

Big Beat: 10 best pieces of art I saw in Ottawa in 2014



PETER SIMPSON - THE BIG BEAT

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Robert Sirman, director and CEO for the Canada Council for the Arts, shows off the latest art exhibit in their new public space at 150 Elgin St. The installation, from artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, is called *The Year's Midnight, 2011*, and features a plasma screen, computer, webcam, and custom software. Stare at the screen the right way and your eyes begin to "smoke." (Photo by Wayne Cuddington/ Ottawa Citizen)

So much art, such a short list.

Of the many works of art that I saw in the Ottawa area in 2014, these 10 were my favourites, for various reasons. Some of the art is by Ottawa-area artists, and some is not. Some of the art is new, and some is very old but was exhibited in Ottawa this year.

The list is entirely subjective, and arranged by opening dates.

Read more about all these works and exhibitions at



The Sea-Bear Bracelet, by Charles Edenshaw, at the National Gallery of Canada (handout photo)

they are dada-esque, and delightful proof that art can come from anyone. [Click here to read more about Beck and the New Artist Showcase.](http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/music/new-artists-a-refreshing-change-from-stodgy-establishment-saw-gallery) (<http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/music/new-artists-a-refreshing-change-from-stodgy-establishment-saw-gallery>)



Otto Dix, Cemetery (Funeral Procession through Summer Landscape), 1941 © Estate of Otto Dix / SODRAC

Cemetery (Funeral Procession through Summer Landscape), by Otto Dix, Canadian War Museum, April: The exhibition Transformations brought together the First World War and post-war art of German Otto Dix and Canadian A.Y. Jackson, each of whom served his country and lived to process the experience through his art. Dix's 1941 painting of a funeral procession weaving through the German

countryside — with storm clouds once again threatening the motherland and a farmer at the roadside with the reaper’s scythe — was powerful mix of natural beauty and man-made terror. [Click here to read more about Dix and Jackson. \(http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-reviews/otto-dix-and-a-y-jackson-two-men-two-nations-and-one-unforgettably-horrible-war\)](http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-reviews/otto-dix-and-a-y-jackson-two-men-two-nations-and-one-unforgettably-horrible-war)



A fake 10-pound note by Banksy. Soon after he made his fake, more fakes of his fake were available on eBay, and all worth more than a real 10-pound note.

Banksy’s 10-pound note, SAW Gallery, June: The exhibition F is for Fake raised questions about fakery and fraud in visual art, and never more gleefully, and profoundly, than in the counterfeit British currency created by Banksy several years ago. The shadowy street artist made 10-pound notes with a photo of Princess Diana in place of the Queen, and with “Banksy of England” on the bottom. What’s so great about that simple sleight-of-hand? Banksy’s fake bills now sell for hundreds of pounds, so they’re worth more than the real bills — so much so that people are selling fakes of Banksy’s fakes. [Click here to read more about](#)

F is for Fake. (<http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-reviews/f-is-for-fake-at-saw-gallery>)



Close-up – The Year’s Midnight, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Morguard Building lobby, June: The Canada Council for the Arts took up residency in the new building on Elgin Street, and booked time on a giant video screen in the lobby. The debut video from Montreal’s Lozano-Hemmer put a hidden camera on passersby, who, if they stopped to look, saw their own eyes burst into white, smoking orbs. It was a sobering, interactive reflection on the ubiquitous surveillance of modern life. [Click here to read more about Lozano-Hemmer’s installation. \(<http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-arts/your-eyes-will-explode-in-canada-councils-new-gallery-space-on-elgin>\)](http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-arts/your-eyes-will-explode-in-canada-councils-new-gallery-space-on-elgin)



Portrait of Catrin Finch, by Edith Maybin, at Wall Space Gallery in Westboro.

Portrait of Catrin Finch, by Edith Maybin, Wall Space Gallery, July: The exhibition of emerging photographers at the Westboro gallery had much to choose from, and the jewel at the centre was Edith Maybin's sumptuous portrait of the very-pregnant Welsh harpist Catrin Finch. That sublime expression, that rich taffeta, that expansive belly — it's a photograph that commands respect. [Click here to read more about the emerging photographers exhibition.](#)

<http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-arts/canadian-photographers-mostly-emerge-at-wall-space-gallery>



Anna Torma's exhibition of silks, titled *Bagatelles*, is a quiet triumph at Karsh-Masson Gallery in Ottawa city hall. (Photo by Peter Simpson, Ottawa Citizen)

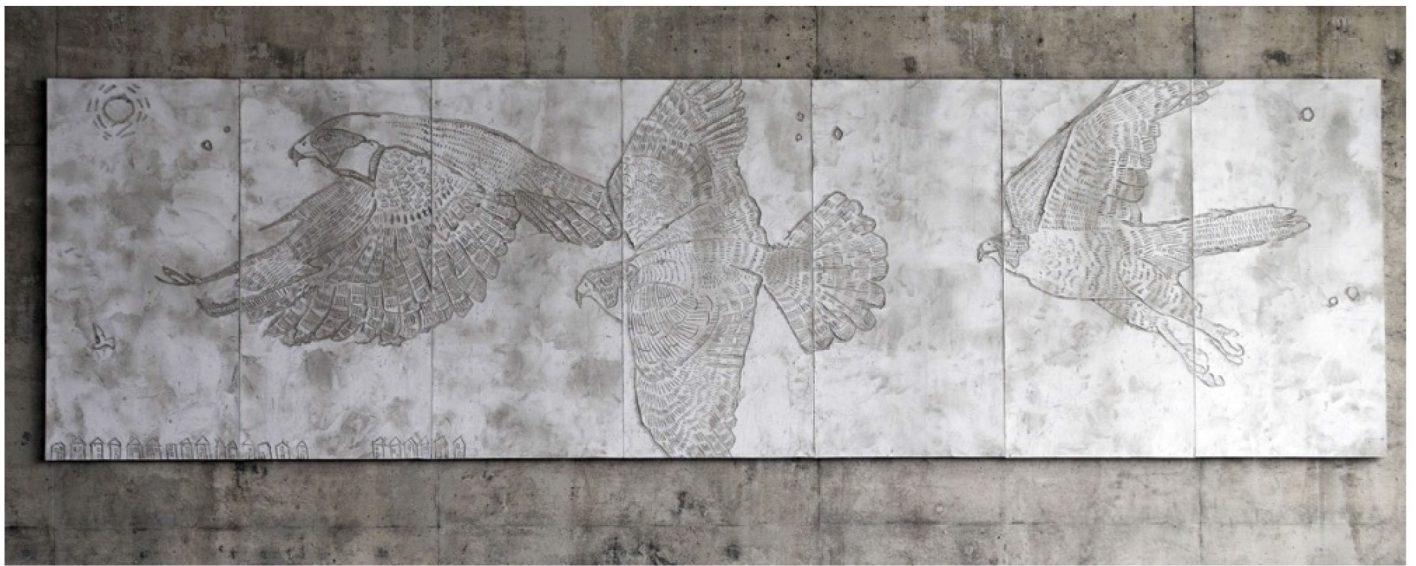
Bagatelles, By Anna Torma, Karsh-Masson Gallery at City Hall, July: Anna Torma's densely embroidered sheets of silk hung mid-room, and were so delicate they'd move as a person walked past. Their ephemeral grace demanded contemplation. To be among them was to be calmed: I felt like wrapping myself in their quietude. [Click here to read more about Torma's Bagatelles.](#)

<http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-arts/anna-tormas-bagatelles-is-a-triumph-in-silk>



Leaves of Grass, by Geoffrey Farmer, at the National Gallery of Canada. (Photo courtesy NGC)

Leaves of Grass, by Geoffrey Farmer, National Gallery, October: Farmer's epic installation is the high point in Shine A Light, the National Gallery's biennial of recent, Canadian contemporary acquisitions. Farmer's crew clipped thousands of images from decades of Life magazine, and propped up the images on small sticks. Walk its length and a half-century of history and popular culture marches past, like a veritable parade of memory. [Click here to read a review of Shine A Light. \(http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-arts/the-national-gallery-shows-off-some-of-its-recent-purchases\)](http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-arts/the-national-gallery-shows-off-some-of-its-recent-purchases)



One of Christopher Griffin' falcon panels on the Bronson St overpass at Riverside.
(Pat McGrath / Ottawa Citizen)

Falcons, by Christopher Griffin, Bronson-Riverside overpass, October: Christopher Griffin won a public-art competition for the Bronson Avenue overpass that crosses Riverside Drive. He installed several concrete panels bearing peregrine falcon shapes and wings below the overpass, then added sculptures of falcons on top of the overpass. It's a public installation with artistic power, yet accessible to anyone.

On Mustard, by Jack Bush, National Gallery, November: Sometimes it's impossible to explain one's attraction to a particular work of art. On Mustard is far from being the most complex or celebrated of dozens of paintings in the Bush retrospective, but its simplicity and joie de vivre are irresistible. (No photo available.) [Click here to read a review of the Jack Bush exhibition.](#)
(<http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-arts/the-irresistible-triumph-of-jack-bush-at-the-national-gallery-of-canada>)