

PRESS RELEASE

CAMP FIRES: THE QUEER BAROQUE OF LÉOPOLD L. FOULEM, PAUL MATHIEU AND RICHARD MILETTE

A PROVOCATIVE EXHIBITION AT THE McCORD MUSEUM

Montreal, April 8, 2014 – From April 10 to August 15, 2015, the McCord Museum presents the exhibition *Camp Fires: The Queer Baroque of Léopold L. Foulem, Paul Mathieu and Richard Milette*. This provocative exhibition, featuring explicit themes, brings together 60 works by three Francophone Canadian ceramic artists of international renown. All three are united by deep roots in Montreal – their city by birth or adoption – common experience and a critical discourse on gay identity. They share a post-modern predilection for humour, appropriation and pastiche as well as social and cultural criticism. For more than 30 years, they have explored the theme of “camp,” an artistic sensibility that emerged in the 20th century alongside queer exuberance. Produced by the Toronto’s Gardiner Museum, this touring exhibition is curated by Robin Metcalfe. It will be presented at the Bellevue Arts Museum, in Bellevue, Wa., United States, in the Autumn 2015. The exhibition is presented in Montreal by *Fugues*.

“Two of these artists, Léopold L. Foulem and Richard Milette, have lived for almost 40 years in Montreal, where Foulem taught at two cégeps from 1970 to 2013. This is an ideal opportunity for Montrealers and anyone interested in gay culture to discover their works,” explains Susanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum. “The presentation of this exhibition is an acknowledgement not only of the undeniable talent of these artists and their recognition beyond Canada’s borders, but also of the openness of Montreal and society’s changing attitudes. *Camp Fires*, which will be on display until August and therefore during Montréal Pride, aims — as does this event — to underscore the importance and contribution of the gay community to the city’s social fabric.”

For more than three decades, the three featured artists have explored the themes of Camp and the gay male experience in their art. Their shared feeling that they’re outside the artistic and social mainstream has helped them create aesthetically powerful and intellectually stimulating bodies of work, rooted in, and critical of, conventional art history, ceramic history and contemporary culture. “Camp” has been identified as a concept, an aesthetic sensibility, and a form of oppositional critique central to gay and lesbian culture. Camp has been variously understood to include elements of irony, exaggeration, excess, humour, sentimentality, theatricality, artifice, parody and devotion. It is a disputed field of appropriation and counter-appropriation and of alternative signifying codes.

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Camouflage Series (EM)
Paul Mathieu
2005
© Kai Mushens



Guasparre
Richard Milette
2000
Ceramic
Photo : Richard Milette

This project is supported by the Canadian Heritage Museums Assistance Program.

Catalogue: The Gardiner Museum has published a bilingual 114-page catalogue, with numerous coloured illustrations. On sale at the Museum Boutique (\$28).

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 1.4 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 at <http://bit.ly/1qUmToP>

Interviews can be arranged with Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum, and with Robin Metcalfe, Curator of the exhibition (Gardiner Museum).

Source and information:

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Léopold L. Foulem
So Many Men So Little Time, 1993–1997
Ceramic and found objects
Collection of the artist
Photo Richard Milette

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ACTIVITIES

■ ***Camp and ceramic art: a discussion with Léopold L. Foulem and Richard Milette***

Round table moderated by Robin Metcalfe, curator of the exhibition

April 22, 2015, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

J.A. Bombardier Theatre

Come hear renowned Canadian ceramic artists Léopold L. Foulem and Richard Milette discuss their artistic practice during a round table moderated by Robin Metcalfe, curator of the exhibition *Camp Fires*. The two artists will talk about sexual identity and artistic issues raised by their work and shed light on the Camp style of their ceramic pieces in the exhibition, as well as those of Paul Mathieu.

The round table discussion will be in French with a bilingual question period.

■ ***Camp: an aesthetic of the self – inventing a persona***

Lecture by Karl-Gilbert Murray, art historian

Wednesday, July 8, 2015 at 6 p.m.

J.A. Bombardier Theatre

Presented as part of the *Camp Fires* exhibition, this lecture by art historian Karl-Gilbert Murray will focus on certain characteristics of the camp aesthetic. Camp is a genuine aesthetic of the self, related to a type of gay sensibility that expresses the idea of taking a proud, provocative effeminate attitude. It will be contextualized through many visual representations from various artistic disciplines and popular culture.

The lecturer will attempt to demystify what Robin Metcalfe has identified as “signifying practices” and “historical circumstances of stigma,” encouraging the ability to invent a persona of resistance through art.

The lecture will be in French with a bilingual question period.

The activities are free of charge and open to all. Places are limited – arrive early. Only McCord Museum Members may make reservations.