

# PRESS RELEASE

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## THE McCORD MUSEUM PRESENTS *DECOLONIAL GESTURES OR DOING IT WRONG? REFAIRE LE CHEMIN.*, A NEW INSTALLATION BY ARTIST NADIA MYRE FOR THE ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

**Montreal, February 16, 2016** – As part of its *Artist-in-Residence* program, the McCord Museum is pleased to present, **from February 18 to May 29, 2016**, *Decolonial Gestures or Doing it Wrong? Refaire le chemin.*, an installation by Algonquin multidisciplinary artist Nadia Myre. “We are delighted and honoured to host Nadia Myre for the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Artist-in-Residence* program,” declared Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum. “With this installation, Nadia bears witness to and recontextualizes her aboriginal identity while providing a personal, discursive, and hypothetical interpretation of our collections,” she continued.

To create her piece, Myre drew inspiration from women’s publications and periodicals from the Victorian era (1837-1901) containing patterns for Aboriginal inspired objects, their presence testifying to the taste for novelty and exoticism of the women of this period. She chose to craft four objects from these sources, while also looking to highlight the importance of oral tradition in the transmission of knowledge and the challenges associated with the recovery of identity. Working with voice recordings devoid of all reference to the nature of the objects, four sets of instructions were read aloud to the artist, who followed them without any knowledge beforehand of what they described.

“Questions about cultural authenticity, appropriation and the loss of ancestral techniques are addressed here. This creative process helps to stress the difficulties inherent in the reconstruction of cultural heritage when lacking the pertinent social, political and cultural landscape. I wanted to reflect the conditions under which women of this period reproduced these objects to reveal how Aboriginal artefacts were decontextualized for purely aesthetic and decorative ends based on Victorian principles and imagination. In the same way, following my own instructions, I reimagined these objects through an exploratory process of trial and error,” stated Nadia Myre.

The creations culminating from these readings are exhibited next to objects from the McCord Museum’s ethnological collection, prompting reflection on the role of museums in the “decontextualizing” process. The artefacts, selected from the First Peoples collection, often become denatured and lose their cultural function when taken from their communities. Through her creative act, Myre re-contextualizes the objects. “The creation of these reimagined pieces epitomizes personal learning and re-skilling as well as a system of knowledge transmission. Creating these works has allowed me to restore the cognitive processes that have been the backbone of native cultures; in revitalizing a material practice, I am performing a decolonial gesture and forging a cultural identity,” concluded the artist.



Exhibition Poster  
© McCord Museum, 2016



Pouch  
1840-1900  
Haudenosaunee, possibly Kanien'kehá:ka  
Gift of St. Matthias Church  
© McCord Museum, M2001.51.1



William Notman, *James Wilson*  
Montreal, QC, 1876  
© McCord Museum, II-42179.1

### **About Nadia Myre**

Quebec artist Nadia Myre is a member of the Anishnabeg Kitigan Zibi Nation. For more than a decade, her multidisciplinary work, rooted in a participatory method, has addressed themes of identity, language, desire and loss. Myre is a graduate of Comosun College (1995), Emily Carr University (1997) and Concordia University (MFA, 2002). She is the recipient of several awards and grants, notably the Sobey Art Award (2014), the Pratt & Whitney “*Les Elles de l’art*” prize from the Conseil des Arts de Montréal (2011), the award for artistic creation for the Laurentians region from the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (2009), and a grant from the Eiteljord Museum (2003).

### **About the McCord Museum’s Artist-in-Residence Program**

Launched in 2012, this program invites artists to take a critical and conceptual look at the McCord Museum’s collection, reflecting on the connections between their artistic practices and the artefacts and stories they uncover during their research. At the end of each residency, the artist presents a solo exhibition of works created for the occasion. As part of this research-oriented creative activity, artists are encouraged to deliver a talk on their speculative interpretation of the collection and propose new ways of interpreting history in its many forms. The program enables the Museum to offer new perspectives on its collection by associating history with the fine arts and the past with the present.

### **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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Interviews possible with Nadia Myre, artist; Guislaine Lemay, Curator, Ethnology and Archaeology and Interim Curator, Decorative Arts; and Céline Widmer, Curator, History and Archives.

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

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The McCord Museum is grateful for the support of the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec, the Conseil des arts de Montréal, Accès Montréal, CAA, and its media partners, *24 Heures*, *The Gazette* and La Vitrine culturelle.