

PRESS RELEASE

PHOTOGRAPHY



THE POLAROID PROJECT: AT THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND TECHNOLOGY

A CANADIAN EXCLUSIVE EXHIBITION AT THE McCORD MUSEUM

Montreal, March 27, 2019 – From June 14 to September 15, 2019, the McCord Museum will be hosting the Canadian exclusive premiere of *The Polaroid Project: At the Intersection of Art and Technology*, a large-scale international exhibition organized by the Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography, New York/Lausanne, in collaboration with the MIT Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the WestLicht Museum for Photography, Vienna.

“*The Polaroid Project: At the Intersection of Art and Technology* is an extensive retrospective on the invention of the Polaroid, a photographic process that greatly inspired the creative approaches of photographers and artists in Montreal and internationally. The exhibition reveals the impact of the technology and includes a wealth of extremely creative works. This is a fantastic opportunity to highlight the importance of photography at the McCord Museum by incorporating bodies of work of Montreal artists, that showcase their contributions” says H el ene Samson, the curator of the McCord’s Photography collection.

The Polaroid, both an image and a wonderful tool, remains associated in the collective imagination with innovation, efficiency and leisure. *The Polaroid Project: At the Intersection of Art and Technology* presents the original works of some 100 of the most celebrated international artists of the 20th century, including Andy Warhol, Robert Mapplethorpe, David Hockney, Chuck Close and Charles Eames, along with acclaimed Montreal artists like Evergon. The exhibition covers a wide variety of formats, ranging from the standard Polaroid (10.7 cm by 8.8 cm) to some very large sizes, including one assembly measuring 1.44 m by 2.99 m. A more technical part of the exhibition describes the development of various Polaroid cameras and accessories, highlighting the genius of their inventor, Edwin Land (1909–91), and the immediacy of the process that has inspired creators both here and elsewhere.

A truly international phenomenon, the Polaroid has left its mark on Montreal’s photographic scene. To illustrate this slice of the city’s history, the McCord will add photographs by three Montreal artists known for experimenting with the Polaroid. Visitors will be able to admire the work of Louise Abbott, Beno t Aquin and Charles Gagnon.

Louise Abbott

Embracing all modes of expression associated with journalism, Louise Abbot has devoted most of her career to exploring the culture, heritage and natural environment of rural and Indigenous communities in Canada. She takes a particular interest in the social and environmental challenges these communities face. In 1979, when she attended the famous annual *Rencontres d’Arles photography festival*, she took part in Polaroid’s *Artist Support Program*. During its existence, the program welcomed some of the world’s great photographers, of which Ansel Adams was the first in a long series. Six of the Polaroids added to the exhibition are pictures Abbott took then, including a portrait of photojournalist Mary Ellen Mark.

Benoît Aquin

Well-known Montreal photographer Benoît Aquin exposes the devastating effects of human activity on the environment and has recently been focusing his photographic research on the consequences of totalitarian political regimes. He has created a number of photographic series, such as *Tsunami* (2004), *Haiti* (2010–11) and *The China Dust Bowl* (2006–07), for which he won the prestigious Prix Pictet award in 2008. The exhibition includes a series of photographs exploring the world of sex workers in Montreal—pictures to which the women added their own input through writing.

Charles Gagnon

A designer by training and a major abstract painter, Charles Gagnon has devoted his career to an approach that explores the conceptual and plastic dimensions of photography and painting. From 1976 to 1978, he intensively delved into the creative possibilities inherent in Polaroid technology. On a daily basis over those three years, he used the medium as a means of studying forms and lines. The exhibition showcases one of his many series dedicated to formalist research. Gagnon's photographic practice is yet another demonstration of the rich creative potential of Montreal artists.

McCord Museum, museum of photography

The McCord's photography collection encompasses over 1,317,610 photographs that primarily document the social history of Montreal, but also that of Quebec and Canada. Ranging from a series of daguerreotypes created in the 1840s 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.

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, Decorative Arts, and Textual Archives. McCord Museum: Our People, Our Stories.

About the Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography

The Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography (FEP) is an international non-profit organization founded in 2003, notably by Canada's William Ewing, to promote the art of photography through museum-quality travelling exhibitions and related publications. The Foundation, based in Minnesota, has offices in Paris and Lausanne. FEP exhibitions are shown in many museums all around the world.

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Interviews possible with Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer and with Helene Samson, Curator, Photography.

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Source and information

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