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## Exhibitions are centenary celebration for Doris McCarthy

By [Kelly Rankin](#), posted *Tuesday, June 8, 2010*

Living life to the fullest is something most of us merely talk about. Doris McCarthy has been doing it for close to 100 years.

To mark the occasion of McCarthy's 100th birthday July 7, 2010 and to celebrate her remarkable life, an exhibition entitled *Roughing It in the Bush: The Landscapes of Doris McCarthy* will be held at her namesake gallery at U of T Scarborough and at the University of Toronto Art Centre (UTAC) from June 19 to July 24.

This is not the first retrospective of McCarthy's pieces: "One of the joys of a long life," pointed out **Nancy Campbell**, curator of the exhibition. But it will take an unusual focus, highlighting an area of McCarthy's work that has been relatively unexplored.

"I was thinking to myself, What can I do to make this interesting to the viewers and also for Doris? I wanted to find a way to look at her work differently because it's been covered so extensively," Campbell said.

While doing her research for the exhibition, Campbell went into McCarthy's archives and found her hard-edge abstract work, paintings such as *Georgian Bay Abstract* (1969) and *Wave Movement #8* (1969) – work that has not received a great deal of attention.

"When I saw all of the hard-edge canvases together I thought they would be amazing for viewers to see," said Campbell. But not to worry, Campbell assures viewers some of McCarthy's better known works, such as the popular iceberg paintings, will also be on display.

The Doris McCarthy Gallery at UTSC will exhibit primarily the hard-edge abstract paintings, produced in the 60s and 70s, plus archival material, such as photographs of McCarthy sketching in the Arctic. At UTAC viewers will find some of the hard-edge work, as well as some of the artist's better known canvases that bookend her abstract work.

Reviewing the prolific and accomplished chronology that outlines the art and life of McCarthy, one can't help turning to terms such as authentic, inspiration and pioneer. Campbell deliberately chose the title *Roughing It in the Bush* for this exhibition because it is one of her favourite books and because she saw some unique parallels

between the life of the author, Susanna Moodie, and McCarthy.

Like Moodie, McCarthy's life was spent exploring terrain not immediately associated with women. Moodie, a pioneer of pre-Confederation Canada, struggled to create a new life for her family in the wilderness and McCarthy, whose works depicts a lifetime of travel and fascination with the Canadian landscape, was a young girl determined to become an artist at a time when it was unusual for women to pursue careers and post-secondary education.

However, McCarthy's legacy goes beyond being a pioneering female Canadian painter. She spent 40 years as a successful art teacher at Toronto's Central Technical School, was an active member of several art societies, an entrepreneur and a philanthropist.

She has donated her home and studio, affectionately named Fool's Paradise, to the Ontario Heritage Foundation along with a \$500,000 endowment for future use as an artist's residence and retreat.

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