It's not unusual to be caught singing in the can: Just ask Sir Tom
EARLIEST RECORDING

$4,000 and $6,000 in next week's
auction. Liz Williams, president of the
Porthcurnock YMCA added: "Tom
began his singing career here and
apparently he often used to sing in the toilets."

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

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A rare recording of singer Tom Jones singing in a lavatory is to go up under the hammer at Christie's. The real-to-reel tape,
made two years before Jones's breakthrough hit It's Not Un-
asual, is his earliest-known recording. It has been put up
for sale in a rock and pop memorabilia sale. The four un-
released tracks were recorded in the lavatories at the YMCA
in Jones's home town of Pontypridd, South Wales, before he
hit the big time. The recordings are from 1952, when Jones,
pictured, was foisting a rock 'n' roll band called The Sen-
ators and performed under the name Tommy Scott. They
were recorded by a TV soundman on an eight-track port-
table studio. The recording is expected to fetch between

ARTS & LIFE
NATIONAL POST\nTheatres, Monday, July 7

Dismantling the sharped of past identities

Last week, Canadians from sea to shining sea celebrated the
nation’s birthday. Yet there are nations across the land
that are much older, from the Ojibway to the Peigan and
beyond. Now, Face the Nation, a new art exhibit at
the Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton, is showcasing contem-
porary First Nations artists inspired by those trending
histories. Here, exhibit curator Catharine Couchell tells
Leah Sandals about the show.

When did you start
devloping this show and why?

We started working on this show at least a year ago, and
there are a number of different reasons why. One
was we were doing an exhibi-
tion of work by Nikolai De
Grandmaison, an early 20th-
century artist who did paint-
ings of First Nations tribes in
Alberta. Alberta Art, History
and Manhood. What we
wanted to do was showcase
current contemporary aboriginal
artists working today who also
address issues raised by the
Grandmaison portraits.

What kinds of issues is it?

Well, De-Grandmaison was a Russian artist who came
to Canada and found himself fascinated by First Nations
people. He actually was a friend of First Nations people
such as the Peigan, and he cre-
ated portraits that are quite
respectful in many ways. But
they also part of a biased
tradition of looking at First
Nations people.

What do the aboriginal artists in the show approach
that for First Nations people?

Jeff Thomas is one of the artists in the show. For a long
time he's been working at the task of Edward
Currie, (a non-First Nations photographer) who was docu-
menting aboriginal people in the early 1900s. In this exhib-
ition, he's worked on similar images from our collection.
Mira Hrycay has done a large mural based on Tom
Theroux and the Group of Seven, looking at how these
images of the northern landscape
came across the presence of aboriginal population. The
Group of Seven talked about the north as “a pristine,
uncontaminated” and a lot of what they were portraying was
in Georgian Bay, which has ac-
tually been the ancestral homelands of Hopeful people for
many, many centuries.

What about the more fashion-oriented work from
De-Grandmaison?

Part of this show revolves around portraiture.
And KC Adams’ Hybrid Portraits docu-
ment the current contem-
porary aboriginal cultural zones.
All these people in her photo-
graphs are working artists or
curators or writers. In a way
there's a kind of Grandmamaison that have this herculean
position, but they take on this
gloss of the fashion photog-
rapher. Also, her figures have
embroidered dang words that have been used as insults

aboriginal people, from ’The
On Indian time’ to ‘Ringes’
place?” What she’s tried to do,
I think, is use that language
that’s been used to degrade
aboriginal people and turn it
back on itself.

This show opened with a panel on defining a contem-
porary aboriginal aesthetic. What came out of that?

Well, you know, in the end
we didn’t address that spe-
cific question. But one of the most interesting things
that come out of it was the idea that the investigation of identity
is itself an aesthetic. I think
that’s common to the artists in
the show, even the ones we
haven’t discussed. Kent Monkman, Terence Hu-
le, Kent Monkman, Fiona Clarke
and Adrian Stimson.

Speaking of identity, you
are non-aboriginal. How do
you resolve this with organiz-
ing an exhibition that in so
much about identity?

I spent a great deal of time
wondering whether I could
do this. There are a lot of
totally good aboriginal cur-
ators in Canada, and there’s a
lot of important work that
has been done by aboriginal curating
collectives, both individu-
ally and in institutions. But
I also worked with some of
these artists in the past. And
it also felt maybe too easy
to say, ‘I can’t do this.’

What must he done
bridge the gap between
mainstream museums and
First Nations art?

The challenge of how
—and one of the things I think
the panel brought up—is a
debate between aboriginal
collectives that work in the
mainstream art world and abori-
ginal communities. From what
I heard, both of these are
needed to move forward—it’s
important to open up the main-
tstream, but it’s also im-
portant to maintain
the respective mainstreams.
And I would say that’s the same
for all sorts of art cultures.

Face the Nation: New Port-
raits of the Past by Contem-
porary Aboriginal Artists con-
tinues to Sept. 21 at the Art
Gallery of Alberta. For
more information, visit
artgallery-alberta.ca.

Leah Sandals

Above, left to right: Jeff Thomas juxtaposes his new images of Slave River people with once
past photographs to create new perspectives on what it means to be a First Nations person.
Sharon Pinnell’s early 1900s, addresses the Canadian landscape and the repression
of aboriginal life within. Do you recognize the treescapes in the background?