

## UAAC/AAUC Recognition Award Lifetime Achievement Award 2020

### UAAC/AAUC Recognition Award

Established in 2010, the UAAC/AAUC Recognition Award acknowledges members and non-members who have demonstrated their unselfish and devoted service to our association and their commitment to our profession's ideals. Past recipients of the award are: Catherine Harding & Allister Neher (2010); Mary & Alan Hughes (2011); Barbara Winters (2012); Brian Foss (2013); David McTavish (2014); Joyce Zemans (2015); Nicole Dubreuil (2016); Lora Senechal Carney (2017); Lynda Jessup and Sally Hickson (2018) and Annie Gérin (2019). In 2017, to honour the UAAC/AAUC conference's 50th anniversary, the board decided that, henceforth, a lifetime membership in the association will accompany this award.

### UAAC/AAUC Lifetime Achievement Award

This award is presented to a past or present member of UAAC who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession over the whole of a career either through leadership, creation, education, curatorial projects, service or publications.

I am very happy to note the two extraordinarily deserving recipients of the 2020 UAAC/AAUC recognition award and the UAAC/AAUC Lifetime Achievement Award: respectively, Dr. Martha Langford of Concordia University, and Dr. John O'Brian of the University of British Columbia. These awards were presented virtually at UAAC's 2020 Conference, hosted jointly by Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia. Thanks to Dr. Erin Silver and Dr. Claudette Lauzon for permission to print the slightly edited texts of their remarks delivered at the conference.

Dr. Benedict Fullalove, President UAAC/AAUC

### **2020 UAAC/AAUC Recognition Award: Dr. Martha Langford**

It is an honour to present the UAAC Recognition Award to long-time UAAC member Martha Langford, Distinguished University Research Professor, Art History and Research Chair and Director of the Gail and Stephen A. Jarislowsky Institute for Studies in Canadian Art at Concordia University, where she has worked since 2004.

Martha's arrival at Concordia was something of a second, third or fourth act; with undergraduate training in photography from NSCAD University in Halifax, Martha went on to work for more than two decades in "government" as the Executive Producer of the National Film Board, Still Photography Division, from 1981 to 1985, and overseeing the transfer of the NFB's still photography collection to the NCC-affiliated Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, where she was chief curator and founding director from 1985 to 1994. Martha earned her PhD at McGill University in 1997. Her first book, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (MQUP 2001), is the product of her meticulous research into vernacular photographic albums from 1860 to 1960 held at the McCord Museum in Montreal. Additional publications include *Scissors, Paper, Stone: Expressions of Memory in Contemporary Photographic Art* (MQUP 2007); the edited volume *Image & Imagination* (MQUP 2005), a scholarly accompaniment to her city-wide, 29-exhibition *Mois de la Photo a Montreal 2005*, where she was Artistic Director; the edited volume *Narratives Unfolding: National Art Histories in an Unfinished World* (MQUP 2016); and, alongside her brother John Langford, *A Cold War Tourist and his Camera* (MQUP) in 2011. She is also editor of the *Journal of Canadian Art History* and, alongside Sandra Paikowsky, the Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation Studies in Art Histories series for McGill-Queen's University Press. Her many-decades-long preoccupation with the work, mind,



and perception of Michael Snow has led to various publications on his practice; her even longer engagement as a maker, curator, mobilizer, and scholar of Canadian photography has led to authoritative texts on the subject—terrain that she continues not only to confront, but also to expand and complicate.

Throughout her tenure as Director of the Jarislowsky Institute, Martha has redefined the conversation about Canadian art, positioning the subject as one incorporating a plurality of approaches, mirrored by her promotion of networks of exchange between scholars across disciplines and geographies. As a teacher, she models mentorship at its finest, making not only space for emerging voices, but also circuits and platforms through which to amplify them—I am but one of the many products of her mentorship.

Martha's countless accomplishments and contributions have been formally recognized with her induction as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, in 2018. An anecdote she shared with me many years ago was that while working at the NGC, she would hide her dress shoes in plant pots around the gallery to quickly change into, out of her sneakers, should official business arise; as Kristy Holmes said during our annual board meeting the other day, "Martha IS an institution."

The UAAC bestows this award to Martha in recognition of her commitment to our organization as a node in the network of ecologies to which she contributes, with gratitude for her boundless energy and belief in the ability to bring to life all that can be imagined, and her deft understanding of systems and institutions—how to work with them, and how to make them work.

Dr. Erin Silver, Dept of Art History, Visual Art & Theory,  
University of British Columbia

### 2020 UAAC/AAUC Lifetime Achievement Award: Dr. John O'Brian

The 2020 UAAC Lifetime Achievement Award has been presented to Dr. John O'Brian, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory at the University of British Columbia.

Prolific as both a writer and a curator, John has authored or edited over 20 books from *Ruthless Hedonism: The American Reception of Matisse* (University of Chicago Press, 1999) to *Through Post-Atomic Eyes* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), as well as *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, one of The New York Times "Notable Books of the Year" in 1986. His most recent book, *The Bomb in the Wilderness: Photography and the Nuclear Era in Canada*, published by University of British Columbia Press in 2020, represents John's enduring commitment to tracing Canada's nuclear footprint through photography. Highlights of his curatorial career include *Strangelove's Weegee* at Presentation House in North Vancouver in 2013, *After the Flash* at WORK Gallery in London (UK) in 2015, *Camera Atomica* at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2015, and *Bombhead* at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2018.



The consummate polymath, John is also a poet and an artist. His short film *Octozilla*, produced with Gregory Coyes, was shown at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2018, and other art projects include *Ci elegans*, produced with Marina Roy at SFU Galleries in 2017, *Sixteen Nuclear Power Stations* at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2013, and *Multiplication* at the Catriona Jeffries Gallery in Vancouver in 1998.

John has been the recipient of many distinguished awards and recognitions, including the Janet Braide Award for outstanding scholarship in Canadian art history in 1990, a Senior Research Fellowship at the Canadian Centre for the Visual Arts in Ottawa in 1992–93, a Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute Visiting Lectureship in India in 1996–1997, a Killam Research Prize at the University of British Columbia in 2000, a Visiting Research

Professorship at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto in 2007, the Brenda & David McLean Chair in Canadian Studies at the University of British Columbia from 2008–2011, and the Thakore Award in Human Rights and Peace Studies at Simon Fraser University in 2011. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada since 2009, John also holds an honorary doctorate from Trinity College at the University of Toronto, and in 2016 he was delighted to be inducted into the Sports Hall of Fame at the University of Toronto.

Anyone who has worked with John O’Brian knows how seriously (and playfully) he takes his role as a leader, advisor and mentor in the field of art history in Canada. From 1989 to 1991, he was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Vancouver Art Gallery, and from 1991 to 1998 a Special Advisor to the board of the National Gallery of Canada. In 2020 he was appointed an External Advisor to the National Gallery. He has also been involved with the Harvard University Art Museum, Polygon Gallery and Belkin Art Gallery. A longstanding supporter of the Universities Art Association of Canada, John co-organized, with Landon Mackenzie and David McWilliam, the 1997 UAAC conference hosted by Emily Carr University and the University of British Columbia. As a professor at the University of British Columbia from 1987–2017, John taught and mentored a few generations of art historians. He held the Brenda & David McLean Chair in Canadian Studies from 2008 to 2011, and was an Associate of the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies. John’s former colleagues and students describe him as an open-minded, rigorous, enthusiastic, generous, kind, and patient mentor and teacher who, to quote a recent graduate student, “creates opportunities and connections for his students that go well beyond his role as professor and beyond the academy.”

On behalf of UAAC’s Board of Directors, I’m thrilled to present the UACC/AAUC Lifetime Achievement award to Dr. John O’Brian in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to the study of art and culture in Canada and beyond.

Dr. Claudette Lauzon, School for the Contemporary Arts,  
Simon Fraser University