

# PRESS RELEASE

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## The McCord Museum presents *Edward Curtis – Beyond Measure* Thirty engravings taken from his work *The North American Indian*

**Montreal, May 22, 2012-** The McCord Museum is pleased to present *Edward Curtis – Beyond Measure*, an exhibition of thirty engravings by this famous American photographer, known for his superb early twentieth-century portraits of North America's First Peoples. The exhibition runs from May 24 to November 18, 2012.

### A photographer's ambitious project

Renowned for his portraits of North American Indians, Edward S. Curtis, born February 16, 1868, in Whitewater, Wisconsin, was fascinated by the camera at an early age and became a self-taught photographer.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> twentieth century, he undertook what many would call a wildly ambitious project: to photograph all of North America's First Peoples and document their traditional way of life. His work, *The North American Indian*, was finished in 1930 and includes 2,200 images taken between 1900 and 1927, each accompanied by narrative text. The final work was published in the form of a twenty-volume encyclopedia, each volume with an accompanying portfolio.

### An original historical exhibition

The public is thus invited to admire thirty engravings on Japanese paper taken from these portfolios, owned by the McCord Museum, from the original edition of the encyclopedia. Visitors will be able to discover portraits of various large Aboriginal families but also as well as images of their environment and material culture.

To be true to the original work, each engraving is accompanied by a caption written by Curtis himself. "*Sometimes astonishing, these captions are accurate witnesses to the beliefs and perceptions of the time and are faithful to what was occurring between 1907 and 1930. These thirty magnificent engravings are Curtis's personal, idealized portrayal of the Aboriginal lifestyle, traditions, and culture of that time,*" declares H  l  ne Samson, curator of McCord Museum's Notman Photographic Archives.

In addition to these engravings, the exhibition includes five rare volumes of the original encyclopedia, open to significant pages revealing the full scope of Curtis's work.



*A Piegan Dandy, 1911, Edward S. Curtis, photogravure on Japanese Gampi Tissue, McCord Museum, M21417.208*



*A Son of the Desert – Navaho, 1904, Edward S. Curtis, photogravure on Japanese Gampi Tissue, McCord Museum, M21417.32*

### **A contemporary perspective**

To present a modern perspective of Curtis's work, the McCord Museum called on the writing talents of Guy Sioui-Durand; artist, sociologist, and member of the Huron-Wendat Nation. Mr. Sioui-Durand comments on Curtis's work through a poetic text paying tribute to the First Peoples of North America.

### **About the McCord Museum**

The McCord Museum is dedicated to the preservation, study and appreciation of Montreal's social history, as recounted by its people, artists and communities. 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 1.4 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 upon request. Possibility of interviews with H el ene Samson, curator of McCord Museum's Notman Photographic Archives

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