acrylic on canvas, 106.7 x 213.4 cm, Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.

Following his training in Winnipeg and work with Joe Plaskett in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Tanabe assumed that he would be an abstract painter, but interestingly, his work, despite its non-objective forms, was often read by others as alluding to landscape.<sup>7</sup> Tanabe acknowledges that there is always a link to the landscape and the natural world in his work. The challenge for him was to engage with this subject in new and authentic ways.

Canada has a long tradition of landscape painters. In the nineteenth century, Lucius Richard O'Brien (1832-1899), John Arthur Fraser (1838-1898), and others associated with the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) helped define the young settler nation. In the twentieth century, the works of the Group of Seven further defined landscape as an artform that carried a strong sense of national identity. But although the CPR painters in the nineteenth century and the Group of Seven in the twentieth century embraced the land as a specific subject matter by documenting its scenic grandeur, Tanabe has rejected specificity in favour of a more distilled, essential landscape.



Lucius R. O'Brien, *Sunrise on the Saguenay, Cape Trinity*, 1880, oil on canvas, 90 x 127 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

After a period of more than twenty years producing abstract paintings, such as *Nude Landscape I*, 1959, in the 1970s Tanabe turned to the vast expanses of the Canadian Prairies to tackle the subject of landscape more concretely. He had already hitchhiked across this open terrain in the 1950s, when he commuted between Winnipeg and Banff, and his impressions from that time were lasting. In 1972, he hitchhiked along the same route, stopping to sketch and photograph the vistas that caught his attention and capturing the effects of light at different times of day.



Over the next several years he produced a series of more than two hundred paintings of the prairies, which, through his novel “one-shot” approach, allowed him to explore the edge between abstraction and representation in uncharted territories. Tanabe presented the prairie landscape in a way that was entirely new. As Plaskett commented: “One of the most original things that he’s done is his interpretation of the prairie landscape and that had never been properly done before.... It is a kind of purity that Tak sees in these vast spaces. That he is able to miraculously translate to the canvas. That I think is a unique contribution.”<sup>8</sup>



LEFT: Reference photographs of foothills in Alberta enlarged and taped together, n.d., photographs by Takao Tanabe. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *The Land 4/75 - East of Calgary*, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 66 x 112 cm, Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa.

Earlier traditions of painting the prairies had shown the vast landscape as it related to people. One sees this in works by Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald (1890–1956) and C.W. Jefferys (1869–1951), where people or buildings commonly appear as integral elements of the composition. More contemporary depictions of the prairie landscape by Dorothy Knowles (1927–2023), such as *The River*, 1967, depict the landscape in more detail. Tanabe, in contrast, sees the prairie landscape as unpeopled and almost abstract; the landscape as a pictorial challenge. Compositions such as *The Land 4/76*, 1976, and *The Land 22/77*, 1977, reveal his unique approach.



LEFT: Dorothy Knowles, *The River*, 1967, oil and charcoal on canvas, 142.2 x 142.5 cm, Remail Modern, Saskatoon. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *The Land 4/76*, 1976, acrylic on canvas, 108 x 121 cm, Museum London.



Tanabe continued painting the Prairies until 1984, but as early as 1976, the Norman Mackenzie Gallery at the University of Regina recognized the significance of the series with a major touring exhibition, *Takao Tanabe, 1972-1976: The Land*, which travelled to Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary, Victoria, and Edmonton. A 1976 review in the *Winnipeg Free Press* proclaimed: "Tanabe's reduction of its panoramic dimensions into a formal essence brings new meaning and clarity to the prairie experience."<sup>9</sup> His evocative depictions of this iconic region continue to captivate audiences across the country.

Tanabe's return to British Columbia in 1980 was personally meaningful, but it also marked a huge change in his subject matter and career path. He had explored how to represent the Prairies for the better part of a decade, as seen in *Prairie*, 1973, but now he was challenged to address the landscape of British Columbia—a subject that was central to the art history of the region. The tradition of Emily Carr (1871-1945), E.J. Hughes (1913-2007), Gordon Smith (1919-2020), and Jack Shadbolt (1909-1998), to name only a few artists, loomed large.



Takao Tanabe, *Prairie*, 1973, acrylic on canvas, 48.3 x 63 cm, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

Of these artists, Carr has been the most lauded for her ability to redefine her style and technique in response to the expressionistic forces she witnessed through her travels across B.C. Her career, according to curator, author, and art critic Sarah Milroy, "is an important record of a singular artist's grappling with that great unanswerable question of the settler imagination: Where do I belong?"<sup>10</sup> Tanabe also needed to find a path of his own. He gravitated to coastal landscapes, such as those seen in *Inside Passage 1/88: Swindle Island*, 1988, that doubtless recalled his childhood in Seal Cove.

In the 2009 documentary series *Landscape as Muse*, Tanabe tells a story that connects his paintings to his experiences on the coast, explaining that "I had a brother who was a commercial fisherman who took his boat up from Vancouver to Prince Rupert every year. I decided to hitchhike with him and look at the landscape. I decided it was maybe worthwhile investigating the West Coast and the sea."<sup>11</sup> However, this retelling does not accurately reflect how Tanabe reached this subject.



Tanabe did not take the trip up to Prince Rupert with his brother until May 1987, approximately five years after he began to paint images of the Gulf Islands. Further, in 1983, he embarked on an excursion that resulted in a series of canvases and prints depicting the Queen Charlotte Islands (Haida Gwaii).<sup>12</sup> Like many of his works of the B.C. coast, these paintings appear simple in form at first glance, with strong horizon lines and applications of colour used to render the region's topography. But their simplicity belies the intensive work of evoking the moody qualities of the coast.



LEFT: Takao Tanabe in Haida Gwaii, n.d., photographer unknown. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *Marble Island Q.C.I.*, 1995, colour lithograph on paper, 46 x 89 cm, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax.

Tanabe's distinct approach to his new subject matter of the coastal landscape was immediately embraced by collectors and the public. His paintings of the West Coast depict "that landscape with a control and magisterial power that no other artist approaches."<sup>13</sup> With this body of work, Tanabe established himself as one of British Columbia's most important landscape painters.

Since his return to British Columbia, Tanabe has explored not only coastal scenes but also the province's interior, as in works such as *Peace River 27/99*, 1999. His particular and exacting approach to both landscapes was the subject of an exhibition at the Kelowna Art Gallery in 2000, *Takao Tanabe: Wet Coasts and Dry Lands*.<sup>14</sup> Tanabe sees the ragged weather of this region as "a metaphor for life," and his ineffable paintings offer a deeply felt meditation on all its mystery.<sup>15</sup>



Takao Tanabe, *Peace River 27/99*, 1999, acrylic on canvas, 12.7 x 21.5 cm, private collection.

Tanabe is always supremely mindful of the making of his work. Perhaps paradoxically, his goal is always that the making be invisible to the viewer. This is what marks these works as distinctively belonging to his oeuvre and, in turn, as an important contribution to the story of landscape art in Canada. As Tanabe



explains, “I am trying to create new forms based on nature so that I see the world in a new way.”<sup>16</sup>

### EDUCATOR AND MENTOR

Tanabe does not regard himself as a teacher and has said that he doubted his ability to get a teaching job due to his lack of university degrees.<sup>17</sup> Tellingly, however, art education has been an integral part of his life. After Tanabe graduated from the Winnipeg School of Art in 1949, he and Don Roy (b.1910) set up a short-lived summer art school in Gimli, Manitoba. He also taught commercial art at the Vancouver School of Art (now the Emily Carr University of Art + Design) in the 1960s, even as his own painting career continued to flourish with both national and international recognition.<sup>18</sup>

Tanabe’s significance as an educator and facilitator made the most impact during his time at the Banff Centre from 1972 until 1980. He was initially hired as Head of the Painting Division and then appointed Artist-in-Residence in 1973. When he arrived in Banff the program was essentially a summer residency for amateur artists, despite some good teachers. During his tenure, Tanabe helped to grow the school by establishing a year-round intensive program that enabled students to prepare for professional training in Bachelor of Fine Arts programs elsewhere in Canada. Under his guidance and direction, the centre became an important locus for professional artists and those aspiring to become professionals.

His recruitment of a wide range of teachers, including Roy Kiyooka (1926–1994), Ivan Eyre (1935–2022), Claude Breeze (b.1938), and IAIN BAXTER& (b.1936), and his rule that no instructor could return more than twice for the summer session, ensured that the students were exposed to a variety of influences and ideas about artmaking. Tanabe also bolstered the reputation of the Summer School during his tenure by inviting notable faculty such as Joe Plaskett, David Bolduc (1945–2010), Jack Chambers (1931–1978), Ted Godwin (1933–2013), Dorothy Knowles (1927–2023), Marcelle Ferron (1924–2001), and Tony Urquhart (1934–2022).<sup>19</sup>

Although Tanabe is primarily a painter, he did not advocate for the development of a single form of art. Throughout his time at the Banff School, Tanabe was an important mentor for a number of artists working in a wide range of media and subject matter, including Alex de Cosson (b.1953), Jack Jeffrey, Cathryn McEwen, Annette Lodge, Marsha Stonehouse, and Barrie Szekely.<sup>20</sup> In light of his tremendous commitment to the program, the rigour and volume of Tanabe’s artistic production through this period is startling. It was during this



LEFT: Takao Tanabe and Robert Young in a Glyde Hall studio, c.1975, photographer unknown, Paul D. Fleck Library and Archives, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. RIGHT: Poster advertising the Visual Arts program at the Banff School of Fine Arts, 1976, Paul D. Fleck Library and Archives, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

time that the artist created works such as *The Land 22/77*, 1977, and *The Dark Land 3/80*, 1980—two of his most innovative works depicting the prairie landscape.



Takao Tanabe, *The Dark Land 3/80*, 1980, acrylic on canvas, 83.1 x 139.7 cm, Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.

Tanabe wanted to balance the hard work of running the school with adding valuable experiences for the students and the visiting teachers. The Walter Phillips Gallery, launched in 1976 under Tanabe's leadership, provided a professional exhibition space for the whole Banff community and an important venue for artists from both near and far. Tanabe revitalized the school throughout the 1970s, and today, the internationally respected Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity (as it is now known) is one of Canada's leading arts, culture, and educational institutions.

After he left Banff, Tanabe became a key supporter of many artists active in Vancouver. As Landon Mackenzie (b.1954) notes: "Tak has been an important mentor in guiding me to be a serious artist, and to be generous with my peers, encouraging me to take a leadership role, when needed, in the celebration and recognition of other artists who have achieved something."<sup>21</sup>

### ADVOCACY AND RENOWN

In addition to Tanabe's dedicated work as an educator, the artist is recognized for his exceptional advocacy for the visual arts. In the 1990s, he began his campaign to establish the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts by canvassing individuals and institutions across the country and calling on the Canada Council for the Arts. Launched in 1999, the Governor General's Awards are among this nation's most prestigious prizes recognizing artistic achievement, excellence in fine craft, and contributions to contemporary art. Fittingly, in 2003 Tanabe was among the distinguished recipients.



He also played an instrumental role in inaugurating the Audain Prize, which recognizes the lifetime achievement of British Columbian artists. First awarded in 2004, Tanabe was the 2013 winner. The other awards he helped establish in British Columbia through the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and in Ottawa through the National Gallery of Canada speak to the impact of Tanabe's leadership and his generosity toward the next generation.

Although he has exhibited widely across his career, it was not until 2005 that a major retrospective, *Takao Tanabe*, was organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. Opening in Victoria, the exhibition then travelled to the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Halifax, and the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario. The range of work revealed in the survey was surprising to many viewers. Critic Robin Laurence remarked on Tanabe's "evolving relationship with the language of abstraction," his "subtle and evocative depictions of the Canadian prairie," and the "rainy, grey, mysterious vistas that speak of both primordial creation and primal awareness."<sup>22</sup> A second retrospective of works on paper (excluding prints), *Chronicles of Form and Place: Works on Paper by Takao Tanabe*, was organized by the Burnaby Art Gallery and the McMaster Museum of Art in 2011. As all these exhibitions reveal, Tanabe's art continually challenges our assumptions about his work, the landscape, and how we see the world.



Governor General Adrienne Clarkson presents Tanabe with a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts during a ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa, 2003, photograph by Dave Chan.



LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *Marsh, Magenta*, 1964, acrylic on paper, 78.1 x 58.4 cm, Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *Moni Vatopedi, Mount Athos*, 1955, pastel on paper, 31.3 x 48.3 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.



A painting of a city at night, viewed from an elevated perspective. The city lights are a dense field of small, colorful dots in shades of yellow, orange, and red, set against a dark blue background. The sky above the city is a gradient of colors, from a deep blue at the top to a bright orange and red near the horizon, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the distance, there are silhouettes of mountains or hills.

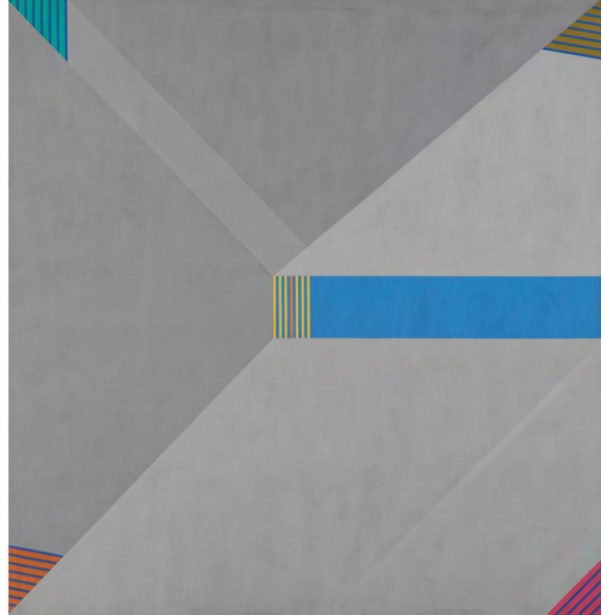
# STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Takao Tanabe has explored watercolour, acrylic, and oil painting, as well as a range of other mediums, to produce an oeuvre that spans painting, drawing, printmaking, and graphic design. The artist's early work was largely nonrepresentational, but he expanded his technical range and modified his style through training in Winnipeg, New York, London, and Tokyo. After spending a year in Japan studying *sumi-e* and calligraphy, Tanabe developed a novel "one-shot" approach to making large-scale acrylic canvases. Through his re-envisioning of Canadian landscapes such as the Prairies and the West Coast, he has created a body of work that reflects his unique perspective.



### ABSTRACTION AND FIGURATION

In the 1950s and 1960s, as Takao Tanabe was launching his career in art, he explored nonrepresentational painting through two principal approaches. The first was a painterly, lyrical approach influenced by Abstract Expressionism and its emphasis on spontaneous, gestural forms. *A Region of Landlocked Lakes*, 1958, is a striking example of this approach. The work seems veiled in mist and hints at a landscape in the title, even as the forms remain elusive. The second approach was a hard-edged, geometric style of painting, such as *Early Autumn*, 1967, in which strong linear



LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *A Region of Landlocked Lakes*, 1958, oil on canvas, 127 x 68.5 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *Early Autumn*, 1967, acrylic and Rhoplex on canvas, 152 x 147 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

patterns dominate the composition, stressing a flattening of pictorial space. Tanabe's travels in the United States, Europe, and Japan during this time profoundly impacted the development of these two approaches to painting as he, according to Roald Nasgaard, absorbed disparate influences "in successive waves," producing "sophisticated and ambitious bodies of work, astutely of their moment but regionally inflected and idiosyncratically unique."<sup>1</sup>

While attending the Winnipeg School of Art in the late 1940s, Tanabe was introduced to the lessons of Cubism, as seen in a rare ink-on-paper still-life work created in 1954, and abstraction by his teacher Joseph (Joe) Plaskett (1918–2014), who was hired as the school's principal when he was fresh from studying with American painter Clyfford Still (1904–1980) in San Francisco and German American artist and educator Hans Hofmann (1880–1966) in New York. Still and Hofmann were formative figures for Abstract Expressionism, and while Plaskett struggled to demonstrate their working methods, Tanabe was intrigued. Tanabe's trip to New York in 1951 gave him the opportunity to study Abstract Expressionism firsthand and energized his commitment to nonfigurative art.

When Tanabe returned to Canada and resettled in Vancouver in 1952, he "began exhibiting interesting paintings in an 'abstract-expressionist' style."<sup>2</sup> These works, such as *Fragment 35*, 1953, were well enough received that Tanabe was awarded an Emily Carr Scholarship that enabled him to enrol in the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London and to travel around Europe from 1953 to 1955. During this time, he absorbed many styles of British and European art and produced representational works that captured the landscape and architecture of his new surroundings. Tanabe also continued to study and experiment with methods in abstraction. In London, Tanabe met with artists like Roger Hilton (1911–1975), a pioneer of post-war abstract art in Britain, and Patrick Heron (1920–1999), whose painting and writing promoted modernist ideas.





Takao Tanabe, *Fragment 35*, 1953, oil on canvas, 78.6 x 119 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Through his experiments with form, Tanabe also pushed the boundaries of his media. He had started out using oils in the early days of his career in Winnipeg, and primarily worked in this medium throughout the 1950s. Tanabe was first exposed to acrylic paint while attending the Brooklyn Museum Art School in 1951. Though acrylics were not widely available until the 1960s,<sup>3</sup> they became the artist's chief means of expression and were later instrumental to the production of his influential prairie paintings.

Tanabe produced his first painting in acrylic in 1961 while living in Vancouver. During the early years of the 1960s (1961–65), Tanabe would sometimes use both oil and acrylic (Lucite) in a work, such as in *Small Valley*, 1961. He employed the quick-drying acrylic to sketch the basic forms on the canvas, and then, when the surface was dry, completed the composition in oil. Tanabe began to work exclusively with acrylics after 1966.<sup>4</sup>



Takao Tanabe, *Small Valley*, 1961, oil and Lucite on canvas, 50.6 x 83.6 cm, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax.

This shift in materials prompted him to engage more fully with his subject matter, and he began to produce abstract paintings in response to the landscapes around him. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the artist produced a



number of abstract landscapes inspired by the rural vistas he glimpsed in Pennsylvania and New York State during his frequent commutes between Philadelphia and New York City. These works, such as *The Land III*, 1972, and *Landscape Study #4*, 1972, involve bands of flat, unnaturalistic colour and loosely drawn, soft-edged geometric shapes to suggest forms in the landscape. As Nancy Tousley notes, these transitional works illustrate Tanabe's emerging endeavour "to paint what he saw, real places in real time, and to do so with minimal distortion."<sup>5</sup>

### SPEED, PRECISION, AND SERIALITY

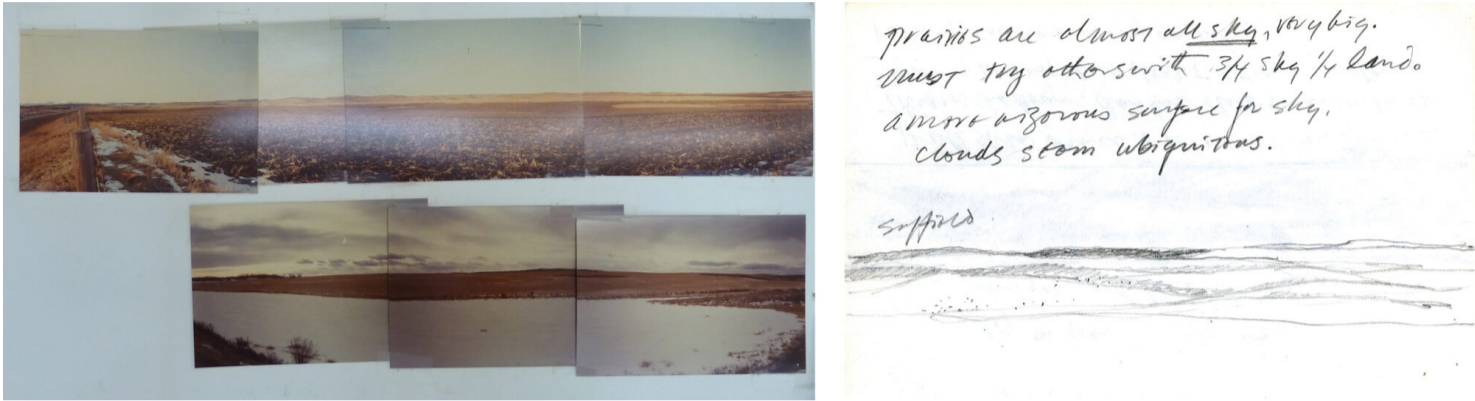
Tanabe's move to Banff in the summer of 1972 cemented his belief that he should be painting landscape. But Tanabe was not compelled to paint the mountainous vistas he witnessed daily. Instead, he turned his eye to the Canadian Prairies, a shift in subject matter that required him to reconfigure his approach to painting.

Working from his sketches and photographs of this expansive terrain, he developed new technical and stylistic solutions as he translated prairie scenes onto his canvas. Here, his training in Japan—where he had learned techniques in *sumi-e* and calligraphy—came into play. With the aid of a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, Tanabe travelled to Japan between 1959 and 1961. While learning from prominent and respected painters and calligraphers, he began to adopt a method of painting characterized by speed and precision, a necessity when working with acrylics. Tanabe blended his paint with glue until it reached the consistency of table cream and applied that mixture to an unprimed canvas. He approached his materials like a calligrapher, stretching his canvas flat on the horizontal surface of a table, working quickly and discarding any flawed images.



LEFT: Takao and his mother, Tomie Tanabe, at Mt. Fuji, Japan, 1961, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, *Setting Sun*, 1960, sumi ink and watercolour on paper, 31.8 x 59 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

As Nancy Tousley notes, since acrylic paint dries slower than ink, Tanabe's "window of opportunity was open longer than a calligrapher's." But although he extended this window by spraying his canvas with water, he still needed to paint decisively. By "laying down the colours of the land first and letting them dry," she writes, and "then painting the sky, Tanabe was able to complete even a large prairie painting in forty-five minutes to an hour."<sup>6</sup>



LEFT: Reference photographs of a prairie landscape enlarged and taped together, n.d., photographs by Takao Tanabe. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe, Landscape sketch in pencil, 1976, Takao Tanabe sketchbook, Prairies, Morocco, Peru 1976, Takao Tanabe fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

Through his paintings of the Canadian Prairies, Tanabe developed his characteristic "one-shot" technique that he honed as he pared down his subject matter, as in *The Land 20*, 1977. Tousley also explains that the artist approached these works with a lengthy and involved process of planning and preparation: "To select and crop an image to paint from among his photographs and sketches, choose the palette, premix the colours in jars and plan the order in which to lay them down might take Tanabe several days. He then gridded the photograph and transferred the image to a matching grid on the canvas.... When the stripped-down image then met and paralleled the stripped-down essence of Tanabe's one-shot painting process, the essential quality of each became emphatic."<sup>7</sup>

In the final step of the painting process, Tanabe unified the painted image, enhanced the sense of space, and sealed it off from the viewer by covering the surface of the painting with a thin wash of black paint.<sup>8</sup> Works such as *Prairie Hills 10/78*, 1978, and *The Land 22/77*, 1977, illustrate how Tanabe's one-shot painting process developed through his lessons with *sumi-e*, where ink washes conjure atmospheric effects. Tanabe's use of black wash in *Prairie Hills 10/78* is particularly unsettling, evoking a sense of calm before a prairie storm.

The series of paintings made with this technique, produced between 1972 and 1984, changed the way that the prairies and foothills of Alberta were seen by the public. Commenting on what he perceived to be essential qualities of the Prairies, Tanabe explained that "What I think about the prairie is perhaps romantic but it is an enormously simple-looking space and within all that simplicity it's very, very rich, very subtle."<sup>9</sup>





Takao Tanabe, *Prairie Hills 10/78*, 1978, acrylic on canvas, 106.7 x 182.9 cm, private collection.

Stripped of all human elements, Tanabe's prairie paintings initially appear to be uncomplicated, with flat bands of colour used to render topographical features. The prairie landscapes are thinly painted, with little to no impasto applied to the surface of the canvas. Through this simplified approach the artist emphasizes flatness as an essential quality of the land. As Tanabe has said, "The prairie that I was painting was flat. As flat a piece of land as I could find and divide it horizontally, sky or clouds, or whatever at the top, a bit of land with a few little subdivisions in it."<sup>10</sup>

Although there is a serial quality to these works, which Tanabe emphasizes by using a consistent titling convention, the paintings offer subtle, differing views, suggesting a desire to feel connected to the expansive horizons stretched before the eye. Even though Tanabe's prairie paintings deliberately court the edge of abstraction, they are among the most telling images of the prairie in Canadian art. As Jeffrey Spalding (1951-2019) noted, these works were "hailed nationally as the pervasive trademark image of the west."<sup>11</sup> But by 1980, Tanabe felt the time had come for a change. He left Alberta and returned to British Columbia.

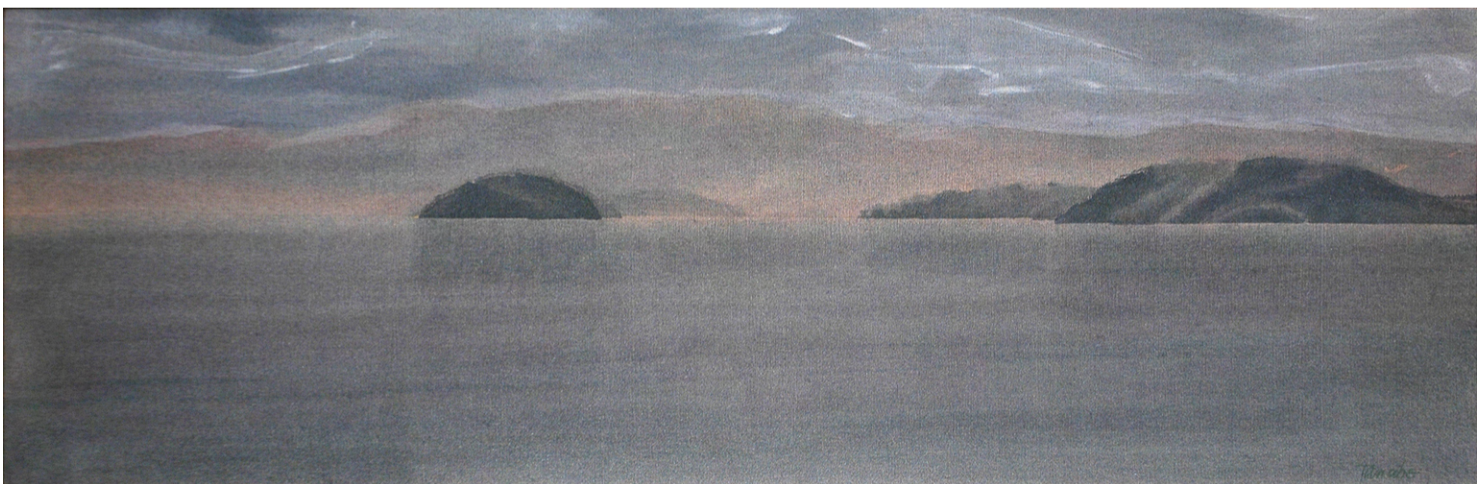




Still photograph from the documentary series *Landscape as Muse*, 2009, photograph by Cam Koroluk.

### THE PACIFIC COAST AND LAYERS OF LANDSCAPE

Tanabe's return to the West Coast in 1980 prompted a shift in subject matter and brought about gradual changes in the one-shot approach he had developed through his prairie paintings. He became fascinated with the idea of what he referred to as the "layered landscape" and was drawn to how light is rendered in British Columbia's coastal environments. Tanabe is not particularly drawn to sunny landscapes. Perhaps in response to his childhood, he has said that he is more attuned to misty, grey environments, as can be seen in *Westcoast 6/86, Late Afternoon*, 1986.



Takao Tanabe, *Westcoast 6/86, Late Afternoon*, 1986, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 122 cm, Museum London.



Reflecting on how he has responded to this in his work, Tanabe says that, “The west coast has its bright, clear days where all is revealed, but the views I favour are the grey mists, the rain obscured islands and the clouds that hide the details.... The typical weather of the coast is like that, just enough detail revealed to make it interesting but not so clear as to be banal or overwhelming.”<sup>12</sup> For Tanabe, an ideal painting of the coast is one obscured by ambient details; an image that does not put everything out in the open, but invites deeper contemplation.

This new scenery necessitated adjusting his painting method to allow for more work on a canvas. In contrast with the quick execution of his paintings of the Canadian Prairies, the West Coast landscapes were executed slowly over months, and many of them have multiple layers of paint.<sup>13</sup> Tanabe has never confined his interest in the landscape of B.C. to one particular region. Instead, he has travelled widely throughout the province, using his camera to document scenes that interest him and that might later be used as the basis for a painting. Documentation is an important part of Tanabe’s practice, but it is also crucial to how he approaches his West Coast landscapes with a relative slowness, a process that enables him to observe deeply the idiosyncrasies of a particular place.



Takao Tanabe, *Sunset 4/86: Crossing the Gulf*, 1986, acrylic on canvas, 113.3 x 212.7 cm, Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.

With his West Coast paintings, Tanabe’s goal was to make work that “just appeared” despite all of the time and labour involved in production. As Tanabe has described: “I’ve tried to submerge my artistic idea of being an individual, with individual brush markings.... I’m trying to make it as anonymous as possible. What I wanted was the image to just appear, magically. There is no sense of the energy of the hand putting the paint on the surface and being a mark.... It’s there, it just appears.”<sup>14</sup>

Works such as *Strait of Georgia 1/90: Raza Pass*, 1990, and *Rivers 2/00: Crooked River*, 2000, emphasize atmosphere rather than subject matter. However, *Low Tide 2/94, Hesquiat Bay*, 1994, is perhaps the most remarkable demonstration of Tanabe’s introspective place-based approach to painting. Apparently without “subject,” the work consists of innumerable layers of thinly applied acrylic paint that quietly but convincingly evoke the limpid atmosphere of the coastal air. The work is subtly detailed but never laboured. As Tanabe intended, it seems to just exist. Over forty-plus years, as of 2022 he has produced 435 acrylic canvases that capture the essential West Coast imagery through his particular lens.<sup>15</sup> This body of work situates Tanabe among the most prolific—and, arguably, most profound—painters of the West Coast.



Takao Tanabe, *Low Tide 2/94, Hesquiat Bay*, 1994, acrylic on canvas, 137.2 x 304.8 cm, private collection.

### FRAMES AND FRAMING

Throughout his career, Tanabe has been sensitive to the way that his work is presented. This sensitivity manifests in two ways: in the care with which he executes his paintings, but also in their framing. Since the 1950s, Tanabe has made the frames for his canvases, an activity unusual for an artist of his stature.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1990s, Tanabe produced a group of small-scale acrylic works. In this case, the artist collaborated on the frames with Kevin Kanashiro at the Paul Kuhn Gallery in Calgary.<sup>17</sup> Although not constructed by Tanabe, the frames are absolutely of his choosing and are individualized to each image.

*Inside Passage*, 1994, neatly demonstrates the relationship between the two elements. The work is only 13.5 x 20 cm, but the landscape depicted is grand, with dark hills emerging from each side of the canvas to create the narrow passage evoked by the work's title.

Tanabe chose a silver-leafed wooden frame with a rounded front and asked Kanashiro to use Plexiglas to glaze the work. This careful framing draws the eye towards a vantage point slightly above the water, as if the viewer is aboard a small vessel, looking through the windscreen. The silver frame echoes and amplifies the velvety grey of the cloudy sky.



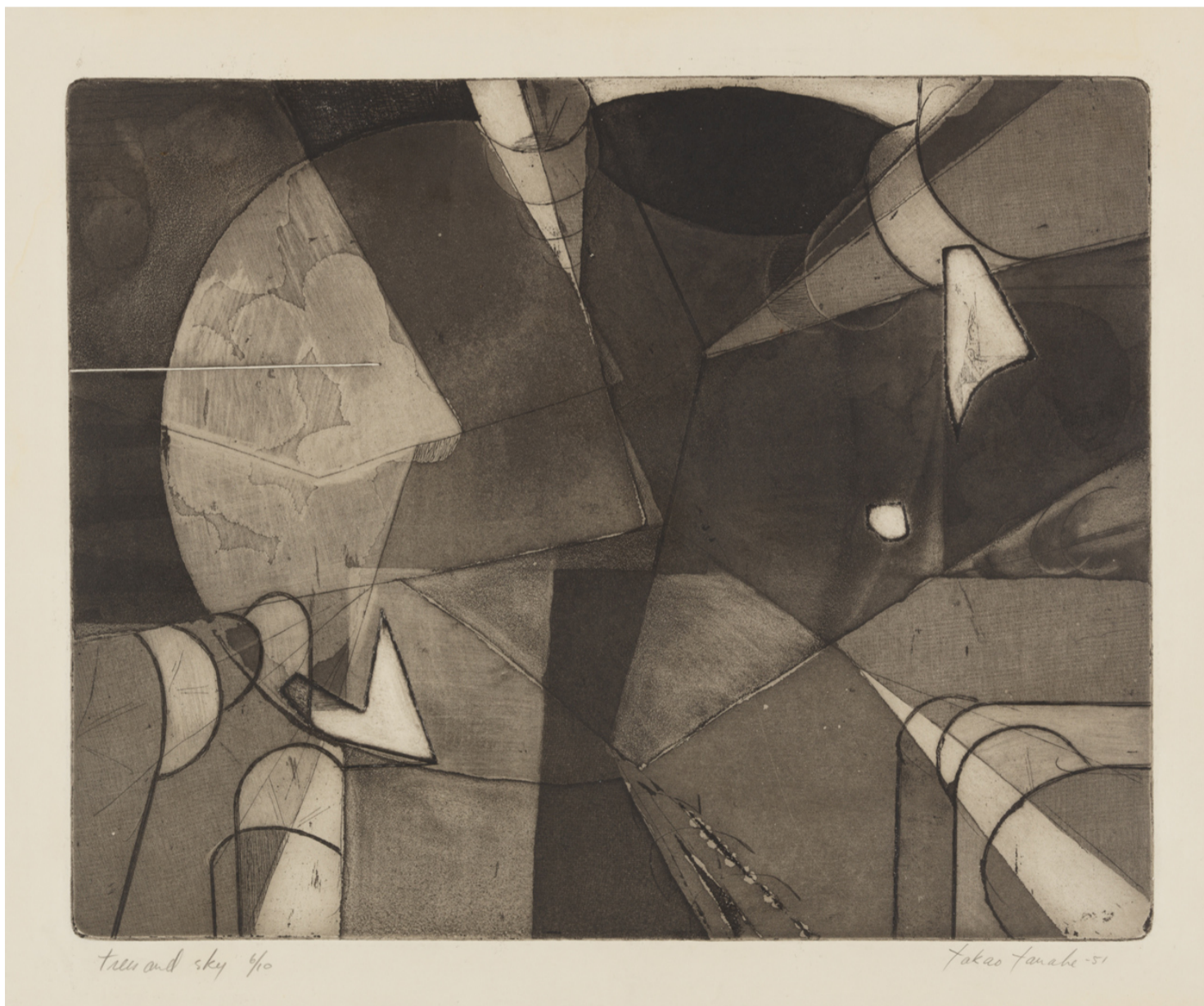
Takao Tanabe, *Inside Passage*, 1994, acrylic on canvas, 13.5 x 20 cm, private collection.



The frames for Tanabe's paintings are elegant and understatedly simple. They provide an enclosure and protection for the work but never detract from the power of the painted image.

### PRINTMAKER

Although printmaking is not central to Tanabe's practice, he has engaged with it throughout his career, using intaglio methods (etching, aquatint, drypoint, photogravure, and engraving), monoprint, linocut, screen print, lithograph, woodcut, and combinations of these media. When Tanabe took up graphic design and printing in Vancouver in the early 1950s, he was immediately embraced as an important new talent in the field. Within this early body of work, *Trees and Sky*, 1951, is particularly masterful. The image, which depicts a view up into the canopy, is rendered through subtle and sensitive intaglio techniques of etching and aquatint. The rich colour variations of white, greys, and blacks suggest the natural world while also gesturing to abstraction.

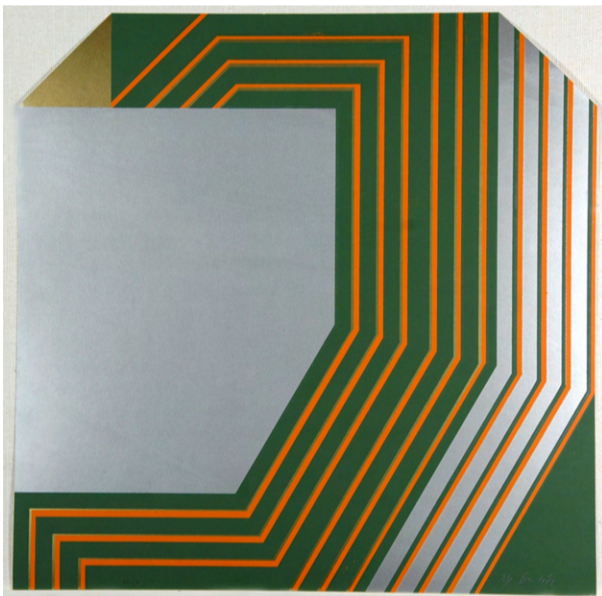


Takao Tanabe, *Trees and Sky*, 1951, intaglio on paper, 36.4 x 49 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Through his Periwinkle Press, founded in 1953, Tanabe printed letterpress and broadsheets and published several books of poetry, as well as some of his own screen prints. The artist went on to create a remarkable range of prints in a number of styles. Screen prints from the late sixties, such as *Wing*, 1968, and the

*Cut-Corners* prints of the same year, are both technically adroit and remarkably imaginative in their manipulation of pictorial space. These works were created at a time when Tanabe was experimenting with hard-edge and geometric abstraction, experiments that were reactions to Abstract Expressionism, in which, as Tanabe has remarked, "it was drilled into one that the space had to be shallow, you went in and you had to come out again... I decided [to] make [the space] as complicated as possible, bouncing back and forth, and be completely confusing."<sup>18</sup>

The approach to space in *Wing* and *Cut-Corners* reflects Tanabe's sentiments about abstraction. *Wing* confounds our reading of space—it is flat but not flat. The black forms on either side have a solidity that is denied by the inset lines and the vibrating patterns of the central stripe. At times the white passages advance before the black, and all this movement is held in check by the strong horizontal bands at the top of the image. The *Cut-Corners* prints complicate these spatial ideas further by making the sheet itself an object in space, due to the cutting of the corners. The printed forms echo and sometimes contradict the cut edges. Space in these images is never static.



LEFT: Takao Tanabe, *Cut-Corners*, C + O, 1968, silkscreen, 45.5 x 45.5 cm, Museum London. RIGHT: Takao Tanabe and Periwinkle Press (printer), *Wing*, 1968, screen print on paper, 33.1 x 50.8 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

As a printmaker, Tanabe has often worked collaboratively. In Banff, he produced many lithographs while working with the printer Jack Lemon (b.1936), as well as a series of woodblocks with the master block cutter and printer Masato Arikushi (b.1947). Since moving to British Columbia, Tanabe has occasionally returned to printmaking with remarkable results. Most significant are his collaborations with Arikushi, beginning with *Gogit Passage*, *Queen Charlotte Islands*, 1988.

Tanabe's art is not linear, and rarely do you find hard edges in his landscapes, the exception being a horizon line. So it makes sense that he would work with a block carver and printer such as Arikushi, who did not use linear key blocks.





Takao Tanabe and Masato Arikushi (printer), *Gogit Passage, Queen Charlotte Islands*, 1988, woodcut on paper, 60 x 90 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

At first glance, a print like *Gogit Passage* is deceptively simple. You might imagine the sky is empty, but closer examination reveals vaporous cloud forms. At the left side of the composition is a group of islands, and on the horizon there is an additional series of almost imperceptible islands. The water is a rich mixture of vibrating forms, and Arikushi exploits the grain of the wood to suggest waves. The subtlety of his graduated printing method is seen in the islands, most of which are coloured from light to dark, suggesting the passage of light across the landscape. Note, too, the miniscule, darker islands silhouetted just left of centre. The composition is made up of many elements and does not work unless they collaborate. The precision of the block carving and printing is a tribute to Arikushi's skill at transforming Tanabe's image.

The translation of a Tanabe painting into a woodblock was arduous, requiring "up to seven blocks, twenty-seven impressions, and perhaps thirty colours," and often involved graduated printing, a method that requires the printer to vary the amount of ink on the block so that the colour in the printed image can shift.<sup>19</sup> The woodcuts that resulted from this collaboration are particularly compelling printed images of the coast of British Columbia.





Takao Tanabe, *Early Evening, Narrow Passage*, 1991, lithograph, colour, 56.8 x 76.5 cm, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.





# WHERE TO SEE

**The works of Takao Tanabe are held in public and private collections in Canada and internationally. Although the following Canadian institutions hold the works listed below, they may not always be on view.**

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## ALBERTA FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS

10708-105 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
780-427-9968  
affta.ab.ca



**Takao Tanabe, *The Land 31/75*,  
1974**

Acrylic on canvas  
106.7 x 182.9 cm

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## ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA

2 Sir Winston Churchill Square  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
780-422-6223  
youraga.ca



**Takao Tanabe, *Gulf Islands, Grey  
Morning 5/82*, 1982**

Acrylic on canvas  
110.1 x 140.1 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Foothills Looking  
West 3/83*, 1983**

Acrylic on canvas  
50.5 x 152 cm

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**ART GALLERY OF GREATER VICTORIA**

1040 Moss Street  
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada  
250-384-4171  
aggv.ca



**Takao Tanabe, *Raked Sand and Stones*, 1960**

Sumi ink  
46 x 90 cm

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**Takao Tanabe, *Skeena #2*, 1970**

Acrylic on canvas  
86.4 x 85 cm

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**Takao Tanabe, *Prairie*, 1973**

Acrylic on canvas  
48.3 x 63 cm

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**Takao Tanabe, *Early Evening, Narrow Passage*, 1991**

Lithograph on paper  
56.8 x 76.5 cm

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**Takao Tanabe, *Malacca Strait: Dawn*, 2004**

Woodblock etching  
59.9 x 151.8 cm

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**ART GALLERY OF NOVA SCOTIA**

1723 Hollis Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada  
902-424-5280  
agns.ca



**Takao Tanabe, *A Region of Hills*, 1957**

Oil on canvas  
90.2 x 96.6 cm

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**Takao Tanabe, *Small Valley*, 1961**

Oil and Lucite on canvas  
50.6 x 83.6 cm

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**Takao Tanabe, *Emperor, Spring Night*, 1964**

Oil and graphite on canvas  
137 x 86.3 cm

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**Takao Tanabe, *3 Black Bars 4*, 1964**

Acrylic on paper  
59 x 79.7 cm

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**Takao Tanabe, *Kitselas*, 1970**

Acrylic on canvas  
86 x 85.6 cm

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**Takao Tanabe, *Marble Island Q.C.I.*, 1995**

Colour lithograph on paper  
46 x 89 cm

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## AUDAIN ART MUSEUM

4350 Blackcomb Way  
Whistler, British Columbia, Canada  
604-962-0413  
audainartmuseum.com



**Takao Tanabe, *Strait of Georgia***

**1/90: Raza Pass, 1990**

Acrylic on canvas  
142.7 x 186 cm

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## BANFF CENTRE FOR ARTS AND CREATIVITY

107 Tunnel Mountain Drive  
Banff, Alberta, Canada  
403-762-6100  
banffcentre.ca



**Takao Tanabe, *The Dark Land***

**2/80, 1980**

Acrylic on canvas  
115 x 546 cm

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## CANADA COUNCIL ART BANK

921 St. Laurent Boulevard  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
1-800-263-5588 ext. 4479  
artbank.ca



**Takao Tanabe, *Landscape Study #4*, 1972**

Acrylic and watercolour on paper  
59.5 x 80 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *The Land 4/75 - East of Calgary*, 1975**

Acrylic on canvas  
66 x 112 cm

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## GLENBOW MUSEUM

130 9th Avenue SE  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada  
403-268-4100  
glenbow.org



**Takao Tanabe, *Southern Alberta Foothills*, 1982**

Acrylic on canvas  
71.1 x 533.4 cm

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**MORRIS AND HELEN BELKIN ART GALLERY**

University of British Columbia  
1825 Main Mall  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada  
604-822-2759  
belkin.ubc.ca



**Takao Tanabe, *Still-Life*, 1954**  
Ink on paper  
35.9 x 31.4 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Study for Mural for Brussels World's Fair*, 1958**  
Oil on wood  
40.9 x 60.9 cm

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**MUSEUM LONDON**

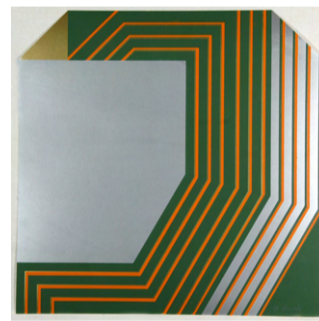
421 Ridout Street North  
London, Ontario, Canada  
519-661-0333  
museumlondon.ca



**Takao Tanabe, *Hillside (Tokyo)*, 1960**  
Sumi ink and  
watercolour on paper  
45.3 x 91.5 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *One Orange Strip*, 1964**  
Acrylic on canvas  
40.8 x 86.4 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Cut-Corners, C + O*, 1968**  
Silkscreen  
45.5 x 45.5 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *The Land 4/76*, 1976**  
Acrylic on canvas  
108 x 121 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Westcoast 6/86, Late Afternoon*, 1986**  
Acrylic on canvas  
40 x 122 cm

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**NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA**

380 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
613-990-1985  
[www.gallery.ca](http://www.gallery.ca)



**Takao Tanabe, *Interior Arrangement with Red Hills*, 1957**

Oil on canvas  
68 x 126.5 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Nude Landscape I*, 1959**

Oil on canvas  
101.5 x 84.5 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Dawn*, 2003**

Acrylic on canvas  
137.5 x 304.7 cm

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**NIKKEI NATIONAL MUSEUM & CULTURAL CENTRE**

6688 Southoaks Crescent  
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada  
604-777-7000  
[centre.nikkeiplace.org](http://centre.nikkeiplace.org)



**Takao Tanabe, *Near the Sea*, 1960**

Sumi ink on paper  
46.9 x 90.8 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Spanish Banks*, 1988**

Woodblock print  
48 x 72 cm

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**UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE ART GALLERY**

4401 University Drive  
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada  
403-329-2666  
artgallery.uleth.ca



**Takao Tanabe, *White-Eyed Monster*, 1952**

Oil on canvas  
61 x 121.9 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *The Land 3/75, Banff*, 1975**

Acrylic on canvas  
66 x 111.8 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *The Land 22/77*, 1977**

Acrylic on canvas  
140.3 x 229.9 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Barkley Sound 1/93: in Imperial Eagle Channel*, 1993**

Acrylic on canvas  
121.9 x 182.9 cm

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**UNIVERSITY OF REGINA PRESIDENT'S ART COLLECTION**

3737 Wascana Parkway  
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada  
306-585-5420  
[www2.uregina.ca/president/art/](http://www2.uregina.ca/president/art/)



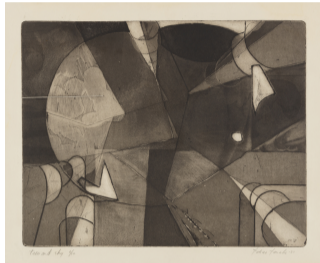
**Takao Tanabe, *Untitled (Banners)*, 1973**

Eight printed nylon banners and  
brass weights  
914.4 x 76.2 cm each

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## VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

750 Hornby Street  
 Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada  
 604-662-4700  
 vanartgallery.bc.ca



**Takao Tanabe, *Trees and Sky*, 1951**  
 Intaglio on paper  
 36.4 x 49 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Fragment 35*, 1953**  
 Oil on canvas  
 78.6 x 119 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Moni Vatopedi, Mount Athos*, 1955**  
 Pastel on paper  
 31.3 x 48.3 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *A Region of Landlocked Lakes*, 1958**  
 Oil on canvas  
 127 x 68.5 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Setting Sun*, 1960**  
 Sumi ink and watercolour on paper  
 31.8 x 59 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Storm*, 1960**  
 Sumi ink and watercolour on washi paper  
 67 x 34.5 cm

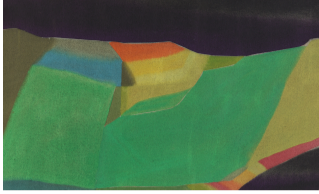


**Takao Tanabe, *Early Autumn*, 1967**  
 Acrylic and Rhoplex on canvas  
 152 x 147 cm



**Takao Tanabe and Periwinkle Press (printer), *Wing*, 1968**  
 Screen print on paper  
 33.1 x 50.8 cm





**Takao Tanabe, *The Land III*, 1972**

Acrylic on canvas  
78.7 x 88.9 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *The Land #6*, 1974**

Acrylic wash on canvas  
84 x 142.5 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *The Land 20*, 1977**

Acrylic on canvas  
121.9 x 142.2 cm



**Takao Tanabe and  
Masato Arikushi  
(printer), *Gogit Passage,  
Queen Charlotte  
Islands*, 1988**

Woodcut on paper  
60 x 90 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *High Arctic 1/90*, 1990**

Acrylic on canvas  
114 x 216 cm



**Takao Tanabe,  
*Shuttleworth Sunset*,  
1993**

Woodcut on paper  
42.5 x 61.2 cm



**Takao Tanabe, *Rivers 2/00: Crooked River*, 2000**

Acrylic on canvas  
114.3 x 304.8 cm

## WINNIPEG ART GALLERY

300 Memorial Boulevard  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada  
204-786-6641  
wag.ca



**Takao Tanabe, *Christmas Card*, c.1948**

Linocut on paper  
11.6 x 15.6 cm

## NOTES

### BIOGRAPHY

1. His parents had first settled briefly in Tofino before moving to Steveston, B.C., a community south of Vancouver that was at the time a largely Japanese Canadian fishing village. Interview with the artist, July 13, 2021.
2. Greg Robinson and Andrew McIntosh, "Internment of Japanese Canadians," *Canadian Encyclopedia*, February 15, 2017, updated September 17, 2020, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/internment-of-japanese-canadians/>.
3. "Enemy alien" is a term used in a government capacity to describe citizens of states legally at war with Canada. This term occludes the fact that the majority of those uprooted and interned during the Second World War were Canadian citizens.
4. For the year Tanabe and his family were sent to Lemon Creek, see Audrey Wang, "Artist in Our Collection: Takao Tanabe," *AGGV Magazine*, June–July 2023, <https://emagazine.aggv.ca/artist-in-our-collection-takao-tanabe/>.
5. Tanabe, quoted in "A Conversation with Takao Tanabe," in *Takao Tanabe, Sumie: Ink Brush Paintings*, ed. Sherri Kajiwarra (Burnaby: Nikkei National Museum, 2016), no pagination.
6. Tanabe, quoted in "A Conversation with Takao Tanabe."
7. Interviews with the artist, July 13 and 14, 2021.
8. FitzGerald, who had served as principal of the school since 1929, was tiring of the institution, and in 1947, he took the first of two leaves of absence (he would ultimately resign in 1949).
9. Joseph Plaskett in *Takao Tanabe: A Work of Art* (Prometheus Films, 2009). Following Tanabe's graduation in 1949, the two men later became very good friends, but at the Winnipeg School of Art the older man was always "Mr. Plaskett."
10. Tanabe described the woodblock process as "magical" (Interview with the artist, July 13, 2021) and, while Tanabe didn't carve or pull the blocks himself, his woodcuts, done with master printer Masato Arikushi, are amongst his finest achievements as a printmaker. An earlier woodblock print, *Low Tide/Rathtrevor*, 1991, was done by Arikushi when he worked in the Sawai Atelier in Vancouver.
11. Tanabe in *Takao Tanabe: A Work of Art*. His mother told him that this was fine, but that he should consider getting "a real job."
12. See René Boux, "Contemporary Mural Painting from Western Canada," *Canadian Art* 11, no. 1 (Autumn 1953): 27–28.
13. Interview with the artist, July 13, 2021.



14. Periwinkle Press was named after the small barnacle-like bivalve, rather than the flower. Interview with the artist, July 13, 2021.

15. Jane Rule notes that Tanabe was on the first board of directors of the newly formed Arts Club in 1957. Jane Rule, "A Biographical Sketch," in *Takao Tanabe 1972-1976: The Land* (Regina: Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, 1976), 21.

16. Tanabe's proposal was ultimately rejected in favour of a ceramic wall by Quebec sculptor Louis Archambault (1915-2003).

17. Tanabe, quoted in Roald Nasgaard, "Adventures in Abstraction, Or, 'Perhaps I was Always a Landscape Painter,'" in *Takao Tanabe*, ed. Ian Thom (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005), 43.

18. He became an Associate of the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts in 1967, was elected a full Academician in 1973, and resigned from the RCA in 1979.

19. Bollards are the short, thick posts on either of a ship or quayside to which a ship's line may be attached.

20. Tanabe was interviewed on the local CBC (*The 7 O'Clock Show*, 1964) about this and admitted that there were some "erotic overtones" to the works but insisted that they were initially based on the bollards that lined the docks of the port of Vancouver. The gallerist, Alvin Balkind, was delighted that the exhibition got the extra publicity!

21. Tanabe, quoted in Nasgaard, "Adventures in Abstraction," 50.

22. The 1972 inaugural exhibition of the Mira Godard Gallery in Toronto (then known as Gallery Marlborough-Godard, due to an institutional partnership with Marlborough Galleries in London and New York) featured works by Canadian abstract painters such as Tanabe and Kenneth Lochhead alongside modernists such as Josef Albers, Francis Bacon, Pablo Picasso, and Jackson Pollock.

23. Ironically, Tanabe completed an important series of Rocky Mountain watercolours in his Vancouver Island studio following a one-month residency at the Banff School of Fine Arts in 2007.

24. The exhibition was shown in Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary, Victoria, and Edmonton from the fall of 1976 until the late spring of 1977.

25. Becky Rynor, "An Interview with Takao Tanabe," *NGC Magazine*, July 21, 2014, <https://www.gallery.ca/magazine/artists/an-interview-with-takao-tanabe>.

26. The Marquess of Lorne, Governor General of Canada, had been instrumental in the formation of the RCA in 1880. Tanabe (in a communication to the author, September 8, 2021) said, "nobody was interested so it died; it was a

matter of principle." In 1997, Nugent's sculpture was restored and reinstalled in its intended location in Winnipeg.

27. Tanabe quoted in Roger Boulet, *Takao Tanabe: Wet Coasts and Dry Lands* (Kelowna: Kelowna Art Gallery, 2000), 9.

28. Interview with the artist, July 13, 2021.

29. Tanabe, in *Landscape as Muse - The West Coast with Takao Tanabe* (291 Film Company / Knowledge Network, 2009).

30. Interview with the artist, July 14, 2021.

31. Interview with the artist, July 14, 2021.

32. His Toronto dealer remains the Mira Godard Gallery; the Equinox Gallery represents him in Vancouver, and in Calgary he is represented by the Paul Kuhn Gallery.

33. The exhibition was shown in Burnaby, Hamilton, Abbotsford, and Nanaimo and included drawings, acrylics on paper, and watercolours, but not Tanabe's prints.

34. Ada Annie Rae-Arthur (1888-1985), known as Cougar Annie because of her marksmanship—she is said to have killed sixty-two cougars and eighty bears—established a homestead near Hesquiat Bay, Vancouver Island. Her restored garden is now administered by the non-profit Boat Basin Foundation.

35. Email to the author, July 22, 2021.

36. Email to the author, July 22, 2021.

37. Email to the author, August 1, 2021.

38. Tanabe in *Takao Tanabe: A Work of Art*.

#### KEY WORKS: INTERIOR ARRANGEMENT WITH RED HILLS

1. Ian Thom, "Takao Tanabe: An Artist's Life," in *Takao Tanabe*, ed. Ian Thom (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005), 23, note 18.

2. Joseph Plaskett, "The White Paintings," in *Takao Tanabe: Paintings and Drawings, 1954-1957* (Vancouver: privately printed, 1957), no pagination.

3. Plaskett, "The White Paintings."

#### KEY WORKS: STORM

1. Interview with the artist, July 14, 2021.

2. Tanabe, fax to Leah Best, Assistant Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery, August 22, 2002, original in the accession files of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



**KEY WORKS: 3 BLACK BARS 4**

1. Tanabe, fax to Leah Best, Assistant Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery, August 22, 2002, original in the accession files of the Vancouver Art Gallery.
2. Tanabe, fax to Leah Best.
3. This is what Hofmann called the tension between aspects of a painting that deny pictorial space and aspects that reaffirm the surface.

**KEY WORKS: ONE ORANGE STRIP**

1. Roald Nasgaard, "Adventures in Abstraction, Or, 'Perhaps I was Always a Landscape Painter,'" in *Takao Tanabe*, ed. Ian Thom (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005), 46-47.
2. Robert Ayre, "Two Westerners in Transition," *Montreal Star*, March 12, 1966.
3. Nasgaard, "Adventures in Abstraction," 47.

**KEY WORKS: THE LAND III**

1. Tanabe, in *Takao Tanabe: A Work of Art* (Prometheus Films, 2009).
2. Tanabe, fax to Leah Best, Assistant Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery, August 22, 2002, original in the accession files of the Vancouver Art Gallery.
3. Tanabe, fax to Leah Best.

**KEY WORKS: THE LAND 22/77**

1. Nancy Tousley, "Takao Tanabe: The Prairie Paintings," in *Takao Tanabe*, ed. Ian Thom (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005), 75.
2. Tanabe, in *Landscape as Muse - The West Coast with Takao Tanabe* (291 Film Company / Knowledge Network, 2009).
3. "Takao Tanabe's love affair with landscapes," CBC News, December 7, 2011, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/entertainment/takao-tanabe-s-love-affair-with-landscapes-1.1038917>.

**KEY WORKS: THE DARK LAND 2/80**

1. Nancy Tousley, "Takao Tanabe: The Prairie Paintings," in *Takao Tanabe*, ed. Ian Thom (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005), 92.

**KEY WORKS: STRAIT OF GEORGIA 1/90: RAZA PASS**

1. Robin Laurence, "Takao Tanabe," *Border Crossings* 25, no. 1 (March 2006): 105.
2. Ian Thom, "Takao Tanabe, *Strait of Georgia 1/90: Raza Pass*," in *Masterworks from the Audain Art Museum, Whistler* (Vancouver: Figure 1, Audain Art Museum, 2015), 102.

3. Thom, "Takao Tanabe, *Strait of Georgia 1/90: Raza Pass*," 102.

#### KEY WORKS: DAWN

1. Becky Rynor, "An Interview with Takao Tanabe," *NGC Magazine*, July 21, 2014, <https://www.gallery.ca/magazine/artists/an-interview-with-takao-tanabe>.

2. Jeffrey Spalding, "Anatomy of a Wave: Ebb and Flow in Errington," in *Takao Tanabe*, ed. Ian Thom (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver Art Gallery, and Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005), 133.

#### KEY WORKS: MALACCA STRAIT: DAWN

1. This is a passage of water, north of Porcher Island, in the upper reaches of the so-called inner passage between Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia. It is more commonly known as Malacca Passage and is not to be confused with the famous Strait of Malacca between the Malay peninsula and the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

2. Email from Peter Braune to the author, November 23, 2021.

#### SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

1. Bryce Kanbara, "Japanese Canadians in the Arts" (essay accompanying *Being Japanese Canadian: Reflections on a Broken World* at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 2019), [https://www.rom.on.ca/sites/default/files/imce/exhibitions/bjc/japanese\\_canadians\\_in\\_the\\_arts.pdf](https://www.rom.on.ca/sites/default/files/imce/exhibitions/bjc/japanese_canadians_in_the_arts.pdf).

2. Joseph Plaskett, "Some New Canadian Painters and Their Debt to Hans Hofmann," *Canadian Art* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1953): 61.

3. Transcript of interview with Robin Laurence, September 18, 1996.

4. Kanbara, "Japanese Canadians in the Arts."

5. "Start Here: Kiyooka, Nakamura, Takashima, Tanabe," Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, <https://aggv.ca/exhibits/start-here/>.

6. Darrin J. Martens, "The Presence of Absence in Takao Tanabe's Prairie Drawings," in *Chronicles of Form and Place: Works on Paper by Takao Tanabe* (Burnaby: Burnaby Art Gallery, 2012), 69.

7. See Nancy Dillow, *Takao Tanabe, 1972-1976: The Land* (Regina: Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, 1976), 6. Dillow notes that the painter William Scott (1913-1989), who had seen Tanabe's work while teaching in Banff, and the curator and critic William Seitz (1914-1974), who had visited Tanabe's studio in Vancouver, had both observed that Tanabe's paintings from the 1950s and 1960s were landscapes.

8. Plaskett, in *Takao Tanabe: A Work of Art* (Prometheus Films, 2009).

9. John W. Graham, "Tanabe Adds Prairie Clarity," *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 18, 1976, 39.



10. Sarah Milroy, "Why Emily Carr Matters to Canadians," in *From the Forest to the Sea: Emily Carr in British Columbia*, ed. Sarah Milroy and Ian Dejardin (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2014), 39.
11. *Landscape as Muse - The West Coast with Takao Tanabe* (291 Film Company / Knowledge Network, 2009).
12. Email from Anona Thorne to the author, July 31, 2021.
13. Ian Thom, "Takao Tanabe: An Artist's Life," in *Takao Tanabe*, ed. Ian Thom (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005), 6.
14. Curated by Roger Boulet.
15. Roger Boulet, *Takao Tanabe: Wet Coasts and Dry Lands* (Kelowna: Kelowna Art Gallery, 2000), 13.
16. Tanabe, in "The Lively Arts," CBC Vancouver, 1961.
17. Tanabe, in *Takao Tanabe: A Work of Art* (Prometheus Films, 2009).
18. As early as 1953, Tanabe had begun to exhibit internationally at the Bienal de São Paulo.
19. David Leighton, *Artists, Builders, and Dreamers: 50 Years at the Banff School* (Toronto: McClelland and Steward Limited, 1982), 68.
20. Email from the artist and Anona Thorne, December 20, 2022.
21. Email to the author, July 22, 2021.
22. Robin Laurence, "Takao Tanabe," *Border Crossings* 25, no. 1 (March 2006): 105.

#### STYLE & TECHNIQUE

1. Roald Nasgaard, "Adventures in Abstraction, Or, 'Perhaps I was Always a Landscape Painter,'" in *Takao Tanabe*, ed. Ian Thom (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005), 52.
2. René Boux, "The Mural as a Ballet in Paint," *Canadian Art* 11, no. 1 (Autumn 1953): 27-28.
3. Interview with the artist, July 13, 2021.
4. Email from Anona Thorne to the author, August 4, 2021.
5. Nancy Tousley, "Takao Tanabe: The Prairie Paintings," in *Takao Tanabe* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005), 77.

6. Tousley, "The Prairie Paintings," 84–85.
7. Tousley, "The Prairie Paintings," 84–85.
8. Tousley, "The Prairie Paintings," 88.
9. Tanabe, in an interview with Nancy Tousley, August 3, 1979, quoted in Tousley, "The Prairie Paintings," 88.
10. Tanabe, in *Landscape as Muse - The West Coast with Takao Tanabe* (291 Film Company / Knowledge Network, 2009).
11. Jeffrey Spalding, "Anatomy of a Wave: Ebb and Flow in Errington," in *Takao Tanabe*, ed. Ian Thom (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005), 104.
12. Tanabe, quoted in Roger Boulet, *Takao Tanabe: Wet Coasts and Dry Lands* (Kelowna: Kelowna Art Gallery, 2000), 13.
13. See Boulet, *Takao Tanabe: Wet Coasts and Dry Lands*, 7, note 2; and 21.
14. Takao Tanabe, *A Work of Art* (Prometheus Films, 2009).
15. Emails from the artist and Anona Thorne, December 20, 2022, and December 26, 2022. This does not include the many canvases that he produced of scenes in the interior of British Columbia, the Arctic, and elsewhere. Nor does it include the many works on paper.
16. Tanabe confirmed he made the frames for his works (or worked with framer, Kevin Kanashiro, of the Paul Kuhn Gallery, Calgary) in conversation with the author, October 28, 2022.
17. Paul Kuhn confirmed that Kevin Kanashiro has worked with him as a framer since 1981. Email to the author, December 30, 2022.
18. Tanabe, quoted in Nasgaard, "Adventures in Abstraction," 50.
19. See Ian Thom, "Takao Tanabe: Reflections on his Recent Prints" (Vancouver: Periwinkle Press, 1994), no pagination.



## GLOSSARY

### **abstract art**

Also called nonfigurative or nonrepresentational art, abstract art uses form, colour, line, and gestural marks in compositions that do not attempt to represent images of real things. It may interpret reality in an altered form, or depart from it entirely.

### **Abstract Expressionism**

A style that flourished in New York in the 1940s and 1950s, Abstract Expressionism is defined by its combination of formal abstraction and self-conscious expression. The term describes a wide variety of work; among the most famous Abstract Expressionists are Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Willem de Kooning.

### **aquatint**

An intaglio printing technique in which an engraved copperplate is immersed in an acid bath to create sunken areas that hold ink. A variation of etching, aquatints resemble watercolour drawings because of the possible tone gradations.

### **Arikushi, Masato (Canadian, b.1947)**

A master Japanese block cutter and printmaker who worked in collaboration with several Canadian artists, such as Mary Pratt and Takao Tanabe.

### **Art Gallery of Greater Victoria**

Opened in 1951, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (AGGV) on Vancouver Island is the largest public art collection in British Columbia. With strengths in Canadian and Indigenous works, the gallery also holds a significant collection of Asian art. Its permanent displays include the work of Emily Carr, a celebrated artist from Victoria, and its gardens feature an authentic Japanese Shinto shrine.

### **Art Gallery of Nova Scotia**

One of the largest museums in Atlantic Canada, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia was founded in 1908. Its collection includes more than 17,000 works, with a focus on work by artists with strong connections to Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada as well as work by historical and contemporary Canadian artists more generally. Its collection of folk art, anchored by the work of Maud Lewis, is especially notable.

### **Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity**

Established in 1933 as the Banff School of Drama, the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity is a post-secondary institution located in Banff National Park, Alberta. Founded by the University of Alberta, the Centre offers educational programs in the performing, literary, and visual arts. It is particularly well known for its artist residencies and practicum programs, having served as a site of artistic inspiration and creative practice for many Canadian artists since its founding.

### **BAXTER&, IAIN (Canadian, b. 1936)**

A seminal figure in the history of Conceptual art in Canada. In 1966, he co-founded, with Ingrid Baxter, the N.E. Thing Co. Conceptual artists' collective,

and that same year launched the gallery and the visual arts program at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C. His work typically incorporates photography, performance, and installations. In 2005, Iain Baxter changed his name to IAIN BAXTER& to reflect his non-authorial approach to art production.

#### **Bolduc, David (Canadian, 1945–2010)**

One of Canada's foremost abstract painters of his generation, Bolduc continued the modernist tradition of Jack Bush, Jules Olitski, and Robert Motherwell and is known for lyrical and contemplative works that consider how layers of colour influence the reflection of light. He draws on Chinese calligraphy, North African designs, and Persian miniatures. His works are in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, and Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton.

#### **Breeze, Claude (Canadian, b.1938)**

Also known as C. Herbert, Claude Breeze began creating the brightly coloured Pop Art-influenced paintings for which he is best known in Vancouver in the 1960s. Breeze was the first Canadian artist to depict mediatized violence in his work, and his paintings often address social and political issues. An educator as well as a painter, he has held teaching positions at universities across Canada and is currently professor emeritus at York University in Toronto.

#### **Bush, Jack (Canadian, 1909–1977)**

A member of Painters Eleven, formed in 1953, Bush found his real voice only after critic Clement Greenberg visited his studio in 1957 and focused on his watercolours. Out of these Bush developed the shapes and broad colour planes that would come to characterize a personal colour-field style, parallel to the work of Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland. With them, Bush participated in Greenberg's 1964 exhibition *Post Painterly Abstraction*.

#### **Canada Council for the Arts**

A Crown corporation created in 1957 by the parliamentary Canada Council for the Arts Act. The Canada Council exists to encourage art production and to promote the study and enjoyment of art in Canada. It provides support to artists and arts organizations from across all artistic disciplines, including visual art, dance, music, and literature.

#### **Carr, Emily (Canadian, 1871–1945)**

A pre-eminent B.C.-based artist and writer, Carr is renowned today for her bold and vibrant images of both the Northwest Coast landscape and its Indigenous peoples. Educated in California, England, and France, she was influenced by a variety of modern art movements but ultimately developed a unique aesthetic style. She was one of the first West Coast artists to achieve national recognition. (See *Emily Carr: Life & Work* by Lisa Baldissera.)

#### **Central School of Arts and Crafts (Central Saint Martins)**

A public institution founded in London in 1896, which offered courses in design and the visual and applied arts initially inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement led by William Morris. In 1989 it merged with Saint Martin's School of Art to form the Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design, now part of the University of the Arts London.



**Chambers, Jack (Canadian, 1931–1978)**

A London, Ontario, painter and avant-garde filmmaker, whose meditative paintings typically depict domestic subjects, Chambers was committed to regionalism, despite the international outlook he developed during five years of artistic training in Madrid. He was one of the founders of CARFAC, Canada's artists' rights protection agency. (See *Jack Chambers: Life & Work* by Mark Cheetham.)

**Cubism**

A radical style of painting developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in Paris between 1907 and 1914, Cubism is defined by the representation of numerous perspectives at once. Cubism is considered crucial to the history of modern art for its enormous international impact; famous practitioners also include Juan Gris and Francis Picabia.

**Cézanne, Paul (French, 1839–1906)**

A painter of arguably unparalleled influence on the development of modern art, associated with the Post-Impressionist school and known for his technical experiments with colour and form and his interest in multiple-point perspective. In his maturity Cézanne had several preferred subjects, including his wife, still life, and Provençal landscapes.

**drypoint**

An intaglio printmaking technique in which an image is scratched onto a (usually copper) plate with a needle-like instrument. This method produces a softened line due to raised edges in the metal around the scratched image and is best for creating small editions of works. Drypoint is often used in combination with etching.

**Emily Carr University of Art + Design**

Originally founded in 1925 by the British Columbia Art League as the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts, the school changed its name to the Vancouver School of Art in 1936. In 1980 it became the Emily Carr College of Art and, in 2008, obtained university status as the Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

**engraving**

The name applied to both a type of print and the process used in its production. Engravings are made by cutting into a metal, wood, or plastic plate with specialized tools and then inking the incised lines. The ink is transferred to paper under the immense pressure of a printing press.

**etching**

A printmaking technique that follows the same principles as engraving but uses acid instead of a burin to cut through the plate. A copper plate is coated with a waxy acid resist; the artist draws an image into the wax with a needle. The plate is then immersed in an acid bath, incising the lines and leaving the rest of the plate untouched.

**Eyre, Ivan (Canadian, 1935–2022)**

A lauded, prolific, and widely collected painter, sculptor, and draftsman. Eyre's significance lies equally in his teaching; a professor of painting and drawing at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg for more than three decades, he has worked closely with generations of Canadian artists. He is known primarily for his majestic prairie landscapes.

**Ferron, Marcelle (Canadian, 1924–2001)**

A painter, sculptor, and stained-glass artist and a member of the Montreal-based Automatistes. Ferron studied at the École des beaux-arts in Montreal (now part of the Université du Québec à Montréal) before meeting Paul-Émile Borduas, whose approach to modern art became crucial to her artistic development. In 1953 she moved to France, where she lived for thirteen years.

**FitzGerald, Lionel LeMoine (Canadian, 1890–1956)**

A Winnipeg-born painter and printmaker, FitzGerald was a member of the Group of Seven from 1932 to 1933. He favoured depictions of prairie landscapes and houses, which he executed in pointillist, precisionist, and abstract styles. (See *Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald: Life & Work* by Michael-Parke Taylor.)

**Frankenthaler, Helen (American, 1928–2011)**

A New York School artist who developed specific techniques to create atmospheric effects in her paintings, including blotting and staining unprepared canvas with thin pigments. Frankenthaler also experimented with woodcuts, colour printing, and sculpture.

**Fraser, John Arthur (British/Canadian, 1838–1898)**

A painter, photographer, illustrator, and art teacher born in England. Upon immigrating to Canada around 1860, Fraser began painting studio backdrops for the photographer William Notman, becoming a partner in Notman's Toronto firm in 1867.

**Gaucher, Yves (Canadian, 1934–2000)**

An internationally recognized abstract painter and printmaker, associated with the Plasticiens. Gaucher's inquisitive nature made him an individualistic figure and artist who drew from many sources, including jazz and atonal music, Georges Braque, Mark Rothko, and the New York Abstractionists. He fought to modernize printmaking and open the medium up to experimental and innovative techniques. Gaucher founded the Associations des peintures-gravures de Montréal in 1960 and was named a Member of the Order of Canada in 1981. (See *Yves Gaucher: Life & Work* by Roald Nasgaard.)

**Glyde, H.G. (Canadian, 1906–1998)**

Trained at the Royal College of Art, London, painter H.G. Glyde is best known for his social-realist depictions of life in the Canadian Prairies. He taught drawing at the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art in Calgary in 1935 and was a painting instructor at the Banff School of Fine Arts between 1936 and 1966. Glyde also established the Division of Fine Art at the University of Alberta, where he taught from 1946 to 1966.



**Godard, Mira (Canadian, 1928–2010)**

Mira Godard established the Mira Godard Gallery in Toronto in 1962, which is renowned for its representation of major contemporary Canadian and international artists, including Jean Paul Riopelle, Alex Colville, David Milne, Christopher and Mary Pratt, and Takao Tanabe. In addition to being an art dealer and advocate, Godard was a founding member of the Art Dealers Association of Canada in 1967 and served as the organization's first president.

**Godwin, Ted (Canadian, 1933–2013)**

A painter and arts educator originally from Calgary who, with four other Regina-based artists, was part of the Regina Five—a vanguard group that coalesced through a 1961 exhibition, originally mounted in their hometown, which ultimately became *Five Painters from Regina*, presented that same year at the National Gallery of Canada. Known as both an abstract and a figurative painter, Godwin frequently produced thematic series of works. While he did some work as a commercial artist, he also attended several workshops at the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops and taught at the University of Saskatchewan between 1964 and 1985. He was made a member of the Order of Canada in 2004.

**Greenberg, Clement (American, 1909–1994)**

A highly influential art critic and essayist known primarily for his formalist approach and his contentious concept of modernism, which he first outlined in his 1960 publication "Modernist Painting." Greenberg was, notably, an early champion of Abstract Expressionists, including Jackson Pollock and the sculptor David Smith.

**Group of Seven**

A progressive and nationalistic school of landscape painting in Canada, the Group of Seven was active between 1920 (the year of the group's first exhibition, at the Art Gallery of Toronto, now the Art Gallery of Ontario) and 1933. Founding members were the artists Franklin Carmichael, Lawren S. Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank H. Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and F.H. Varley.

**Guston, Philip (American, 1913–1980)**

A significant figure in postwar American art. Guston's paintings and drawings range from the intensely personal and abstract to the expressly political, as with his murals of the 1930s and 1940s for the WPA Depression-era Federal Art Project. After nearly two decades of success as part of New York's Abstract Expressionist movement, Guston triggered the anger and scorn of the art world with his return to figurative and symbolic imagery.

**hard-edge painting**

A technical term coined in 1958 by the art critic Jules Langsner, referring to paintings marked by well-defined areas of colour. It is widely associated with geometric abstraction and the work of artists such as Ellsworth Kelly and Kenneth Noland.

**Harris, Lawren S. (Canadian, 1885–1970)**

A founding member of the Group of Seven in Toronto in 1920, Harris was widely considered its unofficial leader. Unlike other members of the group, Harris moved away from painting representational landscapes, first to abstracted landscapes and then to pure abstraction. The Group of Seven broke up in 1933, and when the Canadian Group of Painters was formed in 1933, Harris was elected its first president.

**Heron, Patrick (British, 1920–1999)**

An abstract artist, thinker, and art critic, Heron produced vivid paintings that were rooted in the colours, shapes, and movement that he observed while living in Cornwall, England. Stylistically and geographically, he is connected to the St. Ives School—the community of modernist-leaning artists who settled in the Cornwall area after the Second World War. Heron is notable for gravitating toward vibrant colours and for executing what he described as “wobbly hard-edge paintings,” a signature style that he distinguished from the era’s more typical hard-edge conventions.

**Hilton, Roger (British, 1911–1975)**

An abstract painter associated with the St. Ives School. After Hilton moved to Cornwall, England, in the mid-1960s, the shapes in his paintings began to bear a closer resemblance to boats, water, and sea forms. In his later career, he produced more figurative works, specifically female nudes.

**Hirayama, Ikuo (Japanese, 1930–2009)**

A painter known for creating works that depicted the Silk Road trade route network in the Nihonga style. Hirayama received numerous significant cultural honours (including a membership in the French Legion of Honour, which he received in 1996). In Japan, there are two museums dedicated to the work and legacy of the artist: the Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum, founded in 2004 in Hokuto Yamanashi Prefecture, which showcases paintings by Hirayama alongside selections from his own personal collection; and the Hirayama Ikuo Museum of Art, which is located on Ikuchijima Island, the artist’s place of birth.

**Hofmann, Hans (German/American, 1880–1966)**

As both an Abstract Expressionist painter and a teacher who influenced a generation of artists, Hans Hofmann was a key figure in the American art world following the Second World War. Trained in Munich, where he grew up, and in Paris, Hofmann began his career as a Cubist painter and showed in Europe in the early part of the twentieth century. His style moved through Expressionism, and by 1939 he was creating the Abstract Expressionist works that would secure his place in art historical narratives. Hofmann’s later work is defined by his bold use of colour and gesture, and by a sense of the Cubist structure he developed as a young painter.

**Houle, Robert (Saulteaux, Kaa-wii-kwe-tawang-kak, b. 1947)**

Painter, curator, teacher, and writer, known for increasing the visibility of contemporary First Nations art in Canada. Houle’s experience at Sandy Bay Residential School informs his colour field paintings, which gave him a conceptual language to express the opposing ideologies of Saulteaux-Ojibwa



spirituality and Christianity. Houle served as the first Curator of Contemporary Indian Art at the Canadian Museum of History (1977-1980) and co-curated several landmark exhibitions of First Nations artists. He received the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts in 2015. (See *Robert Houle: Life & Work* by Shirley Madill.)

#### **Hughes, E.J. (Canadian, 1913–2007)**

Known for his stylized paintings of British Columbia landscapes and seascapes, the Vancouver-born painter and muralist Hughes was often likened to Emily Carr, thanks to his distinctive renderings of the natural environment on the West Coast. Hughes enrolled at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts in 1929, where he took classes with Frederick H. Varley and Jock MacDonald; after graduating, he did a brief stint in the military and eventually, in 1941, became the Canadian army's first official service artist. Hughes was chosen as the first recipient of the Emily Carr Scholarship in 1947 and joined the Canadian Group of Painters shortly after that. In 2001 he was made a member of the Order of Canada.

#### **impasto**

Paint applied so thickly that it stands out in relief and retains the marks of the brush or palette knife.

#### **Jefferys, Charles William (British/Canadian, 1869–1951)**

An artist and illustrator and early member of the Toronto Art Students' League, Charles William (C.W.) Jefferys worked primarily as a newspaper illustrator in New York City, as well as in Toronto. His illustrations, published in *The Picture Gallery of Canadian History* in three volumes in 1942, 1945, and 1950, were used regularly in textbooks, shaping an image of Canadian history for a generation of students.

#### **Kacere, John (American, 1920–1999)**

A painter and printmaker best known for his photorealistic depictions of the lingerie-clad midribs of female subjects. Born in Iowa, Kacere taught at the University of Manitoba's School of Art from 1950 to 1953. Kacere was originally associated with the Abstract Expressionist movement but moved away from this painterly style in the 1960s to become a leading practitioner of Photorealism.

#### **Kanbara, Bryce (b.1947)**

An artist, gallerist, curator, and community builder in Hamilton, Ontario, since the 1970s, the artist and gallerist received a Governor General's Award in 2021 in recognition of his lifetime contributions to Canadian visual arts. Kanbara is known for working with a range of media, including printmaking, painting, and sculptural assemblages. In 1975 he helped establish the artist-run centre Hamilton Artists Inc., where he mounted the 1986 exhibition *Shikata Ga Nai: Contemporary Art by Japanese Canadians*, a group show that featured contemporary work by a range of Japanese Canadian artists. Kanbara is also the founder and proprietor of Hamilton's you me gallery.

#### **Kiyooka, Roy (Canadian, 1926–1994)**

Born and raised in the Prairies, Japanese Canadian artist Roy Kiyooka studied under Jock Macdonald at the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art (now

Alberta College of Art and Design) in Calgary from 1946 to 1949. A regular presence at the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops, the avant-garde painter developed a hard-edge abstract style. In the 1960s, Kiyooka experimented with a wide range of media and was a central figure in the Vancouver art scene.

**Kline, Franz (American, 1910–1962)**

An Abstract Expressionist painter and draftsman whose gestural works drew inspiration from contemporaries such as Arshile Gorky and Willem de Kooning. From the late 1940s Kline's paintings were largely black and white, but in the last years of his career he returned to a full-colour palette.

**Knowles, Dorothy (Canadian, 1927–2023)**

A landscape painter who frequently painted the Saskatchewan prairies, Knowles drew inspiration from British watercolour techniques and modernist abstraction. Her practice of painting directly from nature was strongly influenced by her participation in the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops, a summer-school program in northern Saskatchewan that began in 1955 and ran nearly every year until 2012.

**landscape painting**

The representation of natural scenery, including rivers, mountains, forests, and fields, landscape painting emerged as a genre in Chinese art in the fourth century. In Europe, landscapes began as background elements in portraits or other figurative paintings, becoming subjects in their own right around the sixteenth century.

**Letendre, Rita (Canadian, 1928–2021)**

Abstract artist of Abenaki and Québécois descent, associated with the Quebec artist groups Les Automatistes and Les Plasticiens, renowned for her geometric art exploring light, colour, and movement. Working with diverse materials and in evolving avant-garde styles, Letendre's paintings, murals, and prints brought her national and international acclaim. She received the Order of Canada in 2005 and the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts in 2010.

**linocut**

A printmaking technique in which the image is relief-carved into a linoleum block using various sharp tools, such as chisels, gouges, and knives. The final print is created by applying ink to the block and pressing the inked block onto another surface, by hand or with a printing press.

**lithograph**

A type of print invented in 1798 in Germany by Aloys Senefelder. Like other planographic methods of image reproduction, lithography relies on the fact that grease and water do not mix. Placed in a press, the moistened and inked lithographic stone will print only those areas previously designed with greasy lithographic ink.

**Lum, Ken (Canadian, b.1956)**

A Vancouver-born, Philadelphia-based artist internationally recognized for his conceptual and often wry work in photography, sculpture, and installation. Known for his diptychs that pair photographic portraits with pithy quotes, Lum has created numerous series that probe contemporary concerns relating to



gender, race, and class. Associated since the 1980s with the Vancouver School of photo-conceptualism, he is currently Chair of Fine Arts at the School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania.

### **Lyrical Abstraction**

A style of abstract art that arose within the larger movement of Art Informel, itself known as the European complement of American Abstract Expressionism. Art Informel paintings typically drew inspiration from the natural world; they were less rigid and more expressive than geometric abstraction, which was dominant at the time.

### **Mackenzie, Landon (Canadian, b. 1954)**

A Vancouver-based artist and teacher whose large-format abstract paintings are conceptually based while evoking natural forms. They are characterized by brilliant colours and often incorporate elements of collage, text, and map-making. Mackenzie teaches painting and drawing at Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

### **Matisse, Henri (French, 1869–1954)**

A painter, sculptor, printmaker, draftsman, and designer, aligned at different times with the Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, and Fauvists. By the 1920s he was, with Pablo Picasso, one of the most famous painters of his generation, known for his remarkable use of colour and line.

### **McMichael Canadian Art Collection**

Located in Kleinburg, Ontario, the McMichael is a public institution dedicated to Canadian and Indigenous art. Founded in 1965, the museum was built around Robert and Signe McMichael's collection of works by the Group of Seven and their contemporaries. The permanent collection now holds more than 6,500 artworks. The gallery is also the custodian of the Cape Dorset archive. In addition to the museum, the grounds feature hiking trails, a sculpture garden, and Tom Thomson's shack—the artist's former home and studio.

### **modernism**

A movement extending from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century across artistic disciplines, modernism rejected academic traditions in favour of innovative styles developed in response to contemporary industrialized society. Modernist movements in the visual arts have included Gustave Courbet's Realism, and later Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, and on to abstraction. By the 1960s, anti-authoritarian postmodernist styles such as Pop art, Conceptual art, and Neo-Expressionism blurred the distinction between high art and mass culture.

### **Molinari, Guido (Canadian, 1933–2004)**

A painter and theorist who was a member of the Plasticien movement in Montreal. His work, beginning in the mid-1950s, set new models for geometric painting internationally. His "razor-edged" Stripe Paintings create the illusion of a dynamic space, evoked by the viewer's active engagement with how colours appear to change as they rhythmically repeat themselves across the canvas.

**monoprint**

A printmaking technique invented by Giovanni Castiglione around 1640 and revived in the late nineteenth century by, most notably, Paul Gauguin and Edgar Degas. A monoprint is produced by printing from a plate that is inked but otherwise untouched; the process typically yields only one good impression.

**monotype**

A type of print resulting from a process that yields only one impression. A monotype is produced by drawing or painting an image directly onto a bare matrix and then transferring it to paper under the pressure of a printing press.

**Nakamura, Kazuo (Canadian, 1926–2002)**

A member of Painters Eleven, Nakamura embraced science and nature in his early abstract landscapes. Later, he created a body of work known as the Number Structures, which explores the connections between mathematics and aesthetics. The Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto held a posthumous retrospective of his work in 2004. (See *Kazuo Nakamura: Life & Work* by John G. Hatch)

**National Gallery of Canada**

Established in 1880, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa holds the most extensive collection of Canadian art in the country as well as works by prominent international artists. Spearheaded by the Marquis of Lorne (Canada's Governor General from 1878 to 1883), the gallery was created to strengthen a specifically Canadian brand of artistic culture and identity and to build a national collection of art that would match the level of other British Empire institutions. Since 1988, the gallery has been located on Sussex Drive in a building designed by Moshe Safdie.

**NSCAD University**

Founded in 1887 as the Victoria School of Art and Design, and renamed as the Nova Scotia College of Art (1925) and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (1969) before becoming NSCAD University in 2003, the institution is among the leading art schools in Canada. Initially dedicated to traditional landscape painting, the institution developed a more progressive curriculum after Group of Seven member Arthur Lismer served as its principal (1916–19). Assuming the role of president in 1967, Garry Neill Kennedy spearheaded NSCAD's transformation into a world-renowned centre for Conceptual art in the 1970s.

**OCAD University**

OCAD University is located in Toronto and is the oldest and largest art school in Canada. It was founded in 1876 as the Ontario School of Art, becoming the Ontario College of Art in 1912. In 1996 the name changed again to the Ontario College of Art and Design, before being renamed OCAD University in 2010 to reflect its status as a university.

**O'Brien, Lucius Richard (Canadian, 1832–1899)**

A prominent oil and watercolour painter of Canadian landscapes, vice-president of the Ontario Society of Artists (1874–80), and the founding president of the



Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (1880–90). He travelled extensively in Canada, reaching as far as the west coast. For the serial publication *Picturesque Canada* (1882–84) he supervised the commissioning of illustrations, himself producing the vast majority of images upon which the engraved illustrations were based.

**Perehudoff, William (Canadian, 1918–2013)**

A Saskatchewan-born painter, Perehudoff studied at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Centre and became known for producing abstract works in which he drew on the wide-open spaces of the prairies to create vibrant colour field paintings. He met his wife, the renowned landscape painter Dorothy Knowles, at the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops, where both were regular attendees. Perehudoff was made a member of the Order of Canada in 1999.

**Phillips, Walter J. (British/Canadian, 1884–1963)**

Watercolourist and printmaker known for popularizing Japanese woodcut colour printing in Canada, with subjects including still lifes, portraits, and landscapes. Phillips moved to Winnipeg in 1913 and became a prominent art critic for *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune* from 1926 to 1941. In 1925 he helped re-establish the Manitoba Society of Artists and from 1940 to 1959 taught at the Banff School of Fine Arts (now the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity).

**photogravure**

A process for reproducing photographs that was invented in the nineteenth century. This method involves preparing a metal plate with an acid bath to etch the photographic image onto the metal surface. Ink is applied to the plate and then wiped off with a cloth. The plate is pressed into paper that has been lightly moistened, which picks up the pigment remaining in the etched grooves, creating a printed image.

**Picasso, Pablo (Spanish, 1881–1973)**

One of the most famous and influential artists of his time, Picasso was a prominent member of the Parisian avant-garde circle that included Henri Matisse and Georges Braque. His painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)*, 1911–12, is considered by many to be the most important of the twentieth century.

**Plaskett, Joseph (Joe) (Canadian, 1918–2014)**

Known for his representations of everyday life in his paintings, Plaskett was born in British Columbia but spent most of his professional career living and working in Paris. Late in life he moved to the United Kingdom. In 2005 he formed the Plaskett Foundation, which currently awards \$30,000 to a Canadian painter enrolled in or recently graduated from a Master of Fine Arts program to fund a year in Europe.

**printmaking**

A process of artistic creation in which ink is transferred from one surface to another to make an impression. Printmaking generally involves drawing, carving, etching, or burning an image onto a screen, stone block, wood, or metal plate, rolling ink over that surface, and imprinting onto paper, canvas, or another surface. Through this method, multiples of the same image can be made. Common types of printmaking include lithography, woodcut, screen print, and intaglio.

**realism/Realism**

A style of art in which subjects are depicted as factually as possible. The art style “realism” is not to be confused with “Realism”, a nineteenth-century art movement, led by Gustave Courbet, concerned with the representation of daily modern life rather than mythological, religious, or historical subjects.

**Reid, Ilijuwas Bill (Haida, 1920–1998)**

A sculptor, painter, and jeweller known for his championing of Haida culture and land claims and his skills as a master carver. Reid created monumental public sculptures, found at the University of British Columbia, the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., and the Vancouver International Airport. His *Lootaas (Wave-Eater)*, 1986, is a 15-metre canoe carved from a single cedar log, commissioned for Expo 86 in Vancouver. (See *Ilijuwas Bill Reid: Life & Work* by Gerald McMaster.)

**Reid, Robert (Canadian, 1927–2022)**

A typographer and book designer known for publishing the academic journal *The Library Quarterly*. In 1952 Reid collaborated with artist Takao Tanabe to reprint F.G. Claudet’s pamphlet *Gold: Its Properties, Modes of Extraction, Value, Etc.* and poet John Newlove’s volume *Grave Sirs John Newlove’s Poems*. Reid taught typographic design and printing at the Vancouver School of Art and was a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

**Reinhardt, Adolph “Ad” (American, 1913–1967)**

A painter associated with geometric and pure abstraction. Although Reinhardt was a contemporary of Abstract Expressionists, he believed that painting should be concerned with art alone. He rejected all outside symbols and references and was therefore embraced by the later Minimalists.

**Romantic tradition**

A multi-faceted movement that affected most areas of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western culture, including art, literature, and philosophy. Romanticism privileged the emotional and the subjective; it arose in opposition to Enlightenment-era rationalism.

**Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA)**

An organization of professional artists and architects modelled after national academies long present in Europe, such as the Royal Academy of Arts in the U.K. (founded in 1768) and the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture in Paris (founded in 1648).

**Scott, William (Northern Irish, 1913–1989)**

Born in Scotland and raised in Northern Ireland, William Scott established himself as a trailblazer in abstract painting in Britain in the mid-twentieth century. His oeuvre encompassed many subjects—including nudes, landscapes, and more minimalist shapes—but he is most notable for producing abstracted still lifes of domestic objects, specifically focusing on pots, pans, and other kitchen items. For Scott, creating art based on household items allowed him to experiment with the relationships between flat forms on a flat surface, and with the nuances that could be imparted through colour.



**serigraphy / screen printing (screen print)**

Now typically described as screen printing, serigraphy was advanced in 1940 by a group of American artists working in the silkscreen process who wished to distinguish their work from commercial prints made by the same method. To produce a screen print, a printmaker uses a squeegee to push ink through a screen made of very fine wire or fabric mesh, where a stenciled design has been blocked out using a substance or emulsion that prevents liquids from seeping through. The ink is therefore transferred to the substrate—such as canvas or paper—by passing through only the areas that remain permeable. Screen printing can be traced back to China, where it developed sometime during the ninth or tenth century; the technique became more popular throughout Europe and areas of the Western world toward the end of the eighteenth century.

**Shadbolt, Doris (Canadian, 1918–2003)**

A writer and curator, Shadbolt worked in various capacities at the Vancouver Art Gallery from 1950 to 1975. She organized important exhibitions, including *Arts of the Raven*, *Emily Carr: A Centennial Exhibition* and *The Art of Bill Reid*, and published books on both Reid and Carr. With her husband, Jack Shadbolt, she founded the VIVA Foundation for the Visual Arts in 1987.

**Shadbolt, Jack (Canadian, 1909–1998)**

Primarily known as a painter and draftsman, Shadbolt studied art in London, Paris, and New York before returning to British Columbia. He taught at the Vancouver School of Art from 1945 to 1966, becoming the head of the school's painting and drawing section. Major influences include Emily Carr and Aboriginal art of the Pacific Northwest.

**Shikata Ga Nai: Contemporary Art by Japanese Canadians (1986 exhibition at Hamilton Artists Inc.)**

A group exhibition curated by artist and curator Bryce Kanbara for the artist-run centre Hamilton Artists Inc., titled with a Japanese phrase that loosely translates to "It cannot be helped." The show itself was anchored in the legacy of Japanese internment during the Second World War and the Japanese Canadian Redress campaign of the 1980s, which was intended to make amends for that trauma, exploring these themes through the works and reflections of ten Japanese Canadian artists, including Takao Tanabe, Louise Noguchi, and Nobuo Kubota.

**Smith, Gordon (Canadian, 1919–2020)**

British-born Smith is a painter living and working in Vancouver. Time spent as a student at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute) influenced his early style, which progressed from Abstract Expressionism through hard-edged abstraction and back to gestural expressionist landscapes through his career. Smith taught at the University of British Columbia and was a prominent figure in Vancouver's postwar art scene.

**Snow, Michael (Canadian, 1928–2023)**

The paintings, films, photographs, sculptures, installations, and musical performances of artist Michael Snow kept him in the spotlight for more than sixty years. Snow's *Walking Woman* series of the 1960s holds a prominent place in Canadian art history. His contributions to visual art, experimental film, and

music have been recognized internationally. (See *Michael Snow: Life & Work* by Martha Langford.)

**Spalding, Jeffrey (Canadian, 1951–2019)**

An artist, curator, educator, and museum director. Spalding is an important figure in contemporary Canadian art, whose multimedia artistic practice and broad activities within the national art scene influenced the direction and reception of Conceptual art, video art, and painting. He received the Order of Canada in 2007.

**Still, Clyfford (American, 1904–1980)**

A painter associated with Abstract Expressionism. Still spent part of his childhood on an Alberta farm, and prairie landscapes figure prominently in his early work. The natural environment continued to be a marked influence until the mid-1940s, when he moved to New York and his paintings became increasingly abstract.

**sumi-e**

A form of Japanese-style painting, *sumi-e* developed from ink-based techniques that derive from fifth-century China. It is monochromatic and typically involves the use of a brush and black sumi ink, which is made from organic pine soot. The aim of *sumi-e* is to capture the essential quality of a subject, rather than simply producing an image that strongly resembles the source material.

**Taiun, Yanagida (Japanese, 1902–1990)**

A master calligrapher and painter known for his experimental, expressive, and rhythmic style. Yanagida Taiun learned about *kanji kana* and seal scripts from his grandfather and father and studied Western oil painting between 1918 and 1927.

**Tam, Reuben (American, 1916–1991)**

A painter known for his abstracted coastal landscapes, Reuben Tam was born in Hawaii. In 1941 he moved to New York City, where he became affiliated with the Downtown Gallery, the first commercial art gallery in Greenwich Village. He taught at the Brooklyn Museum Art School between 1946 and 1974.

**Tobey, Mark (American, 1890–1976)**

An abstract painter whose work was influenced by Cubism and Chinese calligraphy and frequently evoked his Baha'i faith. Tobey's all-over "white writing" paintings of the 1930s to the 1950s were developed independently of Abstract Expressionism. He lived in Seattle for many years and was associated with the Northwest School.

**Urquhart, Tony (Canadian, 1934–2022)**

A painter, sculptor, and curator, and a pioneer of abstract art in Canada. For a time a member of the London circle that included Jack Chambers and Greg Curnoe, Urquhart was an important advocate for the rights of professional artists through his association with Chambers's initiative CAR (later CARFAC).



**Vancouver Art Gallery**

The Vancouver Art Gallery, located in Vancouver, British Columbia, is the largest art gallery in Western Canada. It was founded in 1931 and is a public, collecting institution focused on historic and contemporary art from British Columbia, with a particular emphasis on work by First Nations artists and, through the gallery's Institute of Asian Art, on art from the Asia Pacific Region.

**Van Halm, Renée (Canadian, b.1949)**

Born in the Netherlands, Van Halm creates work that integrates media and colour, spanning painting, sculpture, and architecture. She studied at the Vancouver School of Art and Concordia University and teaches at the Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

**Walter Phillips Gallery**

The Walter Phillips Gallery was established in 1976 to honour Phillips, an influential printmaker and painter, for his contributions to the visual arts program at the Banff School of Fine Arts. With a focus on contemporary art, the gallery has showcased the work of artists including H.G. Glyde, A.Y. Jackson, Takao Tanabe, Rebecca Belmore, and Brian Jungen.

**Winnipeg School of Art**

Established in 1913 by the Winnipeg Industrial Bureau, the Winnipeg School of Art operated as its own entity until 1950, at which point it fell under the jurisdiction of the University of Manitoba and became the institution's School of Art. The post-secondary program was founded with the dual intention of establishing a national style of art and positioning Winnipeg as an artistic centre. Some of Canada's leading artists of the time, such as Frank H. Johnston and Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald, worked as instructors at the School of Art.

**woodcut**

A relief method of printing that involves carving a design into a block of wood, which is then inked and printed, using either a press or simple hand pressure. This technique was invented in China and spread to the West in the thirteenth century.



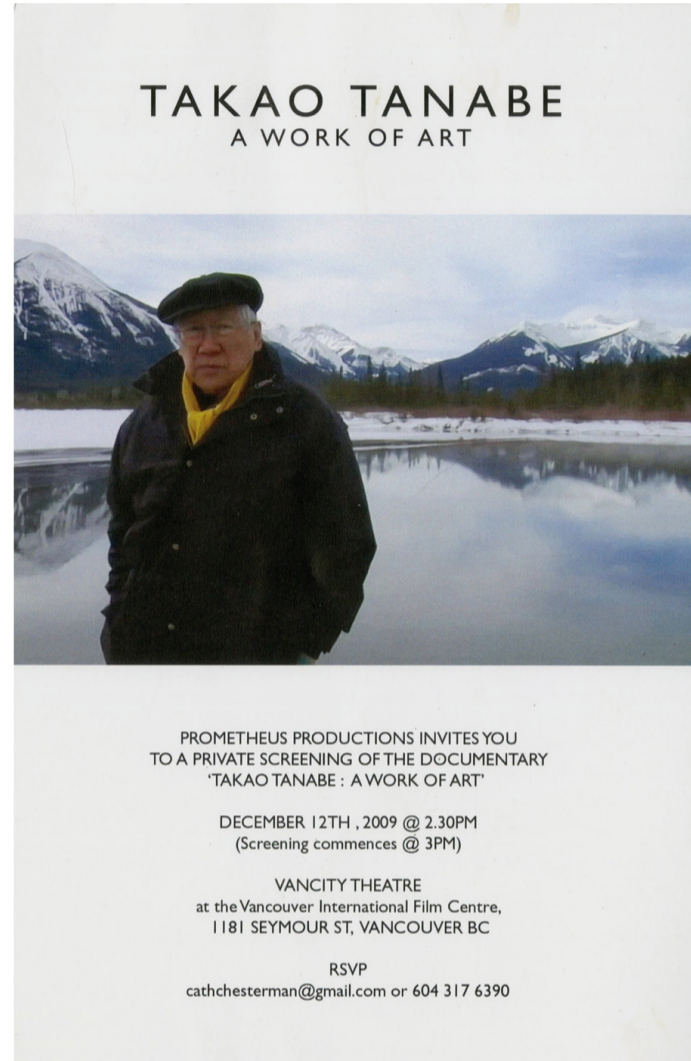
A photograph of a modern, multi-story atrium. The space is characterized by its concrete structure and glass railings on the upper levels. In the center, a service counter is visible with the words "FINANCIAL SERVICES" above it. Several large, vertical banners with vibrant, abstract geometric patterns in shades of yellow, orange, green, and blue hang from the ceiling. The ceiling itself features a series of horizontal wooden slats with recessed lighting. The overall atmosphere is bright and open.

# SOURCES & RESOURCES

In 1971, Takao Tanabe's gallerist Mira Godard offered him a monthly stipend in exchange for the exclusive rights to his paintings. His longstanding relationship with the Mira Godard Gallery in Toronto has helped ensure the wide collection of his work by major public institutions and private collectors across Canada. Tanabe's abstract and landscape paintings have been the subject of major exhibitions, including *Takao Tanabe 1972–1976: The Land* (Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina, 1976) and *Takao Tanabe* (Vancouver Art Gallery, 2005). In 2009, he was the subject of *Takao Tanabe: A Work of Art*, a biographical film by Catharine Chesterman. Tanabe is equally



distinguished as a painter, printmaker, and educator, and his work continues to expand understanding of the possibilities of landscape.



LEFT: Recto of invitation for *Takao Tanabe: A Tribute: 1950 to Present* exhibition at the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, 1995, with a photograph of Takao Tanabe in his Banff studio, 1979, by Paul Draper, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.  
RIGHT: Invitation to a screening of *Takao Tanabe: A Work of Art*, 2009, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

#### MAJOR SOLO EXHIBITIONS

(includes first solo exhibitions with each of Tanabe's dealers)

1949	Winnipeg Hudson's Bay Store
1952	Winnipeg Art Gallery
1957	Vancouver Art Gallery
1959	New Design Gallery, West Vancouver
1960	Nihonbashi Gallery, Tokyo
1962	Galérie Agnès Lefort, Montreal (later Mira Godard Gallery)
1974	Equinox Gallery, Vancouver

- 
- 1976–77** *Takao Tanabe, 1972-1976: The Land*, Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina (touring exhibition, to Winnipeg Art Gallery; Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon; Glenbow Museum, Calgary; Art Gallery of Greater Victoria; Edmonton Art Gallery)
- 
- 1979** *A Drawing Exhibition*, Glenbow Museum, Calgary (touring exhibition, to Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon; Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge; Medicine Hat Art Gallery; Memorial University, St. John's)
- 
- 1980** *Takao Tanabe: The Dark Land*, Art Gallery of Hamilton
- 
- 1985** Paul Kuhn Gallery, Calgary
- 
- 2000** *Takao Tanabe: Wet Coasts and Dry Lands*, Kelowna Art Gallery (touring exhibition, to Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge; Kamloops Art Gallery; Two Rivers Gallery, Prince George; Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, Kitchener)
- 
- 2005** *Takao Tanabe*, Vancouver Art Gallery (touring exhibition, to Art Gallery of Greater Victoria; Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax; McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario)
- 
- 2009** *Takao Tanabe: Mountains in Winter*, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff (touring exhibition, to Penticton Art Gallery; West Vancouver Art Museum)
- 
- 2011** *Chronicles of Form and Place: Works on Paper by Takao Tanabe*, Burnaby Art Gallery (touring exhibition, to McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton; Nanaimo Art Gallery; The Reach, Abbotsford)
- 
- 2016** *Takao Tanabe: Sumie: Ink Brush Paintings*, Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, Burnaby
- 
- 2021** *Takao Tanabe: A Modern Landscape*, West Vancouver Art Museum
- 
- 2023** *Takao Tanabe: Printmaker*, Kelowna Art Gallery

Tanabe has had regular solo exhibitions at his galleries (Equinox Gallery, Vancouver; Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto; and Paul Kuhn Gallery, Calgary), but these are too numerous to list.

#### COMMISSIONS

1953 Mural, Fine Arts Gallery, UBC, Vancouver

1956 Mosaic Mural, Builders' Exchange Building, Winnipeg

1963 Summer Street Banners, City of Vancouver



1966 Paper Collage Mural, Department of Agriculture Building, Ottawa

1967 Silk Banners, Centennial Concert Hall, Winnipeg

1968 Nylon Banner, Confederation Centre, Charlottetown

1973 Nylon Banners, University of Alberta; University of Regina; *The Land Fields*, lithograph commissioned by Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto

1980 Nylon Banners, Canadian Embassy, Mexico City

1981 *South Alberta Foothills 7/82*, 18-foot acrylic on canvas painting, for Petro-Canada, Calgary (now in the collection of the Glenbow Museum)

1983 *Low Foothills, Evening*, woodblock for TD Bank, Toronto

1988 *Spanish Banks*, woodblock for the Vancouver chapter of the National Association of Japanese Canadians

1991 *Early Evening, Narrow Passage*, lithograph for Fletcher Challenge, Vancouver

1995 *Marble Is. Q.C.I.*, lithograph for Artist's for Kid's Trust, North Vancouver

#### TELEVISION AND FILM

1961 CBC, Vancouver, *The Lively Arts*

1964 CBC, Vancouver, *The 7 O'Clock Show*

2009 *Takao Tanabe: A Work of Art* (Prometheus Films)

2009 *Landscape as Muse - The West Coast with Takao Tanabe* (291 Film Company / Knowledge Network)

#### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

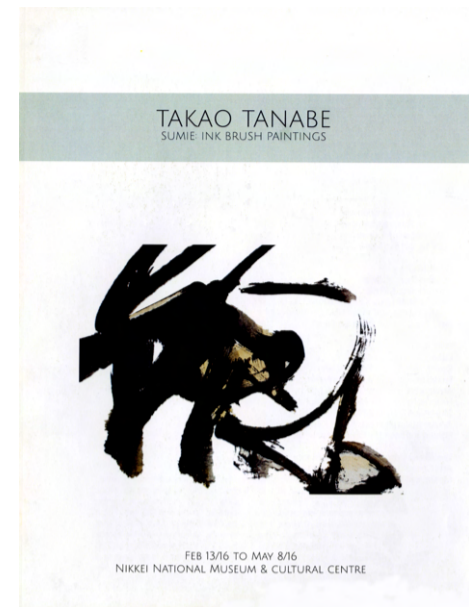
Boulet, Roger. *Takao Tanabe: Wet Coasts and Dry Lands*. Kelowna: Kelowna Art Gallery, 2000.

Cumming, Glen. *Takao Tanabe: The Dark Land*. Hamilton: Art Gallery of Hamilton, 1980.

Dillow, Nancy, and Jane Rule. *Takao Tanabe, 1972-1976: The Land*. Regina: Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, 1976.

*Flatlands: Paintings by Takao Tanabe*. London, UK: Canada House, 1987.

Kajiwara, Sherri, and Takao Tanabe. *Takao Tanabe: Sumie: Ink Brush Paintings*. Vancouver: Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, 2016.



Cover of *Takao Tanabe, Sumie: Ink Brush Paintings*, by Sherri Kajiwara (Burnaby: Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, 2016).

Martens, Darrin, Denise Leclerc, and Ihor Holubizky. *Chronicles of Form and Place: Works on Paper by Takao Tanabe*. Burnaby: Burnaby Art Gallery, McMaster Museum of Art, 2012.

Nasgaard, Roald. *Takao Tanabe: A Survey Exhibition*. Toronto: Mira Godard Gallery, 2023.

Plaskett, Joseph. *Takao Tanabe: Paintings and Drawings, 1954-57*. Vancouver: privately printed, 1957.

Reid, Robert. *Takao Tanabe: Sometime Printer*. Vancouver: The Alcuin Society, 2010.

Thom, Ian. *Takao Tanabe: A Modern Landscape*. West Vancouver: West Vancouver Art Museum, 2021.

Thom, Ian. *Takao Tanabe: New Prints*. Vancouver: Periwinkle Press, 1994.

Thom, Ian, and Christine May. *Takao Tanabe: Printmaker*. Kelowna: Kelowna Art Gallery, 2023.

Thom, Ian, Roald Nasgaard, Nancy Tousley, and Jeffrey Spalding. *Takao Tanabe*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005.

## WEBSITE

Takao Tanabe: Form and Place, <http://en.formandplace.ca>

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, San Francisco

Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Ottawa

Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Edmonton

Alberta House, London, England  
Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

Art Gallery of Guelph

Art Gallery of Hamilton

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

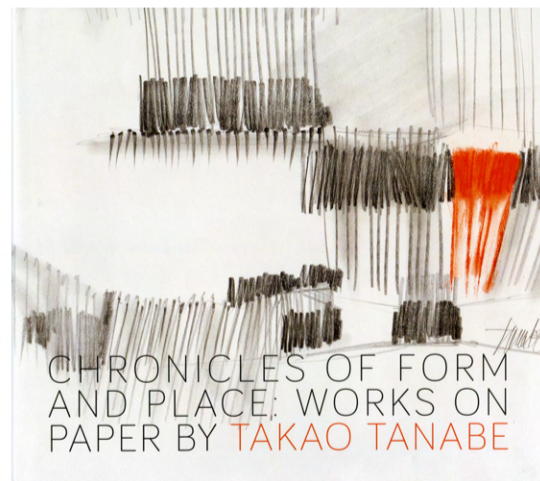
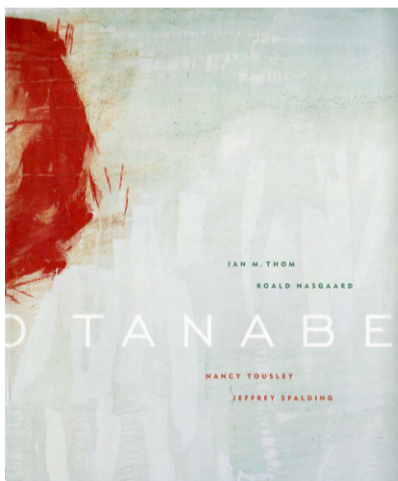
Art Gallery of Sudbury

Art Gallery of Windsor

Art Museum at the University of Toronto

Audain Art Museum, Whistler

Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity



LEFT: Cover of *Takao Tanabe*, by Ian Thom, with contributions by Roald Nasgaard, Jeffrey Spalding, and Nancy Tousley (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, Douglas & McIntyre, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005). RIGHT: Cover of *Chronicles of Form and Place: Works on Paper by Takao Tanabe*, by Darrin J. Martens, with contributions by Denise Leclerc and Ihor Holubizky (Burnaby: Burnaby Art Gallery, 2012).



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Winnipeg Art Gallery



Installation view of *Takao Tanabe: Printmaker* at the Kelowna Art Gallery, 2023.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### IAN THOM

Ian Thom is an art historian and curator who has worked extensively in Canadian public art museums. He was a curator at the Vancouver Art Gallery for over thirty years; he also worked at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. Thom curated Takao Tanabe's first major retrospective, *Takao Tanabe*, in 2005, and he organized the exhibition *Takao Tanabe: Printmaker* for the Kelowna Art Gallery in 2023. Thom was appointed to the Order of Canada in 2009.



**"I have admired Takao Tanabe's work for many years. My organization of a major exhibition of his work, *Takao Tanabe*, in 2005 was a pivotal point for me in understanding the enormous range and power of his achievement. I quickly realized that he is an artist of both exceptional originality and remarkable skill. It has been an honour to revisit Tanabe's work and re-examine his enormous contribution to Canadian visual culture."**





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### Acknowledgements

#### From the Author

This project would not have been possible without the support of Takao Tanabe and, most importantly, his wife, Anona Thorne. Their confidence in me and their help throughout this project has been greatly appreciated. I am also very thankful for the support of my husband, Darrin Martens. Museum staffs across Canada have aided in the selection of art for this project and, while there are too many people to thank individually, I am deeply appreciative of their support. I would also like to thank the staff of the Art Canada Institute who have assisted greatly over the course of the project. I am very thankful for the support of Tanabe's dealers across Canada—Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto; Equinox Gallery, Vancouver; and the Paul Kuhn Gallery, Calgary. Lastly, the support of Michael Audain, who financed this publication, is much appreciated.

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*Cormorant Island, Looking South*, 2015. (See below for details.)

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Biography: Takao Tanabe in his Vancouver Island studio, 1987, photograph by Eliza Massey. (See below for details.)



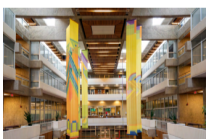
Key Works: *Cormorant Island, Looking South*, 2015. (See below for details.)



Significance & Critical Issues: *The Land 4/75 - East of Calgary*, 1975. (See below for details.)



Style & Technique: *Sunset 4/86: Crossing the Gulf*, 1986. (See below for details.)



Sources & Resources: *Untitled (Banners)*, 1973. (See below for details.)



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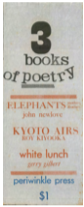


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*Barkley Sound 1/93: in Imperial Eagle Channel*, 1993. University of Lethbridge Art Collection, Gift of the artist, 1995 (1995.247.a/b/c). Courtesy of the University of Lethbridge Art Collection.



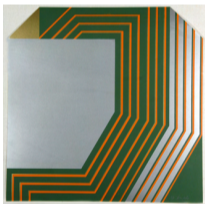
A broadside advertising the release of three books of poetry from Periwinkle Press, 1964. Takao Tanabe (Periwinkle Press) fonds, Special Collections and Rare Books, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby. Courtesy of Special Collections and Rare Books, Simon Fraser University.



*Christmas Card*, c.1948. Collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Acquired with funds from the Winnipeg Art Gallery Foundation Inc. (G-90-443ab). Courtesy of WAG-Qaumajuq. Photo credit: Skye Callow.



*Cormorant Island, Looking South*, 2015. Private collection. Courtesy of the artist.



*Cut-Corners, C + O*, 1968. Collection of Museum London, Gift of Anona Thorne, Vancouver, 2007 (007.A.016). Courtesy of Museum London.



*The Dark Land 2/80*, 1980. Collection of the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity (#P80 0294 A). Courtesy of Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Photo credit: Rita Taylor.



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*Dawn*, 2003. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 2010 (43053). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC.





*Early Autumn*, 1967. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the artist (93.64.4). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



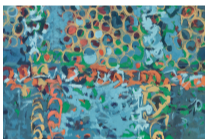
*Early Evening, Narrow Passage*, 1991. Collection of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Gift of Anona Thorne (2005.018.014). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.



*Emperor, Spring Night*, 1964. Collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Gift of the artist, Errington, British Columbia, 2005 (2005.406). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.



*Foothills Looking West 3/83*, 1983. Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Gift of the artist (2015.3.4). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Alberta.



*Fragment 35*, 1953. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the artist (94.12.1). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Fragment 41*, 1951. Private collection.



*Gogit Passage, Queen Charlotte Islands*, 1988. Printed by Masato Arikushi. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund (92.31.42). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Gulf Islands, Grey Morning 5/82*, 1982. Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Gift of the artist (2015.3.3). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Alberta.



*High Arctic 1/90*, 1990. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the artist (2002.22.1). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



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Ink sketch, 1960. Takao Tanabe sketchbook, Japan 1960, Takao Tanabe fonds, Collection of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC.



*Inside Passage*, 1994. Private collection. Photo credit: Rachel Topham Photography.



*Inside Passage 1/04: Malacca Strait*, 2004. Private collection, Vancouver. Photo credit: Ward Bastian.



*Inside Passage 1/89: Burke Channel*, 1989. Private collection. Courtesy of Heffel Fine Art Auction House.



*Inside Passage 3/98: In Malacca Pass*, 1998. Private collection. Courtesy of Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.



*Interior Arrangement with Red Hills*, 1957. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Gift of the artist, Parksville, British Columbia, 2000 (40583). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC.



*Kitselas*, 1970. Collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Gift of the artist, Errington, British Columbia, 2005 (2005.407). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.





*The Land III*, 1972. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the artist (93.64.6). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*The Land 3/75, Banff*, 1975. University of Lethbridge Art Collection, Gift of Canaccord Capital Corporation, 1995 (1995.30). Courtesy of the University of Lethbridge Art Collection.



*The Land 4/75 - East of Calgary*, 1975. Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa (ABBA 75/6-0203). Courtesy of the Canada Council Art Bank. Photo credit: Brandon Clarida Image Services.



*The Land 4/76*, 1976. Museum London, Gift of the artist, Errington, British Columbia, 2006 (006.A.040). Courtesy of Museum London.



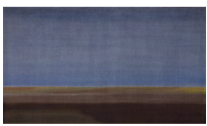
*The Land #6*, 1974. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Permanent Collection Fund (74.40). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*The Land 20*, 1977. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe (82.82). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



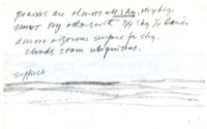
*The Land 22/77*, 1977. University of Lethbridge Art Collection, Purchased 1978 (1978.25). Courtesy of the University of Lethbridge Art Collection.



*The Land 31/75*, 1974. Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Edmonton (1975.022.001). Courtesy of the Alberta Foundation of the Arts.



Landscape sketch, 1972. Takao Tanabe sketchbook, NYC, Banff 1972, Takao Tanabe fonds, Collection of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC.



Landscape sketch in pencil, 1976. Takao Tanabe sketchbook, Prairies, Morocco, Peru 1976, Takao Tanabe fonds, Collection of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC.



Landscape sketch, Resolute Bay, July 12, 1990. Takao Tanabe sketchbook, Arctic 1990, Takao Tanabe fonds, Collection of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC.



*Landscape Study #4*, 1972. Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa (ABBA 72/3-0812). Courtesy of the Canada Council Art Bank. Photo credit: Brandon Clarida Image Services.



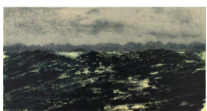
*Low Tide 2/94, Hesquiat Bay*, 1994. Private collection. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Photo credit: Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Low Tide 5/89 Rath Trevor*, 1989. Bank of Canada Collection, Ottawa. Courtesy of the Bank of Canada.



*Malacca Strait: Dawn*, 2004. Collection of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Gift of the artist (2019.025.004). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.



*Marble Island Q.C.I.*, 1995. Collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Purchased with funds provided by the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program and Friends of the AGNS, 1999 (1999.212). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.





*Marsh, Magenta*, 1964. Courtesy of Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.



*Moni Vatopedi, Mount Athos*, 1955. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the artist (2002.22.4).  
Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Near the Sea*, 1960. Collection of the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, Burnaby (2017.14.1.2.2).  
Courtesy of the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre.



*Nude Landscape I*, 1959. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Gift of the artist, Parksville,  
British Columbia, 2000 (NGC 40584). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC.



*One Orange Strip*, 1964. Collection of Museum London, Purchased with the assistance of the Canada Council  
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*Peace River 27/99*, 1999. Private collection. Courtesy of Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.



*Peninsula, N.L.*, 2014. Collection of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Gift of the artist (2019.025.003).  
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*Prairie*, 1973, Collection of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Gift of the artist (2004.031.013). Courtesy of  
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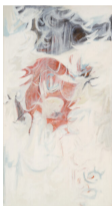
*Prairie Hills 10/78*, 1978. Collection of Carol and John Beckel, Calgary. Courtesy of TrépanierBaer, Calgary.



*Raked Sand and Stones*, 1960. Collection of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Gift of Dorothy and David Torontow (2005.038.002). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.



*A Region of Hills*, 1957. Collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Gift of the artist, Errington, British Columbia, 2005 (2005.404). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.



*A Region of Landlocked Lakes*, 1958. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the artist (94.12.2). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Rivers 1/01: Jordan River*, 2001. Private collection. Photo credit: Ward Bastian.



*Rivers 2/00: Crooked River*, 2000. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisitions Fund with the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program (2001.29). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Self Portrait*, 1957. Printed by Periwinkle Press. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the artist (92.31.8). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Setting Sun*, 1960. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the artist (2002.23.11). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Shuttleworth Sunset*, 1993. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Gift of the artist (95.10.1), Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.





*Skeena #2*, 1970. Collection of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Gift of the artist (2004.031.013). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.



*Small Valley*, 1961. Collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Gift of the artist, Errington, British Columbia, 2005 (2005.405). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.



*South Moresby 2/86: Kunghit Island*, 1986. Courtesy of Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.



*Southern Alberta Foothills*, 1982. Collection of the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Gift of Petro-Canada, 2001 (2001.097.013). Courtesy of the Glenbow Museum.



*Spanish Banks*, 1988. Collection of the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, Burnaby (2017.14.1.1.5). Courtesy of the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre.



*Still-Life*, 1954. Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, Gift of Bob and Mary Steele, 1993 (BG766). Courtesy of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery. Photo credit: Michael R. Barrick.



*Storm*, 1960. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the artist (2002.28.16). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Strait of Georgia 1/90: Raza Pass*, 1990. Collection of the Audain Art Museum, Whistler, Gift of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa (2018.069). Courtesy of the Audain Art Museum. Photo credit: Rachel Topham Photography.



*Study for a Landscape*, 1955. Courtesy of Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.



*Study for Mural for Brussels World's Fair*, 1958. Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, Gift of Bob and Mary Steele, 1993 (BG744). Courtesy of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery. Photo credit: Michael R. Barrick.



*Sunset 4/86: Crossing the Gulf*, 1986. Courtesy of Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.



*3 Black Bars 4*, 1964. Collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Gift of the artist, Errington, British Columbia, 2005 (2005.399). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.



*Trees and Sky*, 1951. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the artist (92.31.1). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Untitled (Banners)*, 1973. University of Regina President's Art Collection (pc.1973.2). Courtesy of the University of Regina President's Art Collection.



*Waterview*, 1965. Private collection. Courtesy of the Burnaby Art Gallery. Photo credit: Scott Massey, SITE Photography.



*West of Winnipeg*, 1940. Private collection. Courtesy of the Burnaby Art Gallery. Photo credit: Scott Massey, SITE Photography.





*Westcoast 6/86, Late Afternoon*, 1986. Collection of Museum London, Gift of the artist, Errington, British Columbia, 2006 (ML 006.A.041). Courtesy of Museum London.



*White-Eyed Monster*, 1952. University of Lethbridge Art Collection, Gift of Takeo and Sakaye Hirose, Winnipeg, 1989 (1989.96). Courtesy of the University of Lethbridge Art Collection.



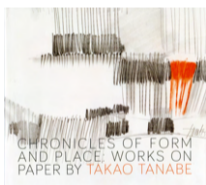
*Wing*, 1968. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the artist (92.31.14). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.

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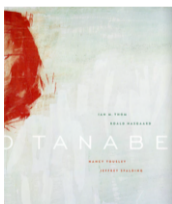
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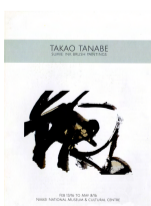
Art Gallery, Canadian Pavilion, Brussels International Exhibition, 1958. Photograph by Graham Warrington. Visual Resources Collection, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. Original print the property of Canadian Government Expositions Centre. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada.



Cover of *Chronicles of Form and Place: Works on Paper by Takao Tanabe*, by Darrin J. Martens, with contributions by Denise Leclerc and Ihor Holubizky (Burnaby: Burnaby Art Gallery, 2012). Courtesy of the Burnaby Art Gallery.



Cover of *Takao Tanabe*, by Ian Thom, with contributions by Roald Nasgaard, Jeffrey Spalding, and Nancy Tousley (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, Douglas & McIntyre, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2005). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



Cover of *Takao Tanabe, Sumie: Ink Brush Paintings*, by Sherri Kajiwarra (Burnaby: Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, 2016). Courtesy of the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre.



*Crossover (AA)*, 2019, by Renée Van Halm. Courtesy of the artist and Equinox Gallery, Vancouver.



*Cupola*, 1958-60, by Franz Kline. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of the Women's Committee Fund, 1962 (61/55). © Estate of Franz Kline / Artists Rights Society, New York / CARCC, Ottawa (2023).



Exterior view of the Hamilton Artists Co-op (now called Hamilton Artists Inc.), c.1976. Photograph by James A. Chambers. Courtesy of James A. Chambers.



Fishermen's Reserve rounding up Japanese Canadian fishing vessels in Steveston, B.C., December 10, 1941. Photograph by the Canadian Department of National Defence. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (3193627). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.



*Gabriel's Crossing to Humbolt*, 1994, by Landon Mackenzie. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery (96.31). Courtesy of the artist and the Vancouver Art Gallery.



Governor General Adrienne Clarkson presents Takao Tanabe with a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts during a ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa, 2003. Photograph by Dave Chan. © Canadian Press Images / Dave Chan.



Installation view of *Shikata Ga Nai: Contemporary Art by Japanese Canadians* at the Burlington Cultural Centre (Foreground: Louise Noguchi, *History can kill you*, 1984-85), 1987. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Bryce Kanbara.





Instructor Takao Tanabe and summer painting class, Summer School of Visual Arts, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1962. Photograph by Peter Holborne. UBC Archives Photograph Collection, Vancouver (UBC 1.1/9953-1). Courtesy of the University of British Columbia Library.



Installation view of *Takao Tanabe: Printmaker* at the Kelowna Art Gallery, 2023. Courtesy of the Kelowna Art Gallery.



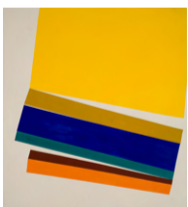
Invitation to a screening of *Takao Tanabe: A Work of Art*, 2009. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada.



*Looking Through the Institution*, 2014, by Robert Burke. Burke and Rain Cabana-Boucher were the 2022 Tanabe Prize winners. Courtesy of the artist and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.



*Maligne Lake, Jasper Park*, 1924, by Lawren S. Harris. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1928 (3541). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC.



*Nanai #6*, 1969, by William Perehudoff. Collection of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (A9 6 P 1). Courtesy of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. © Estate of William Perehudoff. Photo credit: Richard-Max Tremblay.



*Old Cemetery, Provincetown*, 1948, by Joe Plaskett. Collection of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Gift of Lillian B. Allen (1986.045.001). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.



Philip Guston and Nicolas Carone at the Cedar Tavern, New York City, c.1957-60. Photograph by Arthur Swoger. Collection of the RISD Museum, Providence, Gift of Rachel Swoger (2005.101.8). Courtesy of the RISD Museum.



Portrait of Takao Tanabe, 1961, by Iljuwas Bill Reid. Private collection. Photo credit: Rachel Topham Photography.



Poster advertising the Visual Arts program at the Banff School of Fine Arts, 1976, by unknown. Collection of the Paul D. Fleck Library and Archives, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Courtesy of the Paul D. Fleck Library and Archives.



Recto of invitation for *Takao Tanabe: A Tribute: 1950 to Present* exhibition at the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, 1995, with a photograph of Takao Tanabe in his Banff studio, 1979, by Paul Draper. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada.



Reference photographs of a prairie landscape enlarged and taped together, n.d. Photographs by Takao Tanabe. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Anona Thorne.



Reference photographs of foothills in Alberta enlarged and taped together, n.d. Photographs by Takao Tanabe. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Anona Thorne.



Relocation of Japanese Canadians to internment camps in the interior of British Columbia, 1942. Photograph by Tak Toyota. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (3193859). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.





*The River*, 1967, by Dorothy Knowles. The Mendal Art Gallery Collection at Remai Modern, Saskatoon, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Smith, 1973 (1973.2). Courtesy of Remai Modern. © Estate of Dorothy Knowles.



*A Rushing Sea of Undergrowth*, 1935, by Emily Carr. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust (43.3.17). Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



Seal Cove showing Canadian Fish & Cold Storage in Prince Rupert, B.C., c.1930. Photograph by Jack R. Wrathall. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (3308277). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / The Brechin Group Inc.



*Sunrise on the Saguenay, Cape Trinity*, 1880, by Lucius R. O'Brien. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Royal Canadian Academy of Arts diploma work, deposited by the artist, Toronto, 1880 (113). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC.



Still photograph from the documentary series *Landscape as Muse*, 2009. Photograph by Cam Koroluk. Courtesy of 291 Film Company Inc.



Takao Tanabe and Anona Thorne on their Vancouver Island property, 2022. Photograph by Rachel Topham. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Rachel Topham Photography.



Takao and his mother, Tomie Tanabe, at Mt. Fuji, Japan, 1961. Photographer unknown. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Anona Thorne.



Takao Tanabe and his sister, Meiko, in Seal Cove, B.C., 1937. Photographer unknown. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Anona Thorne.



Takao Tanabe and Mira Godard at an exhibition opening at 22 Hazelton Avenue (Mira Godard Gallery), Toronto, n.d. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto.



Takao Tanabe and Robert Young in a Glyde Hall studio, c.1975. Photographer unknown. Collection of the Paul D. Fleck Library and Archives, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Courtesy of the the Paul D. Fleck Library and Archives.



Takao Tanabe at Lemon Creek Japanese Internment Camp, B.C., 1943. Photographer unknown. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Rachel Topham Photography.



Takao Tanabe carving in Skidegate, B.C., 1976. Photograph by John Alexander. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Anona Thorne.



Takao Tanabe in Haida Gwaii, n.d. Photographer unknown. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Anona Thorne.



Takao Tanabe in his studio, n.d. Photograph by Equinox Gallery, Vancouver. Courtesy of Equinox Gallery.





Takao Tanabe in his New York studio, 1970. Photograph by Charmian Reading. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Rachel Topham Photography.



Takao Tanabe in his Vancouver Island studio, 1987. Photograph by Eliza Massey. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Rachel Topham Photography.



Takao Tanabe in Seal Cove, B.C., 1935-36. Photographer unknown. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Rachel Topham Photography.



Takao Tanabe painting in Japan, c.1960. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the artist and the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, Burnaby.



Takao Tanabe painting with ink, Vancouver, early 1960s. Photograph by Tess Boudreau. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Anona Thorne.



Takao Tanabe sketching in Venice, 1955. Photographer unknown. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Anona Thorne.



Takao Tanabe (second row, far right) with his graduating class from the Winnipeg School of Art, 1949. Photographer unknown. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Anona Thorne.



View of Lemon Creek Camp, c.1940-49. Photographer unknown. Japanese Canadian Research Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia Library, Vancouver (JCPC-31-010). Courtesy of the University of British Columbia Library.



Walter J. Phillips pulling prints off a woodblock, 1934. Photographer unknown. Visual Resources Collection, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC.

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Art Canada Institute  
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