

PRESS RELEASE

OUR PEOPLE OUR STORIES
690 SHERBOOKE STREET WEST
MONTREAL (QC) H3A 1E9
T: 514-861-6701 F: 514-861-9609
MUSEE-MCCORD.QC.CA/EN



THE McCORD MUSEUM PRESENTS *LIFE BEFORE DIGITAL*, AN EXHIBITION BY THE MONTREAL PHOTOGRAPHER MICHEL CAMPEAU

Montreal, February 14, 2018 – From **February 16 to May 6, 2018**, the McCord Museum is presenting *Life Before Digital*, a survey of work by the Montreal photographer Michel Campeau, who is also a collector of amateur photographs. Composed of works executed between 2005 and 2017, the exhibition reflects the artist's subjective and emotional approach to photography before the digital era. The approximately ninety items on view include images of historical colour and silver prints, photographs by Campeau himself and reproductions of slides found on eBay. Together, they summarize the material culture and aesthetic legacy of silver-based photography.

The eight series included in *Life Before Digital* offer a unique exploration of the essential components of silver-based photography – including its cameras and darkroom process – and of a number of amateur photographs that the artist has selected for their autobiographical resonance. By combining his own images with those of anonymous photographers, Michel Campeau summarizes a practice that has crystallized his childhood memories, deepened his existential quest, nourished his poetic vision and, ultimately, provided him with an artistic family. His is not the view of a historian or a sociologist, but of an artist in thrall to his past. Visitors will be drawn into the world of pre-digital photography as seen through the prism of Campeau's love of the medium: its rituals, people and faces, its capacity to immortalize a moment and make it the stuff of history and identity. By encompassing the amateur snapshot, this artistic review of the tools and techniques of silver-based photography pays tribute to the universal community of photographers.

Visitors will also be able to watch Romain Guedj's film *Michel Campeau: Looking Back at "The Americans" by Robert Frank*, which shows Michel Campeau collecting and sorting anonymous slides taken during the 1950s and 1960s, searching for those that strike him as comparable to the photographs published by Robert Frank in his famous book *The Americans* (1959).

"Michel Campeau examines a theme that is pivotal in the history of photography – the switch from silver-based or analog photography to digital," says H el ene Samson, curator of the exhibition and Photography Curator at the McCord Museum. "All of us, as amateur photographers, have witnessed and been affected by the changeover. The exhibition explores a type of photography that has been practiced for many years but that is now obsolete. It represented a quite different way of making, sharing and collecting images."

The exhibition will coincide with the publication of a new book of Michel Campeau titled *Rudolph Edse: Une autobiographie involontaire/An Unintentional Autobiography*, which includes essays by Michel Campeau and H el ene Samson. Co-published by the McCord Museum and Les  ditions Loco, Paris, the book is on sale at the Museum Boutique.



Anonymous, *PAS-Foto, Copenhagen, DNK*, about 1956. Collection of Michel Campeau



Anonymous, *Easter Greetings*, about 1955. Collection of Michel Campeau



Anonymous, *Photo Club*, about 1955. Collection of Michel Campeau



Anonymous, *Desired Moments*, about 1955. Collection of Michel Campeau

The exhibition will be accompanied by a number of other activities, including lectures, discussions and screenings. A detailed activities schedule is included with this press release. The events calendar may also be consulted on the Museum's website (mccord-museum.qc.ca).

Michel Campeau: A Brief Bio

Michel Campeau (Montreal, 1948) has been active on the Montreal photography scene for the past four decades. Since the documentary project titled *Disraeli : une expérience humaine en photographie* (1973), which marked a milestone in the history of Quebec photography, he has developed a practice that explores the subjective, narrative and ontological aspects of the medium. The extended series *Week-end au « Paradis terrestre »!* (1970s) expressed his fascination for his fellow human beings with an earthy realism reminiscent of street theatre. It was followed by a more introspective period, during which he examined his own life in relation to nature and photography. Around 2005, in reaction to the switch to digital, Michel Campeau began photographing darkrooms. The resulting series earned international recognition, giving rise to two publications and several exhibitions, notably at the National Gallery of Canada, in Ottawa (2014), and at the Centre Pompidou, in Paris (2015). During the same period, he began collecting vernacular photography and pursuing his creative path via the photographs of others, seeking to unveil the underlying motive force behind the practice of photography and his own desire to narrate the world. Michel Campeau is a recipient of the Bourse de carrière Jean-Paul-Riopelle from the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (2009) and the Duke and Duchess of York Prize from the Canada Council for the Arts (2010). The original and multifaceted path taken by Michel Campeau's career establishes him as one of the most important photographers of his generation, in Quebec and beyond.

About the McCord Museum

The McCord Museum is dedicated to the preservation, study and appreciation of Montreal's social history, both past and present, as well as its people, artists and communities. It is home to one of the largest historical collections in North America, consisting of First Peoples objects, costume and textiles, photographs, decorative and visual art, and textual archives, totalling more than 1.5 million artefacts. With its contemporary perspective on history, the McCord Museum produces exciting exhibitions that captivate visitors from Montreal, Canada and beyond. It also offers educational and cultural activities, as well as innovative projects on the Internet. ***McCord Museum: Our People, Our Stories.***

-30-

Interviews can be arranged with Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum, Hélène Samson, curator of the exhibition and Photography Curator, and Michel Campeau, artist, photographer and collector.

Photographs available at <http://ow.ly/mX9I30ii0Zc>

Source and information:

Nadia Martineau
Public Relations Officer, McCord Museum
514 861-6701, extension 1239
nadia.martineau@mccord-stewart.ca

Royal Photo and Marsan School of Professional Photography are partners for the exhibition *Michel Campeau: Life Before Digital*.

The McCord Museum is grateful for the support of the Quebec Ministère de la Culture et des Communications and the Conseil des arts de Montréal, Accès Montréal, CAA, and its media partners: *La Presse+*, *Montreal Gazette* and *La Vitrine culturelle*.

