The Current

Friday December 13, 2019 Full Episode Transcript

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The Current Transcript for December 13, 2019

Host: Laura Lynch

STORIES FROM THIS EPISODE

The Current
Andrew Scheer's resignation; U.K. election results; Baltimore Museum and women artists

▶ / 1:14:28

Prologue

[Music: Theme]

SOUNDCLIP

ANDREW SCHEER: I just informed my colleagues in the conservative caucus that I will be resigning as the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada.

LAURA LYNCH: Days after vowing he would stay as leader, Andrew Scheer is on his way out. The Conservative Party is once again wrestling with just what it wants to be to Canadians and who is best to lead the charge. First up today, a panel of party stalwarts weighs in. After that. Well, we did. We pulled it off anyway. The biggest conservative majority since the 1980s. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has won a crushing majority, seemingly assuring the nation will leave the European Union. But that's not the end of it. There's the future of Scotland to consider. Not to mention the future of a now weakened Labour Party. That's in about half an hour. Also today, blank canvas. Why female artists are so often left behind and what one gallery is doing about it. I'm Laura Lynch and this is The Current.

Back To Top »

'Tone deaf' to keep Scheer as interim leader after private school revelations: Conservative strategist

Guests: Jamie Ellerton, Peter Van Loan, Brad Trost

The Current
Andrew Scheer's resignation

▶ / 20:12

SOUNDCLIP

ANDREW SCHEER: I've made this decision because it's the best thing for our party. Our party needs someone who can give everything they've got. I know that the road ahead, the stress that would put on my family, I can't give them that 100 percent assurance. So I know the next person will and I know I can speak on behalf of all our team that the next leader of this party will have the support required from these benches to make sure we are successful next election.

LL: And so it ends for Andrew Scheer after weeks of sniping in backrooms and in public, the conservative leader caved into the pressures to step aside. But now there are questions about where the party goes from here. For insight into the debates raging within the party, we've pulled together a panel of conservative insiders. Brad Trost is the former Conservative MP for Saskatoon University. He's in our Saskatoon studio. Jamie Ellerton is a conservative strategist with the communications firm Conaptus. And Peter Van Loan held a number of cabinet posts under Stephen Harper, including House Leader. He's now a partner with the law firm of Aird and Berlis. They're both with me in our Toronto studio. Hello, everyone.

PETER VAN LOAN: Good morning.

JAMIE ELLERTON: Good to be with you.

BRAD TROST: Good to be here.

LL: Peter Van Loan, let's start with you. How did you react to Andrew Scheer's announcement?

PETER VAN LOAN: I wasn't surprised. The timing was a little bit surprising. I thought it might happen early in January. But with the work that John Baird was doing, travelling the country with the work that Andrew had done himself with post-mortems with candidates and campaign managers, I think it was becoming evident that it was going to be a very tough ride through to April. And if you wanted to try and fight and stay improbably, it would be unsuccessful. And in those circumstances, I can understand why someone would want to spare their family. You know, you got a lot of young kids and that kind of nasty stuff that would be said is can be pretty hurtful and harmful. And if it's not in cause of success, I think it was kind of inevitable.

LL: You reference John Baird, who's the former conservative cabinet minister who is doing the post-mortem on the election. He was apparently briefing some employees on where he was at with that. Brad Trost, was anyone surprised by this?

BRAD TROST: I think, like Peter said, the timing maybe was a little bit of a surprise, but I think a lot of people figured this was going to come. I thought possibly around the January caucus, but the problems hadn't just started after the election or during the election. There had been complaints literally for several months to a year ahead of time. And I think with all that baggage, politicians become realistic, even if they want to hang on, sometimes they have to go.

LL: And Jamie Ellerton. What did you think when you heard the news?

JAMIE ELLERTON: Yes, it's kind of a little surprised by the timing. I thought it would take until after this parliamentary session was done and they were into the Christmas break. But I think the one thing that has united conservatives in recent weeks is that Andrew shares electability in a future election was very much in doubt. And I think he saw the writing on the wall and did the honourable thing yesterday in resigning.

LL: Peter, that there was a story that broke yesterday about the Conservative Party paying for some of the costs of Andrew shares children's private school education. How much of a role do you think that played in this?

PETER VAN LOAN: I don't think it was a significant role at all. I think he was pretty much at that decision. I'd look much more to that feedback, an assessment of whether he could survive. And I think it's a bit of a trumped up story. Admittedly, parties do provide support for their leaders, for wardrobes, for travel, for some other expenses, because it's very difficult and costly to be a leader. Haven't seen it involve children's education before, but it's not out of the realm. And as the fund said, they you know, it was done on an above board basis. So I think the bigger factor was electability and what feedback he was getting from John Baird's canvas and his own.

LL: Well, that's what you say. Let's listen to conservative strategist Kory Teneycke on this issue. He was on CBC TV yesterday.

SOUNDCLIP

KORY TENEYCKE: Information was going to come out in the media that Andrews Children's Private School educations were being paid for by party members. And I think that's something that is pretty serious. People who donate to the Conservative Party, these are small donations. Most of them are often under 100 dollars. They're not giving out money so it can subsidize the lifestyle of a party leader. It's inappropriate for Andrew to be staying on until a next leader is chosen. Party fundraising will be negatively affected.

CBC HOSTESS: It's your opinion that this precipitated resignation? Do you think this forced Mr. Scheer to resign?

KORY TENEYCKE: 100 percent. That's what happened.

LL: Brad Trost. What do you think of the decision by caucus to keep Andrew Scheer on as interim leader?

BRAD TROST: That one actually surprised me because one of the things that you want to do as a caucus when you're getting a new leader is have a fresh reset. You want to have a position where you can transition from one leader to another and an in terms leader's job is to do that. So that one actually surprised me. They seem to have made the decision in about a 45 minute caucus. I haven't talked to anyone in the room who made that decision. So I'm going to be very curious to understand why. But that one actually did surprise me.

LL: Jamie, what do you think?

JAMIE ELLERTON: Yes, I think when you saw what caucus had to say coming out of their meeting last night, it came across as absolutely toned up. People know that there are going to be special exceptions to cover things like wardrobe that Peter mentioned as a result of the unique position as leader. But to pretend that grassroots donations 50 and 100 dollars at a time are subsidizing the leader's children's private education, I think just doesn't sit right. And I think when most people hear that they kind of recoil and caucus kind of covering for that last night was not their finest moment.

LL: All right. Let's move on a bit from there and talk about, Andrew Scheer's social conservatism. We know that there had been some resistance in the party. Jamie Ellerton, you spoke to this about his positions on on social issues. How much do you think that had to do with his eventual downfall?

JAMIE ELLERTON: I think social conservatism has kind of put out as a scapegoat on some of this stuff. I think one of the bigger issues was Andrew's inability to just kind of answer questions in a very convincing and straight forward fashion. You can have a view of social conservatism and advance a social conservatism that is big, that it includes expanding support for families, expand strengthening communities, rather than trying to diminish those sorts of things that I think his inability over the course of the campaign. There's answer, straightforward questions in a way that convinced and inspired confidence amongst Canadians was ultimately the bigger share.

LL: Peter, how long you watched him struggle to answer those questions? What do you think?

PETER VAN LOAN: I think Jamie is right on that. But I think conservatives also have to be wary of saying that that is the problem. Has real tactical problem was he didn't put forward other issues that people could focus on. So it became easier to focus on some of these distractions, notwithstanding that he had good answers. And it seems to be something that I think gets inserted by some in the media and others who want to divide conservatives who are trying to create wedges and put conservatives into different camps.

LL: A lot of conservatives in different camps right now.

PETER VAN LOAN: No, I don't think so. I think the reality is social conservatives are not the moral majority of the United States 20, 30 years ago. They're actually in a place like where progressive used to be. They just want to be left alone. Give us the freedom to have governments stay out of our lives and let us live our beliefs as we want. And that's consistent with what people on the progressive side would also say. Don't meddle in our personal lives. Leave us out of it and leave government out of our own personal choices. And I think that's one of the reasons why conservatives can focus on other issues like foreign policy, like taxation, the size of government, individual personal freedom and liberty. All of these things do come together in what is a coherent, big tent, broad consumer relation.

LL: Brad Trost, let's bring this to you, socially conservative members of the party we're hoping Andrew's share would be their champion and they say they were disappointed the Campaign Life Coalition welcomed his resignation yesterday. Where do conservatives like you go from here? Is there a place in the party for you?

BRAD TROST: Well, I think very much there is a place in the party for what you call social conservatives. I mean, you look at what is the core social conservative areas of our party. There were new Canadians are. The places like Scarborough, Richmond, Richmond, Hill, Mississauga, that's actually where the social conservative wing of our party is actually the most engaged in. New Canadians are the demographic that we as the Conservative Party need to reach out to. 2011, we dominated and won the new Canadian vote. That's, I think, one of the big priorities and questions for the party. How do we have a vision that not just holds our base in areas like western Canada, the oil and gas heart line land, but how do we reach out to new Canadians? The key demographic in the GTA and the Greater Vancouver area.

LL: Are you shaking your head, Jamie?

JAMIE ELLERTON: Yes. I actually find Brad's approach on this to just be utterly disingenuous when Brad talks about social conservatives in that regard. It's always a faith base that's like bringing a lot of faith into politics. And the mobilization of what that looks like, for instance, members in terms of one leadership, one member, one vote leadership style. Fundamentally, you can have a social conservatism that is big, that has a vision that looks to invite more people into the fold and build communities up. Too often what we see is actually the denigrating of other people who views people like LGBTQ Canadians as lesser people fundamentally. So it's a social conservatism that's founded in disrespect for others--

BRAD TROST: And I'm sorry, I can't [unintelligible].

LL: OK. Brad, go ahead.

BRAD TROST: What did I say there that in any way denigrated anyone when I said what are key demographic is going to be going forward is new Canadians, new Canadians, be they from the Philippines, be they from Nigeria, be they from whatever, we have to have a vision to reach out to them. These are people who are often fiscally conservative, socially conservative, culturally conservative. And the liberals regularly clobber us in that demographic. What did I say? And what does reaching out to those people mean denigrating to anyone? I think it's very clear those people aren't could be brought in by a urban, cosmopolitan sort of pitch. It's economic issues that you have--.

[Cross talking]

LL: Peter Van Loan

PETER VAN LOAN: This debate between Jamie and Brad tells you why the social conservative social issues, whether they're on the conservative side or the progressive side, is not the conservative strong suit. It's not what brings us together. It's not what Canadians are looking for from their politicians in any event. I think they really want social issues like that to be left to people's individual choices and their freedoms. And they want a public policy side. They want to focus on the kind of issues that to bring conservatives together, smaller government, lower taxes, a sort of foreign policy on behalf of Canada, things like that.

LL: Okay. So you know what the conservatives need. Tell me who the right person is to lead the party, Peter Van Loan. You supported Kelly Leach last time around.

PETER VAN LOAN: Yes, I did. And had a long friendship with her, going back to her tremendous contributions and building up our party on the ground. And I'm really very much someone who believes in folks that do that kind of work. And it's an important element of our party. I think there are a lot of very good choices. I think we're going to see a Peter Mackay and Erin O'Toole, who've basically had campaigns almost ready to go, going. You'll see people like Pier Polio, Michelle Rampel I'm sure we'll be looking seriously at it. Someone who I think is very interesting to look at is Gerard Deltell, not as high profile. He hasn't been given the opportunities to showcase himself, but he's one of our caucus members from Quebec with considerable experience, tremendously powerful debater.

LL: What is it in those candidates that you see that you didn't see in Andrew Scheer, generally speaking?

PETER VAN LOAN: Well, I'm not saying that- it's not a question of comparing them with Andrew Scheer.

LL: Some people are doing those comparisons clearly.

PETER VAN LOAN: Well, Andrew Scheer has made the decision to leave. And that's why I think a lot of folks who were supportive of him in the past are happy to be in this caucus are obviously going to now see is a leadership opportunity. Should I step forward into that? I think the SCheer question is behind us now, the question is, what is the best choice that brings together conservatives and focuses us on the issues that will help us defeat Justin Trudeau.

LL: Brad Trost, I'll come to you in a second, but this one here, Jamie Ellerton on this. Who's the right person to lead this party?

JAMIE ELLERTON: I think it's too soon to say. I think now that Andrew Shearer stepped aside, people will come forward. I think some of the usual and higher profile names I've people I've talked about in the past that Peter just listed. We'll take a look at this. And I hope there's other people who come forward or perhaps lesser known today. I think if you look at kind of where public opinion polls might put name recognition and higher profile people, if we were to go based on those, Christine Elliot probably would've been premier for the past 10 years here in Ontario. That's not how these things tend to play out. I think what you all need to see in this is a leadership candidate that can unite Canadians, that can inspire them with vision, that can appeal to all Canadians and their values. That seems to be bigger and bring more people into the fold rather than trying to exclude and kind of play, let's just appeal to 45 percent of Canadians and hope we get across the 40 percent mark in the polls.

LL: Do you need a leader from Quebec, for example?

JAMIE ELLERTON: I don't think the leader has to be from Quebec, but I think the leader has to be bilingual and be able to function in both of Canada's official languages.

LL: Brad Trost, what do you say on this?

BRAD TROST: I think it goes back to the point we need someone with vision, not someone who's just going to talk tactics or try to recycle the past, but someone who can actually say this is where I think the country needs to go. I think Peter's got a point. It's got to be broad based issues that unite people to three main points and drive those directly to the audience. And as much as it pains me to say this, I probably think it's going to be a problem to have someone from western Canada, people talk about the hot button, social issues, cetera. The last election was really regionally based. We cleaned up Alberta and Saskatchewan. I love my home province. I'm a geophysicist, support the oil patch industry. But unless the candidate is really exceptional from the prairies or the west, I think there's got to be an advantage given to someone coming from the east.

LL: So you aren't running again?

BRAD TROST: No, I'm not planning to. I think there's a danger for conservatives in setting up litmus tests. You have to have a certain position on a certain issue. You have to be this conservative or not. You have to be from this particular geographic place. I think when we start doing that, we start limiting our party. And I think we really have to set aside the tests of are you a good enough conservative for where do you come from the right place and look for people that grow beyond that. And the risk for candidates will be that there will be a temptation to run your campaign focussed as a social conservative to get those votes or as a progressive to get those votes and to break into those camps and see yourself as a delegate of them. That might help you win a leadership. It will not serve the party well. It will not serve you well if you become leader. So I hope that we'll have a- And I think the party membership broadly, having been through what we've been through, will look for electability, will look for the strength of the policy positions, your ability to engage in debate, take on Justin Trudeau and look like a compelling, strong leader. Conservatives have to have strong leaders if we're going to succeed.

LL: And I wondered, Jamie, that there are schisms that exist there. There is the West versus the East. There's issues of climate change. Those who support taking action on that, those who say, no, we need to support the oil and gas industry more. There is the social conservatism. Can one leader fix all of that within the party?

JAMIE ELLERTON: Yeah, I think that the leader has to have a vision that unifies that. And if you take the issue of climate change and resource development, I don't think fundamentally those are actually at odds with each other. I think if you look at the state of the world today and energy demands, that continues to actually increase globally, getting more of Canada's resources to market is a good thing rather than less of it. And I think you can still take things that look to actually address climate change and do so in a way that is serious as opposed to just being a glossy brochure. And I hope that people aren't going to ask you about it. On the things of social issues. I think you look at where society is today and how far our society has come from Paul Martin same sex marriage debate in 2005 to where we are today. Canadians overwhelmingly support equal marriage. The Conservative Party convention in Vancouver a few years ago, 75 percent of delegates voted to recognize marriage equality for exactly what it is. It's marriage. And so on, issues like that, going backwards and having those debates is not in the party's best interest. And I think Canadians fundamentally walls us the party for its values and where it will wants to be going forward rather than relitigating past debates.

LL: So it's been suggested that the one person who's really happy about all of this is Justin Trudeau, because now he knows that he had a conservative party that's going to be much more focussed on its own internal affairs than infighting in parliament. And I'm wondering, Brad, to also being with you on this, how weak is the party going to be in these months when it could have been fighting in parliament against a minority government?

BRAD TROST: Well, I think the one group that's actually going to be very disappointed about this are Liberal backbenchers. They know the problems they have with Justin Trudeau. They know that they're in trouble. If we're actually fixing our issues and having an honest and open discussion about how to reach out to different demographics where we underperformed northern Canada, a small town Quebec, new Canadians, the Atlantic area, we're actually solving our problems. The Liberals have huge problems coming out of the last election. They should have lost the last election. They're not actually fixing the result.

LL: They didn't.

JAMIE ELLERTON: Quite frankly, were an increasingly urban society. I'm not pretending that you're going to see downtown conservatives in cities all across the country. But fundamentally, a conservative party that doesn't appeal to urban Canadians, period, is going to be a conservative party that struggles.

BRAD TROST: But that's where new Canadians are absolutely located. That's where they are located in strategic large numbers.

LL: Okay. Listening to this conversation, it is all about the Conservative Party coming together to try to define what it's going to be and who its leader is going to be. Peter Van Loan, it's not just about the focus being on this instead of on parliament. It's also about money that gets soaked up in in the leadership campaign, which leaves the conservatives at a disadvantage.

PETER VAN LOAN: The real risk is not in the leadership because obviously I think Justin Trudeau's got a stable minority. He's there is as long as he wants to be and he's going to look pretty bad if he calls an election where the Tories are in the leadership process. That's simply not going to happen.

LL: But he could call it right as soon as--

PETER VAN LOAN: Exactly. That's where the risk occurs, is right after the new leader is elected. And we've seen that happen. David Pearson did that with Mike Harris in 1990. It didn't work out well for David Peterson, but it also didn't work out well for the conservatives because it was during that time of the leadership, there are no candidates being recruited. There's very little money being raised. As you said, you are simply out getting ready for an election. [Unintelligible] ended it as well with competitive leaders. So that's the point that we really have to focus on. And I think the public will probably punish someone who's seen as prime minister is seen as trying to capitalize on that. But it is the risky period. And there is a reason to do the leadership sometime within the next six or seven months so that we can't get on with that important task of finding candidates and building Alex.

LL: Jamie Ellerton.

JAMIE ELLERTON: Yes. In terms of election timing, too, let's not forget that we have a fixed election date law. And so even though this is a minority parliament, he would have to actually lose the confidence of the House to trigger that election. So opposition parties, whether or not they vote against or just abstain and sit on their hands to allow parliament to continue. That's I think another--.

LL: He could also just go to the Governor-General and dissolve Parliament and call an election, though.

JAMIE ELLERTON: I think he would pay a political price for something like that.

LL: Brad Trost, late last word to you on this. What? Where will the Conservative Party be in what, say, six months from now? And don't make it all rosy.

BRAD TROST: I think the Conservative Party will had an honest conversation. I think it will be united. I think by and large, the membership of the party want people to pull together. They don't want people to be divisive or fight each other. So whoever comes out on top of this will be given the latitude and support from right across the party to do the job that they will have been elected to do.

LL: Okay. So no one wants to suggest who they're endorsing this early out of the gate, huh? Well, we don't even know who the candidates are at this stage. So I bring you your chance to pick your pony now.

BRAD TROST: Peter Van Loan for leader.

JAMIE ELLERTON: Yes. A lot of people now seeing the opportunity will talk with their families and supporters across the country in the lead up to free a country between now and the start of 2020. And I suspect the race will have a lot of gusto and momentum in the air.

LL: All right, gentlemen, thank you very much for your time.

BRAD TROST: Thank you.

JAMIE ELLERTON: Thank you.

LL: Brad Trost is the former MP for Saskatoon University. He was in our Saskatoon studio. Jamie Ellington is a conservative strata strategist with kidnapped us. And Peter Van Loan held a number of cabinet posts under Stephen Harper, including House leader. They were both with me in our Toronto studio. The CBC News is next. Then another political drama is unfolding across the pond. We're looking at the fallout after yesterday's election in the United Kingdom. I'm Laura Lynch, and you were listening to The Current.

Back To Top »

U.K. election results

Guests: Rob Green, Peter Biggins, Margaret Evans

LL: Hello, I'm Laura Lynch, and you're listening to The Current. Still to come, a major art museum says it won't buy any works by male artists next year. But first, the vote to get Brexit done.

SOUNDCLIP

BORIS JOHNSON: We will at last be able to do what?

[Crowds cheering]

BORIS JOHNSON: Pay attention, because this election means that getting Brexit done is now the irrefutable, unarguable decision of the British people. With this election I think we put an end to all those miserable threats of a second referendum.

[Crowd cheering]

JEREMY CORBYN: This is obviously a very disappointing night for the Labour Party with the result that we've got. Brexit has so polarized and divided debate within this country and I recognize that has contributed to the results that the Labour Party has received this evening all across this country, I want to also make it clear that I will not lead the party in any future general election campaign.

LL: A gloomy Jeremy Corbyn of the British Labour Party, and before that, an elated Boris Johnson of the Conservative Party. Voters in the United Kingdom capped off a wild year in politics with the general election and a big win for Boris Johnson and his Conservative Party. He called the election after a string of defeats in the House of Commons over plans to leave the European Union. In this campaign, he promised to, quote, get Brexit done once and for all. His main opponent, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, promised to renegotiate the deal with the EU and perhaps hold a whole new Brexit referendum. But the campaign was also marked by a debate over the future of the National Health Service and a sense among some voters that neither party leader was really their cup of tea. That was not the case with my next two guests. Rob Green is the owner of the Pavillion Bakery. It's a small chain of shops in east London. He had been actively supporting labour by stamping pro Corbyn messages on the coffee cups and bread bags his stores give out. And Peter Biggins is a retired businessman in Leeds who's actively campaigned for both Brexit and the Conservative Party. Hello to both of you.

ROB GREEN: Hi there.

PETER BIGGINS: Hello.

LL: Peter Beggins, let's start with you, how are you feeling today about Boris Johnson's biggest win since Margaret Thatcher's conservative victory in 1987?

PETER BIGGINS: Well, I feel very pleased, obviously. I also feel vindicated because I think the referendum was carried out, will now be carrying out the results of the referendum. So it's a great day for democracy, in my opinion.

LL: Robin, what about you? Are you viewing what's happened after what's been called a drubbing suffered by the Labour Party?

ROB GREEN: I mean, I feel like we got Brexit wrong, you know, with our campaign. And I think, you know, with him being neutral, it really face the electorate. You know, people didn't really understand where Corbyn was on his feelings of Brexit. I think that speaks to all that kind of safe, safe bets in the north of England. So I think that we've had a major part to play with that.

LL: And you were Jeremy Corbyn families. He's announced he's stepping down. What do you think of that?

ROB GREEN: Yes, I think he's taken the party as far as he could. I think he brought socialism to the mainstream politics. You know, and there's a new generation of MPs below him who are passionate about his ideas. And these are existing ideas of socialism, about looking after the whole of the community. And I think you'll see a new breed of politics coming through in the next few years.

LL: How much does Corbyn wear this defeat on his shoulders?

ROB GREEN: Yes, I think the Brexit would kill the Dominic Cummings is one of the best strategists in the world. You know, I think the Conservative government had a very strong, easy to understand message. I mean, I'm from Leeds. I'm from Scarborough. You know, I'm from these areas. I understand, you know, you need a simple message to get across to people. And it came across very well. But, you know, for his manifesto of equal opportunities, looking after people in society, funding the NHS. I think Corbyn did something great for the country.

LL: You mentioned Dominic Cummings there just for our listeners. He is a conservative strategist. Peter begins, It's your man who's won the day here. Why do you think voters stuck by Boris Johnson?

PETER BIGGINS: Well, I think the really, really big thing was Jeremy Corbyn and the ideas that have infected the Labour Party. I think if we were up against Tony Blair, we would have lost, frankly. The Labour Party has moved right away from the people. And this area of the north where we've won so many seats is South traditional industrial area. And the Corbyn vision just does not strike here, he's seen as being a very weak person and seen as anti-British. There is a strong feeling of patriotism and so on. And I think all these things feed into this. And I think the whole- I'm very pleased to hear my friend in London advocating that his ideas carry on, because I think that means that we will win the next election as well.

LL: But also, Peter Biggins, what about the idea of people just being sick and tyred of having to think about Brexit and that being a factor in this as well?

PETER BIGGINS: Yes. The facts about I think the that was more with the main voters. I think there has been strong0 I've been, you know, ploughing a very fertile furrow in my group, my leave group because the feeling around these leave areas where 75 per cent of people voted to leave is the feeling is very, very strong that we should have left. And they're very, very angry with people who tried to [unintelligible] of leaving. So there's a feeling that people really do want. It's not boredom. It's a feeling of anger that they've been ignored.

LL: Robin, it looks like Brexit is going to get done. How do you think it's going to affect the country?

ROB GREEN: Yeah, I think it depends on what kind of deal. I mean, obviously a trade deal with the U.S. and you know, we've got traditional industries trying to survive in places like Leeds, in Yorkshire and, you know, we need true investment from the conservative government, I mean, which of which they haven't got a very good track record of. I think you'll see in five years' time we'll have a much stronger Labour government candidates coming through and you'll have a youth [unintelligible] that wants to see positive change. If Boris backs what he says and he can be trust it, I think that's good on the Conservatives, but they have a bad record for funding the NHS and local industries. And, you know, people in Yorkshire have a very short memory about Thatcherism and what's happened to the north. I know they're frustrated about Brexit, but we wouldn't want to do trade deals with the U.S.. We want to obviously make sure the NHS isn't privatised. And the proof is in the pudding, as we say, in England. You know, so let's see what Boris delivers on.

LL: All right. Peter Biggins, what do you think will change in the UK with Brexit?

PETER BIGGINS: I think that, well, I'm hoping that we'll have a phased and orderly withdrawal from the European Union. And the European Union will be a very profitable part of Britain. And that will have a very good relationship. And I also hope that we have a good relationship with other countries like the United States and Canada, of course. And I think that's perfectly possible. And I don't I don't envisage any catastrophic events. And I think that the people to do [unintelligible] in the North. They do remember the [unintelligible], I think people have voted here is a very, very resounding and quite unexpected result that the people who have sworn they'll never vote Tory have lost to Tory in this in these areas. There were people who got a very strong attachment to labour who have turned against labour and turned towards the Tories who's giving them what they want. And I think the Labour Party really needs to wake up and think about this and why it's happened, because it will happen again if they don't.

LL: Well, let's talk about how divided the country has been. And Peter, I want to come back to you on this. You and Rob didn't see eye to eye on this. How worried are you about the divisions in the country?

PETER BIGGINS: I'm not the slightest bit worried. I think I want the same thing as Rob. You know, I think Bob will wants Britain just rise and prosper and have good relationship is with us relations and trade and another security matters with other countries. I'm quite sure he feels that way. And that's how I feel. And I don't find, you know, my friends and my family. Some of my family were voted Labour. But of course, we don't fall out with. We understand the other people's different point of view. And I was on the BBC the other day being interviewed. And in between takes, I was talking to a very strong [unintelligible]and a very pleasant conversation we had. [unintelligible] and if I sat down with Rob now, I'm sure it would go very well.

I: Rob Green, what do you say back to Peter begins about how the UK can heal divisions?

ROB GREEN: Yeah, I think it's all about positivity and looking forward hopefully. I mean, there's good in everybody. I see socialism very much over both parties. You know, it's not just the, this is capitalism and socialism. It's more about the environment, health, education. You know, you don't want to cause friction if you don't need to. You know, I was brought up in Yorkshire. You know, my grandfather was a miner. I spent a lot of time in these places. I used to live in Leeds and I know exactly where everybody's coming from, and I think we just really messed up the strategy around Brexit. And I think Dominic Cummings is a very clever man. But I don't necessarily trust what Boris has got to say. I think he's a serial liar. I don't think the Conservatives have ever funded public transport and public services how they should. If they change their spots for life, they fund it properly, then it's all good. I mean, I'm very positive about the future. I'm also positive about looking after the most vulnerable in society. And I think that has to be key to business as well. It's not just about making money, it's about looking after people. And I think that's what came through with Jeremy Corbyn and he took the party as far as he can [unintelligible]. I think we've got a bright future.

LL: We are going to have to leave it there. Gentlemen, I thank you both.

ROB GREEN: Thank you.

PETER BIGGINS: Thank you.

LL: Rob Green is a Labour Party supporter and the owner of the Pavilion Bakery, a small team of shops in the east end of London. And Peter Biggins is a retired businessman and Conservative Party supporter in Leeds. Well, the CBC senior Europe correspondent Margaret Evans has been watching every twist and turn in this election campaign. And she was up until the hours as the returns came in last night. He joins me from our London England's. Studio Hi, Margaret.

MARGARET EVANS: Good morning, Laura.

LL: Have you had any sleep?

MARGARET EVANS: I had a few hours? Yes. Yes. And a shower.

LL: Okay, good. Let's get to this. How did Boris Johnson manage to pull off this resounding victory after the rough ride his party had in the past year over Brexit?

MARGARET EVANS: Well, I think there are a couple, well, actually many different things at play. I mean, I guess to begin with. You know, they ran a pretty tight and a good campaign. I think they had a strategy. You know, this is somebody we all know who's prone to gaffes. He missed some of the key debates. He avoided one key interview that all the other party leaders did and, you know, the you didn't see a lot of substance. The one thing that you heard from him was get Brexit done. And I have a ready-made deal in the oven. And so, it was very gimmicky campaign in a way. You know, you saw this sort of affable, scruffy haired fellow, you know, delivering milk in the morning, you know, on a bulldozer driving through walls, kind of baking pies for his ready-made deal. And I think they were really successful in keeping him from sort of saying anything off message because we remember in the fall this is someone he was accused of lying to the queen when he had a parliament prorogued earlier. He has a problem with trust. During one of the debates when he was talking about trust, the audience laughed out loud. So those messages, they managed to keep them down. So a good campaign, in a sense. And they also were more successful with targeting what they call the red wall, which is a labour heartland. We were reporting on it. For you earlier this week, where you have traditional working class labour constituencies in the north who for generations voted for Labour. And the Conservatives really targeted those ridings. And they did so more successfully than Theresa May did in 2017, because it's not a new strategy. The Conservatives tried it back then, but that consistent message of get Brexit done really resonated up in the north because most of those constituencies voted to leave the European Union and they felt really insulted. A lot of areas where they've lost their industrial base. And, you know, that referendum vote was seen almost as a protest vote. And the fact that Brexit still hadn't been delivered three and a half years later made people angry. And was a huge part of it.

LL: So now Johnson is promising, we know, before he's to get Brexit done. And yet and yet we have Nicola Sturgeon, the leader of the Scottish National Party, speaking out last night because they had an resoundingly solid result in Scotland, took a vast majority of the seats. And here's what she had to say about the results of this vote and what it means for Scotland.

SOUNDCLIP

NICOLA STURGEON: The result across the UK is grim. I don't want a conservative majority government. And, you know, I don't pretend that every single person that voted SNP yesterday will necessarily support independence. But there has been a strong endorsement in this election of Scotland having a choice over our future. Boris Johnson has no rights, firstly, to take Scotland out of the EU and secondly, no right to block the Scottish people choosing their own future.

LL: How much of a challenge is this going to be for Boris Johnson?

MARGARET EVANS: I'm not sure. It's a really good question because I mean, he has such a solid majority and he and Nicola Sturgeon would differ over whether or not Scotland has the right to hold another referendum. She certainly has indicated that's what she wants to do. And she says. I mean, there's a phrase I can't remember the exact wording of it, but that's that circumstances have changed substantially since the last referendum that would allow Scotland to go ahead. But they can't really do it without the approval of Westminster. And Boris Johnson has said he will not allow another referendum. You know, before the election, you saw a lot of speculation about what Jeremy Corbyn if try to make a deal to get support from Nicola Sturgeon by by saying, yes, I would support a second referendum. But I mean, she will see this as a mandate herself. I mean, obviously, that's the reason d'être of that party. But she'll also be a little bit wary because of the fatigue factor that we've seen around Brexit. You know, will the Scots really, you know, after all of this support that on the other hand, you know, I was up there the end of the summer and people really are affronted. They do not see this as a United Kingdom anymore. A majority of Scots voted to remain in the European Union and we met a lot of people who had shifted from those who would have rather stayed in the UK, but saying, you know, it's different now. When we voted to stay in the United Kingdom, we thought we would be staying in the European Union and they see it as a great betrayal. So she will be a thorn in Boris Johnson's side. But he does have a pretty substantial majority, and I'm sure he's going to use it to his advantage.

LL: Well, then, so take us through what the next steps are in actually getting Brexit done.

MARGARET EVANS: Apparently, things are going to move pretty quickly. Downing Street, even yesterday before the final results were in, was saying that they would be introducing this ready-made deal we've been talking about the legislation that parliament would need to have in place to pass it by the end of January. So that means that Britain will leave the European Union finally on January 31st. And then after that, he's saying, it's very complicated, but there are provisions for a transition period after the leaving during which Britain and the European Union can decide on future relations. Theresa May had negotiated a longer period. Boris Johnson saying, nope, don't need that. I'm going to do this in 11 months. And that's what has some people worried here. They say that's like a really heavy timetable. The European Union chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, has already said it's unrealistic and you're not going to do it in 11 months. But he's pledged to do it and say, well, we'll be leaving no matter what, whether we have this relationship in place or not for the future by the end of 2020. And that has some people worrying that you could still see a disorderly or a hard Brexit from the European Union. But we'll have to wait and see, because he did say that people said he couldn't negotiate another withdrawal agreement from the E.U. and he did it.

LL: You have been up and down the country covering this election. You've covered the U.K. for many years. What would you say about how politically divided the country seems to be at this point? You've talked about Scotland already, but what about everywhere else?

MARGARET EVANS: I think it's hugely divided and confused. I mean, this election was confusing for people and they didn't know what they were choosing. You know, you'd meet a conservative person saying, I'm remain. But you know what? What do I choose? Because it's the next five years or is it the next, you know, 50 years? But and if you look at the results of this vote, a big majority for Boris Johnson. But if you tally the numbers as the statisticians are all doing. More people voted for parties that support remaining in the European Union than leaving. And again, it's about 52-48, which is sort of the exact opposite of what the referendum result was. And there are lots of people who are just I want to get on with my life. But for the people on both sides of the debate who feel passionately, there's this really deep sense of loss, like something's been stolen from them and that's hard to get over. And I remember when the referendum first happened, I was in my local butcher, the results coming out. And I remember a man swearing on the telephone that he was going to you know - I can't say it on air - to Boris Johnson that. And I kind of had a chill at the time. And I thought, wow, this is an angry country. And so Boris Johnson came out, you know, in his speech today talking again about this, being a one nation conservative, bringing these united disparate parts together. We'll see. Because even his own Conservative Party is a divided house. Is he going to continue to pander to these hard right Euro sceptics in his party? What's he going to do with all of his new Labour MPs who are now Conservative MP, I mean, the support areas, the constituents. What are those working class guys? Those people are still talking to me up north about the NHS, not trusting the conservatives when it comes to public services. But being so angry over Brexit that they actually changed these old loyalties.

LL: All those questions means there's lots more for you to cover, Margaret. Thank you for your time today.

MARGARET EVANS: It's a pleasure. Thanks for having me, Laura.

LL: Margaret Evans of the CBC senior Europe correspondent. And she joined us from our line in London, England studio. I'm Laura Lynch and you're listening to The Current. Okay. We're changing gears here. Less than two weeks left before the big day, so it is a sure bet Christmas party revellers will be out in full force this weekend. That's left The Current's comic correspondent in Vancouver mulling Christmas carols.

SOUNDCLIP

JOHN CULLEN: Hi, I'm John Cullen. It's Christmas and that means a lot of things. Time spent with loved ones, good food presents and Christmas carols. We've got a love hate relationship with Christmas carols since they were invented, and we also have not been very good at writing new ones. Have you heard a Christmas song written since the time of Jesus? That sounded good. Snapchat Santa by some teen internet rapper isn't exactly what we're looking for in 2019. In fact, most of the Christmas songs we sing and feel like they were written by Jesus himself, composed outside of the manger and passed down for generations. Yes, I realize in this metaphor I'm making Jesus wrote these songs immediately after his own birth, but I mean, it does feel like that. Have you looked at the lyrics of literally any Christmas song? None of them make any sense, and they could have easily been written by Jesus or any other baby. In fact, Christmas carols are so simple. You can boil them down to one of four things. Snow, God, love or sleeping with Santa. There is a reason he's a pretty jolly guy after all. As a comedian and The Current's resonant Christmas expert, might I offer one tip for you this Christmas? Don't use a randomized Christmas Carol playlist at your Christmas party. Spotify, Apple Music, there's so many tools now that make having festive music on at your gathering so easy and make the parties so fun. But here's a tip as hot as cocoa. It won't. Because if I asked you to hum along to a Christmas Carol in your head, it's probably pretty jaunty, right? Maybe it's jingle bell, jingle bell, jingle bell rock. What a time. Simply having a wonderful Christmas time. I am now. I mean, I didn't sing it well, but it still sounded good because it's a fun song. But here's the thing. One out of every 10 Christmas carols is the saddest song you've ever heard in your life. And they are on every random playlist. Let me paint a picture for you. It's your annual Christmas gathering. All your friends are over. And wow, you're having a great time. Great music is playing. Drinks are being had. The merriment is never ending. And then out of nowhere. Here it comes. A boys choir from an eastern European nation is about to destroy every good vibe at this party. [Sings] You might die this Christmas - Wait. Sorry, what did they just say? [Sings] This Christmas could be your last. Okay. That is very- what is going on at this point. [Sings] We saw when you parked in that handicapped sport. The mall was very busy. This is getting very specific. Take my advice. Make your own playlist. It takes 10 minutes. It's fun to do. And you'll quickly learn that there are great ways to have a good time at your Christmas party that don't involve Michael Bublé singers from the 1950s you've never heard of or your own apparent imminent death. Merry Christmas.

LL: Merry Christmas, John. John Cullen is a comedian and the Current's Christmas Carol expert in Vancouver. Coming up in our next half hour, why a major U.S. art museum is only buying works by women next year.

SOUNDCLIP

And I think there is an unequal and unjust balance in our exhibition history and in our collections when it comes to gender.

The Baltimore Museum of Art's bold new plan to rebalance its collection. I'm Laura Lynch, and you're listening to The Current.

Back To Top »

Baltimore Museum and women artists

Guests: Anne Dymond, Christina Yuen Zi Chung, Ilene Sova

LL: You're listening to The Current on CBC Radio One and Sirius XM. I'm Laura Lynch.

SOUNDCLIP

Women always have been equal, and extraordinary contributors to the history of art. If our collections don't tell that story, it's incumbent upon us to correct them so that's the history we accord to our public is a truthful one.

LL: And the correction that museum director Christopher Bedford is making is creating waves in the art world. He's announced plans to sell off some works and for the next year, buying display only art made by women.

SOUNDCLIP

CHRISTOPHER BEDFORD: We have seen 95,000 objects in our collection, which is the case, and only four percent of those are by women. That proportion cannot possibly be explained through merit, that that proportion is the consequence of either conscious or unconscious bias enacted over many decades.

LL: The Baltimore Museum of Art isn't the only one with a shortage of works by women. A recent survey of 18 prominent art museums in the United States found that out of more than 10,000 artists on display, only 13 percent were works by women. In Canada, it's a bit better, but a 2015 such study said works by female artists still made up just 36 percent of major solo Canadian exhibitions. The question about how to address that imbalance is something many galleries are grappling with. Anne Dymond is an associate professor of art history and museum studies at the University of Lethbridge and the author of Diversity Accounts Gender, Race and Representation in Canadian Art Galleries. She's in Lethbridge, Alberta. Christina Yuen Zi Chung is a PHC candidate at the University of Washington in the Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies. She's in Seattle. Ilene Sova is an artist and the Eighties Slate chair of contemporary drawing and painting at the Ontario College of Art and Design University. She is in our Toronto studio. Hello to all of you.

ILENE SOVA: Hi.

CHRISTINA YUEN ZI CHUNG: Hello.

ANNE DYMOND: Hi.

LL: Ilene, we'll begin with you as an artist. What do you think of this move by the Baltimore Museum of Art?

ILENE SOVA: I was very excited to see this article come across my news feed. I have to say, everyone was sharing it. It was going viral in our community and I was sharing it and I just thought, what a radical move. And I think that the fact that he sold and Andy Warhol, a Rauschenberg and a Klein, it just signals a sea change that the Baltimore Museum of Art is saying that we value women's art. Not only are we going to buy it, but we're going to sell works that were held up in high regard before in order to purchase women's art. And I was very pleased to see that they were purchasing diverse women's art. So, you know, often when these diversity and equity pieces happen, museums will buy famous white women artists. But the museum is really taking a step and making sure that they buy women artists from all diverse backgrounds. So I was very pleased with this move by the museum.

LL: Christina, what do you think?

CHRISTINA YUEN ZI CHUNG: I absolutely agree. And I think that this is a very important corrective to the canon which has historically favoured white hetero normative men. So I was thrilled by this.

LL: Do you think it will create systemic change?

CHRISTINA YUEN ZI CHUNG: I think it definitely needs to. That's my only hesitation and my queries, whether they will actually address a lot of the structural values and ideas that have marginalized women for so long. And so this canonical challenge will only be tokenistic and it will be an important move towards representation. But it will not actually produce structural changes if they do not challenge itself at the level of ideology and values.

LL: Anne Dymond, how far do you think this goes to addressing inequities?

ANNE DYMOND: I think it's a really important symbolic gesture in terms of actual changes in the museum. And one year of purchasing, it's a gesture and I hope it points to more radical change. But there's a number of reasons why the purchases won't actually change the balance of the collection in a year. Not least, it's only 4 percent. But every year, purchases make up less than 10 percent of the acquisitions of a museum. Most of their acquisitions are donations and those are always heavily skewed towards male purchases.

LL: Right. So, I mean, let me come back to you on this and challenge you with this. In the end, don't museums have to house have to display what people want to see?

ILENE SOVA: Well, I think all our major institutions are going through a kind of reckoning with the past because their audiences do want to see diverse artists. They do want to see their stories on the walls of the museums. So when they do this, it's a benefit to everyone that will start attracting the audiences that we have in our city. The demographics of the urban global west have completely changed and our museums are not changing with those audiences. So, for instance, last year we had McLean Thomas at the AGO. There was huge line of amazing programming. The year, I think two years before we had [unintelligible], there were line-ups down the street. You know, the museum was packed.

LL: Who is man.

ILENE SOVA: Who is a man but he is he's under some colour. And not just showed that when museums, you know, show artists that represent the community, that tell the stories of that community, when they see themselves in the museum, they get excited, they start going back to the institutions. So I think it's a benefit to everyone that these changes happen.

LL: Christina, how limited do you think museums are about what the audience expects to see? I mean, what Warhol, I suppose, is a big draw.

CHRISTINA YUEN ZI CHUNG: Yes, absolutely. I think museums always have to walk a fine line in terms of balancing what the audience wants to see, but also trying to push discourse in society, trying to shape- museums or institutions of public education. And so it is a place where there should be new ideas, new conversations and new topics being pushed forward at every exhibition. I personally think of each exhibition as an essay. It is meant to persuade us. It is meant to give us new ways to see the world. And so this is absolutely the place to be pushing the envelope and not just follow what people currently want.

LL: And I'm in that. Let's talk about Canada, but how do museums and galleries in Canada fare when it comes to representation?

ANNE DYMOND: Quite similarly to the United States. Those numbers from Baltimore don't really surprise me at all. If we look at a museum like the National Gallery of Canada, it's acquisitions of female artists are typically around 30 or 35 percent, so significantly less. And [unintelligible] that's in contemporary. If we look at their historic acquisitions, their acquisitions of historic art, it's less. So in general, the bigger the gallery, the more likely it is to be very male biased.

LL: And you talked about acquisitions there, but you also talked earlier about art that's donated. What is the difference there?

ANNE DYMOND: In donations, often there are even less than women are represented less, something like 18 percent at the National Gallery in a 10 year period that I looked at are by female artists.

LL: You specifically studied Vancouver Art Gallery. What choices have they made?

ANNE DYMOND: They're interesting because they're undergoing a lot of changes right now, the director has changed. But historically, they their exhibitions of contemporary living artists - so not historic artists - have been around 20 percent female. So they are both not buying a lot of work by women, but also not exhibiting a lot of work by women. And that's also true at the National Gallery. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, many of our largest museums show less than 25 or 30 percent female contemporary art.

LL: Ilene, what do you think when you hear numbers like that?

ILENE SOVA: Yes, it's kind of depressing. I think that when I first graduated from art school and moved to the city, I remember going to the Toronto International Art Fair and walking around and seeing this huge disparity which didn't reflect what I experienced in art school. So actually in art schools, women outnumber male students by 10 to one. But that's not done reflected in the art world and the art market.

LL: Even in younger generation.

ILENE SOVA: Even in younger generations. Yeah, we've had many art galleries open in the city of Toronto while I've been here over the past 20 years that didn't have a single woman artist on their roster when they opened. So this continuation of the myth of the male genius artist continues into the art market today. And I think that maybe, you know, the new dump democratization of online sales, Instagram sales is going to change this gatekeeper process that's happening. So I see my young female students selling art off their Instagram accounts. I have women colleagues who've left their galleries and are selling direct to customers online. So I'm hoping that actually the Internet is going to start to change this because we don't have these people deciding who has value, who's important in the art world and deciding, you know, who's the best.

LL: I'm curious about your own personal story. What have you experience when trying to display and sell your art?

ILENE SOVA: I think myself, because my work is centred and in a social justice framework, I was always more interested in public spaces. So I've shown my work in libraries and community spaces, in university galleries, places where mass public are going to see my work. I wasn't that attracted to the commercial gallery market. I'm somebody who looks for funding and then wants to draw a large audience to see the work and have a discussion about social justice. So the commercial gallery wasn't that attractive to me. So I've kind of worked outside of that system my entire art career.

LL: OK. Christina, you've specifically looked at the art scene in Hong Kong. Do exhibits focussing on women help bring their art into the mainstream there?

CHRISTINA YUEN ZI CHUNG: I think that's a hard question to answer. I feel like very much the exhibition is about women and gender have very much been at the periphery in Hong Kong, although government run institutions and art museums have definitely put on these shows that focus on gender and focus on women. They're very much, they were a flash in the pan and a lot of conversations about feminism and about women have often sort of been drowned out by a lot of debates and a sense of ambivalence towards attachment to the term feminism, because there's this notion that it's either passé or that it's too radical. So oftentimes exhibitions in Hong Kong that have focussed on gender are very momentary. And I feel like right now there's been a larger push towards focussing on issues of gender that have brought it back into the public eye. But whether it's going to have a lasting effect is still to be seen.

LL: I hate to reduce art to dollars and cents, but Christine, I wonder how big is the gap in market value for pieces made by women compared to those made by men?

CHRISTINA YUEN ZI CHUNG: I mean, it's quite significant. I don't have the exact numbers in Hong Kong at the moment, but it is definitely true. Very much of the same scenario where there's a large representation of young women artists who are being trained in the academy more so than men. But they don't actually end up becoming full time career artists. And so it actually affects a lot of evaluation of their art, their need to take care of their family. They need to continue to engage in social reproductive labour means that oftentimes they're time dedicated to making art. And so they end up making less art works. And therefore, there's less notice of their work out in the public sphere, and that also influences the valuation of their art. So there's so many of these compounding factors that make it so that there is still a drastic bias towards male artists and also evaluating their work in higher value.

LL: All right. I want everyone to listen to some more of Christopher Bedford from the Baltimore Museum of Art.

SOUNDCLIP

CHRISTOPHER BEDFORD: The fact that I'm the director of the museum at this moment and have been able to enact this principle is something I am proud of in terms of action. The fact that we were able to get off the ground in such a visible way so quickly, I believe is probably a direct reflection of the sexism, the structural sexism that we're trying to address with this initiative. I'm abundantly aware that women leaders have been doing this work and attempting to do this work for decades now.

LL: Anne Dymond, I'm and I'm wondering how comfortable are female curators emphasizing the value of women's art?

ANNE DYMOND: In general, that depends on their position. It's if they are empowered by their institution to work in a feminist way to trade women, then they do. But often they're not. So when I was interviewing traders for my book, at one point, I was assuming that a woman trader had been working in a feminist method because her records showed that she traded a lot of women, but she didn't know the percentage of women she had curated. And when I told it to her, she started laughing and said, Oh my goodness, don't tell anyone, that'll ruin my career. And I thought that was a really instructive anecdote. Like, she was sort of joking, but she wasn't really joking. You know, she did not feel it would be a good thing for her career to be identified as someone who traded more than half women.

LL: Ilene, let let's go back in time a bit here. How did we get here? What has happened with art made by women through history? I mean, I can think of women artists who I know have a profile, Emily Carr, Frida Kahlo. But there's not that many I can name. So what has happened in through the history of art?

ILENE SOVA: It's interesting. I was listening to this podcast called Bowed Down. It's new podcast by Frieze magazine, and they were talking about this very issue. And the episode I was listening to is about Angelica Kaufman. And they were also talking about our music, Gentle Esky. So these very like revered European Western artists from art history. And the interesting thing that the historians pointed out was that actually at the time that these women were alive, they were revered. They were painting portraits of magistrate. They were, you know, quite wealthy, quite successful. But their stories were literally erased from art history as the canon was being written by men. So you always have to go back to this idea of who is writing history, whose story it is, who it benefits. Also, when we talk about acquisitions, when wealthy people buy work and they donate it to museums and galleries, it's about, you know, that story. Museums get their work from wealthy people and their art consultants advise them to buy work by men because they believe it's going to increase in value. So it's kind of like this circle that just keeps repeating and repeating itself. So I think that until we break down this idea of this grand myth of the of the male artist genius that I mentioned before, we're not going to get to a place where people are purchasing and supporting women artists. We really need to deconstruct that.

LL: Christiane, let's get you in on this. Why is so much of the art that's considered to be great art and made by men?

CHRISTINA YUEN ZI CHUNG: I mean, there's a lot of literature on this, and I think it does come from art. History as a discipline itself is very much built on the European canon and the European tradition of making art. And historically, the sort of notion of apprenticeship and I'm passing down artistry and craft was really done through a patch, a line through a line of men who were teaching, other men who were teaching other men. And so very much the craft itself, art itself was kept away from women and women had access to art and access to art training, but through other routes or through people who did not comply with norms. And so it made them the exception and made them the minority. And the norm really were to be a sort of male artists who were then touted as these creative individual geniuses. And the myth of that is indeed so very strong that even now, when there's still much more access to art training for people of all genders, it's still the idea of not only who is an artist, but who is a great artist is still very much tethered to this notion of masculinity, of this singular individual genius.

LL: Anne Dymond, I'm curious to know whether you have any thoughts about about the women who have managed to punch through historically, who have landed in the public consciousness. What is it about them that managed to do that?

ANNE DYMOND: Oh, that's an interesting question. I think often times when we see women have success, it's that it's really late in their careers. So it takes longer and it takes a lot of persistence for women to punch through. And that's not always true. We do see some younger women, especially in the last couple of decades, punching through. It's an interesting question. I'm not sure.

LL: So why do you think the perception persists, though, about this? The male artists are the great artists.

ANNE DYMOND: I mean, I think there's a lot of systemic bias. There's also a lot of things sort of structurally that we associate with success that are coded more masculine in our culture. One trader I heard talking about really valued that her artists that she was supporting had a lot of confidence. And I said to her, oh, you know, confidence is, the way confidence is expressed, is a gendered thing. And that really surprised her. So if you're looking for a really kind of swaggering confidence as a sign that the artist is committed and truly it matters to them, you're not going to see that in a female artist or if you're looking to something like influence as who gets major shows. And male artists never say that they're influenced by female artists. You're not going to see a lot of female artists being influencers even if they are, if they're not named.

LL: Okay, Ilene let's push this forward to solutions. You already talked about Instagram, democratizing art and allowing women to be their own curators, in a sense. You also teach and I'm curious to know what you tell your students about the future of the art world.

ILENE SOVA: Yes, I had a class of all female students last summer. It was a figurative painting class. And, you know, they were really excited to talk to me about their professional careers. They were in third year going into fourth year. And they asked me, like, what do we do when we graduate? How are we going to, you know, become artists? Like we're so afraid of what's going to happen. And I really encouraged them to think about, you know, becoming, you know, forming their own art collectives and told them that they're going to have to kind of work outside the system. They're going to have to rent spaces put up are chosen in warehouses, make their own press releases be their own marketers and to to see themselves kind of creating their own careers. And they were really kind of surprised by that. I think they thought when I graduate, I'll get a gallery and this gallery is going to represent me. And I said, you know, you really need to look at statistics and look at the galleries and who they're representing. And you might have to build your career outside of the system for many, many years before that happens for you. So I was honest with them, and I think that it was a bit shocking. But I also want to be realistic and practical with them.

LL: Christina, what do you think needs to happen?

CHRISTINA YUEN ZI CHUNG: I think we definitely need to challenge our ideas at the level of core values of what we even deem to be great art and good art. And we need to ask ourselves really hard questions along the way. So, for example, if you like, there's two ways of approaching this. One is to say, well, let's continue to just buy art made by women. So Baltimore Museum like continue to follow this pattern. But the risk of that is to fall into biological essentialism or this fixed notion of what it means to be female, to be a woman. To think that there is some sort of stylistic or quality level difference between the artwork made by women or men. And even if the Baltimore Art Museum doesn't intend to reinforce that, this mentality that women somehow make art that's different from men still persists in the art world. And so we need to combat that and we need to question are there stylistic and quality differences between work made by people of different gender and different identities? And we need to ask ourselves, why are women also being shut out of administrative and territorial roles? Why do we constantly have these biases and these values? And we also need to look at labour, how labour is being structured in society. There are these differences between genders because of these social structures and hierarchies of labour, how we portion labour to different people. So what a lot of we mentioned that a lot of women have often become late starters in their careers, gaining fame only much later in life, oftentimes because there has been the burden of childcare and having to take care of your home for a larger portion of your younger life. And then being able to dedicate yourself to your work later on. And so how do we address these issues of re apportioning domestic labour, for example. These are questions that for perhaps you're not being brought to the fore and they need to be.

LL: We've just got a couple of minutes left. I just want to play one more clip from Christopher Bedford in Baltimore.

SOUNDCLIP

CHRISTOPHER BEDFORD: I think that there is a very strong feeling that prevails across all curious old directors and a growing awareness among collectors, too, that we have been wilfully unconsciously blind to the achievement of some women artists historically. And I do believe that there is a great awakening happening, but I do believe it is an awakening. I don't think that there has been an equity enacted, particularly in the art market historically. And I don't think that we're going to see a full correction in the immediate future. I think that that correction is a generational one.

LL: Anne Dymond, let's start with you. What is your take on that? Is this the beginning of an awakening in the art world?

ANNE DYMOND: I do think it's the beginning of an awakening. I think we are seeing really significant shifts around, particularly in Canada, around race, racialized individuals and around indigenous art. We feel a lot more interest in that and a lot more exhibitions in that which is important reparative work by museums. I do worry that sometimes these things are faddish. If we look at, for example, the history of exhibitions of women, in Canada, they increased a lot in the 1980s and 1990s and then the representation of women actually decreased in the 2000s at some galleries. And so that is just a sign that sometimes what looks like systemic change can actually be more flavour of the month, you know. So I hope it's systemic.

LL: Christina, briefly, what's your take on this?

CHRISTINA YUEN ZI CHUNG: Yeah, I very much feel the same way. And in fact, that same rise and fall in the pattern of representation of women artists and their visibility very much for the soul and took place in the same era and in Hong Kong. And so I do interpret its current rise back into the public eye as part of the zeitgeist, as part of the result of a global me too movement. But whether it will produce lasting structural changes is yet to be soon.

LL: Ilene, last word to you.

ILENE SOVA: I am going to be optimistic here. I know that when I read through the press release from the Baltimore Museum of Arts, there is an entire structural and systemic conversation and discussion and policy happening. And I see that happening also at the museums here and also at my own institution where we've centred decolonization and diversity and equity and the conversation has completely changed. I also want to add that I think the Internet and the democratization of art sales and the production and promotion of art is going to create that sea change.

LL: All right. I thank all three of you for this really interesting discussion. Bye bye.

CHRISTINA YUEN ZI CHUNG: Thank you.

ANNE DYMOND: Bye. Thank you.

ILENE SOVA: Thank you.

LL: Ilene Sova is an artist and the ADA Slate chair of contemporary drawing and painting at the Ontario College of Art and Design. She was in our Toronto studio. Christina Yuen Zi Chung is a PHC candidate at the University of Washington in the Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies. She's in Seattle. Anne Dymond is an associate professor of Art History and Museum Studies at the University of Lethbridge and the author of Diversity Counts Gender, Race and Representation in Canadian Art Galleries. She was in Lethbridge, Alberta. That is our program for today. Stay tuned to Radio One for Q and Thom Powers conversation with Jamaican novelist Marlon James. He won the Man Booker prise for a brief history of seven killings. His latest is Black Leopard Red Wolf is the first book in a planned trilogy he's described as an African Game of Thrones. That's coming up after the news as the holiday season gets into full swing. We're going to leave you with our Christmas expert, John Collins' pick for worst Carol ever. And it's a controversial choice. So if you disagree, write to us with your most hated Christmas songs. You can e-mail us by going to our Web site, cbc.ca/thecurrent and click on the contact link or tweet us @TheCurrentCBC or me @LauraLynchCBC. I'm Laura Lynch. Thanks for listening to The Current.

SOUNDCLIP

[Christmans song: Silver Bell]

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