Unsettling Canadian Art History brings together scholars of art and culture to address visual and material culture histories of settler colonialism, enslavement, and racialized diasporas in the contested white settler state of Canada. There is a purpose to publishing a book of this scope in the McGill-Queen's/Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation Studies in Art History Series, which makes possible “the publication of innovative books that advance our understanding of Canadian art and Canada's visual and material culture.” In its very orientation to the white settler state of Canada, Canadian art history is a colonial discipline that many scholars and creative practitioners have dedicated their careers to disrupting by foregrounding Indigenous, Black, and racialized diasporic art in this part of the world. Canada's complex histories under multiple European empires and their corresponding modes of settler colonial violence require scholars of Canadian art history to unsettle Canada's past from diverse but overlapping decolonial and anti-racist perspectives. As Canadian art historian and scholar of the African diaspora Charmaine A. Nelson reminds us, “Canada's colonial history straddles multiple empires.” Unsettling Canada's genocidal colonial legacies through the study of visual and material representations and disruptions of that past therefore requires a multitude of scholarly voices and relational ways of understanding how colonial pasts inform and impact the present.

The chapters in this book offer new perspectives for decolonial and anti-racist scholarship on art, archives, and creative practice by rethinking histories of Canadian colonialisms from distinct but relational Black, Indigenous, racialized diasporic, and white settler perspectives. It has been my privilege to work with a group of scholars who take such care in analyzing the violence of colonialism alongside the expansive possibilities that anti-racist art and creative practice provide for making decolonial futures a lived reality. The contributors to this volume bring multiple histories of lived experience to their critical analyses of art and culture and colonialism in Canada, which include Black (Hamilton and Nelson), Indigenous (Danger, Métis/Saulteaux; Huard, Anishinaabekwe; McIntyre, Inuit/settler-Scottish; Robertson, Scots-Lakota; Wysote, Mi’gmag), diasporic settler of colour (Gayed, Egyptian Canadian), non-Black non-Indigenous racialized (Patel, Pakistani Canadian Muslim), and white settler
(Cheetham, Decter, Fraser, Morton, Svec, and Taunton) positionalities. Their chapters work together separately but also relationally to disrupt colonial archives of art and culture and to excavate, resurface, and recreate radical Black, Indigenous, and racialized diasporic experiences. Read together, these chapters also expose the racist frameworks that not only continue to erase histories of colonial violence and anticolonial resistance but that also hinder structural reorganizations of Canadian art institutions from decolonial and anti-racist perspectives.

This book’s critical impact on the broader project of unsettling Canadian art history is the result of the myriad decolonial and anti-racist perspectives on colonial histories that these contributors offer. Originally, I envisioned *Unsettling Canadian Art History* as a single-authored book. However, my previous editorial experience with the McGill-Queen’s/Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation Studies in Art History series, *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada* (co-edited with Lynda Jessup and Kirsty Robertson, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014), was a lesson in why certain critiques must be collaborative ventures. *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot* examined the liberal capitalist underpinnings of disciplinary Canadian art history as it shows up in curatorial work, museum collections, art criticism and scholarship, and university teaching and research. While *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot* set out to critique the liberal individualism of colonial capitalist disciplines such as Canadian art history, histories of colonialism were not the book’s primary focus. And yet, that volume’s capacity to productively analyze Canadian art history’s colonial formations and racist exclusions was made possible through the work of contributors, who saw the possibilities of bringing critiques of liberalism and capitalism into conversation with colonialism. As a result, *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot* offered critically important work on Indigenous art and racialization and representation in Canadian art, specifically in chapters written by Richard William Hill, Heather Igloliorte, and Alice Ming Wai Jim.

Collections of scholarly essays that centre decolonial and anti-racist, feminist, queer, trans, and Two-Spirit collaboration, in which scholars with various points of expertise in Black, Indigenous, and racialized diasporic visual and material culture productively disrupt colonial concepts of individualized expertise, are critically necessary to “unsettling” colonial fields of scholarship such as Canadian art history. The variety of perspectives offered in the chapters that follow are part of this book’s strength. These collaborations originally emerged around a SSHRC Insight Grant that funded the larger project from which this volume emerged. Together, our research group shared conversations on art and archival sources in the interrelated visual histories of settler colonialism, enslavement, and racialized diaspora formations in the settler state of Canada. I am grateful in particular for the conversations that the writing of this book generated behind the scenes, especially regarding the colonial nature of Canadian art history as a discipline dependent on whiteness and on the anti-Indigeneity and anti-Blackness present in many fields that claim to be undertaking decolonial and anti-racist work, including settler colonial studies. As an editor, I am humbled by the innovative and radical work that is represented in this volume as it enters into longstanding conver-
sations on Black, Indigenous, racialized diasporic, and queer, feminist, trans, and Two-Spirit scholarship on art and culture in the contested settler state of Canada.

It should go without saying, and yet it seems to need constant restating, that different positionalities in decolonial, anti-racist, and "unsettled" scholarship come with varying sets of privileges, which are always impacted by intersections of disability, caste, class, gender, and sexuality. White settler scholars in this book foreground the lived experiences of Indigenous, Black, and racialized diasporic artists and historical experiences while also examining our own responsibilities for dismantling violent and genocidal colonial legacies. Yet it remains clear that white scholars such as me must continue the difficult and disruptive work of unsettling our own positions of privilege in art institutions and universities if we are to truly participate in anti-racist and decolonial solidarity work, which means focusing on pulling apart white supremacy rather than centring our own scholarship. *Unsettling Canadian Art History* offers a collaborative approach to understanding the ways in which multiple and overlapping histories of coloniality (settler colonization, enslavement, and racialized diasporic migration) show up in art and culture. This collaborative approach is also necessary to help readers come to the study of art and colonialism in Canada in multiple ways, especially beyond the lens of white settler-led methodologies and research. Contributors to *Unsettling Canadian Art History* have divergent and sometimes deeply personal understandings of what undertaking decolonial and anti-racist art historical and creative research means in the Canadian context, which is part of what makes this book important for readers of Canadian art who come to these topics from a range of perspectives.

The perspectives of Black, Indigenous, and racialized diasporic scholars in this book offer important histories of the colonial past and also critique the impact of such histories on the colonial present. Indigenous scholars in this book continually challenge the erasure and misinterpretation of Indigenous art practice at a time when tokenistic calls to "Indigenize" institutions of art and culture and universities have become common but where deep structural change often remains to be seen. Their critical work highlights the continued need to offer close examinations of Indigenous artists and their creative practice, in order to continually reaffirm and re-centre Indigenous methodologies in art scholarship. Likewise, despite a recent uptick in centring Black Canadian histories and experiences in museums, art gallery, and universities, anti-Black racism pervades these institutions and continues to impact the radical practices of Black artists past and present. The Black authors in this volume offer critical contributions that make clear the need to continually disrupt colonial archives in ways that uncover erased histories of Canadian enslavement while likewise creating new archives of contemporary and historical Black experiences from visual and cultural fragments. Racialized diasporic scholars in this book also grapple with complex colonial histories that migrate to the settler state of Canada through historical and contemporary racialized migration and displacement. These range from examinations of relational complicity in settler colonial structures and systems, to undertaking the political work of examining what these complicities obscure and reveal across colonial
contexts that include settler colonialism, enslavement, caste oppression, sexuality, and migration as they pervade across colonial structures.

This collection of essays offers new and timely scholarship in the fields of Indigenous, Black, racialized diasporic, and feminist, queer, trans, and Two-Spirit visual and material culture in what we together challenge as “Canada,” for a readership that seeks to be part of a much longer conversation on these art matters. Unsettling Canadian Art History is an unfinished project, in that essays gathered here are intentionally disparate in their approaches to decolonial and anti-racist scholarship. This book affirms the importance of collaborative research and conversations in undertaking decolonizing methodologies, rather than attempting to locate a singular line of argument or set of questions with which to “unsettle” scholarship and research. In the now ten-year-old words of decolonial Argentinian scholar Walter Mignolo, “It may happen that, as everything else, either postcoloniality or decoloniality (as they become ‘popular’) will be used by individuals to increase personal gains at the institution or in the public sphere. I cannot speak for postcolonialists, but I can tell you that the aims of decolonial thinking and the decolonial option … join the aims of the political society for whom the decolonial is a question of survival rather than promotion.” While as contributors and readers we may not have equal stakes of survival in undertaking decolonial and anti-racist work, my hope is that together we can approach what this book offers from emphatic and ethical perspectives. This book acknowledges the importance of foregrounding the perspectives of scholars and artists for whom survival is a constant state of being and thinking in academic and creative spaces.

NOTES

1 As a white settler editor, I struggled to select geographical terminology that appropriately fits with the tone of this book. Leading Indigenous writers such as Unangax̱ scholar Eve Tuck have repeatedly called for the use of Indigenous place names to make visible the histories of stolen Indigenous land (for example, see her Land Relationships Super Collective collaboration with Susan Blight [Anishinaabe, Couchiching] and Hayden King’s [Anishinaabe, Gchi’minissing] Ogima Mikana artist collective, which engages in site-specific public art interventions; one project seeks to replace street signs and landmarks in Tkaronto/Gichi Kiwengi/T oronto with Anishinaabemowin place names, https://ogimaamikana.tumblr.com/ and http://www.landrelationships.com/collaborators). The white settler states of Canada and the US encompass the northern part of North America, a geographic area that many non-Indigenous scholars commonly, though not without trouble, refer to as “Turtle Island.” While this term gets casually tossed around by white settler writers in particular, it has an Anishinaabeg etymology that spans millennia. Popular, quasi-academic white settler sources such as the Canadian Encyclopedia cite “the turtle” as a conceptualization; it “support[s] the world … by most accounts, it acts as a creation story that places emphasis on the turtle as a symbol of life and earth” (Robinson, “Turtle Island”). However, many Indigenous writers and critics from territories that encompass the land mass that settlers know as North America (typically understood as the settler states of Canada, the US, and Mexico but which can also encompass the Caribbean and Central...
America) make it clear that “Turtle Island” is a specific creation story for Anishinaabeg people that should not be casually appropriated by non-Anishinaabeg people. Like many Indigenous terms, “Turtle Island” on non-Indigenous, and particularly on white settler, lips has become shorthand for what Métis scholar Chelsea Vowel regards as “cheeky settlers” seeking “to position themselves as more aware” (@apihtawikosisan, “I don’t use the term Turtle Island,” 23 May 2018, 8:03 p.m., https://twitter.com/apihtawikosisan/status/999452415844728832). Some Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars have likewise employed the term “Kanata,” taken from French colonial writings of contact with Huron–Iroquois words for villages along the Saint Lawrence waterways and made famous by a Canadian Heritage Moment (televised short films that have been shown on Canadian television since 1991) about Jacques Cartier. While neither of these terms seems completely appropriate for me to use for the complex reasons that Vowel articulates, retaining the artificial geographical boundary of the white settler state is also clearly problematic. That said, at the suggestion of a peer reviewer of this volume, I have given up on the term “Turtle Island,” and I occasionally use the white settler state term “Canada” until I find more appropriate geographical language. I do this with hesitation and with the understanding that my complicity in settler structures remains evident here.


3 See, for example, Bowen, Other Places, Iglooliorite and Taunton, Continuities Between Eras; Iglooliorite, Nagam, and Taunton, Indigenous Art; Hill and McCall, The Land We Are; Mathur, Dewar, and DeGagné, Cultivating Canada; Nelson, Towards an African Canadian Art History; and Jas M. Morgan’s Kinship issue of Canadian Art (Summer 2017).


5 Mignolo, The Darker Side of Western Modernity, xxvi–vii.