

PRESS RELEASE

PHOTOGRAPHY



McCord Museum receives extraordinary donation of over 9,000 photographs

Montreal, March 9, 2020 – The McCord Museum has received an exceptional gift of over 9,000 photographs dating from the mid-19th to the late 20th century created by Quebec photography studios from across the province. The donation from Mr. Jean-Luc Allard has been granted “cultural property” status by the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board.

Composed of a wide variety of photographs, this extensive collection eloquently illustrates the production of Quebec photography studios and, at the same time, helps situate and illuminate the professional practice of photography in Quebec from the mid-19th to the late 20th century. The 1,030 photographers from around the province represented in this collection of images augment the list of amateur and professional artists active in the province, many of whom are lesser known to the general public. Among them are Ludger Côté from Montreal, John Thomas Lambly from Trois-Rivières and Quéry Frères from Quebec City, to name a few.

In addition to identifying more photographers, this donation is an incredible source of information on photographic processes. The different media and dimensions of the images illustrate the technological evolution of black and white photography from its beginnings: daguerreotypes, tintypes, albumen prints in the form of cartes-de-visite (calling cards), cabinet cards and stereographs, gelatin silver print postcards, and other special formats like photographic jewellery.

The thousands of portraits from photography studios located throughout the province provide an overview of a changing population over time and through the lenses of social class and region.

“The Allard collection is an invaluable resource for expanding our knowledge of the history of photography in Quebec. The names and addresses of the various studios provide information about the profession of photographer, notably the place of women in this field. Jean-Luc Allard and his wife Lucie Surprenant have made an extremely generous gift and we are very appreciative” notes Hélène Samson, Curator, Photography.

A retired chemistry teacher from Montreal's Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, Jean-Luc Allard began his collection in the early 1970s. Initially interested in postcards, he started collecting old photographs several years later, focussing on images with details of material culture like clothing, objects and furniture. In 2006, he and Jacques Poitras published a book entitled *Les photographes québécois : la première liste officielle (1839-1950)*, which catalogued a large part of his collection.

Estimated to be worth several hundred thousand dollars, the Allard collection required the McCord's teams to spend approximately 3,000 hours studying, cataloguing, and storing each individual item, in accordance with professional museum practices.

McCord Museum, museum of photography

The McCord's photography collection encompasses over 1,300,000 photographs that primarily document the social history of Montreal, but also that of Quebec and Canada. Ranging from a series of daguerreotypes from the 1840s and 1850s to modern digital images, the collection illustrates the development of the art of photography along with the great transformations that have marked the city over the last two centuries. The Notman Photographic Archives constitute the core of the collection, with some 450,000 photographs from the Montreal studio founded in 1856 by William Notman (1826–1891) and run by his sons until 1935 under the name Wm. Notman & Son. The archives were added to the prestigious Memory of the World Register of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO in the fall of 2019.

About the McCord Museum

The McCord Museum is the museum of all Montrealers, a social history museum that celebrates life in Montreal, both past and present—its history, its people and its communities. Open to the city and the world, the Museum presents exciting exhibitions, educational programming and cultural activities that offer a contemporary perspective on history, engaging visitors from Montreal, Canada and beyond. It is home to over 1.5 million artefacts, comprising one of the largest historical collections in North America, organized into the following departments: Dress, Fashion and Textiles, Photography, Indigenous Cultures, Paintings, Prints and Drawings, Material Culture, and Textual Archives. McCord Museum: Our People, Our Stories.

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Possibility of interviews with Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum, and Hélène Samson, curator, Photography, McCord Museum.

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