

Press release  
For immediate release



It's on!

The MAC opens the exhibition *Leonard Cohen: Une brèche en toute chose / A Crack in Everything*



Montreal, November 8, 2017 – After investing more than two years in the exhibition's development, the MAC is proud to present [Leonard Cohen: Une brèche en toute chose / A Crack in Everything](#). From **November 9, 2017 to April 9, 2018**, Leonard Cohen's music, words and life will take over the MAC for five months in what may be the museum's most ambitious exhibition in its history. Presented by CBC/Radio-Canada, *Leonard Cohen – Une brèche en toute chose / A Crack in Everything* is part of the official program for Montréal's 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

#### A LIFE'S WORK REVISITED THROUGH CONTEMPORARY ART

A truly multidisciplinary exhibition combining visual art, virtual reality, installations, music and writing, *Leonard Cohen: Une brèche en toute chose / A Crack in Everything* offers the public a collection of new works created by local and international artists who have been inspired by Leonard Cohen's life, work

and legacy. The exhibition also explores how Cohen's vast achievement became part of the cultural conversation and cut deeply into the marrow of the body politic.

## EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

- 20 works
- 40 artists
- From 10 countries
- [A temporary off-site work at Silo No. 5, from November 7 to 11, inclusively](#)
- [A series of concerts to accompany the exhibition: \*Leonard Cohen: 5 concerts / 5 albums\*](#)

The exhibition also offers contextual multimedia installations specially conceived by the MAC, including an immersive multi-screen environment highlighting five decades of Cohen's concert performances and a brilliant multi-screen exploration of his thoughts and the workings of his mind in an installation concentrating on Cohen in interview and in his own speaking voice. Needless to say, Leonard Cohen was seldom banal, and always a joy to behold and listen to.

The experience actually begins outside of the MAC: Montreal and Cohen lovers, and visitors alike are all invited to Silo No. 5, in the Old Port, for five consecutive nights to witness Jenny Holzer's majestic *For Leonard Cohen*, beginning on the first anniversary of his death, November 7, until November 11.

As part of the exhibition, the MAC is also holding a series of five off-site concerts, based on five iconic Leonard Cohen albums during the five months of the exhibition. Each concert will present musicians and guest singers from Montreal who will perform a Cohen album in its entirety, in an intimate setting, in keeping with the album's original intent and song order.

### **The exhibition will feature work by artists:**

Kara Blake, Candice Breitz, Daily tous les jours, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, Christophe Chassol, Tacita Dean, Thomas Demand, Kota Ezawa, George Fok, Ari Folman, Clara Furey, Jenny Holzer, Jon Rafman, Michael Rakowitz, Zach Richter, Sharon Robinson, The Sanchez Brothers and Taryn Simon.

### **Musicians have been invited to record an exclusive cover of a Cohen song, which will play at the Museum in an installation titled *Listening to Leonard*. They are:**

Ariane Moffatt, with l'Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, Aurora, Brad Barr, Basia Bulat, Chilly Gonzales and Jarvis Cocker with The Kaiser Quartett, Dear Criminals, Douglas Dare, Feist, Half Moon Run, Julia Holter, Leif Vollebakk, Li'l Andy & Joe Grass, Little Scream, Lou Doillon, Mélanie De Biasio, Moby, The National with Sufjan Stevens, Richard Reed Parry and Ragnar Kjartansson, Socalled.

## QUOTES

*"Cohen is an extraordinary poet of sorrow and the human condition, giving voice to what it means to be fully alert to the complexities and desires of both body and soul. It is a true honor to launch this exhibition that is devoted to the critical celebration, loving tribute and, a year after his passing, quiet commemoration of a vast artistic achievement and inspiring life.*

— **John Zeppetelli**, Director and Chief Curator at the MAC, Co-curator of the exhibition

*“To mark Montréal’s 375th anniversary, we could think of no better cultural figure to honour with a large-scale, wide-ranging exhibition than the local genius and planetary icon, Leonard Cohen. The exhibition began as an ardent celebration of a universally acclaimed Montrealer, but has evolved into a more solemn and commemorative experience, as it now opens exactly one year after Cohen’s passing.”*

— **Victor Shiffman**, Co-curator of the exhibition

*“It’s an incredible honour to present this international-scale exhibition in the city where Mr. Cohen was born. This is a major event among the celebrations for Montreal’s 375th anniversary—its exceptional artistic quality is a stirring tribute to this great man. His brilliant work is certainly an exceptional cultural legacy that transcends borders and ages.”*

— **France Chrétien-Desmarais**, President, Society for the Celebrations of Montréal’s 375th Anniversary.

*“Throughout the year, we’ve had the opportunity to gather together in order to commemorate our shared history and celebrate our pride as Montrealers. The exhibition prepared by the MAC now gives us the chance to celebrate the great artist and outstanding citizen that Leonard Cohen has been to us.”*

— **Denis Coderre**, Mayor of Montreal

*“Leonard Cohen’s magnificent work is part and parcel of our identity as a metropolis. This exhibition will enable the public to look back over an exceptional Montrealer’s illustrious career. Cohen’s words and music have moved fans the world over and made all Quebecers proud.”*

— **Martin Coiteux**, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Land Occupancy, Minister of Public Security, Minister Responsible for the Montréal Region

## **ARTISTS’ THOUGHTS ON LEONARD COHEN**

*“I’ve been listening to Leonard nearly all my life. His music has accompanied a lonely prom night, family holidays, open-sky drives on tour, new romances and failed romances, anxious worrying about the end of the world, walks along the Main, and the moment I’m writing this. I wanted to record ‘Dance Me to the End of Love’ because every time I’ve played it, I’ve felt as though I know it deeply and also as if I’m hearing it for the first time. A kind of reflection of all these different moments of my life where every new understanding has brought a deeper mystery, a sigh and a laugh.”*

— **Basia Bulat**

*“[Janet Cardiff and I] have both been fans of Leonard Cohen for a long time. Not only of his music but of his poetry and novels. In high school, I passed English by composing Leonard Cohen-inspired poetry and started playing guitar because of him. I wrote Cohenesque songs and played them alone in my room. [...] My mother was not too fond of him, however; I think she found his lyrics too obscene for a teenager in the seventies. She called him ‘that man’ as in ‘please stop playing that man.’ Years later, Mum’s favourite song was ‘Hallelujah’, and we played it for her at her hospice bedside. ‘I miss my mother. I want to bring her to India.’ We were asked if we wanted to participate in a show in which the artists would create works inspired by Leonard Cohen. We said yes immediately.”*

— **George Bures Miller**

*“That light that Leonard Cohen turned on in my brain and heart has revealed the world that lies in between words, in between lines, in between the known and the unknown... That light has kept me curious for details, has kept my eyes open and has guided me through the rollercoaster of life, with tears and a merry heart.”*

**— Lou Doillon**

*“What touches me about Cohen’s oeuvre is that it works so well as a sonic experience—and not just as a recitation of his much-lauded lyrics. I’m equally inspired by the guitar arpeggios from his early albums, the synth pop in his eighties recordings, the choir and string arrangements on his last album and by the metamorphosis of his voice over time.”*

**— Kota Ezawa**

*“I chose [‘Hey That’s No Way to Say Goodbye’] so I could sing it quietly, almost as much inward as outward. That’s what I loved about Leonard Cohen’s rumination. I have always heard his songs as memories unspooling from a privacy I could sense was intact and deeply invested in. It makes me aspire to that kind of privacy, with songs acting as the cracks in the walls of those inner rooms.”*

**— Feist**

*“My first memory of Leonard Cohen goes back many years to when I was a boy of 10. My 18-year-old eldest sister’s boyfriend left her without warning, and she plunged into a deep depression. She locked herself in her room for weeks, shut the shutters and windows, and played just one record on her turntable: Songs of Leonard Cohen, Cohen’s first record. The whole family stood outside her bedroom day after day, for hours, terrified that my sister would harm herself. After a month inside she came out as skinny as a toothpick and told us she’d decided to study medicine. Forty years on, she’s an international specialist in ophthalmology for premature babies. The years passed, but Leonard Cohen remained forever associated in my mind with an all-embracing, protective, sweet melancholy that gives you a feeling of home and of ‘leave me alone for a while, I need some time to myself.’”*

**— Ari Folman**

*“It is Cohen’s sincerity that I have chosen to be influenced by. His sincerity to admit he is distressed because he wants everything, his awareness of this sickness that most of us have today of never being satisfied and of not being in the present moment. He is aware that this is such a difficult task to address that it demands one’s lifelong, constant attention. It is Cohen’s lesson that beauty might appear after a long arduous process. Not beauty that appears out of nowhere, but beauty that is already there, under the layers and layers of accumulated ‘stuff’ ready to be discovered when one ‘cleans.’”*

**— Clara Furey**

*“Without being too dramatic about it, upon reflection, I do think my dad playing Cohen’s music on guitar [when I was young] may have been one of the first realizations I had of the truth that hides in abstraction—that the madness that we experience in our heads can be the building blocks of beauty and understanding.”*

**— Julia Holter**

*“A political poet-singer—‘Democracy is coming to the USA,’ he croaked with doses of irony—and a writer who could remind listeners and readers of shared vulnerability—‘Like a bird on a wire’—Cohen lived wild and long, and traveled in song across pathos and lust. His songs are easy to remember. Cohen spawned*

*fans and fan clubs, melting devotees. He worked diligently over decades, at points more in the spotlight, at others, less. He could hit home.”*

— **Jenny Holzer**

*“I began performing ‘Democracy’ sometime in the 1990s, but recently I’ve found myself unable to hear its ambiguous refrain (‘Democracy is coming to the U.S.A...’) with the same humour its author perhaps intended, unable to approach its lyric with the same hopeful and ‘anthemic’ quality Cohen said he wanted to give to the song. I wanted to create a disquieting backdrop befitting the political and social change that makes us hear the song in this new way. So, late one night, pedal-steel guitarist Joe Grass and myself covertly set up five microphones in the Palais des congrès parking garage [in Montreal] and let its acoustics and background noises act as a third instrument as we performed this version of ‘Democracy.’”*

— **Li’l Andy**

*“One of my earliest memories is my mom playing piano and singing ‘Suzanne.’ Until I was 4 or 5 years old, I just assumed it was a song she had written. So even though I was briefly crestfallen to find out that my mom didn’t write ‘Suzanne,’ it’s still my favorite of Leonard’s songs.”*

— **Moby**

*“What I’ve always been drawn to in Leonard Cohen’s music is his masterful ability to author lyrics that explore ambiguity and the ‘essence of meaning’ in our lives. His songs look past the obvious, they challenge us, allowing the exploration of something different in each of us.”*

— **Zach Richter**

*“In loss, music becomes a way of breathing, of saying things that can be said in no other way. It was in this breath that the song ‘Goodbye Stranger’ came to me. I wrote it songwriter to songwriter, friend to friend, but feeling and hoping that I was also writing it for everyone with whom I share a love of Leonard’s words.”*

— **Sharon Robinson**

*“I rarely sing in English: most of the texts that I sing are in Yiddish, a language of my culture that I do not speak fluently. But for some reason, I found my ‘voice’ singing in this lost language of my ancestors. This is the second time I’ve tried to present a Leonard Cohen song, and once again I must say Cohen’s text just feels so right: his words feel eminently singable and relatable to me. I feel his passion, his despair, his hope, his courage in every word: his poetry speaks to my past and my present.”*

— **Socalled**

*“When you listen to Leonard Cohen, you live inside his voice. And it gives you all of the advice you eventually take.”*

— **Leif Vollebakk**

## **NOTEWORTHY**

- **Clara Furey** will be at the MAC to perform *When Even The* at these times:
  - 7 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.
  - 2 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

\* Visitors are invited to consult [the full, updated schedule](#) on the MAC website before visiting the Museum.

- [A series of artist conferences](#) will be held at the MAC during the opening week of the exhibition. Other activities will be announced during its course.
- Don't miss the next [Nocturne at the MAC](#) on December 1, when visitors can explore the exhibition until 2 a.m. Special programming on the exhibition will be presented.

## **ORGANIZATION**

The exhibition was curated by John Zeppetelli, Director and Chief Curator at the MAC and Victor Shiffman, Guest Curator.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC) wishes to first thank Leonard Cohen, who gave his generous consent to the exhibition concept while alive. The MAC also wishes to thank the family and friends of Cohen, in particular Robert Kory, Adam Cohen and Lorca Cohen, who provided important support for the organization of this exhibition.

The MAC is pleased to be associated with local institutional partners who have generously contributed to the production of this exhibition. The MAC extends its warm thanks to CBC/Radio-Canada, the exhibition presenter and creator of exclusive content for the exhibition. CBC/Radio-Canada also made its archives available at no charge to the artists creating work for this project.

The MAC also wishes to thank its exhibition partners: DeSerres, Aéroports de Montréal (ADM) and the Société de transport de Montréal (STM).

Co-curatorial partners provided specific support in the realization of this exhibition. The MAC wishes to thank the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), which also made their full archives available free-of charge to the artists. The MAC and NFB are co-curators and coproducers of a work of art with the Daily tous les jours collective. The concert series *Leonard Cohen : 5 concerts / 5 albums* was produced in collaboration with POP Montréal.

The MAC thanks Sony Music and Sony ATV for granting permission to use the songs and archival video material of Leonard Cohen to the artists and for the purpose of the exhibition.

The MAC greatly appreciates the contribution of partners who directly supported the creation of artworks by the artists: Goethe-Institut (Candice Breitz), Spotify (Daily tous les jours), Audio Z (George Fok), Consulate General of Israel in Montreal and the Swiss Institute (Ari Folman), as well as Lytro (Zach Richter).

The MAC is a provincially owned corporation funded by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec. It receives additional funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts. The MAC also thanks its partners Loto-Québec and Ubisoft Montréal, and its media partners La Presse and Publicité sauvage.

Finally, the Musée sincerely thanks the following for their generous support: The Azrieli Foundation, the Stephen and Lillian Vineberg Family Foundation, Nick Tedeschi and Sal Guerrero, and Claudine and Stephen Bronfman Family Foundation.

### **ABOUT THE MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL (MAC)**

Located in the heart of the Quartier des Spectacles, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC) makes today's art a vital part of Montréal and Québec life. For more than fifty years, this vibrant museum has brought together local and international artists, their works and an ever-growing public. It is also a place of discovery, offering visitors experiences that are continually changing and new, and often unexpected and stirring. The MAC presents temporary exhibitions devoted to outstanding and relevant current artists who provide their own particular insight into our society, as well as exhibitions of works drawn from the museum's extensive Permanent Collection. These may feature any and every form of expression: digital and sound works, installations, paintings, sculptures, ephemeral pieces, and more. In addition to its wide range of educational activities familiarizing the general public with contemporary art, the MAC organizes unique artistic performances and festive events. It is a window onto a myriad of avant-garde expressions that extend the reach of art throughout the city and beyond.

[www.macm.org](http://www.macm.org)

### **ABOUT THE SOCIETY FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MONTRÉAL'S 375TH ANNIVERSARY**

The Society for the Celebration of Montréal's 375th Anniversary is a non-profit organization whose mission is to organize the celebrations and socioeconomic contributions that will mark Montréal's 375th anniversary in 2017. With a focus on promoting Montréal expertise, it acts as a catalyst for local forces in carrying out its mandate: to mobilize the community, implement a funding strategy, rigorously manage public funds, develop quality programming and ensure the visibility of the celebrations.

The Society benefits from the support of the Ville de Montréal, the Québec government, the Canada government and private funding from 12 Great Montrealers. For more information, see <http://www.375mtl.com>

You can find all our press releases and additional pictures and videos in our virtual [press room](#). Get all the latest news in real time on our [Twitter feed: @375Mtl](#).

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To learn more about the contribution of the Québec government to Montréal's 375th Anniversary celebrations, [click here](#)

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