



The Natalie Brettschneider Archive

Carol Sawyer

Wednesday, September 23rd - Sunday, November 15th, 2020





CAROL SAWYER

THE NATALIE BRETTSCHEIDER ARCHIVE

SEPTEMBER 23 - NOVEMBER 15, 2020

CURATOR: MONA FILIP

A SCOTIABANK CONTACT PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL CORE EXHIBITION

SCOTIABANK
CONTACT
PHOTOGRAPHY
FESTIVAL

koffler gallery



Canada Council
for the Arts
Conseil des arts
du Canada



FUNDED BY
THE CITY OF
TORONTO



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO
An Ontario government agency
du ministère du patrimoine, du tourisme



In The Natalie Brettschneider Archive, Vancouver artist Carol Sawyer assembles a fiction as realistically as possible to tell a needed story. Convincingly manufactured photographs and documentary materials imagine the life and work of a genre-blurring, avant-garde artist leaving a fragmentary imprint through Modernism's exclusionary account. The archive unfolds chronologically as Sawyer pieces together Brettschneider's biography to (re)construct a believable artistic forebear, while at the same time creating a narrative device that brings to light buried histories of women's creative achievements.

Selectively consolidating a monolithic record, the Western art history canon has been shaped by ideological, political, and psychological motivations. Organizing its version of art's progress into neat categories and clear connections, this framework omits voices and trajectories that complicate or elude patriarchal and Eurocentric assumptions. Unfixed and ever-growing, the Natalie Brettschneider archive is a feminist intervention that ruptures art historical hegemonies, uncovering sidelined stories and perspectives. With each of its iteration, the project shifts focus to research local contexts, enrich perceptions of the past, and unlock a spectrum of divergent futures.

Here at the Koffler Gallery, Sawyer deepens her examination of Natalie Brettschneider's historical context and connections to Toronto's artistic communities. Including both authentic and fabricated archival documents linking Brettschneider's explorations to actual events, people and places, the project examines photography's use in sustaining art historical conventions and cultural assumptions about identity, authorship and art-making. Placing Brettschneider in Toronto at various dates between the mid-1940s and the late 1970s, Sawyer investigates beyond Brettschneider's struggles and privileges as a 20th-century white woman to foreground some of the queer and racialized women who contributed to the local cultural milieu and the Canadian art scene.

Through a contemporary intervention that prods the foundations of dogmatic narratives, Sawyer exposes a more nuanced array of art histories and disrupts mythologizing views of art and artists. Her acts of subversion aim to enable a fuller understanding and engagement with our living culture, nurturing hope for unfettered futures.

Carol Sawyer gratefully acknowledges research assistants Keiko Guo and Daryn Wright; cousin Alfred Holden, local history buff; Faye Blum, Archivist, Ontario Jewish Archives, Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre, Toronto, Ontario; Linda Kawamoto Reid, Research Archivist, Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, Burnaby, BC; and the staff at Dance Collections Danse and the Ontario Multicultural History Project for their valuable assistance.

The artist is also deeply grateful to the individuals who generously shared their stories about the remarkable creative women in their families – their mothers, aunts, or grandmothers whose images are included in this show: Arlene Chan, Arlene and Cyrill Gryffe, Doug Hum and family, Bernice and Julia Hune, Zelda Melamed, Ilan Neumann, Santee Smith, Diane Solway and Julie Weston. Many thanks to Susan Chew, who gave permission to include her image and story in the show, and to Sarindar Dhaliwal for her thoughtful and generous contributions to the exhibition.

The intensive research and creation time invested in this project would not have been possible without a generous grant from the Canada Council for the Arts.

Childhood and Early Life

Natalie Brettschneider was a singer and performance artist born in New Westminster, BC in 1896. She was active in Europe from 1913 until the late 1930s, when a family illness necessitated her return home. Originally trained as an opera singer, her exposure to the artistic avant-gardes of Europe led her to embrace an increasingly wide-ranging performance practice. Brettschneider continued her unconventional artistic career in Canada from 1938 until her death in 1986, at the age of 90. This exhibition attempts to piece together what little is known of her work, reconstructing Brettschneider's eclectic output from the archival fragments that have surfaced to date.

Brettschneider was the third and youngest daughter born to German immigrant parents who settled in New Westminster BC in the 1880's. Her father was a carpenter, whose skills were in high demand after a devastating fire levelled most of New Westminster in 1898. Her mother worked as a dress-maker, creating costumes for some of the many amateur theatrical troupes active in the area. The entire family attended the grand opening of the New Westminster Opera House in 1899, where the performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore* made a deep impression on the young Natalie, spurring a childhood obsession with opera and a lifelong love of singing.

As with many performance artists and musicians, Brettschneider's art practice was for the most part ephemeral and site specific. Some documentation of her work survived to this day, enabling a fragmentary account to be deduced from existing photographs, scores, and first-hand reports. The exhibition traces her activities in Paris, the BC interior, Vancouver, Victoria, Ottawa and Toronto, and explores links with some of Brettschneider's Canadian contemporaries – highlighting the work of a rich and diverse range of female artists who were active in these regions.



Natalie Brettschneider

Childhood Sketchbook, c. 1904 – 1909

Mixed media, paper

Carol Sawyer/ Natalie Brettschneider Archive



Text block on the wall, likely a description of the artwork.





Small text label on the wall, likely providing information about the artwork.



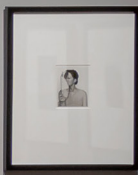
Small text label on the wall, likely providing information about the artwork.



Small informational text panel on the left wall.



Small informational text panel on the left wall.



Small informational text panel on the right wall.





Unknown Photographer,

Natalie Brettschneider performs Nancy Cunard's Hat, Paris, c. 1925

Silver gelatin print

Carol Sawyer/ Natalie Brettschneider Archive

Paris Years

Brettschneider's early fascination with opera singers grew into a determination to pursue a career as a singer herself. While still a teenager, she toured British Columbia in several small operetta productions. The two promotional postcards shown here appear to date from that part of her career. Recognizing her precocious talent, a group of local business owners helped her raise funds to study in Paris with the renowned vocal pedagogue Mathilde Marchesi. In the spring of 1913 she left Vancouver on a train for Montreal, the first leg of a journey that would take her to Paris to further her music studies. All of the snapshots of Brettschneider that her mother took that day turned out to be double exposures.

Brettschneider arrived in Paris only to discover that Madame Marchesi had recently passed away. She nonetheless loved living there, and was soon looking for any kind of employment that would allow her to prolong her stay and find a new voice teacher. She picked up work as a model for various fashion houses and milliners, and earned extra money as an English tutor. Poet Germaine Albert-Birot introduced herself to Brettschneider at one of the daily demonstrations of throat gargle that Brettschneider gave at La Semaritaine department store, which led to her meeting other artists involved with Paris' experimental literary, music, and theatre communities.

These influences inspired her to create increasingly eccentric and theatrical vocal performances, incorporating sounds inspired by the rhythmic rattle of the newly opened Paris Metro, the cries of street vendors in the produce and fish markets, songbirds, and other sounds she encountered on her long walks through the city. She gradually began to think of everything that she did as part of her artistic practice, which contributed to the signature eclecticism of her output.



Small text label on the wall.



Small text label on the wall.





Unknown Photographer

Natalie Brettschneider performs Burnt Tree, Kamloops, B.C., 1949

Archival Inkjet print from original negative

Carol Sawyer/ Natalie Brettschneider Archive,

Gift of Ray Perrault, 2010

Return to Canada

When Brettschneider returned to Canada in the late 1930s, she renewed her acquaintance with the opera community in Vancouver, attending recitals by rising Vancouver opera star Lily Washimoto and performances by singer/celebrities like Maryon Anderson, Paul Robeson and Bidou Sayou, brought to Vancouver by Hilker Entertainment. She travelled to the interior of British Columbia, where she created a number of site-specific performances, and gave recitals in both Kelowna and Kamloops.

During the Second World War and the decade just after, when supper clubs with in-house dance bands proliferated, Brettschneider pursued work as a jazz singer, once again using the stage name Natalie Brett, which she earlier used during WWI, in order to sidestep growing anti-German sentiment. With her Natalie Brett Quartet, she performed in various cities in southern Ontario in the late 1940's and 1950's, gradually shifting to a more experimental practice that incorporated jazz, classical, and avant-garde influences.



1970
 1971
 1972
 1973
 1974
 1975
 1976
 1977
 1978
 1979
 1980
 1981
 1982
 1983
 1984
 1985
 1986
 1987
 1988
 1989
 1990
 1991
 1992
 1993
 1994
 1995
 1996
 1997
 1998
 1999
 2000
 2001
 2002
 2003
 2004
 2005
 2006
 2007
 2008
 2009
 2010
 2011
 2012
 2013
 2014
 2015
 2016
 2017
 2018
 2019
 2020
 2021
 2022
 2023
 2024
 2025
 2026
 2027
 2028
 2029
 2030
 2031
 2032
 2033
 2034
 2035
 2036
 2037
 2038
 2039
 2040
 2041
 2042
 2043
 2044
 2045
 2046
 2047
 2048
 2049
 2050
 2051
 2052
 2053
 2054
 2055
 2056
 2057
 2058
 2059
 2060
 2061
 2062
 2063
 2064
 2065
 2066
 2067
 2068
 2069
 2070
 2071
 2072
 2073
 2074
 2075
 2076
 2077
 2078
 2079
 2080
 2081
 2082
 2083
 2084
 2085
 2086
 2087
 2088
 2089
 2090
 2091
 2092
 2093
 2094
 2095
 2096
 2097
 2098
 2099
 2100
 2101
 2102
 2103
 2104
 2105
 2106
 2107
 2108
 2109
 2110
 2111
 2112
 2113
 2114
 2115
 2116
 2117
 2118
 2119
 2120
 2121
 2122
 2123
 2124
 2125
 2126
 2127
 2128
 2129
 2130
 2131
 2132
 2133
 2134
 2135
 2136
 2137
 2138
 2139
 2140
 2141
 2142
 2143
 2144
 2145
 2146
 2147
 2148
 2149
 2150
 2151
 2152
 2153
 2154
 2155
 2156
 2157
 2158
 2159
 2160
 2161
 2162
 2163
 2164
 2165
 2166
 2167
 2168
 2169
 2170
 2171
 2172
 2173
 2174
 2175
 2176
 2177
 2178
 2179
 2180
 2181
 2182
 2183
 2184
 2185
 2186
 2187
 2188
 2189
 2190
 2191
 2192
 2193
 2194
 2195
 2196
 2197
 2198
 2199
 2200
 2201
 2202
 2203
 2204
 2205
 2206
 2207
 2208
 2209
 2210
 2211
 2212
 2213
 2214
 2215
 2216
 2217
 2218
 2219
 2220
 2221
 2222
 2223
 2224
 2225
 2226
 2227
 2228
 2229
 2230
 2231
 2232
 2233
 2234
 2235
 2236
 2237
 2238
 2239
 2240
 2241
 2242
 2243
 2244
 2245
 2246
 2247
 2248
 2249
 2250
 2251
 2252
 2253
 2254
 2255
 2256
 2257
 2258
 2259
 2260
 2261
 2262
 2263
 2264
 2265
 2266
 2267
 2268
 2269
 2270
 2271
 2272
 2273
 2274
 2275
 2276
 2277
 2278
 2279
 2280
 2281
 2282
 2283
 2284
 2285
 2286
 2287
 2288
 2289
 2290
 2291
 2292
 2293
 2294
 2295
 2296
 2297
 2298
 2299
 2300
 2301
 2302
 2303
 2304
 2305
 2306
 2307
 2308
 2309
 2310
 2311
 2312
 2313
 2314
 2315
 2316
 2317
 2318
 2319
 2320
 2321
 2322
 2323
 2324
 2325
 2326
 2327
 2328
 2329
 2330
 2331
 2332
 2333
 2334
 2335
 2336
 2337
 2338
 2339
 2340
 2341
 2342
 2343
 2344
 2345
 2346
 2347
 2348
 2349
 2350
 2351
 2352
 2353
 2354
 2355
 2356
 2357
 2358
 2359
 2360
 2361
 2362
 2363
 2364
 2365
 2366
 2367
 2368
 2369
 2370
 2371
 2372
 2373
 2374
 2375
 2376
 2377
 2378
 2379
 2380
 2381
 2382
 2383
 2384
 2385
 2386
 2387
 2388
 2389
 2390
 2391
 2392
 2393
 2394
 2395
 2396
 2397
 2398
 2399
 2400
 2401
 2402
 2403
 2404
 2405
 2406
 2407
 2408
 2409
 2410
 2411
 2412
 2413
 2414
 2415
 2416
 2417
 2418
 2419
 2420
 2421
 2422
 2423
 2424

[illegible]

Author's address:
 Department of Mathematics
 University of Illinois at Chicago
 875 North Dearborn Avenue
 Chicago, IL 60642-3143
 USA
 E-mail: shen@uic.edu

Author's address:
 Department of Mathematics
 University of Illinois at Chicago
 875 North Dearborn Avenue
 Chicago, IL 60642-3143
 USA
 E-mail: shen@uic.edu





Brettschneider appears to have travelled widely in Canada during the late 1940's and 1950's. She visited the Banff Centre to participate in the first years of its opera program, continued to make tours in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, and decided to establish herself as a jazz singer in the late 1940's and early 1950's she toured across Canada with her seven-piece vocal ensemble, The Canadian Harmonique and played with larger vocal ensembles in Banff and Ottawa.

Brettschneider spent considerable time in Toronto in 1946, visiting friends and meeting new ones while working as a hat model for various local retailers and singing jazz. At the same time, she continued to seek out a wide range of music and opera performances, attending the premiere of choreographer Cynthia Barrett's production of *Canadians*, an ambitious depiction of the country's social history - an act and premiere of new works by Henry (Joe) Dyer, a production of the opera *La Traviata* starring ex-Vancouverite Lily Blumstein, and at least one Chinese Opera performance.

During this Toronto visit, Brettschneider attended a party celebrating the re-opening of the ballroom at the Park Plaza Hotel, where jazz singer Phyllis Marshall and her band were featured - a performance documented by photographer Sylvia Schmitt. The latter's father, Joseph Schwartz, was part of the Park Plaza Company, a group of investors who helped complete the Park Plaza in 1935.

1946
Brettschneider spent considerable time in Toronto in 1946, visiting friends and meeting new ones while working as a hat model for various local retailers and singing jazz. At the same time, she continued to seek out a wide range of music and opera performances, attending the premiere of choreographer Cynthia Barrett's production of *Canadians*, an ambitious depiction of the country's social history - an act and premiere of new works by Henry (Joe) Dyer, a production of the opera *La Traviata* starring ex-Vancouverite Lily Blumstein, and at least one Chinese Opera performance.



1946
Brettschneider spent considerable time in Toronto in 1946, visiting friends and meeting new ones while working as a hat model for various local retailers and singing jazz. At the same time, she continued to seek out a wide range of music and opera performances, attending the premiere of choreographer Cynthia Barrett's production of *Canadians*, an ambitious depiction of the country's social history - an act and premiere of new works by Henry (Joe) Dyer, a production of the opera *La Traviata* starring ex-Vancouverite Lily Blumstein, and at least one Chinese Opera performance.

1946
Brettschneider spent considerable time in Toronto in 1946, visiting friends and meeting new ones while working as a hat model for various local retailers and singing jazz. At the same time, she continued to seek out a wide range of music and opera performances, attending the premiere of choreographer Cynthia Barrett's production of *Canadians*, an ambitious depiction of the country's social history - an act and premiere of new works by Henry (Joe) Dyer, a production of the opera *La Traviata* starring ex-Vancouverite Lily Blumstein, and at least one Chinese Opera performance.



1946
Brettschneider spent considerable time in Toronto in 1946, visiting friends and meeting new ones while working as a hat model for various local retailers and singing jazz. At the same time, she continued to seek out a wide range of music and opera performances, attending the premiere of choreographer Cynthia Barrett's production of *Canadians*, an ambitious depiction of the country's social history - an act and premiere of new works by Henry (Joe) Dyer, a production of the opera *La Traviata* starring ex-Vancouverite Lily Blumstein, and at least one Chinese Opera performance.



Natalie Brettschneider

Rapunzel and Medusa sit down to chat about war, c. 1947

Archival ink-jet print from original negative

Carol Sawyer/ Natalie Brettschneider Archive

Toronto Travels

Brettschneider appears to have travelled widely in Canada during the late 1940's and 1950's – she visited the Banff Centre to participate in the first years of its opera program, continued to model hats in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, and worked to establish herself as a jazz singer. In the late 1940's and early 1950's she toured across Canada with her avant garde noise ensemble Trois Femmes Mécaniques and played with larger noise ensembles in Banff and Ottawa.

Brettschneider spent considerable time in Toronto in 1946, visiting friends and making new ones while working as a hat model for various local milliners and singing jazz. At the same time, she continued to seek out a wide range of music and dance performances, attending the premiere of choreographer Cynthia Barrett's production of *Canadiana* – an ambitious depiction of the country's social history – as well as premieres of new works by Nancy Lima Dent, a production of the opera *La Traviata* starring ex-Vancouverite Lily Washimoto, and at least one Chinese Opera performance.

During this Toronto visit, Brettschneider attended a party celebrating the re-opening of the ballroom at the Park Plaza Hotel, where jazz singer Phyllis Marshall and her band were featured - a performance documented by photographer Sylvia Schwartz. The latter's father, Joseph Schwartz, was part of the Park Plaza Company, a group of investors who helped complete the Park Plaza in 1936.





Two small informational text panels are mounted on the wall to the right of the central photograph.





Listen to The Exclusive Sound of the Characters Talent Agency ltd, featuring series of brief female demo tapes. Used with permission of the CBC. Library and Archives Canada, 1977-0189.



Textual information, likely a caption or description, located on the left wall.

Textual information, likely a caption or description, located on the left wall.

Textual information, likely a caption or description, located on the left wall.

Textual information, likely a caption or description, located on the right wall.

Textual information, likely a caption or description, located on the far right wall.



Small informational text label.

Small informational text label.





Unknown Photographer

Last Known Photograph of Natalie Brettschneider, 1986

Archival Inkjet print from original negative

Carol Sawyer/ Natalie Brettschneider Archive

Gift of Erika Heininger Sawyer, 2002

Late Years

Surprisingly little is known about Brettschneider's later years. In the 1960's she used a modest inheritance from her mother to buy a small summer cottage in Point Roberts Washington, which she gradually covered with a fanciful bricolage of beach glass and other found objects. There is some evidence that she took part in at least one of the many feminist collectives that sprang up in Vancouver in the 1970s. For most of the year, she lived in an old house in east Vancouver, where she tended a small vegetable garden, made innovative gingerbread houses, and put on puppet plays with neighbourhood children.

Brettschneider's last visit to Toronto seems to have been in 1970, when she renewed her acquaintance with ex-New Westminster denizen Susan Chew, attended a performance by soul singer Jackie Shane at the Sapphire Tavern, and enjoyed several meals with friends at the Kwong Chow and at Mary Millichamp's restaurant. She was excited to learn about Mohawk pottery, when she encountered the work of Elda "Bun" Smith at the Caravan Festival. In 1978, Brettschneider made a last trip to Paris to visit friends. While there, she struck up a friendship with the young Canadian artist Sarindar Dhaliwal. One letter of their subsequent correspondence, penned by Dhaliwal, has recently surfaced.

Brettschneider died in 1986, at the age of 90.

Lily Washimoto



Lily Washimoto, 1939
Nikkei National Museum.

Lilian Fumiko Washimoto was a talented singer and pianist who achieved considerable success in Vancouver in the 1930s. Born on Vancouver Island in 1909, she obtained her Toronto Conservatory of Music (A.T.C.M.) degree in piano in 1931, and completed her A.T.C.M. degree in singing in 1936. By 1939 Washimoto had established a successful career as a professional singer. Brettschneider mentions attending her critically acclaimed recital at Hotel Vancouver in January of that year.

A month after the surprise military attack on Pearl Harbour by the Japanese Navy on December 7, 1941, the Canadian government passed the order calling for the removal of male Japanese nationals between the ages of 18 and 45 from within 100 miles inland from the coast of BC. On February 24, 1942 "all persons of Japanese origin," no matter their place of birth, were forcibly removed from the coast to temporary internment camps in the BC interior. Washimoto is listed in city directories as living at 1286 W. 14th Ave in Vancouver in 1942, but no records of her being interned were found, or of any performances by her taking place between July 1941 and May 1943. It appears that she relocated to Toronto after the war.

On May 26th 1946, Brettschneider attended a performance of *La Traviata* by the Rosselino Opera Company at the Eaton Auditorium, excited to hear soprano Lily Kuroyanagi, nee Washimoto, sing the role of Violetta. Brettschneider had seen her perform in Vancouver between 1939 and 1941, including her star turn as Yum Yum in the Theatre under the Stars' presentation of the *Mikado* in July 1941, but Washimoto disappeared from Vancouver stages after that production. It is likely, though unconfirmed, that the Washimoto family left Vancouver in 1942, when Vancouver's more than 22,000 Japanese-Canadian citizens had their businesses and property confiscated by the Canadian Government, and were forcibly relocated and interned in the name of national security. Many members of the community moved to Ontario before or after the war, as Japanese Canadians continued to be legally prevented from entering the "protected zone" of the Pacific coast until 1949. Washimoto's next known public performance after 1941 was in 1943, when she sang at a convocation service at Bloor United Church in Toronto. Washimoto sang the lead role of Violetta in two different productions of *La Traviata* in Toronto in 1943 and 1946, and also taught piano privately. Sometime between 1944 and 1946, she appears to have married Harry Kazuo Kuroyanagi, the photographer who captured the above photo of her as Violetta.

Tuey Ping Lee-Hum



Tuey Ping Lee-Hum was a Cantonese opera star who came to Canada in 1936 with her performance troupe in order to raise awareness and support for the war effort in China against Imperial Japan. In Vancouver, she joined the local Jin Wah Sing music society, and seems to have moved to Toronto shortly after. Lee-Hum may have been granted entry to Canada on a special visa or performer permit because of her association with the opera troupe, but her husband, Hum See Tong, had already arrived in 1912, paying the head tax imposed on Chinese immigrants at the time. Hum worked in the restaurant business, eventually owning and operating his own restaurant, Cathay Gardens, originally located on the south end of Elizabeth Street. Cantonese opera during this time was incredibly popular and the three Cantonese opera houses that existed in the city were full every night, attended by both Chinese and non-Chinese audiences. Lee-Hum specialized in male roles. The troupe often toured across the country for performances and, following the war, were invited to New York, where Lee-Hum spent three years, taking her young children with her. After she returned to Toronto from New York, she performed less frequently and she occasionally coached others in opera. One of her last public performances was around 1980. She died in 1994.

Unknown Photographer,

Tuey Ping Lee-Hum performing in costume, n.d.
Courtesy of Doug Hum, Multicultural History Society
of Ontario

Minnie Soltz



Unknown Photographer,
Interior View of Minette Millinery, 278 ½ Yonge St., Toronto,
c. 1935-1945
Ontario Jewish Archives

Each time Brettschneider came to Toronto, she liked to visit Minette Millinery to call on proprietor Minnie Soltz or one of the ten Soltz sisters who helped mind the hat shop located at 278 ½ Yonge Street. Open from 1928 to late 1955, the store carried a great variety of stylish hats. Minnie was by all accounts a wonderful character - talkative, funny, and fun to be around.

A Brettschneider diary entry from July 15, 1946, "Hot and humid all day - Drinks and dinner in Chinatown with MS etc - stood on Elizabeth Street after listening to the glorious sound of Chinese opera singers and gongs coming from open window," may refer to a visit with Minnie Soltz to the Continental Tavern - a popular hangout for the lesbian community during the war years just a block east from Minette Millinery - and dinner in one of the Chinese restaurants nearby. Soltz and her friends liked meeting in Chinatown, where a group of unescorted women could comfortably enjoy a meal together without being hassled. The music Brettschneider refers to is likely to have been emanating from the open windows of the Chinese United Dramatic Society, which built their 250 seat hall at 118 Elizabeth Street in 1940. Brettschneider returned several times that summer to listen to the music from both outside and inside the building.

Gar Yin Hune



Unknown Photographer

Gar Yin (Jacqueline) Hune (née Tse Gar Yin)

c. 1940's

Courtesy of Bernice Hune and family



Born in 1918, Tse Gar Yin lived in Guangzhou, China, when schooling was limited for girls. At the age of fourteen she joined a Cantonese opera company and learned to read by memorizing opera scores. At age twenty, amid Japanese aggressions, Tse Gar Yin was one of the lucky few admitted to Canada during the Chinese Exclusion Act (1923-47). For decades Chinese people worked in the margins of white society; Cantonese opera brightened their lives in North America. Such cultural activities were also fundraising events for their homeland. Gar Yin arrived in Canada with the help of Vancouver's Jin Wah Sing music society, a branch of the Chinese Free Masons. During 1938-39, Gar Yin's troupe toured Chinatowns from Vancouver to Montreal. Sunday performances were particularly popular. In the 1940's she settled in Toronto and married Don (Tan On) Hune. Through to the late 1950s, with four children, Gar Yin occasionally toured to New York, Detroit and Chicago. She was actively engaged in Toronto's Chinese United Dramatic Society throughout her life. In the 1960s, to support her beloved art form, Gar Yin donated her elaborate costumes to performers who originated from Hong Kong. She graced the stage for many more years, contributing to fundraising events for various community organizations. There is a space in the building of the Mon Sheong Foundation named after Don and Jacqueline Hune for their many contributions.

Sylvia Schwartz



Sylvia Schwartz,
Self-portrait, 1950
Ontario Jewish Archives

Sylvia Schwartz was born in Toronto on February 5, 1915. In 1935 she studied photography in New York, where she befriended various performers and musicians, including Harry Belafonte and Duke Ellington, who affectionately called her “Doll”. She returned to Toronto and, in 1939, opened her own photography studio. By the late 1940s, Schwartz had established herself as a well-known portrait photographer for prominent Toronto figures, especially those in the entertainment field and the Jewish community. She photographed singer Phyllis Marshall in 1946, and Portia White in 1955. Schwartz was a communist, often travelling across the border to work with American communists. In the mid-30s, she travelled to Russia with an international Communist Youth contingent. Through this community, she became friends with Paul Robeson, Lena Horne, and Cab Caloway. In 1963, Schwartz opened a gallery with friend Doris Pascal; the Gallery Pascal was located at 104 Yorkville St. In her later years, Schwartz worked with autistic children at the West End Creche in Toronto. According to her obituary, she was known by her nieces and nephews as Auntie Mame, remembered for her signature red beret and cherry lipstick, and for pulling balloons and kites out of her bag. Schwartz died of heart failure on August 2, 1998, at the age of 83.

Phyllis Marshall



Sylvia Schwartz,
Phyllis Marshall, 1946,
Ontario Jewish Archives

Phyllis Marshall was born on November 4, 1921 in Barrie, ON. As a child, she studied piano and was a talented track athlete. She made her debut as a singer at the age of 15 on the radio station CRCT. She then performed with Jack Arthur and on CBC radio with Percy Faith. Her first performance at a nightclub was at the Silver Slipper in Toronto in September 1938. She was encouraged by CBC announcer Byng Whitteker to sing blues and jazz, which led her to perform throughout the 1940s in Toronto with various jazz bands. For 18 months between 1943 and 1944, she held a residency at the Park Plaza Hotel with her own trio. In 1947-48, Marshall toured the US with the Cab Calloway Orchestra, and by the late 1940s, she was performing on CBC radio; alongside Eleanor Collins, she was one of the pioneering black performers on the CBC at that time. In 1949-52 Marshall performed on radio's "Blues for Friday," in 1952-54 she was on tv's "The Big Revue," and in 1956-59 she was on "Cross-Canada Hit Parade," among other shows.

During her career, Marshall performed with Oscar Peterson and Bert Niosi, and was a star of the Canadian National Exhibition's grandstand show. In 1959, she performed in England on BBC TV, and in 1964 began performing in nightclubs again. She recorded an LP for Monogram in 1949, and in 1964 recorded her LP *That Girl* with Buck Clayton and Buddy Tate. In 1956, Phyllis began her career as a stage actress, performing in dramatic and musical roles at Toronto's Crest Theatre. She also appeared in radio and TV productions, including *Cindy-Ella* (1964), CBC radio's *The Amen Corner* (1970), and CBS-CTV's *Nightheat* in the mid-80s. She sang at the ACTRA Awards in 1977 and at Freedom Fest in 1988. She died in Toronto on February 2, 1996.

Cynthia Barrett



Cynthia Barrett was born in Toronto on December 25, 1921. A key figure in the modern dance movement in Toronto in the 1940s, Barrett first studied under Saida Gerrard before travelling to the US to dance in 1938. She spent some time in the 1940s in New York, where she studied under modern dance pioneer Martha Graham, as well as Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Benjamin Zemach and Louis Horst. In 1943, she performed on Broadway in the show *One Touch of Venus*, choreographed by Agnes de Mille. She returned to Toronto, where her *Canadiana* show, presented at the Eaton Auditorium on 17 May 1946, was very well-received. Barrett taught dance at numerous organizations during the 1940s, including the Workers Educational Association, Young Men's Hebrew Association, and the United Jewish People's Order. She staged *Song of David* as part of the Second Canadian Ballet Festival, performed by Neo Dance Theatre, in 1949. During the 1949/1950 season, Barrett worked alongside Nancy Lima Dent as the modern dance instructors for the New Dance Theatre classes at the United Jewish People's Order. In the 1950s, she was invited by the CBC to work as a choreographer for their burgeoning television program. Her final choreographed work was for *Heritage* in 1967; in her later years, Barrett taught movement classes for seniors. She died in 2006.

Page Toles

Cynthia Barrett in *Canadiana*, 1946

Courtesy of Dance Collection Danse

Nancy Lima Dent



Unknown Photographer

Nancy Lima Dent (foreground) in YWCA Creative Dance Club Performance

February 10, 1948

Courtesy of Dance Collection Danse

Nancy Lima was born in Toronto in 1919 to an Italian immigrant family. Despite expressing an interest in dance at an early age, her parents would not allow her to take lessons. From 1941 to 1943, her father, Peter Lima, was interned by the Canadian government (along with other Canadians of Italian, German, and most notably, Japanese descent, he was targeted by the RCMP as an enemy alien). The Lima family faced considerable hardship due to the loss of the family breadwinner during this time, but Nancy Lima embraced the opportunity to study ballet; upon her father's return home she moved out of the family home so that she could continue to pursue her dance career. She studied modern dance with Elizabeth Leese in Toronto before going to New York to study with Martha Graham and African/Caribbean dance artists Pearl Primus and Katherine Dunham. She presented her first choreographed work, *Set Your Clock at U235*, in June 1946 for the Toronto Labour Arts Guild's Summer Festival. Emil Gartner, the conductor for Toronto's Jewish Folk Choir, saw this performance and encouraged Lima to join the Neo Dance Theatre (later called New Dance Theatre), a dance group that was part of the United Jewish People's Order. In addition to working with the NDT as a choreographer and dancer, Lima taught modern dance at the YWCA. In May 1974, Lima choreographed the cantata *Oifin Fidle (The Fiddle)* for the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir; this would be her last publicly presented choreographic work. She died in 2013.

Jean Lumb



Unknown Photographer

Jean Lumb in front of her restaurant Kwong Chow Chop Suey House
c. 1960's

Courtesy Arlene Chan

Multicultural History Archives of Ontario

Jean Bessie Lumb (Toy Jin Wong) was born in Nanaimo, BC, on 30 July 1919, child of Chinese immigrants Fun Gee Wong and Hone Hung Mah. Jean left school at age 12 in order to work to help support her family. In 1935, when she was 16, she moved to Toronto, where she opened a fruit store at Bathurst St. and St. Clair Ave. In 1939, she married Doyle Lumb; because he had been born in China, and as a result of citizenship laws that determined a woman's nationality by her husband's, Jean lost her Canadian citizenship. They continued to work in their fruit store while raising their six children.

Jean Lumb became involved in the fight for national legislation to reunite families who had been separated by the Chinese Exclusion Act; even after 1947, when the exclusionary legislation was repealed, restrictions for Chinese immigration remained. Jean was invited to join a delegation who lobbied the government to lift restrictions. As the only woman in the group, Deifenbaker insisted that she sit next to him, and because he was deaf in one ear and was having trouble hearing the official speakers, he asked her to repeat everything to him. Most of the questions from the floor were directed at her, as the main issue under discussion was family reunification, and she was the only woman in the group. Although the delegation was largely successful, it took another ten years for all immigration restrictions based on race to be removed.

Lumb was very social and well-connected, considered by many to be the unofficial mayor of Toronto's Chinatown. Lumb and her husband opened Kwong Chow Chop Suey House in 1959, which became a hub of activity for Chinese and non-Chinese Canadians alike. She demonstrated Chinese cooking in venues like the Royal Ontario Museum, spoke on television and radio shows, and was active in the arts, forming the Chinese Community Dancers of Ontario in the late 50s. When Toronto city hall drew up plans to tear down Chinatown, she actively and successfully spearheaded the effort to save the parts of it that weren't used for the building of the new city hall. She sought to bridge the gap between the Chinese community and non-Chinese Canadians and to promote Chinese culture through food, art, and social organization. As a result of her efforts, Lumb was the first Chinese Canadian woman – and the first restaurateur – to be inducted as a Member of the Order of Canada, in 1976. She died in 2002.

Peggy Anne Jaffey



Unknown Photographer

Peggy Anne Jaffey, Peggy Anne Hat Company, Toronto, 1950s
Ontario Jewish Archives

Brettschneider often worked as a model for milliners, including her friend Peggy Anne Caplan. Caplan was born in 1908 and married Samuel Jaffey in 1934. She launched her hat business, Peggy Anne Hat Co., with her husband in 1935. She was the creative force behind the label, and her husband managed the business. Her hats were sold through boutiques in Eatons and Spencer's stores across the country, and featured in fashion spreads in many publications, including Fashion Buyer, Chatelaine, Mayfair, Star Weekly, and the Globe and Mail. She frequently served as a contest judge for hat shows, as well as presenting her own hats in fashion shows, including at the Canadian National Exhibition in 1938. Her niece Arlene Gryfe describes her as a consummate fashion stylist – all of the women in the family valued her advice on what to wear for special occasions. She had an eye for detail, customizing store-bought clothes by adding subtle improvements, like re-sewing in a zipper by hand. She never learned to cook, preferring to entertain friends with dinners at the Primrose Club. The Caplans closed Peggy Anne Hat Company in 1965, donating their remaining millinery supplies to the Canadian Cancer Society. Peggy Anne Caplan died on December 4, 1995 at North York General Hospital in Toronto.

Aiko Saita



Unknown Photographer

Aiko Saita

Around 1953

Nikkei National Museum. Kaye Kishibe Collection

On November 28th 1953, Natalie attended a performance by contralto Aiko Saita at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Saita was born in Cumberland, BC, and then moved to Vancouver as a teen-ager to further her studies, boarding with Vancouver dentist Dr. Eiji Miyake and his family. The Japanese community raised money for her to study opera in Milan in the 1930s. After receiving accolades there, and considering offers from numerous European opera companies, she decided to sign a contract with the Japan Victor Company as a “Red Label” artist. In addition to her recordings of classical and semi-classical songs, she also recorded folk songs and more popular songs, under the pseudonym “Yoshie Tachibana.” Returning to Canada for cross country tours in 1937 and 1939, Aiko gained a dedicated following, especially in Vancouver. During the war, while performing for Japanese soldiers in Manchuria, Aiko was interned by the Russians, and was not able to return to Japan until November 1946. Homesick for Canada, where her brother and mentor Dr. Miyake now lived in Ontario, Aiko gave a series of concerts across Canada in 1953, including performances at Toronto’s Ukrainian Labour Temple. Intending to continue her cross country tour after her Toronto performance, Aiko’s plans were cut short when she began experiencing abdominal pain. She spent several months in hospital in Vancouver before returning to Tokyo, where she died on September 21 1954.

Susan Chew



Unknown Photographer

Susan Chew modeling her own design. c. 1960's

Courtesy of Susan Chew

Multicultural History Society of Ontario

Susan Chew grew up on a farm just outside of Victoria BC, where she and her ten siblings helped their parents, Chew Dang and Yee C. Loo Chew, with the family's vegetable garden business. After an appendectomy made it difficult for her to keep up with farm work, she moved to New Westminster to help her sister with her grocery store, the Handy Fruit Mart. Chew took over the store in 1946. In 1955, when a storefront became available next door to the Fruit Mart, Chew opened the Waffle House, which became a popular hangout for young people and reporters. In 1956, Chew was denied tenancy in an apartment by the building's prospective buyers, who wanted to bar Chinese tenants. Her reporter friends were appalled, and wrote about it - the community rallied behind her, resulting in the original owners cancelling the sale of the building and encouraging Chew to move in.

Chew had many talents and was very entrepreneurial - she went on to create her own fashion designs and worked as a fashion model, a travel agent, and a hula dancer. She moved to Toronto around 1963, where she continued her modeling and design work, eventually opening her own boutique to sell her fashions and paper flowers. At one point, she had her own radio show called "The World of Susan Chew," which had a Pacific theme, played Hawaiian music, and featured special guests. Ahead of Expo '67 in Montreal, Chew was hired as an advance researcher and interviewer to document sites of interest for the Canadian Pavilion, and during Expo '70 in Japan, Chew's paper flowers were displayed in the Canadian Pavilion. Chew never married, and spent many years in Toronto before returning to Vancouver, where she still lives.

Portia White



Born in Truro, NS, Portia White took voice lessons as a young woman at the Halifax Conservatory of Music and sang on devotional radio broadcasts hosted by her father. She competed in the Halifax Music Festival, where her extraordinary voice was recognized with the Helen Kennedy Silver Cup award in 1935, 1937 and 1938. In 1939 she won a scholarship to continue her musical training at the Halifax Conservatory of Music. White gave her national debut as a singer in Toronto on November 7, 1941 at the Eaton Auditorium, and her international debut in New York's Town Hall on March 13, 1944. In 1945 White signed with Columbia Concerts Incorporated and toured across North, Central, and South America. She toured Central and South America again in 1946 for three months, and sang in France and Switzerland in 1948. Following her 1946 tour in South America, she began experiencing issues with her voice, perhaps as a result of the intense concert schedule imposed by her management. These vocal problems led her to retire from public performances in 1952. She settled in Toronto where she taught privately, and undertook further studies with Gina Cigna and Irene Jessner at the Royal Conservatory of Music. White briefly performed as a dramatic actress, including a performance on CBC's *The Crucible* in 1959 in the role of Tituba. She sang publically on a few occasions during the 50s and 60s, including an appearance before Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip at Charlottetown's Confederation Centre of the Arts on 6 October 1964. Her final public performance took place in July 1967 at the World Baptist Federation in Ottawa. She died at age 56 of cancer. White did not make any studio recordings, but there are several concert recordings, including a song recital titled *Think on Me* (1968). She was declared a Person of National Historic Significance by the Government of Canada in 1995.

Sylvia Schwartz

Portia White

March 1955

Ontario Jewish Archives

Jan Chamberlain



Jan Chamberlain was a monologist, actor, and “effective speech teacher.” During the late 1940s and 1950s, she presented a series of original “character sketches”, in which she portrayed dozens of different personages, using only simple props such as hats or chairs. The recording of “The Exclusive Sound of the Characters Talent Agency Ltd.” features a brief monologue from Jan, along with samples of the work of other singers and voice actors represented by the agency. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Jan appeared in a number of Canadian television and film productions, including the popular series *Jake and the Kid* and *Horizon*. She was well known for her TV commercial for Heinz Ketchup, and was often hailed by strangers on the street, who were excited to meet the “Ketchup Lady”.

Brettschneider first met Jan Chamberlain at the Hart House Theatre on March 16 1955, after a performance of Chamberlain’s signature monologues. The sociable Chamberlain and Brettschneider enjoyed each other’s sense of humour. Whenever Brettschneider was in Toronto, she hoped to be able to catch one of the legendary studio parties thrown by Jan and her husband Frank, a newspaper reporter. Chamberlain’s niece Julie Weston remembers that these parties were very lively and diverse, including lots of journalists, actors and other artists.

Digital reproduction of advertisement flyer for *Some Women She Knows...* at Hart House Theatre, 1955
Courtesy of the Ontario Archives
Used with permission of the Toronto Heliconian Club

Mary Millichamp



Cooking with Charm: Elegant and Easy Recipes by Mary Millichamp
Published in aid of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, c. 1962

Mary Millichamp ran a small tearoom and cafe in an apartment block at the corner of Bloor and St. George for several years before becoming manager of the rooftop restaurant at the Park Plaza Hotel when it opened in July 1937. In late 1947, Millichamp bought a dilapidated house at 115 Yorkville and began renovating it into a restaurant. Mary Millichamp's opened in June 1948, and ran until 1958, when Millichamp retired. Mary and her life-long partner, Pansy Reamsbottom, lived above the restaurant. Mary Millichamp's was a favourite hangout for the underpaid and underfed dancers from the National Ballet of Canada; Millichamp would keep the restaurant open late so they could eat after performances. According to dancer Celia Franca, Millichamp would "literally, stuff us." She also offered discounts to people connected to the radio and television arts. Millichamp died on 31 October 1962, and shortly afterwards this cookbook was published by some of her friends, as a fundraiser for the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada. Cooking with Charm: Elegant and Easy Recipes by Mary Millichamp features stories from the restaurant's regulars and Mary's friends, as well as one of the only publicly available photographs of Millichamp and Reamsbottom together, standing in front of 115 Yorkville. Reamsbottom died on 26 September 1972.

Jackie Shane



Jackie Shane, with Frank Motley and his crew
Any Other Way and Sticks and Stones
45 R.P.M. record, 1969

Jackie Shane was born in Nashville, TN, on 15 May 1940. She was raised by her mother and grandparents, and showed a love for dressing up and music from the time she was little. Her earliest experiences with music came from church and gospel music, and she sang in choir groups as a child, often featured as the lead singer. By the time she was thirteen, Shane was wearing makeup to school and embracing her identity as a woman, a decision that was fully supported by her mother. In her teens she began to take an interest in music as a viable career. In 1958 she drove to Detroit with the guitarist Johnny Jones, a bass player, keyboard player, and drummer, to look for gigs there. In late May or June 1959 they played several shows in Cornwall, ON, before driving east to Montreal and getting a gig as a house band in a club. Shane stayed in Montreal for two months before joining another band, The Motley Crew, and moving with them to Boston. 1961 saw them return to Montreal in the summer, and in September they went on to Toronto, playing the second floor of the Holiday Tavern. The show was very popular, often drawing crowds that lined up around the block to get in. Although she toured the eastern US extensively, Shane lived in Toronto through most of 1963 and 1967, and parts of 1968, 1970, and 1971, gaining a strong local fan base. During a week-long run at the Sapphire Tavern in July 1967, Caravan Records recorded Shane's live show, resulting in the LP Jackie Shane Live. Tired of the music industry and discrimination she faced as a transgender performer, she spent the next decades taking care of her mother and living a quiet life in LA. Shane died on February 22, 2019.

Elda “Bun” Smith



Unknown Photographer

Elda “Bun” Smith, c. 1967

Archival Inkjet print from scan of original print

Originally published in the Brantford Expositor newspaper

Courtesy Santee Smith

Elda “Bun” Smith was a Kahnien’kehàka (Mohawk) woman born in 1919 on Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve near Brantford, Ontario. Her work in ceramics began when she started collecting pieces of broken pottery that she found dispersed throughout the lands of the reserve. Curious about the pieces, Smith began researching Kahnien’kehàka ancient pottery methods. At her request through a granting program, the Ontario Arts Council sent the potter Tessa Kiddick to contribute to teaching pottery at Six Nations. Elda Smith went on to create the Mohawk Pottery studio along with other artists – including her husband Oliver M. Smith, and Darlene Smith and Dee Martin – leading a movement to revive and reclaim pottery work in the Kahnien’kehàka tradition. Their methods involved traditional practices of digging clay out of the ground and using non-electric kilns.

Smith and her husband exhibited their pottery in the Canada Pavilion at the Montreal Expo ‘67, and one of her works, a tea set, was presented to Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to Canada. She taught her son Steve T. Smith these traditional methods when he was 12 years old, and he later formed Talking Earth Pottery. The art form continues to be passed down through the family, as Steve’s daughter Santee Smith also learned her grandmother’s pottery methods. Elda Smith eventually developed arthritis, limiting her ability to work. She died in 1976, but her creative legacy lives on.

Sarindar Dhaliwal



Sarindar Dhaliwal
Bangles & Sweeties, 1979
Watercolour on paper



Sarindar Dhaliwal was born in the Punjab, India, and raised in London, England before moving to Canada in 1968. She has exhibited widely in Canada and internationally since the 1980s, living and working in Toronto. A retrospective exhibition, entitled *The Radcliffe Line and other Geographies*, curated by Marcie Bronson (Rodman Hall, Brock University in St. Catharines) toured to the Reach in Abbotsford, BC and the Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Oshawa in 2015-16. More recently, she participated in the following group shows: *Vision Exchange: Perspectives from India to Canada*, a national touring exhibition organized and circulated by the Art Gallery of Alberta and the National Gallery of Canada, 2019; *Yonder* at the Koffler Gallery, Toronto 2016; *Form Follows Fiction: Art and Artists in Toronto* at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, 2016; and *India Contemporary Photographic and New Media Art*, FotoFest 2018 Biennial, Asia Society Texas Center, Houston, Texas.