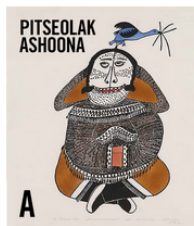


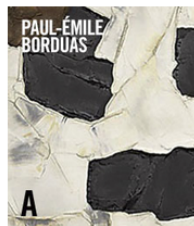
RISS Review: ACI Online Art Books

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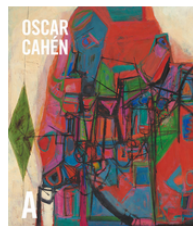
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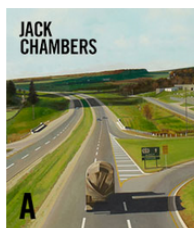
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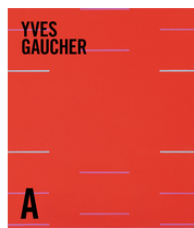
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ACI Online Art Books is a suite of open-access, peer-reviewed e-books published by the Art Canada Institute (ACI)/ Institut de l'art canadien, a charitable non-profit research organization operating out of Massey College, University of Toronto.

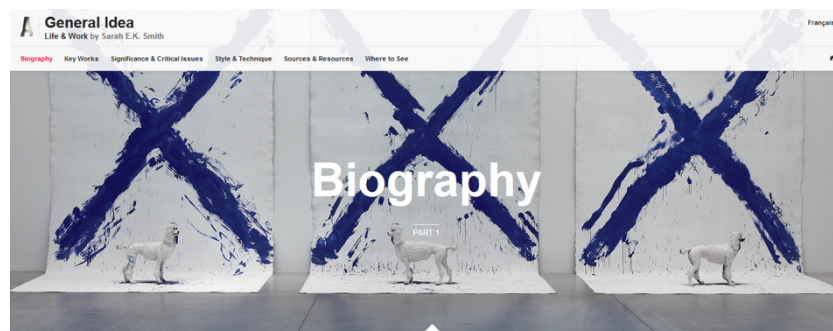
The ongoing series highlights Canadian artists predominantly from the twentieth century. Of eighteen monographs published in or since 2013, only AA Bronson (of the collective General Idea) and Michael Snow are still alive.

Key figures like Emily Carr, Paul-Émile Bourduas, and Norval Morrisseau are featured in addition to lesser-known artists. Also impressive is the fact that each title is published in Canada's two official languages, English and French.

ACI authors hail from academia and cultural institutions, and their writing is fairly accessible to the general public. With libraries in the US and Canada having already taken advantage of the free MARC records through OCLC, the ACI is well on its way to achieving the goal of engaging a national and international audience. Personally, I found this resource to be outstanding when preparing a modern Canadian art history class, and recommend it highly for academic use. Some content pertains more to scholars than recreational readers, such as the 'Sources and Resources' section. The bibliographies within often identify trends explicitly, such as a plethora of interviews or a dearth of archival material.

Users can choose between a downloadable PDF file and an online version compatible with a desktop or laptop computer, or mobile device like an iPad.

Concrete Design Communications has used a layout for the web-based version that combines the flair of coffee table books with the familiarity of web design. Each publication has fifty to sixty images, many of which are zoomable. With the average word count being 17,000, that's one image for every few hundred words, making for a stimulating design. Each book contains the following sections: Biography, Key Works, Significance & Critical Issues, Style & Technique, Sources & Resources, and Where to See. They are accessed as drop-down menus with variable subsections (which are somewhat comparable to index terms) in the desktop/laptop version, but the mobile version contains only a top-level menu of the six sections. The use of hypertext in both versions should appeal to readers accustomed to surfing the web. However, occasional discrepancies between associated terms may slow down readers unfamiliar with the subject matter; for example, in Tom Thomson (2015) by David P. Silcox, 'modernist movements' links to a section that relates but doesn't use that term or variant terms.



Certain features are reportedly inactive in the PDF file format, but the ACI doesn't specify details. Naturally, the PDF file is less interactive. Some differences are: no hyperlinks; lack of zoomability for images; mouseover popup footnotes changed to static endnotes; and the same treatment of the glossary, which is reduced—it contains only terms that relate to the individual book as opposed to those that relate to the series as a whole (for example, the entry for the artist-run centre, A Space, is excluded from the PDF version of Emily Carr [2015] by Lisa Baldissera).

The PDF file allows for the most robust searching. Full-text searching can be done within an individual book rather than from the ACI homepage for all books simultaneously, and search terms are highlighted rather than results being yielded without indication of the appearance of search terms.

To keep abreast of news—such as new titles and the forthcoming development of virtual exhibitions and apps that highlight Canadian art—follow the ACL on Twitter, Facebook, or join their email list.