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PRESS RELEASE

MONTREAL MANSIONS, 1974 **A BYGONE WAY OF LIFE IMMORTALIZED IN PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARLES GURD**

Montreal, June 14, 2016 – From the 1910s to the 1930s, prominent Montreal businessmen, among them Louis-Joseph Forget, hired the best architects of the day to build them luxurious Edwardian style homes. Presented from June 16 to November 16, 2016, the exhibition **Montreal Mansions, 1974 – Photographs by Charles Gurd** bears witness to a bygone way of life. The exhibition features 40 stunning black and white photos, taken in natural light in 1974 by young Montreal architect and photo artist Charles C. Gurd. They illustrate the interiors of these exceptional mansions, which have since disappeared or been altered, victims of changing times, tastes and generations.

“This exhibition gives us an entry into homes that were remarkable for both their architecture and sumptuous décor. They reflected a period in Montreal’s history when its flourishing economy rivalled that of North America’s greatest cities,” explained Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum. “Their owners, all influential, showcased their success and lavish lifestyle in these homes. Thanks to the insight and talent of Charles C. Gurd, we have a permanent record of this landmark era in our city’s history.”

One of the homes portrayed in the exhibition was bequeathed to McGill University, while others changed ownership, such as the Forget mansion in Senneville and the Ogilvie mansion on Gouin Boulevard in Montreal’s east end. Marble floors and columns, oversized fireplaces and rich woodwork, and staircases and libraries built by the day’s top craftsmen all graced the homes’ elegant reception rooms, which were decorated with beautiful furniture and carpets, the tables gleaming with fine china and polished silverware. The prosperity and exquisite taste of the occupants was evident at every turn. By contrast, the private wings of these mansions speak to the complexity of this North American bourgeoisie who at the time controlled much of Canada’s economy.

The demolition in 1971 of the Prince of Wales Terrace homes and in 1973 of the Van Horne mansion sparked concern over the threat posed to this architectural heritage. Save Montreal (1973) and Heritage Montreal (1975) were both formed in the wake of these events.

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1475 Pine Avenue West
1974, Montreal
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In 1974, Charles C. Gurd set out to preserve the memory of these mansions through photographs. He received support from many influential people of the day, including Gretta Chambers, a CBC radio reporter. He obtained a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, and, equipped with a Leica M4, was quick to receive permission from the families to carry out his project.

The series of black and white photos is comprised of some 6,000 35 mm negatives. In 2014, Gurd donated 1,337 negatives to the McCord Museum along with 325 inkjet prints produced in 2013. The photographs featured in the exhibition have been drawn from this collection.

Charles C. Gurd – Biographical notes

Born in Montreal in 1950, Charles C. Gurd earned a degree in psychology from McGill University (1971) and an architecture degree from Rice University in Houston, Texas (1976). While pursuing an international career in architecture, he practiced photography and painting – as he continues to do. A self-taught photographer, in the 1960s Gurd was influenced by the documentary style of Sam Tata, Gabor Szilasi, Louise Abbott and Brian Merrett. He lives and works in Victoria, British Columbia, and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

About the McCord Museum

The McCord Museum is dedicated to the preservation, study and appreciation of Montreal's history, as recounted by its people, artists and communities living in the city's past and present. The McCord Museum is home to one of the largest historical collections in North America, consisting of First Peoples objects, costumes and textiles, photographs, decorative and visual artworks, and textual archives, totalling more than 1,451,000 million artefacts. The McCord Museum produces exciting exhibitions that engage visitors from Montreal, Canada, and beyond by offering them a contemporary look at the world. The McCord Museum also offers educational and cultural activities, as well as innovative projects on the Internet. **McCord Museum: Our People, Our Stories.**

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Photographs available at <http://ow.ly/4tGu300Oy6D>

Interviews can be arranged with Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum, and H el ene Samson, Curator, Notman Photographic Archives.

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