

**1953**

The image features a dark red, textured background. In the center, the year "1953" is printed in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font with a white outline. The text is surrounded by several overlapping geometric shapes: a yellow triangle pointing right at the top right, a light blue triangle pointing right below it, a tan triangle pointing right below that, and a red triangle pointing right at the bottom right. Additionally, there are several thin, white-outlined diamond shapes scattered across the background, some overlapping the other elements.




# 1953



**curated | présenté  
by | par  
Ihor Holubizky  
Robert McKaskell**



THE ROBERT MCLAUGHLIN  
GALLERY



**Actuality is when the  
lighthouse is dark  
between flashes: it  
is the instant between  
the ticks of the watch:  
... it is the void  
between events. <sup>1</sup>**





## 1953, Fifty Years Later

Robert McKaskell

**A**ctuality is now. Just as there is no 2003, there was no 1953. Nevertheless, things happen. A few happenings are recorded. George Kubler calls these records "signals." From these signals we construct history according to our personal histories and our particular moment of actuality.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the high profile of certain political, scientific, social and cultural events — events like the Coronation of Elizabeth II, the conquering of Mount Everest, the death of Stalin, the end of war in Korea, and so on, whose 50th anniversaries have been noted in the press this year<sup>3</sup> — there are more subtle signals that were emitted in 1953, signals that have gathered strength and continue to shape our thought. On January 1, Toronto's *Globe and Mail* announced the appointment of two women to the Queen's Council.<sup>4</sup> Through the year other women were reported as being chartered accountants,<sup>5</sup> engineers,<sup>6</sup> pilots,<sup>7</sup> doctors,<sup>8</sup> veterinarians,<sup>9</sup> senators,<sup>10</sup> and geologists.<sup>11</sup> I suspect that most of us associate the entry of women into these professions with the feminist movement of the 1960s, but here is a clear, celebratory record of their accomplishments in 1953.<sup>12</sup>

1953 was also the year the phrase "the greenhouse effect" was brought to public attention.<sup>13</sup>

Then, too, the Cold War was in full swing — and it had impact on Toronto's art world. On January 12, *The Globe and Mail* reported that the newly-formed Toronto Arts Council had "accepted the resignation" of its secretary because of his supposed relationship with Communist leaders in Canada.<sup>14</sup> By January 26 the chairman resigned for the opposite reason, charging that there "was a conspiracy to change the original aims of the council into those embraced by Communist sympathizers."<sup>15</sup> The Council nevertheless retained supporters, among them Toronto's Mayor Lamport. Reverend Gordon Domm, pastor of the Bathurst Street United Church — where the Council met, was quoted as saying that people are "hindering, rather than aiding freedom.... I believe the ends of the council are right.... A few Communists can't as yet scare me off."<sup>16</sup>

In March, William Newcombe, Toronto artist and former president of the Canadian Society of Graphic Arts, protested that the Society's Annual Exhibition had been judged "on a political basis, not one of merit." He went on to say that Henry Ornstein, the current president, and Aba Bayefsky, a jury member, "have consistently supported the Communist party line in both speech and action...and as such cannot be expected to judge a work of art without a political bias. In the end, if the present trend continues, all our work will be judged on our ability to handle doves or kites.... There is a danger that our Society will be undermined and