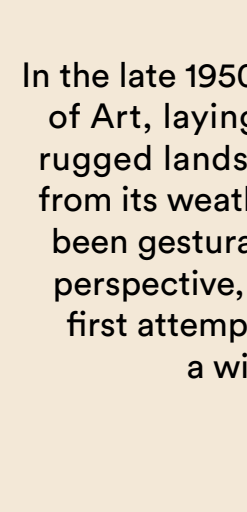
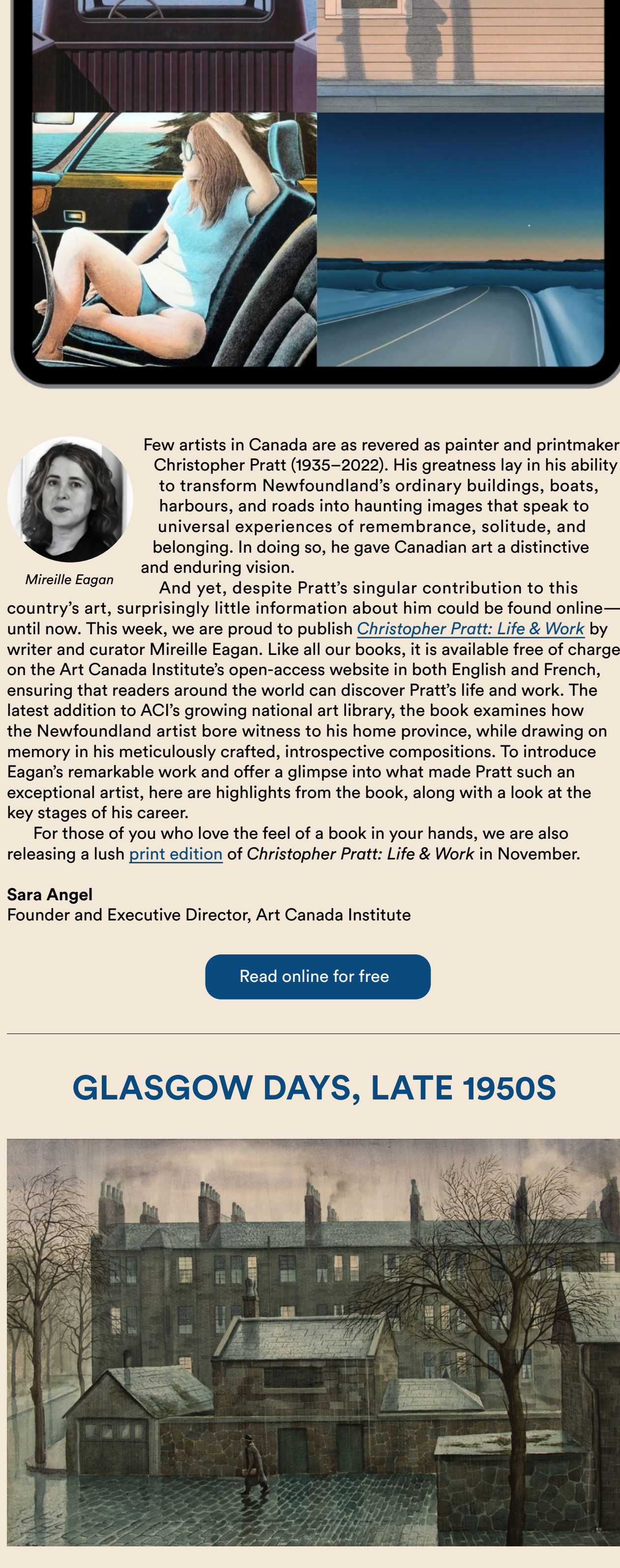


OCTOBER 16, 2026

CHRISTOPHER PRATT

NOW LIVE, ACI'S NEW RELEASE

The mesmerizing story of how, over six decades, iconic Canadian artist Christopher Pratt captured the essence of Newfoundland and Labrador with unwavering precision.



Mireille Eagan

Few artists in Canada are as revered as painter and printmaker Christopher Pratt (1935–2022). His greatness lay in his ability to transform Newfoundland's ordinary buildings, boats, harbours, and roads into haunting images that speak to universal experiences of remembrance, solitude, and belonging. In doing so, he gave Canadian art a distinctive and enduring vision.

And yet, despite Pratt's singular contribution to this country's art, surprisingly little information about him could be found online—until now. This week, we are proud to publish *Christopher Pratt: Life & Work* by writer and curator Mireille Eagan. Like all our books, it is available free of charge on the Art Canada Institute's open-access website in both English and French, ensuring that readers around the world can discover Pratt's life and work. The latest addition to ACI's growing national art library, the book examines how the Newfoundland artist bore witness to his home province, while drawing on memory in his meticulously crafted, introspective compositions. To introduce Eagan's remarkable work and offer a glimpse into what made Pratt such an exceptional artist, here are highlights from the book, along with a look at the key stages of his career.

For those of you who love the feel of a book in your hands, we are also releasing a lush [print edition](#) of *Christopher Pratt: Life & Work* in November.

Sara Angel

Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

[Read online for free](#)

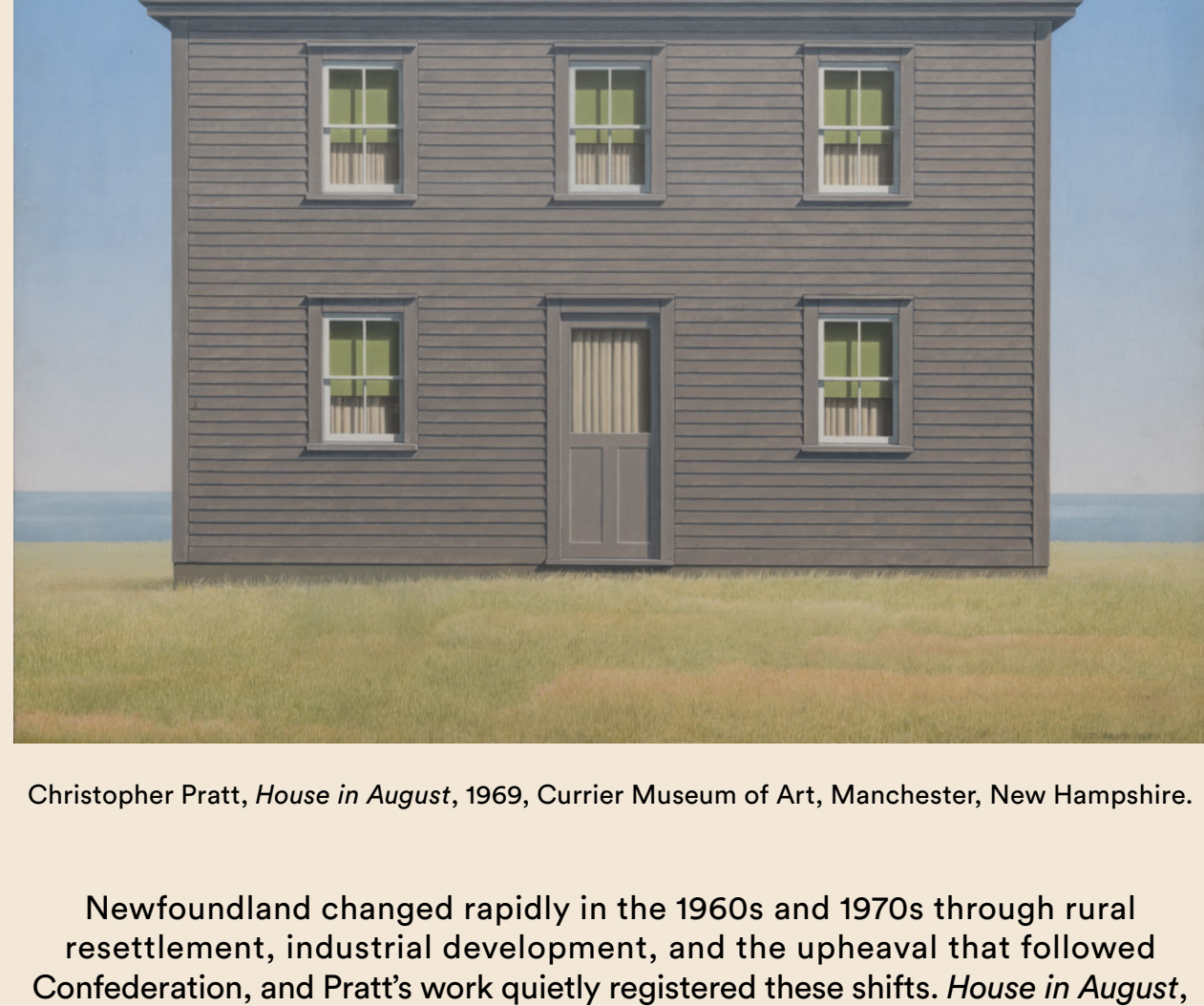
GLASGOW DAYS, LATE 1950S

Christopher Pratt, *Grosvenor Crescent*, 1957, The Rooms, St. John's.

In the late 1950s, Christopher Pratt studied for two years at the Glasgow School of Art, laying the foundation for his career. Coming from Newfoundland's rugged landscape, he was drawn to the city's sombre, industrial character, from its weathered stone facades to its noisy trams. His earliest paintings had been gestural and expressive, but in Glasgow, he gained a firm command of perspective, proportion, and precise line. This watercolour marks one of his first attempts at framing, with the view appearing as though seen through a window—a device that became central to his later work.

[Learn more](#)

START OF SERIGRAPHS, 1961

Christopher Pratt, *Boat in Sand*, 1961, The Rooms, St. John's.

In 1959, Pratt returned to Canada to complete his degree at New Brunswick's Mount Allison University, where he began producing silkscreen prints. *Boat in Sand*, 1961, his second-ever serigraph, uses a limited palette of browns and greys that seems to cast a haze over the still coastal scene. Created as Newfoundland's traditional, self-sufficient way of life was eroding, his depiction of the beached, motionless boat became an unintended political symbol of a province in transition. Even at this early stage in Pratt's career, the work points to contrasts he would explore throughout his practice: motion and stillness, memory and reality, loss and endurance.

[Learn more](#)

A NATIONAL AUDIENCE, 1964

Christopher Pratt, *Woman at a Dresser*, 1964, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg.

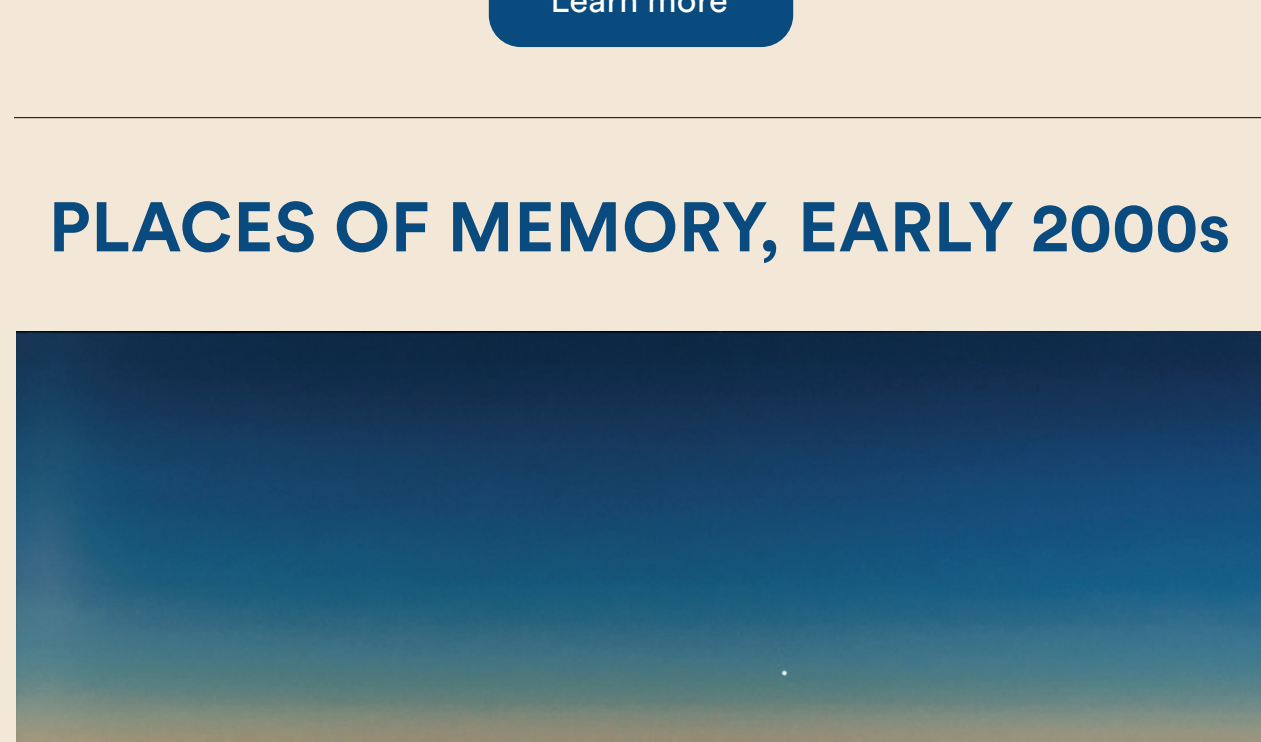
Pratt's career gained momentum with *Woman at a Dresser*, 1964. Shown in the National Gallery of Canada's 6th Biennial Exhibition of Canadian Painting, it brought his work to a national audience. The painting also marked his return to the human figure, drawing on the attention to contour and light he had learned in Glasgow. It was a study in intimacy, observation, and compositional control. Only the model was drawn from life; the mirror, room, and floral wallpaper came from Pratt's imagination. He treated the figure with the same care as her surroundings, making her one part of a unified whole.

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THE NEWFOUNDLAND VERNACULAR, LATE 1960S

Christopher Pratt, *House in August*, 1969, Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire.

Newfoundland changed rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s through rural resettlement, industrial development, and the upheaval that followed Confederation, and Pratt's work quietly registered these shifts. *House in August*, 1969, does not depict a real building. Instead, it distills what Pratt called "the Newfoundland vernacular" into a solitary form. With its careful structure, warm but restrained colour, and crisp precision, it exemplifies his signature style. The house reads almost as a self-portrait, conveying not his likeness but his presence. The work signals a change in how Pratt approached Newfoundland's buildings: no longer simply recording them, he began treating them as holders of memory, emblems of endurance, and reflections of emotional life.

[Learn more](#)

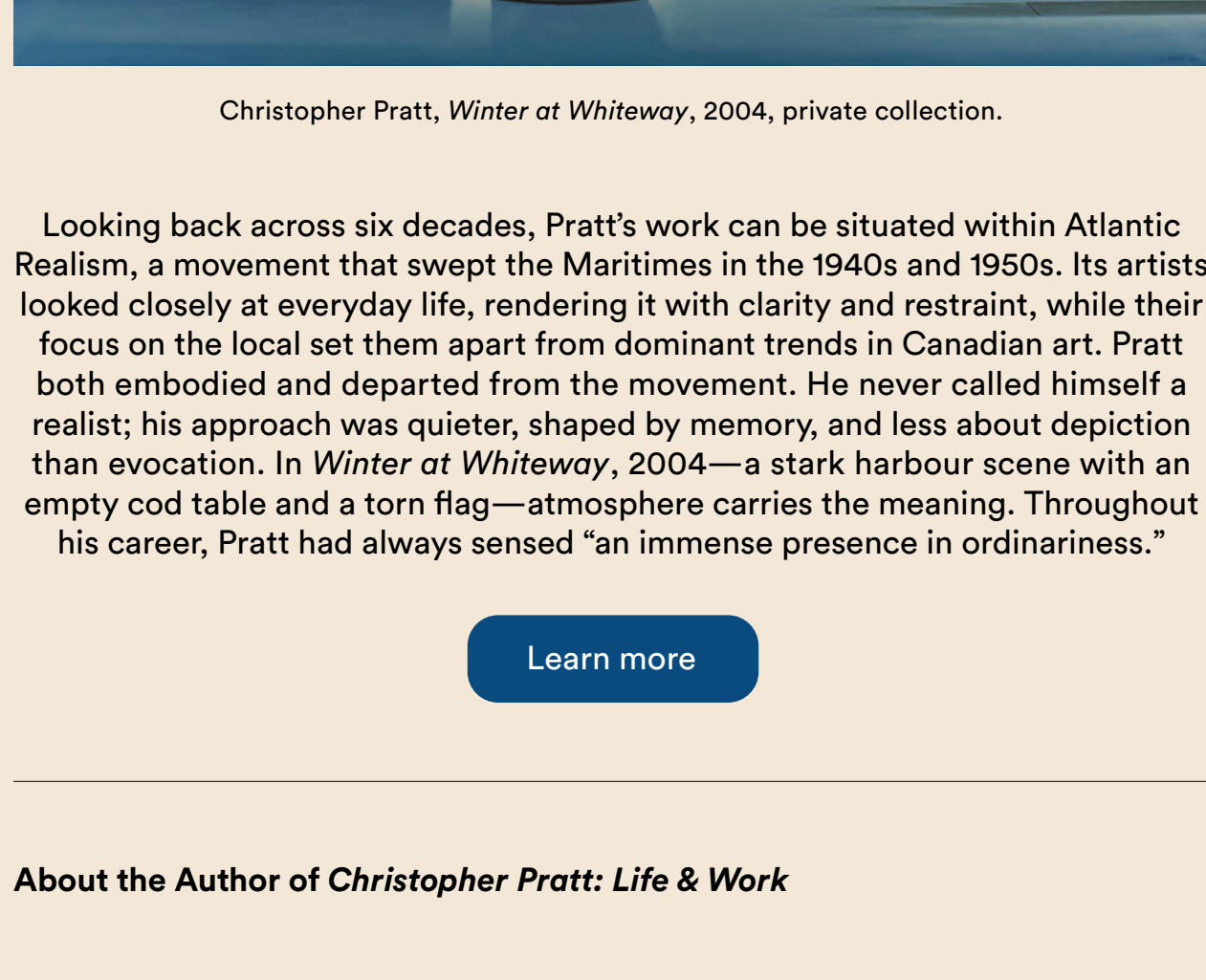
SPACE AND STILLNESS, MID-1970S

Christopher Pratt, *New Boat*, 1975, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton.

From the mid-1970s, Pratt deepened his exploration of space, reflecting between interiors and exteriors. More than a stylistic change, this reflected a new way of thinking: he was interested in how places, whether a wide expanse of sea or a vacant room, could hold emotional meaning. A keen sailor, Pratt often depicted boats out of their element. In *New Boat*, 1975, a white sailboat hangs in slings above a calm sea, neither afloat nor ashore. Gentle, diffused light smooths every surface, heightening the sense of stillness. By the 1980s, light would become central to his work.

[Learn more](#)

HOMAGE TO A MENTOR, 1982

Christopher Pratt, *Sackville Attic*, 1982, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

In 1982, Pratt paid tribute to his longtime mentor, Alex Colville (1920–2013), with *Sackville Attic*, a view of the attic in Colville's home in Sackville, New Brunswick. One of Canada's foremost realist painters, Colville had taught Pratt at Mount Allison University and remained his closest artistic and personal influence. He instilled in Pratt a careful, exacting technique, spatial precision, and a grounding in real places. Yet where Colville's scenes hinted at unfolding narratives, Pratt's lingered in atmosphere. Colville himself observed that in Pratt's work, consciousness lies with the viewer rather than within the picture.

[Learn more](#)

A PORTRAIT OF PRATT, 1995

Christopher Pratt, *Christmas Eve at 12 O'Clock*, 1995, The Rooms, St. John's.

In this lithograph, Pratt portrays himself from behind, walking through the night towards a closed shed—a departure from his usual front-facing self-portraits. His familiar restraint and discipline are turned inward, and the dark, cold scene feels calm. In his preparatory notes, Pratt wrote: "A sheep shed lit by an approaching figure. It is the viewer who goes to the shed; the light in his hand. The door to the shed is closed. Darkness behind—maybe trees." He invites viewers to imagine themselves as a figure trailing just behind him, transforming the act of seeing into a participatory journey.

[Learn more](#)

PLACES OF MEMORY, EARLY 2000S

Christopher Pratt, *Driving to Venus: On the Burgeo Road*, 2000, private collection.

In later life, the highway replaced the sea as Pratt's source of inspiration, especially the long stretches between destinations. He called certain recurring sites his "places of memory." *Driving to Venus: On the Burgeo Road*, 2000, depicts one of them: a stretch of southwestern Newfoundland highway he returned to many times. For Pratt, driving was a kind of meditation, a state in which attention sharpened and time loosened. He paid close attention to the arc of the road, observing how its geometry directs the eye and scatters what we glimpse at the periphery. In the end, Pratt's highways feel personal, mapping an inner journey as much as a route through his home province.

[Learn more](#)

THROUGH THE WINDOW, 2001

Christopher Pratt, *Half Moon and Bright Stars: My Bedroom in September*, 2001, private collection.

In *Half Moon and Bright Stars: My Bedroom in September*, 2001, a three-panel window captures the moment when moonlight, fog, and treeline meet. Outside, the balcony rail mirrors the foot of the bed inside, creating a symmetry between interior warmth and exterior mystery. Windows, doors, and windshields were recurring motifs throughout Pratt's work, opening onto the world while marking the limits of sight. He used windows as devices that could reveal a view, reflect it, or obscure it. In framing a scene, they became both threshold and barrier between the known and unknown.

[Learn more](#)

A REALIST OF MEMORY, MID-2000S

Christopher Pratt, *Winter at Whiteway*, 2004, private collection.

Looking back across six decades, Pratt's work can be situated within Atlantic Realism, a movement that swept the Maritimes in the 1940s and 1950s. Its artists looked closely at everyday life, rendering it with clarity and restraint, while their focus on the local set them apart from dominant trends in Canadian art. Pratt both embodied and departed from the movement. He never called himself a realist; his approach was quieter, shaped by memory, and less about depiction than evocation. In *Winter at Whiteway*, 2004—a stark harbour scene with an empty cod table and a torn flag—atmosphere carries the meaning. Throughout his career, Pratt had always sensed "an immense presence in ordinariness."

[Learn more](#)

About the Author of *Christopher Pratt: Life & Work*

Mireille Eagan

Mireille Eagan is the curator of contemporary art at The Rooms in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. She has curated more than 150 exhibitions, individually and in collaboration, including *Christopher Pratt: Places I Go* (2015), the nationally touring retrospective *Mary Pratt* (2013–15), *Mary Pratt: This Little Talking Artist* at the National Gallery of Canada (2015), and the Terra Nova Art Foundation's official collateral project at the 55th Venice Biennale (2013). Eagan also served as project lead, editor, and contributing author for *Future Possible: An Art History of Newfoundland and Labrador* (2021). Her writing has appeared in *Border Crossings*, *C Magazine*, *Canadian Art*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Visual Arts News*, and *Inuit Art Quarterly*, and she has lectured widely across Canada and internationally.

CHRISTOPHER PRATT: LIFE & WORK IN PRINT

Cover of *Christopher Pratt: Life & Work* by Mireille Eagan.

A print edition of *Christopher Pratt: Life & Work* will be available in bookstores across Canada in November.

[Pre-order your copy](#)

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