

More News

Welcome to the fall edition of MORE News. We hope that you enjoy reading about TMI's current and upcoming programming!

In This Edition:

TMI and Our City



This fall, TMI inaugurates a new series of courses under the banner "TMI and Our City." As Manager of Academic Affairs Joseph Vietri explains, the series is designed to supplement our regular curriculum with shorter and lighter courses that will invite participants to actively engage with our city. "City" here does not just refer to Montreal in a bubble. It implies "city" in the sense of a living organism that impacts the lives of those within its borders and which is in turn influenced by the world around it. "TMI and Our City" will connect our community to the artistic, literary, and environmental world that surrounds us. [Read more on page 2]

TMI's Gallery Wall

Visitors to the Thomas More Institute often remark on the artwork that adorns its walls. This fall, there will be even more of a feast for the eyes, as we unveil a Gallery Wall in our north classroom, displaying multiple works from TMI's Art Collection. The decision to collect art went to the heart of what TMI's founders thought belonged to the meaningful life of an adult learner... [Read more on page 2]

TMI Volunteer Profile: A Conversation with Tony Joseph

Since the 1970s, Tony Joseph has been a dedicated member of the TMI Community, participating in the activities of the Institute as student, discussion leader, course designer, Board member and more, including his role as a key organiser of TMI's annual art exhibits. Discover more about his life in this interview with Dominic Varvaro, writer and TMI student. [Read on page 3]

Fall Edition
August 2023

Upcoming Events

TMI Open House

August 26, 12:30-3:30 p.m.

"Expressions of Poetry":

An Evening of Poetry

September 7, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Webinar: *Exploring Ethical Questions around Medical Assistance in Dying*

October 12, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Book Launch: "James Wilson Morrice: Paintings and Drawings of Venice"

November 22, 6:30 p.m.

Westmount Library Literature Circle and TMI Discussion

November 30, 7:00 p.m.

Feast of Lights

December 8

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

**For full details
see inside.**

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TMI and our City (continued)

This year, five courses make up the curriculum of “TMI and our City”.

Two of these courses include visits to Montreal museums. In October, [“TMI visits the McCord Museum”](#) invites participants to view the McCord’s brilliant reimagined permanent exhibition, Indigenous Voices of Today: Knowledge, Trauma, Resilience. Including both a visit to see the exhibit, a museum workshop on site, and a discussion at TMI a week later, this course will allow a deeper consideration of the exhibit than would be had on one’s own.

Spring’s [“Looking at Art,”](#) led by art historian and instructor of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts guides, Anita Grants, will consist of three online sessions dedicated to learning how to discuss art in an approachable way, with a fourth session conducted at the Museum, allowing participants to put into practice what they have learned by sharing their observations about works of art on display.

In addition to museum courses, we also have a spring walking tour. [“Put a Spring in Your Step with TMI”](#) is designed as a sight-seeing tour of four Montreal neighbourhoods: Saint-Henri, Little Burgundy, Pointe-Saint-Charles, and Verdun. The tour will look at the public art, historical landmarks, and popular cafés and food shops of the neighbourhood. Short stories and articles about the locales will supplement the visits.

Finally, [our popular opera course](#) will connect TMIers to the New York Metropolitan Opera, and [“Canada Reads: TMI Participates,”](#) will allow us to engage in a mini version of the Canada-wide battle of the books.

Consider supplementing your usual diet of TMI 12-week courses with one of the lighter treasures of “TMI and Our City.”

[Register Here](#)

TMI’s Gallery Wall (continued)

As TMI’s Executive Director Madeleine Colaço explains, “TMI’s founders were supporters of the arts in all their forms and believed that a learning environment was enhanced by the presence of works of art.” This interest in art led not only to art-related courses, but also to active engagement with contemporary Quebec artists.

From 1963 to 2008, the Institute hosted an annual art show, at which the work of contemporary Quebec artists was displayed and sold. At each exhibition, the Institute would purchase at least one work, thus growing its collection. Donations also added to it, creating a collection which now contains approximately 150 works, most of which are by Quebec artists from the modern and contemporary periods.

While TMI no longer holds an annual art exhibit, we have long wanted to profile our collection. Under the vision and guidance of Concordia Professor Emeritus of Art History, Sandra Paikowsky, we have done just this, through the transformation of one of the walls of our classrooms into a mini gallery. Professor Paikowsky reviewed the collection and selected works that highlight its treasures. In her words: “The artworks’ arrangement on this wall and in adjacent settings, indicates the diversity of the TMI collection at the same time that the pictures suggest the range of art making in Montreal.”

Paikowsky worked with her colleague Victoria Le Blanc, artist, writer and curator, on the arrangement of the works. They selected works on paper that made use of a diversity of materials. The artworks “reflect the unique and equal respect by the city for representational and non-representational art, with both approaches sharing much of the same visual and aesthetic language,” she notes.

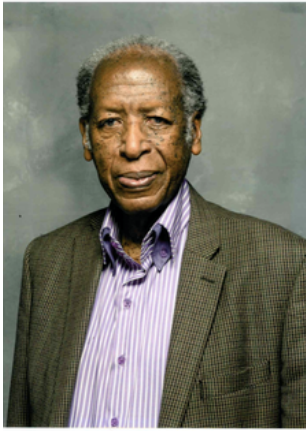


TMI's Gallery Wall (continued)

Among the painters whose work is featured in the Gallery Wall are Léon Bellefleur, Fitz Brandtner, Rita Briansky, Edwin Holgate, Louis Mahlstock, Henri Masson, Goodridge Roberts, Sylvia Safdie, and Francine Simonin. Come to our Open House on Saturday, August 26 to see the Gallery Wall in person and to learn about its creation.



TMI Volunteer Profile: A Conversation with Tony Joseph



"I'm a lucky man," Tony says. He's arrived 30 minutes before me. "I took the bus here," explaining how he doesn't drive. "It was right there." Then he mentions the neighbour who once tried to sell him a car for a dollar. "Too expensive, I told him," he quips. He wears a jacket in spite of the June heat. His hands cherish Elizabeth Strout's *Anything Is Possible* (a reading for a fall course he is taking). But it's his Caribbean-blue eyes that claim my attention as we nurse our morning beverages.

Tony is a product of change. He grew up in Port-of-Spain watching his native Trinidad transform into an independent British Commonwealth republic. "The writing was on the wall—the Brits were relinquishing control. Transition to independence was peaceful though," he recalls. He credits British education for his love of English poets. "William Wordsworth is my favourite," he declares early in our conversation.

He transplanted his 24-year-old self to a New-York community college to finish his studies when his preoccupation with sports caused him to fail math. It was also in New York that he got to know Unity Movement champion Eric Butterworth, who turned him on to metaphysical spirituality.

Tony's in his element as we circle back to the subjects of luck, metaphysics, and divine intervention. He talks of a Milky Way poster he once owned and of how the vastness of its image made him see "we're all part of the totality."

I ask for his impression of contemporary literature. He laments that "we don't take enough time anymore," but then invokes authors like Joseph Campbell, who coined *Follow your bliss*, and Maria Popova's popular *Brain Pickings* site. He later lists Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, William Wordsworth, and Thomas Mann as "lifelong friends and literary muses."

We talk of his earning a BA in sociology and English literature at Montreal's Sir George Williams University when he first came to the city. "Why Montreal—and in 1970?" I'm curious. "Why jump from the frying pan to the fire?" I wonder about emigrating to Montreal during a particularly troubling time in its history.

"I felt like I'd been here for years. I liked the ambience. I have no regrets." And I believe Tony and also in the syzygy that is his career. He claims, modestly, that he'd talked his way into a career managing the Montreal General Hospital's non-medical operations. I suspect, however, that the decision makers who first met with him recognized the celestial alignment of confidence and audacity that had walked into their lives, with Tony ultimately overseeing 500 volunteers, serving for 18 years as community rep on the Medical Research Ethics board all while sensitizing medical professionals to the human impact of their procedures.

TMI Volunteer Profile: A Conversation with Tony Joseph (continued)

"Volunteering is giving back," he then says, changing gears. "Volunteers need to get something." He describes how empathy must accompany technology, what he calls "High tech, high touch." Getting to know the volunteers beyond their names is a "two-way street. You must make them part of the team." He talks of how hospital workers and volunteers establish communities and how these networks become de facto families.

His passion for public speaking is the origin of the stroke of luck that brought Tony to the Thomas More Institute when a friend at a Dale Carnegie session suggested "Go there for a real education." For over 50 years, Tony leveraged his love of transcendental literature to design courses like Rethinking the Mythic Imagination and Balancing on the Technological Trapeze. Tony's propensity to build a curriculum of "... internal and external aspects, balancing a flourishing life for humanity" was a perfect fit with the institute's mantra of imaginative exploration. He also brought his managerial experience to TMI's board and its executive committee. He championed its annual art exhibition. Tony moved hearts and minds to such an extent that TMI Director Danny Schouela recognized him, in deference to Tony's love of all things Emerson, as the Sage of the Institute.

"His passion for public speaking is the origin of the stroke of luck that brought Tony to the Thomas More Institute"

I ask him why he is so compelled by the Institute that he would invest 50 years of his life in it. Here he waxes poetic with the most telling and personal comments of our conversation. Tony feels there is a profound catalyst at work in the interactions between fellow learners and the texts in a TMI course, leaving what he refers to as "slow-dying embers and sparks ignited" that "remain in the deeper parts of oneself." Another comment conveys his idea that the Institute transforms the teacher into the student when "a question...literally changes one's mindscape"—perhaps the ultimate reward for a lifelong learner.

Tony may believe that luck is an accomplice in his achievements but it's as clear as his eyes are blue that the lucky ones are the souls graced with his presence.

About the Author: Dominic Varvaro is a writer, photographer and TMI student. His foodie creations can be found on Instagram: [@thesauceison](#)

Community Survey

In May of this year, we conducted an online TMI Community Survey. After 2 ½ years of the pandemic, your responses allowed us to take the pulse of the community in areas such as existing and potential programming and preferences for online versus in person courses. The survey revealed a high level of satisfaction with TMI courses and an appreciation for the breadth of subjects, the level of intellectual challenge and the value of collaborative learning.

Just over half of the community indicated a preference for in-person courses, finding the discussions better and the social aspect a key benefit. **Approximately one-third prefer on-line or hybrid courses for their flexibility and convenience.** With this in mind, we will continue to offer courses in a variety of formats to meet the needs of our community. These and other insights will be a key asset as we develop programming going forward. We thank all of you who took the time to respond to the survey and share your views with us. We are also grateful for support from the Government of Canada's Community Service Recovery Fund, which helped fund this initiative.

Upcoming Events

August

TMI Open House

Saturday, August 26, 12:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Hear about TMI's latest course offerings and meet our course leaders. The Open House will include a sample discussion session on an upcoming course and an introduction to our new Gallery Wall, featuring art works from TMI's permanent collection.

September

Expressions of Poetry: An Evening of Poetry

Thursday, September 7, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

The Thomas More Institute presents “Expressions of Poetry,” an evening of listening to writers read and talk about their work. Poetry can be found in the day-to-day as much as in verse and prose. We have invited five writers from here and away who will share their words and embark on a discussion of their sources of inspiration. Host Munirah Amra will engage with award-winning Montreal novelist Olivia Tapiero; Montreal poets Devon Gallant,

Samara Garfinkle, and Jerome Ramcharitar; and Toronto poet Sophia Devi. Join us for a scintillating evening! Register by email at: info@thomasmore.qc.ca



October

Webinar: *What Constitutes a Good Death? Exploring Ethical Questions around Medical Assistance in Dying* -- An Interview with Dr. Eugene Bereza

Thursday October 12, 2023 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

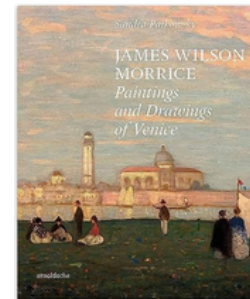
Dr. Bereza is currently Director of the newly created MUHC Centre for Applied Ethics, where he has instituted an innovative program for an integrated, multi-disciplinary, professional approach to applied ethics. Join us for an evening of conversation on the vital question of what constitutes a good death. Dr. Bereza will be interviewed by TMI's Christine Jamieson and Martin Baenninger.

November

Book Launch of Art Historian Sandra Paikowsky's latest work -- James Wilson Morrice: Paintings and Drawings of Venice

Wednesday, November 22, 6:30 p.m.

Join us at the Thomas More Institute for a conversation with Concordia Professor Emeritus of Art History, Sandra Paikowsky on the Canadian painter James Wilson Morrice. The book is the first comprehensive look at the artist's images of Venice, Italy. Morrice (1865–1924) was the first Canadian painter to make regular trips to Venice from the mid 1890s to about 1908. This book describes how he entwined intimate images of the city with the daily life of Venetians.



Westmount Library Literature Circle / Discussion

Thursday, November 30, 7:00 p.m.

At the Westmount Library

TMI's Imogen Brian and Carol Fiedler will lead a discussion of Laotian Canadian Poet and Short Story Writer, Souvankham Thammavongsa's story, “Edge of the World,” from her collection *How to Pronounce Knife*, which won the 2020 Giller Prize. Register at wpl-thomas-more-eventbrite.ca.



December

Feast of Lights

Friday, December 8, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Meet with old friends and new as we come together over food and conversation to celebrate the holiday season.



Office Updates

New (and returning) faces at TMI

In February we welcomed Patricia Saxton who took up the position of accountant / bookkeeper at TMI. Patricia brings with her a broad experience from working in similar positions within non-profit institutions. Outside of working hours, Patricia enjoys family activities with her children and her spouse. Her spare time is often spent running, drawing, or in the outdoors.



In July we were thrilled to welcome back Lucía Linaje-Ferrel for a second summer as a student intern hired under Employment and Social Development Canada's "Canada Summer Jobs Program". As Data Administrator Lucía has been providing valuable support in updating our website as well as helping with various social media and marketing initiatives.



Office refurbishments

TMI's summer break provided the opportunity to undertake a number of office refurbishments with help from staff and volunteers. In addition to the installation of the art Gallery Wall in the North classroom, a new air conditioning unit was put in place for the South classroom. In the reception area, a fresh coat of paint and a rotation of the artwork on the walls has brightened up TMI's entrance. The reorganisation of certain office spaces is also underway with a view to enhancing their comfort and appeal for the TMI community and staff. Many thanks to all those involved in these on-going improvements.



We look forward to
welcoming you
this fall semester!

