A CRACK IN EVERYTHING

KARA BLAKE
CANDICE BREITZ
JANET CARDIFF
AND GEORGE BURES MILLER
CHRISTOPHE CHAISEL
LEONARD COHEN
DAILY TOUS LES JOURS
TACTA OUAN
THOMAS DEMAND
KOTA EZAWA
GEORGE FOK
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JON RAFMAN
MICHAEL RAKOWITZ
ZACH RIGBY
SHARON ROBINSON
THE SANCHEZ BROTHERS
TARYN SIMON

ARIANE MOFFATT WITH THE
ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE DE MONTRÉAL
AURORA
BASIA BULAT
BRAD BARR
CHILLY GONZALES AND JARVIS COCKER
WITH KAISER QUARTETT
DEAR CRIMINALS
DOUGLAS DARE
FEST
HALF MOON RUN
JULIA HOLTER
LEIF VOLLEBEKK
LIL ANDY AND JOE GRASS
LITTLE SCREAM
LOU DOILLON
MÉLANIE DE BIASIO
MOBY
SOCALLED
THE NATIONAL WITH SUFJAN STEVENS,
RAGNAR KJARTANSSON AND RICHARD REED PARRY

LEONARD COHEN
Leonard Cohen: A Crack in Everything
An exhibition organized by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal and presented from November 9, 2017 to April 9, 2018.

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Well aware of his fiercely guarded privacy, we wrote to Leonard Cohen with caution and anxiety: would he object to the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal (MAC) devoting a large exhibition to him for an extended period of time? How would he respond to visual artists, filmmakers, performers and other musicians revisiting his words, songs and biography with new inflections and perspectives, drawing from his themes of love and desire, loss and redemption—while breathing alternative and potentially provocative new life to them?

To our great relief, he agreed, with the amusing caveats that a) he would not attend the opening; b) he would not be an obstacle to our work as curators; and c) under no conditions were we to demand of his time or direct participation in the project. When I say we wrote to Leonard, I mean we wrote to his long-time manager and representative Robert Kory, who from our earliest conversations told us that Leonard Cohen was surprised and touched by the attention, but that he was fully immersed in his own creative endeavours. We cannot tell you how pleased, vindicated and confirmed in our unorthodox subject matter we were when, almost two years into our curatorial work on the exhibition, Cohen released at age eighty-two, just days before his death, a magnificent studio album, his fourteenth, produced by his son Adam.
“A million candles burning for the love that never came/You want it darker/We kill the flame,” Cohen intones sombrely from the prophetic, moving and widely acclaimed *You Want It Darker*. That title track in particular seemed to announce, with the force of poetic indignation and disgust, the sinister travesty taking over his adopted country—and indeed, Cohen died in Los Angeles the day before the 2016 US election and was secretly buried in Montréal in a simple pine casket a few days later. What began, therefore, as a delirious celebration and loving tribute also evolved into something suffused in elegy. The exhibition is now a commemoration of a vast artistic achievement and inspiring life, as it opened exactly one year after Cohen’s passing. A large-scale public art intervention, *For Leonard Cohen*, by the relentlessly probing Jenny Holzer marked the evening in question, November 7, 2017, with quiet majesty. Holzer imagined a poignant yet optimistic requiem on a massive, iconic, concrete grain silo in Montréal’s Old Port area, where three gigantic projections of Leonard Cohen’s lyrics and poems scrolled slowly and silently while revealing and illuminating his words.

Leonard Cohen’s thinking, writing and music are a thing of beauty and despair. For decades, the novelist, poet and singer/songwriter tenaciously supplied the world with melancholy but urgent observations on the state of the human heart. With equal parts gravitas and grace, he teased out a startlingly inventive and singular language, depicting both a rapturous, or sometimes liturgical, spirituality and an earthly sexuality. Yet, with characteristic humility, he has said he never really aimed for anything more exalted than to simply be able to sing someone a song.

His song was sublime. He set the blunt but brilliant instrument of his famous voice—a “velour foghorn” so deep and cavernous, or more recently, his raspy chant-like whispers—to beautiful melodies and simple arrangements that belied a great musical intelligence. His interweaving of the sacred and the profane, of mystery and accessibility, was such a compelling combination it became seared into individual and collective memory. Our exhibition explores and embodies how this vastly important achievement has affected and inspired artists, how it has entered the cultural conversation, how it has cut deep into the marrow of the body politic.

Celebrating and reflecting upon a much-loved and complex Montrealer who was also a planetary star was a daunting challenge. Cohen himself seemed unclassifiable and unafraid to...
With sumptuous, if sometimes harshly exacting language, he charted the darkest byways of emotion, he saw the prayer in the carnal and seemed to acknowledge, at every turn, the inevitability of pain and disappointment: “There is a crack in everything,” he memorably wrote.

Our exhibition, which gathers over forty artists, musicians, filmmakers and performers, revisits Cohen’s magnificent work while offering four contextual multimedia installations specially conceived by the MAC. These include an emotional and immersive multi-screen environment by George Fok. Although wistfully titled *Passing Through*, the installation, consisting of three projections on three walls of a large room, is a rollicking archival montage highlighting almost fifty years of Cohen’s concert performances, where a single song is sometimes performed across several decades, with a visibly transformed Cohen appearing in each segment. Another exquisite archival installation, by Kara Blake—this time an ode to Cohen’s intricate inner life—*The Offerings* explores Cohen’s thinking and beautifully captures on five screens the workings and patterns of his mind and voice, while yet another moment, *Listening to Leonard*, gathers newly commissioned covers of Cohen’s musical repertoire, most exclusively available for the exhibition only. In addition, Cohen himself makes a single but important appearance as a visual artist with a projection of hundreds of his obsessive, annotated self-portraits, offering yet more insights on his bittersweet, funny and self-mocking self.

By providing a variety of conceptual responses and other reflections, all the invited artists bring to bear different perspectives on Cohen’s art and life, transforming and interpreting...
his work while struggling with the weight of admiration and revision, not to mention Cohen’s reputation, profundity and enduring relevance. Despite a few carefully chosen objects, photographs and, purportedly, Cohen’s own Olivetti Lettera 22 manual typewriter making an appearance in the show, there was never an interest in showing Cohen’s memorabilia or other artifacts from his life, nor engaging in an uncritically sycophantic or hagiographic exercise. Our wish was to see if we could assess and celebrate Cohen’s boldly beautiful and singular legacy through the fearless responses of other living artists. A conversation we had always hoped Cohen would be moved by.

Other artist interventions delve into the many unexpected pathways that emanate from Cohen’s work, including a major participatory installation by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller called The Poetry Machine. Visitors are invited to play on organ keyboards, with individual keys summoning audio files of Cohen’s poetry, beautifully recited by Cohen himself, while creating a magical machine capable not only of recomposing his poems but also of sketching a potent new portrait of the artist. Another stunning portrait, by Candice Breitz, centres around Cohen’s comeback album I’m Your Man, read as a template of late style and masculinity and featuring ardent Cohen fans—all men sixty-five or over—singing the entire album individually in a professional recording studio, but coming together as an improbable eighteen-video-screen chorus. In an antechamber, the Cohen family synagogue choir supports the men with mellifluous backup vocals. A brilliant work where art and anthropology co-mingle, and where the palpable experience of fans enjoying an opportunity to publically display their love and devotion to their idol is raw and touching.

Obliged by financial circumstance but propelled by sheer will, Cohen mounted late in life one of the most euphoric and successful comebacks in music history, delighting fans, old and new, in large arenas well into his seventies. He had, after all, been present (and for some, unavoidable) in the culture for over five decades. Although he never seemed to take himself too seriously, Cohen was nonetheless an oracle, a voice of chilling prophecy and occasional fear, of joy and complication, with murmurings and pronouncements resonating far and wide. At their centre was always an elegantly imperious if disarming poetry of brokenness.
Cohen was nonetheless an oracle, a voice of chilling prophecy and occasional fear, of joy and complication, with murmurings and pronouncements resonating far and wide. At their centre was always an elegantly imperious if disarming poetry of brokenness.

In one of the quieter, but no less powerful, moments in the exhibition, Taryn Simon signals the epochal shifts and ruptures in the culture by simply displaying a copy of the *New York Times* dated November 11, 2016. At the top of this dispiriting front page is a still shocking image of then President-elect Trump’s first visit to the White House with President Obama, a man whose legitimacy Trump relentlessly undermined. “Failing” and “fake news” were frequent insults directed at the venerable newspaper by a man also attempting to dismantle and endlessly manipulate the truth. Cohen’s obituary appears at the bottom of that page: “Leonard Cohen, 1934-2016: Writer of ‘Hallelujah’ Whose Lyrics Captivated Generations.” A radiant, smiling Cohen is pictured either raising or lowering his hat, in a gesture that is both a hello and a goodbye.
The hut wasn’t much bigger than a prison cell. It was one of a scattering of plain wood cabins on Mount Baldy, above the snowline, an abandoned Boy Scouts camp that the hut’s long-time resident had helped turn into a monastery. Jikan was his name—given to him by Roshi Sasaki, the head of the monastery, when ordaining him as a Buddhist monk. The name meant “ordinary silence” or “the silence between two thoughts.” You know him as Leonard Cohen. For more than half of the 1990s he lived in this white-walled cabin. “I was always going off the deep end,” said Cohen, smiling. “So it was no radical departure.”

True, when you think about it, the life of Leonard Cohen was a series of radical departures. He was born in Montréal into a well-to-do family of rabbis, scholars, businessmen, who founded synagogues and Canada’s first English-language Jewish newspaper. Serious people. Leonard became a serious poet. He was twenty-one when his first collection, *Let Us Compare Mythologies*, was published and he was hailed by Canadian literati as their new golden boy. There was even a documentary made about him, as if he were a rock star: *Ladies and Gentlemen... Mr. Leonard Cohen*. But instead of staying where he was loved, he left for New York where the Beat poets weren’t so enamoured of his “rhymed, polished verses, which they associated with the oppressive literary establishment.”
Cohen lived in London for a while—Hampstead; lots of writers there—but soon left to live in a house with no electricity or running water on the Greek island of Hydra. In a room with plain white walls, like a monk’s cabin, he wrote novels. There’s a photograph of that room on the back sleeve of *Songs From a Room*, his lover Marianne Ihlen seated at his desk, naked but for a towel. Then, when prose and poetry failed to pay even his meagre bills, he decided he’d go to Nashville and be a country songwriter. This on the basis of liking Hank Williams, George Jones and Ray Charles’s country album, and having once played in a square dance band. He’d been playing guitar since he was fifteen—the same age that he discovered Federico García Lorca. Which was the moment that he decided to be a poet—this was 1949; Cohen had no tradition of rock music behind him. But when he read Lorca, he said he heard the music of the synagogue. He also said that there was music behind every word he wrote.

En route to Nashville he stopped off in New York. A friend suggested he meet with Mary Martin, a fellow Canadian, Albert Grossman’s former assistant, who had introduced Bob Dylan to The Hawks who became The Band. Martin introduced Cohen to Judy Collins, who covered his songs and took him onstage, and that led to John Hammond’s signing Cohen, as he had done Dylan, to Columbia Records.

Cohen was thirty-three when his debut album *Songs of Leonard Cohen* came out. Another radical departure, this being the youth culture, when you weren’t to trust anyone over thirty. Cohen was not a youth; it’s quite possible to believe he never was. Like his poems, his lyrics were sophisticated and dense. Although he had consumed copious amounts of acid and speed, his songs showed no evidence of either. His songs were like nothing else being made in the late sixties; he was unique, at the same time ancient and fresh. Hammond had a hard time getting Columbia to sign an “old poet.” Cohen had a harder time making that first album. When it was finally done he swore he would never make another—until Bob Johnston, back then a Columbia staff producer, lured him to Nashville after offering him the keys to a plain wooden cabin in the middle of nowhere.

From the outset, Cohen’s relationship with the music business had ranged from dismal to conflicted. Take touring: Cohen hated it. “I felt,” he said, “that the risks of humiliation were too wide.” He had stage fright. He was even more afraid
for his songs. They had come to him from somewhere pure and he’d worked long and hard to make them sincere representations of the moment. He wanted to protect them, not parade them before strangers in an artificial intimacy. He might have seemed like the consummate showman for any of us who saw him back then, but for much of his music career he drank and drugged himself copiously to get through a show.

As time went on, songwriting became increasingly torturous also. Songs had to be “torn” from him. There’s the famous story of Cohen and Dylan trading lyrics over coffee in Paris. Dylan played him a new song and Cohen asked how long it had taken to write. “Fifteen minutes,” Dylan said. How long did it take Cohen to write his new song *Hallelujah*, he asked. “A couple of years,” Cohen told him, too embarrassed to tell him it was five years or more. But really the problem was not with writing a song—Cohen could do that relatively easily. It was his perfectionism and a craving for complete authenticity.

Take *Anthem*—ten to fifteen years in the writing. Cohen recorded it for at least three different albums. He rejected it twice because, listening back, he felt that the guy singing the words was “putting us on.” The first of those albums was *Various Positions* (1984), the same album *Hallelujah* was on—and the album that Columbia refused to release in the US because they didn’t think it had any songs. “Leonard, we know you’re great,” the head of the music division, Walter Yetnikoff, famously said, “We just don’t know if you’re any good.”

For most of his music career, Cohen’s patch had been the UK and Europe, perhaps because darkness wasn’t so alienating there, intelligence and poetry not so suspect, and his wry, black humour was understood. “I thought they were making a mistake,” Cohen said. “I thought that there was an audience in the United States and Canada [but] from their point of view the market was so limited that it didn’t justify the distribution machinery.”

It seems hardly credible now that the album that introduced *Hallelujah*—the all-purpose hymn for the millennium, the feel-good singalong/treatise on the bleakness of human relations and go-to vocal workout on TV talent contests—was forced to come out in North America on an indie label. There had been some attempts to sell Leonard on this side of the Atlantic, all unsuccessful: for example, his collaboration with Phil Spector.
Death of a Ladies’ Man—Cohen’s lyrics, Spector writing music and producing the album (at gunpoint).

Cohen finally broke through in the late eighties, a time when many of his contemporaries were floundering. *I’m Your Man* (1988) reintroduced him as a suave, smart, self-deprecating lounge lizard-cum-chansonnier. The songs’ themes were as dark as ever: *Ain’t No Cure For Love*, a singalong about love, sex, God and the AIDS crisis; *First We Take Manhattan*, probably the only Eurodisco song to tackle both the war between the sexes and the Holocaust. But the darkness was mitigated by catchy beats, keyboards in place of gloomy guitar and bright production. His humour was more obvious too: “I was born like this I had no choice,” he sang laconically, “I was born with the gift of a golden voice.”

This was really Cohen’s first comeback. He had stepped into the shadows at the end of the *Recent Songs* tour, staying there for four years, writing a book of poems, psalms really, *Book of Mercy* (1984). What he had learned from his ongoing studies with Roshi, he said, had led him back to the Talmud, Torah, Kabbalah and the Jewish prayer book. Since *Various Positions* didn’t much trouble North America, it had been nine years before *I’m Your Man* rebranded Cohen as cool.

“In terms of my so-called career,” Cohen said, “*I’m Your Man* was certainly a rebirth. But it was hard to consider it a rebirth on a personal level. It was made under the usual dismal and morbid condition”—including an unravelled romantic life once again, the death of his manager Marty Machat and a deepening of the depression he’d suffered since late adolescence. “Not just the blues,” he explained, but “a kind of mental violence that stops you from functioning properly from one moment to the next.” Unable to keep the momentum up, it took him another four years for the follow-up.

But *The Future* (1992) sold even better. Its lyrics were dystopian, pessimistic, but almost gleefully so. The title track name-checked Stalin, Charles Manson, the Devil and Christ—and Cohen himself as “the little Jew that wrote the Bible.” When the Los Angeles riots broke out, Cohen had watched the fires from his little house in an unglamorous part of the city. He had bought it to be near Roshi, whose first US Zen centre had opened near South Central L.A. Cohen catalogued all the sins of the West on the album. Everything was broken—but for Cohen everything always was. Even Jesus was broken on one
of his earliest songs, Suzanne. The state of being cracked, imperfect, was one of this perfectionist’s longest, deepest studies; it might have been his battle cry.

Anthem—“There is a crack in everything/That’s how the light gets in”—finally made it onto this album, thanks in large part to Rebecca De Mornay, who convinced Cohen, who was still working on it, that it was fine as it was. She and Cohen were engaged to be married. The actress had just made the biggest movie of her career, The Hand That Rocks the Cradle, and Cohen was there when she shot it, sitting in her trailer, writing on a synthesizer. He was her escort at the Oscars ceremony in March 1992. When he went on tour to promote the album, Rebecca would sometimes show up to give moral support.

Along the way, Cohen sang with Elton John on Elton’s Duets album, and narrated a two-part Canadian TV series, The Tibetan Book of the Dead. He also received the Governor General’s Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement—one of two handfuls Canada had bestowed on him recently. At the ceremony, Cohen said, “I feel like a soldier. You may get decorated for a successful campaign [but it’s] probably just in the line of duty. You can’t let these honours deeply alter the way you fight.” Again he was afraid of betraying his art. The Future tour had been as much a battle for him as his early tours. He was drinking so heavily that even Roshi, no stranger to alcohol, expressed concern.

In September 1994, back in L.A., he ran into Roscoe Beck, his bass player on the 1979-1980 Recent Songs tour. “I’ve had it with this music racket,” Cohen told him. After celebrating his sixtieth birthday, he packed his bag and moved into the hut 6,500 feet up in the San Gabriel Mountains to be the servant and companion of an old Japanese man and live the tough and highly structured life of a Rinzai Zen monk.

As well as breaking with the music business, he broke off his engagement to De Mornay. Romantic relationships for Cohen were often just as conflicted. There had been long relationships with his muses, including Marianne Ihlen and later Suzanne Elrod, the mother of his two children, but he had never married. Now it was religion, “my favourite hobby,” as he called it, that took the forefront. Although he remained a practising Jew, even as a Buddhist monk, he had spent his life studying different spiritual paths including Christianity, Scientology and Vedanta. His poems and songs have often featured religious teachers and invariably associate religious
and sexual devotion and ecstasies. Roshi, Cohen said, told the monks, “You lead hard lives, you rise early, you spend hours on floors, but if you want to try something really hard, try marriage. That is the true monastery.”

One attraction of Rinzai Zen was its almost military discipline. Cohen had wanted to go to military school as a child, but when his father died—Leonard was nine—his mother put paid to that idea. In his twenties, Cohen had gone to Cuba to try and join the revolution and later offered himself to the Israeli army during the Yom Kippur War. He was turned down. The routine at the monastery was very rigorous. “You get up very early, 2:30 or three in the morning, and there are duties assigned the whole day.” Dressed in black robe and sandals, the monk’s uniform, he’d clean toilets, cut bamboo and act as Roshi’s driver, cook and secretary.

It was one of many ways to try to cope with the “deep, paralysing anguish for no reason at all.” He’d tried treating his depression with alcohol and drugs of all kinds. The monastery for him was “a hospital [where I could] learn everything from the beginning again, how to sit, how to walk, how to eat and how to be quiet. ... Once you overcome your natural resistance to being told what to do, if you can overcome that, then you begin to relax into the schedule and the almost voluptuous simplicity of the day. That whole component of improvisation that tyrannizes much of our lives begins to dissolve.” But that didn’t work either. Five and a half years later, in such a deep depression he couldn’t claw back up, he told Roshi he was leaving.

October 2004. Cohen was in Montréal when his daughter Lorca called. She’d just had a strange conversation with the boyfriend of someone who worked for Kelly Lynch—Cohen’s manager since Marty Machat’s death. All he would say was that Cohen needed to look at his bank accounts, and fast. At Lorca’s insistence, Cohen flew back to L.A. and went to his bank. Almost all of his money was gone, including his retirement account, as well as publishing rights to some of his most popular songs.

Life since leaving the monastery had become quite serene. He had a new romantic partner, his sometime backing singer Anjani Thomas. Three years after Ten New Songs he’d made another album, Dear Heather (2004). The lengthy periods he’d been spending in Mumbai now, studying Vedanta with Ramesh Balsekar, had somehow cured his depression. But to spend his old age in what felt like an eternity of legal and financial paperwork was a joke so black as to test even his sense of humour. At the age of seventy, Cohen was forced to remortgage his house in order to pay the lawyers.

“It was an enormous distraction,” he said. “Will I ever be able to get back to a life where I get up in the morning, walk over to my keyboard or pick up my guitar or go to the meditation hall? Or will it just be appointments and searching through emails?” Help came in the form of Robert Kory, Anjani’s ex-husband, a former music industry lawyer, who offered to defer his fees and plunge into what turned out to be a wildly convoluted business.

Cohen’s two albums since leaving the monastery had sold some copies in the UK, Europe and Canada, but very few in the US. He’d had no interest in touring to promote them, wanting to stay as far as he could get away from the music business and the spotlight. Even on his albums he moved increasingly away from centre stage. Women had always played a part in Cohen’s songs—as backing singers, muses and, in Leanne Ungar’s case, engineer/producer, but Ten New Songs had been as much Sharon Robinson’s album as Cohen’s—her music, his words. On his next album, Dear Heather (2004), he left much of the singing to the women, his own voice just a whisper. By Blue Alert (2006), his collaboration with Anjani, he had faded out almost entirely. It was Anjani’s idea, her music and vocals, and her face on the sleeve.

Meanwhile, Hal Willner’s ensemble project Came So Far For Beauty—begun in 2003 as a one-off celebration of Cohen
in a Brooklyn park, funded by the Canadian consulate—had taken on a life of its own. Various shows around the world featured a panoply of artists covering Cohen—among them Laurie Anderson, Linda Thompson, Rufus Wainwright, Lou Reed, Antony Hegarty, Jarvis Cocker and Nick Cave. An Australian filmmaker used these concerts as a basis for the documentary film *I'm Your Man* (2005). Philip Glass composed a series of song cycles based on poems Cohen was writing for his first new volume of poetry in twenty-two years, *Book of Longing* (2006). Everyone, it seemed, was singing Cohen’s songs but Cohen.

But the thought of going on tour had started nagging at Cohen. He didn’t want to; he wasn’t sure he could do it after almost fifteen years; he wasn’t convinced that anyone would want to see him. But since neither poetry nor albums were paying the bills, it was the only solution he could think of. Robert Kory called the UK concert promoters AEG in London. It turned out that one of the promoters, Rob Hallett, was a big Cohen fan. He flew to L.A. and made an offer Cohen couldn’t under his present circumstances refuse. After the meeting, Cohen drove to Sharon Robinson’s house and told her, a worried look on his face, “I think I’m going to have to go on tour again.”

Cohen asked Roscoe Beck to be the musical director, and in January 2008 Beck started hiring. Some were musicians Cohen had worked with before—Sharon Robinson; guitarist Bob Metzger, Leanne Ungar’s husband—and some were new to him: keyboard player Neil Larsen; Javier Mas, a Spanish laud and bandurria player who had been the musical director of a Leonard Cohen tribute concert in Barcelona; and drummer Rafael Gayol. They hired a violin player, then decided to replace her with a woodwind player and multi-instrumentalist Dino Soldo. Jennifer Warnes was invited but declined. Sharon brought in Charley and Hattie Webb, the Webb Sisters. They rehearsed for four months, with the promoter footing the bill.

“It’s hard to separate the feelings at the beginning of the tour,” said Leonard. “Reluctance of course. The difficulty of assembling the band, especially when you haven’t done it for almost fifteen years, and in those early periods of assembling the band, I guess I felt some reluctance that I had started the whole process, because it didn’t look like it was going to pan out very well. There was a great anxiety about whether we had a show. And my voice,” he laughed. “Well my voice was the

6. 1968–1978
Conquering the world. Portrait of an inveterate ladies’ man

The late 1960s and the 1970s were characterized by Cohen’s deepening involvement in the New York artistic milieu and, internationally, by his increasing fame. He frequented the Chelsea Hotel in Manhattan, which was a haunt for numerous artists and writers, including Andy Warhol and the Factory, Allan Ginsberg, Bob Dylan and many others. In 1968, an amorous encounter with Janis Joplin on one of his visits inspired him to write the song *Chelsea Hotel No. 2*, which was released in 1974 on the album *New Skin For the Old Ceremony*. In 1972, a tour took him to several countries in Europe and to Israel. During the Yom Kippur War in 1973, he returned and performed in front of a group of Israel Defense Force soldiers at an outpost in the Sinai. He also composed *Lover Lover Lover*, another song that would appear on *New Skin For the Old Ceremony*. *Leonard Cohen: Live Songs* was released by Columbia Records in 1973; it was followed, in 1975, by the album *The Best of Leonard Cohen*, then by a tour of Europe, the United States and Canada, on which Cohen was accompanied by John Lissauer. During this period, the artist bought a large house in Plateau Mont-Royal, which would keep for the rest of his life. It was located at 28 Rue Vallières, across from Parc du Portugal. His neighbours included Michel Garneau, who would become his French-language translator for Québec.

With the release of the album *Death of a Ladies Man* (1977), co-produced by Phil Spector, followed by a collection of poems of the same name (1978), the artist experienced a turning point in his thinking. He began to develop the idea that light—and joy—penetrated through the cracks in the soul. This thought was clearly expressed in a line in the song *Anthem* (1992) that would become very famous: “There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.”
least of my worries. I’ve never thought of my voice as a fine or a delicate instrument; I’ve never thought of myself as a singer.” But finally he said he was ready. He asked Kory, now his manager, to set up a “pre-tour tour”—eighteen small, low-key venues in Canada, to give him a chance to fail miserably away from the eyes of the world.

The first show was in Fredericton, New Brunswick, on May 11, 2008 in a 700-seat venue. Standing in the wings in his sharp suit, fedora and shiny shoes, his new uniform, Cohen took off his hat, bowed his head and said a little prayer. Putting it back on, he stepped out onstage for the first time in a decade and a half. The applause was deafening. The whole place was on its feet. No one had played a note but the ovation just kept going. And when the music started and Cohen sang in a voice that was now several fathoms below sea level, you could hear a pin drop, such was the attention and devotion. The official tour started in June in Toronto—3,000 seats, sold out. This time Cohen skipped onstage, literally skipped, welcomed again with a standing ovation. The Toronto Star described the concert as “a love-in,” a description you could apply to all the concerts. Within weeks they were playing to 100,000 at Glastonbury. Michael Eavis said, “There will never be anything better than Leonard Cohen’s performance that night for me.”

As the tour continued, new bookings kept coming—an intense schedule that would put a young band to shame. Cohen was playing night after night—hardly a day off except for travel—for three hours or more, plus two-hour sound checks; that perfectionism of his never went away. “Everybody was rehearsed not only in the notes but also in something unspoken,” said Cohen. “You could feel it in the dressing room as you moved closer to the concert, the sense of commitment, tangible in the room.” The audiences they played to were the biggest and most age-diverse of his career, right around the world, each show a sellout, every show a triumph.

“As once you get the hang of it,” Cohen had said of the monastic life, “you go into ninth gear and kind of float through it all.” The parameters of this life on the road gave him a kind of freedom. The bowing and the falling to his knees satisfied a sense of rite and service that was rooted deep in him. More than one reviewer likened them to religious gatherings, even a papal visit. It was December 2010 now, the end of one of the most remarkable comeback tours ever, and here he was, 7. 1988–1992

I’m Your Man. A major musical comeback

In the early 1980s, Cohen stepped away from the music scene. Aside from the two world tours he undertook in 1980 and 1985, he devoted himself mostly to writing. In 1984, he published a new poetry collection, Book of Mercy, which won the Canadian Authors Association Literary Award for Poetry. That same year, the album Various Positions was released, featuring Dance Me to The End of Love and the hit Hallelujah, which became the most famous song in Cohen’s repertoire. In the 1990s, it would be popularized by John Cale, a musician in the experimental rock group The Velvet Underground, and then by Jeff Buckley.

The release of I’m Your Man (1988) heralded Cohen’s highly successful comeback to the music scene. With its mix of geo-political considerations, social concerns and relationship and religious issues intermingled with a touch of humour, this album indicates his shift to a more modern style, thanks to the use of synthesizers in some of the songs and Cohen’s improved singing. Several titles went on to become huge successes, including I’m Your Man, Ain’t No Cure For Love, First We Take Manhattan, Tower of Song (a pivotal song on the album) and Everybody Knows. Ultimately, the album was a major commercial hit in a number of countries. Even though it enjoyed more limited success in the United States, CBS Records gave the singer a Crystal Globe Award. A few examples of the album’s triumph on the international music scene: I’m Your Man went silver in Great Britain and gold in Canada, and held the No. 1 spot in Norway for sixteen weeks. Several of the album’s hits posted record sales and it figured prominently on various lists of Top Albums of the 1980s.

Four years later, the album The Future (1992) helped introduce the singer to younger generations. Three of its titles were featured on the soundtrack of US director Oliver Stone’s Natural Born Killers, and contributed to the film’s commercial success.
seventy-six, a rat pack rabbi, still sharp at the edges. He’d picked himself up, dusted himself off and by his own hard work refilled his coffers, and more.

Autumn 2011. We’re in Cohen’s modest house in Los Angeles, sitting at a wooden table in a small room with plain white walls, listening on his computer to his new album. Cohen’s eyes have been closed from start to finish as if he were meditating. When I said I’d been watching him, wondering what was going through his mind, he said, “I was thinking of how it sounds. Listening for any false steps. But that wasn’t the case.” And if it were? “I’d have to take it back in the studio.” That authenticity and perfectionism.

The album was *Old Ideas* (2012), his first new album in eight years. Despite the title—a wry reference to his songs having always explored the same themes—it had all new songs; two had been premiered on tour. It was a wonder that such a pitiless judge of his own work should have completed something to his satisfaction in such a short time: an extension of the length and focus of the tour? He pondered the question as if it had never occurred to him. “I don’t really know, but it was a very devoted mode.” He said he missed the road, the routine, ritual and companionship, the feeling, as he put it, of “full employment.” Before being forced back into action, “I had the feeling that I was treading water—kind of between jobs, a bit at loose ends.” A big incentive for finishing the album was so that “I could put my band and the crew together. They keep writing me, saying, ‘Will we ever go out again?’”

They did. Another globe-spanning victory lap. More new songs made their debut onstage. In December 2013, when the final curtain fell, again he went straight back to work. On his eightieth birthday, just nine months later, he released another new album, *Popular Problems* (2014), which he described as setting “a new tone and speed of hope and despair, grief and joy.” It was less soft-focused than *Old Ideas*, an album that many reviewers took as his farewell. They’d forgotten that Cohen was always talking about death and was always drawn to goodbyes.

There was talk of another tour. He had planned to take up smoking again at eighty, he told me, before turning it into one of his stage pieces, and was looking forward to sneaking behind the tour bus for a smoke. Those two tours, there really had been nothing like them: the hushed silence of the audience,

The demand was there, but his body wouldn’t allow it. Compound fractures of the spine. No more dancing on and off stage or falling to his knees. In the words of a man who liked to wear a uniform, he was “confined to barracks.” But still working. “Time speeds up the closer it gets to the end of the reel,” he told me. “You don’t feel like wasting time.”

October 21, 2016, a month after his eighty-second birthday, Cohen released *You Want It Darker*. It was his third studio album in five years—astounding given that there had been only eleven in the three and a half decades before the comeback tour. And miraculous given the deterioration of Cohen’s health. Since he was unable to use the studio above the garage where he’d recorded since *Ten New Songs*, it was made in the living room, Cohen sitting in an orthopedic chair, fighting through the fatigue. “Sometimes,” said Adam Cohen, Leonard’s son and the album’s producer, “medical marijuana intervened and played a role. At times I was very worried about his health and the only thing that buoyed his spirits was the work itself.”

“How do we produce work that touches the heart?” Cohen said, back in the nineties. “We don’t want to live a superficial life. We want to be serious with each other, with our friends, with our work. Serious has a kind of voluptuous aspect to it. It is something that we are deeply hungry for.” His new album was a perfect example of that voluptuous seriousness. It was one of the richest, deepest albums in a lifetime of rich, deep work. There’s no mistaking its urgency, intensity and darkness. Cohen had a long practice of looking darkness in the eye. He faced death the same way, head-on. They’d come to some kind of amicable-enough agreement decades before.

He had come to terms with growing old too. “I think it’s one of the most compassionate ways of saying goodbye that the cosmos could devise,” he said. And age suited him. The man in the suit and hat looked more at home with himself than the young Cohen ever had. There were headlines in the papers quoting him saying, “I am ready to die”—nothing new from Leonard. But this time he decided to give a press conference in L.A., somehow get up there and smile and say he was going
to live to 102. He said nothing about the cancer. When I was writing Cohen’s biography, a close friend from childhood, Mort Rosengarten, had described how, even when suffering acute bouts of depression, Leonard “wasn’t a whiney depressive, he didn’t complain.” In the email I got from Leonard around five weeks before his death, he mentioned that he was “a little under the weather.” I’d forgotten what a master of understatement he was.

In his final album, he sang himself back home. *Hineni*, he sang, “I am ready,” accompanied by the cantor and choir of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim in Westmount, the synagogue his great-grandfather had founded, and in whose cemetery he would be buried on November 10, in a private ceremony, next to his parents.

In L.A., Cohen was working until the day before he died: a new collection of poems, more than fifty of them done, and songs for a new album. The champion of the cracked and broken, one of the great poets and songwriters of our time, a one-off, irreplaceable, he died with his boots on, and left us so much.

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Text originally published in *MOJO*, No. 279 (February 2017).
“Now I greet you from the other side of sorrow and despair, with a love so vast and so shattered, it will reach you everywhere.”

- Leonard Cohen
My first memory of Leonard Cohen, goes back many years to when I was a boy of ten. My eighteen-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.” When I received the wonderful offer to take part in the exhibition at the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, I intuitively knew that I wanted to address the depressing aspect of Leonard Cohen as it was manifested in his early albums. To try to understand what drives what: Does Cohen’s melancholia drive his creative work? Or does his creativity “oblige” the listener— as a built-in condition—to enter a state of melancholia? The general idea is to build a “depression box,” a kind of sarcophagus 3 x 2 metres in size and 2 metres tall. A completely black box, a black Limbo, with a pallet on the floor. The visitor lies on the pallet, and hears Cohen’s Famous Blue Raincoat (according to Cohen’s fan site, this song was chosen many times as his most depressing song). The visitor, in total isolation, hears the song, then the visitor’s image appears on the black ceiling of the box as the projected lyrics of the song begin to slowly morph, letter by letter, through animation, into icons that symbolize Cohen’s multi-faceted thematic universe. These images eventually flood the space, gradually shrouding the visitor’s image.

Ari Folman’s Waltz with Bashir (2008) is internationally recognized as a cinematic masterpiece. The animated feature documentary won eighteen awards, including Israel’s awards for best film, best director and best screenplay, and the Directors Guild of America award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary, and was honoured with a Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film. The war documentary was also nominated for multiple BAFTA awards, a Cannes Film Festival award and an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Folman’s 2013 live action/animated feature film The Congress premiered that year at Cannes and won the European Film Academy award for Animated Feature Film.

ARI FOLMAN
HAIFA, ISRAEL, 1962
LIVES AND WORKS IN TEL AVIV, ISRAEL.

Depression Chamber, 2017
Interactive computer-animated video installation, live camera, Kinect sensor, black and white, colour, sound, 5 min 10 s, including resting platform

The fragility of the human psyche is a recurring theme in Leonard Cohen’s early albums and throughout his body of work. Addressing the debilitating nature of loss, suffering and depression, Israeli filmmaker Ari Folman has created a sensory “depression chamber.” Visitors are invited, one at a time, to enter a sarcophagus-like environment and be plunged into an otherworldly experience. The image of the visitor lying on a bed in the space, in total isolation and darkness, is projected onto the ceiling of the box as Cohen’s song Famous Blue Raincoat plays. The projected lyrics of the song begin to slowly morph, letter by letter, through animation, into icons that symbolize Cohen’s multi-faceted thematic universe. These images eventually flood the space, gradually shrouding the visitor’s image.
I swear that you're building
George Fok received his design education at Hong Kong Polytechnic, which provided him with an eclectic blend of traditional British art education and progressive Eastern philosophy. Upon his arrival in Montréal, he co-founded Epoxy Communications and established himself as a creative director capable of crossing over into various visual communication platforms, from graphic design, photography, film and video to visual effects. He is currently creative director at the Phi Centre, a multidisciplinary cultural institution in Montréal.

Passing Through, an immersive video work, celebrates Leonard Cohen’s singular voice, his music, his charismatic persona and his inimitable stage presence. Drawing on a vast archive of audiovisual material, George Fok pays tribute to Leonard Cohen’s monumental, five-decade-long career as a singer/songwriter and performer. This composite portrait of the artist recalls and reconstructs various pivotal stages in Cohen’s career—from his early years in bohemian, 1960s Montréal to his recognition as a heavyweight global cultural icon later in life. Visitors experience an extraordinary time-travel journey through a collage of collective memories, musical moments and emotions that have enchanted generations of fans around the world.

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Passing Through is my personal tribute, a commemorative farewell and also an invitation to loyal fans of Leonard Cohen and a new generation of audiences to celebrate his charismatic persona and monumental stage presence, in an immersive time-travel journey.

With the objective of collective experience rather than personal achievement in mind, the focus of this installation is first and foremost Leonard—larger than life.

My creative process began with an extensive footage search from broadcasters and institutional archives; an analytical database was then compiled from a variety of sources as the bedrock of this work. The contents of this footage were meticulously reviewed and categorized into groups and subgroups, such as tempo, key, framing, duration, camera angle, etc., thus giving an overview of available audiovisual material for montage and composition.

The song Passing Through, although not written by Leonard himself, was performed extensively during his early career years. The opening verse unfolds a parable, from a first-person point of view, as a stranger, sojourner or bystander eyewitnesses Jesus’ excruciating suffering on the cross. Perplexed by the circumstance, the stranger poses a question about the worthiness of Jesus’ sacrifice for a world that is hostile and treacherous. Surprisingly, Jesus encourages the stranger with words of love and compassion rather than hate, speaking of the transient nature of one’s life journey on earth. This quasi-Abrahamic, Judeo-Christian notion, which prevails throughout Cohen’s body of work, and the liturgical quality of his work (Hallelujah), intensified in his last three albums, have become the backbone and source of inspiration of this project.

This is complemented by other prominent themes in Cohen’s work, such as romance, longing, desire and remorse—with hits such as Suzanne and Chelsea Hotel No. 2 underlining the ironic link between loneliness and companionship.

The final emotional letter Leonard wrote to Marianne Ihlen before her death has added another swell of emotion to the song as I witnessed it for the first time, the young, midlife and elder Leonard performing the same song in a juxtapositional time frame.

The conflict between his Jewish identity and his Buddhist practice, his social criticism and cynicism, between the sacred and the secular, longing and spirituality, darkness and elegance, humour and wisdom, is well displayed in the middle section with the choice of songs like Democracy, Dance Me to the End of Love, Tower of Song and Memories.

Finally, I’ve been deeply moved by the beauty and knowledge of Leonard Cohen and by his words of wisdom—his dedicated work ethic, brutal honesty toward himself, stoic manner at times of suffering, constant quest for spirituality and much more. I would like to be able to partake in his legacy, through my work in this exhibition, to celebrate, rejoice and share tears of loving memories together with every visitor, in this particular time and space where our paths intersect and we are blessed with his golden voice. G.F.
When the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal approached me about contributing a work for A Crack in Everything, I was only vaguely familiar with the music of Leonard Cohen. Growing up in rural Germany in the eighties, my main musical influences were Heavy Metal, Punk and Pop music. North American singer/songwriters almost completely passed me by, perhaps because I thought it was necessary to pay attention to the lyrics (which I didn’t always understand).

To my surprise, I got completely sucked into the music of Leonard Cohen while gearing up for this project and have listened to it constantly in my studio ever since. 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 seduced 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*

KOTA EZAWA

Cologne, Germany, 1969

Lives and works in Oakland, California.

*Cohen 21*, 2017

16-mm animated film installation, black and white, sound, 2 min 30 s, looped

In his cinematic work *Cohen 21*, Kota Ezawa reanimates the opening two and a half minutes of the National Film Board of Canada’s 1965 documentary film, *Ladies and Gentlemen... Mr. Leonard Cohen*. This recreated black-and-white scene portrays Cohen at age thirty on a visit to his hometown of Montréal, where he comes “to renew his neurotic affiliations.” Ezawa has created a derivative work, painstakingly animated frame by frame and overlaid with semi-transparent geometric forms inspired by Hans Richter’s 1921 silent abstract film *Rhythm 21*.

Kota Ezawa’s work explores the appropriation and mediation of current events and images. He translates found film, video and photographic images into drawings and animations that reduce complex imagery to its most essential, two-dimensional elements in order to debate their validity as mediators of actual historical events and personal experiences. Ezawa’s work has been shown in solo exhibitions across Canada and the United States, and in group exhibitions at major museums such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Art Institute of Chicago and Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris.

*Cohen 21* is not so much an homage to Leonard Cohen as it is a chemical experiment. What do you get if you combine the first two and a half minutes of a poetry performance by Cohen with the geometric movement in Hans Richter’s film *Rhythm 21*? I leave it up to the viewer to analyze the result, but my hope is that Richter’s Dadaist shapes function similarly to the instrumental portion of Cohen’s music and that they transform Cohen’s words into a song. *K.E.*
MICHAEL RAKOWITZ
GREAT NECK, NEW YORK, 1973
LIVES AND WORKS IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

I’m Good at Love, I’m Good at Hate, It’s in Between I Freeze, 2015–2017
Multimedia installation featuring video projection, darkened monitor, archival artifacts and objects

This installation meditates on the iconic figure of Leonard Cohen and the ethical crisis of the post-Holocaust Jew in relation to Israel, Palestine and the greater Middle East. Michael Rakowitz presents various relevant objects and artifacts (such as Cohen poems published in Farsi in Iran), as well as letters and contextualized fragments that weave together a compelling and moving narrative.

The work also includes a video projection, filmed at the Alhambra Palace Hotel in Ramallah, Palestine—which, like the Hotel Chelsea in New York City, hosted many musicians and movie stars passing through Palestine—to reconstruct the period during which Cohen travelled to Israel to perform for troops fighting in the Yom Kippur War. The project’s culmination is an event that may or may not happen: the reincarnation of a 2009 Cohen concert in Ramallah, which was cancelled because of the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, to be played by Rakowitz and local musicians at the Ramallah Cultural Palace. This footage will be added to the installation once it has taken place. Until then, the video monitor remains dark.

Michael Rakowitz’s multidisciplinary practice engages the senses as a means of sparking discourse around pressing political, social and historical issues. An American artist of Iraqi-Jewish origin, Rakowitz creates conceptual art that is known for establishing unexpected connections. In doing so, he forges entirely new and composite narratives that challenge and engage the audience in a vibrant revival of the past.

He is Professor of Art Theory and Practice at Northwestern University and has shown his work in venues worldwide. Over the years, he has been honoured with many awards for his work, which also features in major private and public collections around the world. His solo exhibition at MCA Chicago, Michael Rakowitz: Backstroke of the West, opened in September 2017. He has been awarded the Fourth Plinth commission for 2018 in London’s Trafalgar Square.
August 14, 2015

Dear Leonard,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to you from my rented apartment in Istanbul. In fact, I am writing this letter on the green Olivetti letter 22 typewriter, a prize I won in a contest for which I paid dearly. I have been trying to contact you through your representative, Hubert Krey, since November 2012. In his response, he said that you and I should meet and that we have much to talk about as artists. Sadly, I have not heard from you further, so I am reaching out once more.

I don’t know if you could simply consider me a fan. I am a very great admirer of your work, although I came to it late, in order to romance a girl from your hometown of Montreal. Proselytization finally occurred during your concert at the Chicago Theatre in May 2009. It was taken in by your humanity, your poignant utterances, and your faith in poetry to have world-changing potency. At the end, you read the traditional Hebrew blessings in everyday language, a kind of farewell that was bestowed to me—by you—in the position of Cohen priest. As your name suggests... upon an audience of mixed backgrounds with a simple warning that we should bind up because the weather was terrible. That if we should fall, we’d be on the side of beauty; a plan for us to be surrounded by loved ones, and if this was not our lot in life, that the blessings find us in our solitude. I never felt more Jewish in my entire life.

I have eaten through many concerts and 41 North Wabash and Von EpsyYour sesame. This was the pinnacle of any live collective event I can recall to memory.

Later that same year, I traveled to Jerusalem to make an artwork of my own with a Palestinian organization called AI Michael Foundation for Contemporary Art. I was alerted to find out that you were scheduled to play in Ramallah in September at the invitation of the Palestinian Prisoners Club. But then the restrictions of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) forced the gig’s cancellation, as you were also scheduled to play Tel Aviv on September 14, just three days after your 70th birthday.

In a press release explaining the cancellation, PACBI stated: “Alternatives at ‘parity’ not only morally excuse the oppressor with the oppressed, making a neutral position on the oppression...they also are an illusion to the Palestinian people, as they assume that we are naive enough to accept such token moves of ‘solidarity’ that are solely intended to cover up gross acts of colloboration in widening Israel’s crimes. Those ostensibly interested in defending Palestinian rights and taking a moral and courageous stance against the Israeli occupation and apartheid should not play Israel, period. That is the criminal form of solidarity Palestinian civil society has called for.”

Leonard, I believe boycotts are problematic. I think politics can obliterate art, but I also think that art can create facts and bring to light truths that are suppressed. Your words have had great impact around the world, and in particular, in the Arab world and West Asia. Palestinian director Elia Suleiman features your recording of “First We Take Manhattan” during the climax of his lyrical film “Chronicle of a Disappearance.” Your poesy is quoted by poets and artists from Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. Two collections of your poems have been translated into Farsi and published in Iran, where Jewish poets are not well represented. Both editions sold out within hours. Art obliterates politics. I have never been interested in being perfect, morally or ethically. I am interested in the real, the contradictions and the resultant tensions that are created within the self. I think about you— the poet who was born in 1934, and the 11-year-old boy who in 1948 saw
As Jews living in Baghdad in the 1940s, my grandparents’ lives became increasingly difficult as the tide of politics turned and the British Mandate for the partition of Palestine grew closer and closer to becoming a reality. Their land was confiscated, their assets taken, and their livelihoods changed forever. In some ways, a good forever. In many ways, a sad forever. My grandparents spoke Arabic, and traditional food was Middle Eastern, not Arabic. They were Jews, but they were also Iraqis, until they were told they could no longer be Iraqis.

Looking through old photographs recently, I came across several of my grandfather wearing a keffiyeh. It reinforced for me that they were actually Arabs, Arab Jews. This term—Arab Jews—exists in the world until 1948. How it seems like an oxymoron. I am not interested in arguments and accusations about who is responsible for the exodus of Jews from Arab lands, and I am better served here at other times and places. But the well-documented programs that sought to de-Jewishize Arab Jews upon their arrival in Israel is another story of cultural erasure, which I am intimately familiar with.

The existence of the state of Israel could not be possible without a deconstruction of historical narratives that does not always intersect with truth. A land without a people for a people without a land, for one, well, there were people there. Every Jewish institution that I have ever known has displayed the Hebrew inscription “hebrew.” Never, and on a Jew, I cannot support a Zionist position because of what it forgets.

I am therefore asking your permission, Leonard, to remember. To illuminate truth. As a Jewish artist who has written many letters, declining invitations to exhibit in Israel, as a draftsman of The Jewish and Cultural Hayworth, I ask you to remember the concert you planned in Ramallah as a culmination of this project. I was实在 to sound like an attempt at normalcy. You came from the West and made a choice. I approach the East and make another, both are painful, and both yield unacceptable consequences of elimination (in this case, of culturalism). But I am heartened, for...
Leonard Cohen died on Monday, November 7, 2016, one day before Donald Trump was elected the forty-fifth President of the United States. The New York Times published his obituary on the front page of the newspaper on Friday, November 11, 2016, below an article and photograph describing the first face-to-face meeting between Barack Obama and then President-elect Trump. In the picture that accompanies his obituary, Cohen lifts his hat in a gesture of greeting or farewell.

Trump and Obama meet to break the ice.
BY KATHERINE Q. SEELYE
and CLAIRE CAIN MILLER
CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — It was visceral. Women left gutted, shocked, appalled, afraid. The prospect of celebrating the election of the nation’s first female president had been crushed by a man whom many women viewed as sexist.

In this liberal enclave, where Mrs. Clinton won 89.2 percent of the vote over Donald J. Trump, one of her strongest showings anywhere, Molly Hubner, 33, said she was having difficulty explaining the result to her 8-year-old daughter.

“We had told her that he wouldn’t be a good president because he’s not very kind,” Ms. Hubner said, pushing her young son in a stroller as she jogged down a leaf-covered sidewalk. After the election, she said, they told her it was important to be kind to people “and that our country is O.K., it’s still a safe place to be.”

Women across the country who supported Mrs. Clinton are starting to process their feelings about the long road to victory and the long road to disaster. The shock they felt that a man whom they describe as sexist, misogynistic and boorish was elected has overshadowed some of their grief about Mrs. Clinton’s loss. Like so many of the other 14%


Leonard Cohen, 1934-2016

Hallelujah’ Whose Lyrics Captivated Generations

details were available on the cause of his death.

Over a musical career that spanned nearly five decades, Mr. Cohen wrote songs that addressed — in sparse language that could be both obscure and telling — themes of love and faith, despair and exhaustion, solitude and connection, war and politics. More than 2,000 recordings of his songs have been made. Initially by the folk-pop singers who were his first champions, like Judy Collins and Tim Hardin, and later by performers from across the spectrum of popular music, among them U2, Aretha Franklin, B.B. King, Trisha Yearwood and Elton John.

Mr. Cohen’s best-known song may well be “Hallelujah,” a majestic, meditative ballad infused with both religious and earthiness. It was written for a 1984 album that his record company rejected as insufficiently commercial and popularized a decade later by Jeff Buckley. Since then some 200 artists, from Bob Dylan to Justin Timberlake, have sung or recorded it. A tweet has been written about it, and it has been featured on the soundtracks of movies and television shows and sung at the Olympics and other public events.

At the 2016 Grammy Awards, Tinariwen’s patch of the song, “Hallelujah,” was the album of the year. The group, which grew up in the Sahara desert, revived the song for a new generation.

Continued on Page B12.
Ampel / Stoplight, 2016
Multimedia video installation
Animated video on LED panel, colour, stereo, sound (Tyondai Braxton with Leonard Cohen), 20 min, looped

In Thomas Demand’s video piece, an animated sculptural rendition of a stoplight switches from red to green and then back to red. A pedestrian traffic light is amongst the most binary and self-evident directives of any city, an organizer of movement and, at the same time, a symbolic representation of an individual and a hand. These two signs are profoundly basic images that send clear and concise instructions to the pedestrian.

The close-up view of the stoplight is accompanied by a special a cappella recording of Leonard Cohen’s song Everybody Knows, which Demand considers a piece of musical infrastructure. The song is both wickedly funny and bleakly pessimistic, an endless litany of notable observations and dystopian predictions where the title is repeated dozens of times, echoing the relentless stop and go of the stoplight. Tyondai Braxton composed a soundtrack that embeds Cohen’s vocal track with abstract but urban signals and humming tunes. The timed animation follows the song’s recurring refrains and stanzas.

After initially concentrating on sculpture, Thomas Demand soon turned to constructing architectural models out of paper and cardboard, which he then photographed or filmed to make astonishing, yet enigmatic, large-scale images and projections. His work has been shown in countless group shows around the world and solo exhibitions at major international institutions.
I grew up listening obsessively to classical music, jazz, film music, Indian classical music, West Indian music and a few pop bands.

I was, and still am, crazy about Miles Davis, Stravinsky, Ennio Morricone, Ravi Shankar and The Cure, but I more or less consciously overlooked institutions like the Beatles, Bob Dylan or Pink Floyd. Leonard Cohen was one of those I overlooked.

That’s why, when I was invited to participate in this exhibition, I thought at first that I wasn’t a legitimate participant. Then I understood that it was actually an opportunity to use my musical practice of harmonizing reality to discover and appropriate for myself this “artist/institution” whose song Suzanne was all I vaguely knew. My only other connection to Leonard Cohen was his family name, which he shared with my partner and our son.

In delving into the archives placed at my disposal, I was struck by his resemblance to Dustin Hoffman—someone I have felt close to since I was a teenager because of Little Big Man and, especially, Marathon Man.

More than his music, I wanted to hear his poems, his prose and his diction.

Looking at the documentary Ladies and Gentlemen... Mr. Leonard Cohen, the political irony, the quiet calm, the humour and the depth of the young “Dustin Cohen” in his poem “The Only Tourist in Havana Turns His Thoughts Homeward” immediately spoke to me.

The melodic promise of political phrases like “Let us encourage the dark races, so they’ll be lenient when they take over” was more than fulfilled.

Other, more violent and nostalgic lines still resonate in my head:

“My brothers, come, our serious heads are waiting for us somewhere, like Gladstone bags abandoned after a coup d’etat.”

Christophe Chassol is a pianist, film score composer and audiovisual maverick. His compositions combine voice, music, sound and image into new audiovisual objects—“ultrascores”—which he duplicates and re-edits to create a visual motif through the harmonization of sounds. His last “ultrascore,” Big Sun (2015), was produced in his family’s birthplace—Martinique—and closes a trilogy begun in New Orleans with Nola Chérie (2012) and continued in India with Indiamore (2013).
I was in Havana

fighting on both sides

And, I wrote this poem

Let us put them on very quickly
so they'll be lenient when they take over
Come my Brother - Let us Govern Canada

Let us find our serious Heads - Let us dump asbestos on the white house

Let us make the French talk English

Not only here but everywhere

Let us Fortune the Senate - Individually
Until they confess - Let us purge the New Party

Let us encourage the Dark Races

So they'll be lenient, when they take over

Let us make the CBC talk English

Let us all lean in one direction

and float down to the coast of Florida
We 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. I learned to play *Chelsea Hotel* and wore out the grooves on my *Songs of Leonard Cohen* album. 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.

For years we had an old broken Wurlitzer organ sitting around the studio. We’d been planning to create some sort of sound artwork out of it. We discussed an idea: each key on the organ would play a poem from Leonard Cohen’s early books. If you released the key it would stop mid-poem, and if you pressed the key again it would start from where it had stopped. You would be able to juxtapose different lines from different poems or play multiple poems all at once, creating a spoken-word cacophony. It would be a poetry machine of infinite possibility and connection.

We didn’t know if it could be made to work or not. Janet drew it in her notebook. The organ, covered in old speakers and gramophone horns. We started researching software to make it happen (*Plogue Bidule*—uncannily, made in Montréal). We started reading the old books again, books I had lost when I moved away from home: *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956); *The Spice-Box of Earth* (1961); *Flowers for Hitler* (1964). I did some test recordings, but something just wasn’t right. My voice and performance didn’t resonate the way they needed to. We tried to find recordings by Leonard Cohen of these early works, but he had recorded only a few of them. We needed enough poems to fill 122 keys on the Wurlitzer.

We fantasized about asking Mr. Cohen if he would think about recording a large number of his early poems for us, but it seemed an enormous amount to ask of anyone, let alone a busy celebrity. We put that idea on the back burner while looking for other options, and then the unexpected happened: Leonard Cohen died at the age of eighty-two. We (along with millions around the world) mourned his loss. I sat and cried as I listened to his final, hauntingly beautiful album, *You Want it Darker*. So sad to say goodbye to someone I had admired for so long.
Months passed. We collected old speakers. I worked on the piece in *Bidule*, building up a program that would do what we wanted it to do. We played with some of the early recordings made by the CBC and the NFB, and then Robert Kory, Leonard’s manager, sent us a copy of the digital files of Cohen’s recordings of *Book of Longing*, his poetry collection from 2006.

The first thing we heard from these recordings was Leonard’s deep, bass voice reading the title of the book, the copyright and the dedication to Irving Layton. He moved in his chair, a plane went by in the background, he turned the page. We were struck by the intimacy of his voice and the sense of his presence, as if he were sitting right there in front of us. This was the perfect material for the piece: over 170 poems recorded in his home studio in Los Angeles.

The piece has grown. There are more speakers now than in Janet’s drawing. I sit at the organ and I play poem after poem, Leonard’s voice coming out of the speakers that surround me. Sometimes I collage them together, but mostly I like to hear each poem from start to finish. I’ve been listening to them for weeks now, doing the editing, looping and bouncing, and I never get tired of them. There is always something surprising that makes me think or makes me laugh. We knew that if we could get the piece to work, it would be a magical sound machine, but what we didn’t realize was how it would become such an intimate portrait of Leonard Cohen. When you sit at the keyboard, you have an invisible archive before you of his thoughts, ideas and anecdotes. It’s full of his black comedy, irony, self-deprecation, word mastery, wit and humour, and its all available with the touch of a key. G.B.M.
KARA BLAKE  
CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO, 1974  
LIVES AND WORKS IN MONTRÉAL, QUÉBEC.

My work as a filmmaker with an imagined previous life as an archivist mines vestiges of the past for unseen richness and meaning. For *The Offerings*, I immersed myself in a vast collection of Cohen-related archival materials including radio and television interviews, photographs and written documents. With a curator’s sensibility, I sought out key moments of sound and image that crystallize the character of this revered creative thinker.

*The Offerings* provides a passage through Cohen’s interior landscape, using his singular voice to engage visitors in an intimate conversation. Cohen muses on a variety of subjects, ranging from his personal writing practice to universal themes of love, humility and spirituality. These offerings issue from a life of observation and introspection, presenting Cohen in his own words and inviting guests into his contemplative world.

Inspired by Cohen’s propensity to explore ideas from a variety of angles and continually revise his position, I use multiple screens to re-examine and re-contextualize familiar images of the artist throughout his career. In religious numerology, the number five often symbolizes harmony of body and spirit. Here, five screens are used to illuminate Cohen’s lifelong investigation of the complex interplay between the mortal and the divine. *The Offerings* brings together some of the poet’s most heartfelt, witty and thought-provoking insights; it is a memento of Cohen’s perspective on what it means to be human.  

Kara Blake is a Montréal-based filmmaker whose creative projects range from short films and music videos to live performance visuals and installation pieces. Interested in fusing fact with fiction, and past with present, Blake often works with archival materials to construct new narratives that encourage a re-examination of the world around us. Her films have been shown internationally at festivals and venues including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Telluride Film Festival, Colorado, CPH.DOX, Copenhagen, Bravo and the Independent Film Channel.

*The Offerings, 2017*  
5-channel video installation, black and white and colour, sound, 35 min, looped

This multi-channel video projection forms an environment in which Leonard Cohen’s voice and thoughts envelop and captivate the public. Through a series of shared personal, contemplative and reflective moments, visitors are invited to commune with images of Cohen, sourced from decades of archival material, that construct a composite portrait of the artist as he touches on a variety of subject matter and material. Responding to a series of questions in his own voice, Cohen’s engaging thought process is revealed—one that is sensitive, humble and humorous, always considerate and never banal.

70
Je viens d’écrire quelque chose de bon.
Well, my friends are gone and my hair is grey
I ache in the places where I used to play
And I’m crazy for love but I’m not comin’ on
I’m just payin’ my rent everyday in the Tower of Song

I said to Hank Williams “How lonely does it get?”
Hank Williams hasn’t answered yet
But I hear him coughing all night long
Oh, a hundred floors above me in the Tower of Song

I was born like this, I had no choice
I was born with the gift of a golden voice
And twenty-seven angels from the Great Beyond
They tied me to this table right here in the Tower of Song

So you can stick your little pins in that voodoo doll
I’m very sorry, baby, it doesn’t look like me at all
I’m standin’ by the window where the light is strong
Ah, they don’t let a woman kill you, not in the Tower of Song

Now, you can say that I’ve grown bitter but of this you may be sure:
The rich have got their channels in the bedrooms of the poor
And there’s a mighty Judgement comin’ but I may be wrong
You see, I hear these funny voices in the Tower of Song

I see you standin’ on the other side
I don’t... How the river got so wide?
I loved you, baby, way back when...
And all the bridges are burnin’ that we might’ve crossed
But I feel so close to everything that we lost
We’ll never, we’ll never have to lose it again

Now, I bid you farewell, I don’t know when I’ll be back
They’re movin’ us tomorrow to the tower down the track
But you’ll be hearin’ from me, baby, long after I’m gone
I’ll be speakin’ to you sweetly from a window in the Tower of Song

Yeah, my friends are gone and my hair is grey
I ache in the places where I used to play
And I’m crazy for love but I’m not comin’ on
I’m just payin’ my rent everyday in the Tower of Song

C.B., quoting Leonard Cohen, Tower of Song
I'M YOUR MAN (1988)

Album – Lyrics

FIRST WE TAKE MANHATTAN

They sentenced me to twenty years of boredom
For trying to change the system from within
I'm coming now, I'm coming to reward them
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

I'm guided by a signal in the heavens
I'm guided by this birthmark on my skin
I'm guided by the beauty of our weapons
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

I'd really like to live beside you, baby
I love your body and your spirit and your clothes
But you see that line there moving through the station?
I told you, I told you, told you, I was one of those

Ah you loved me as a loser, but now you're worried that I just might win
You know the way to stop me, but you don't have the discipline
How many nights I prayed for this, to let my work begin
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

I don't like your fashion business mister
And I don't like these drugs that keep you thin
I don't like what happened to my sister
And I don't like these drugs that keep you thin
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

I'd really like to live beside you, baby
And I thank you for those items that you sent me
I'd really like to live beside you, baby
I'd really like to live beside you, baby
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

I walked into this empty church – I had no place
There's nothing pure enough to be a cure for love
I walked into this empty church – I had no place
There's nothing pure enough to be a cure for love
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

AIN'T NO CURE FOR LOVE

I loved you for a long, long time
I know this love is real
It don't matter how it all went wrong
That don't change the way I feel
And I can't believe that time can heal this wound
I'm speaking of
There ain't no cure
There ain't no cure
There ain't no cure for love

I'm aching for you, baby
I can't pretend I'm not
I need to see you naked
In your body and your thought
I've got you like a habit and I'll never get enough
There ain't no cure
There ain't no cure
There ain't no cure for love

I'm coming now, I'm coming to reward them
When you've done a line or two
Everybody knows you've been faithful,
give or take a night or two
Everybody knows that you've been discreet,
but there were so many people you just had to meet
without your clothes
And everybody knows

I'm coming now, I'm coming to reward them
When you've done a line or two
Everybody knows you've been faithful,
give or take a night or two
Everybody knows that you've been discreet,
but there were so many people you just had to meet
without your clothes
And everybody knows

I'm coming now, I'm coming to reward them
When you've done a line or two
Everybody knows you've been faithful,
give or take a night or two
Everybody knows that you've been discreet,
but there were so many people you just had to meet
without your clothes
And everybody knows

EVERYBODY KNOWS

Everybody knows that the dice are loaded
Everybody rolls with their fingers crossed
Everybody knows that the war is over
Everybody knows the good guys lost
The poor stay poor, the rich get rich
That's how it goes
Everybody knows

Everybody knows that the boat is leaking
Everybody knows that the captain lied
Everybody got this broken feeling
Like their father or their dog just died
Everybody talking to their pockets
Everybody wants a box of chocolates
And a long stem rose
Everybody knows

Everybody knows that you love me baby
Everybody knows that you really do
Everybody knows that you've been faithful,
give or take a night or two
Everybody knows you've been discreet,
but there were so many people you just had to meet
without your clothes
And everybody knows

Everybody knows, everybody knows
That's how it goes
Everybody knows

Everybody knows
Everybody knows
That's how it goes
Everybody knows

Everybody knows
Everybody knows
That's how it goes
Everybody knows

EVERYBODY KNOWS

If you want a lover,
I'll do anything you ask me to
And if you want another kind of love,
I'll wear a mask for you
If you want a partner,
take my hand
Or if you want to strike me down in anger,
here I stand
I'm your man

If you want a boxer,
I will step into the ring for you
And if you want a doctor,
I'll examine every inch of you
If you want a driver,
climb inside
Or if you want to take me for a ride,
you know you can
I'm your man.

Ah, the moon's too bright,
the chain's too tight,
the beast won't go to sleep
I've been running through these promises to you
that I made and I could not keep

Ah but a man never got a woman back,
not by begging on his knees
Or I'd crawl to you baby
and I'd fall at your feet
And I'd howl at your beauty
like a dog in heat
And I'd claw at your heart
and I'd tear at your sheet
I'd say please, please,
I'm your man.

And if you've got to sleep
a moment on the road,
I will steer for you
And if you want to work the street alone
I'll disappear for you
If you want a father for your child,
or only want to walk with me a while
across the sand,
I'm your man.

If you want a lover,
I'll do anything that you ask me to
And if you want another kind of love
I'll wear a mask for you

—

Written by Leonard Cohen
**TAKE THIS WALTZ**

Now in Vienna there’s ten pretty women
There’s a shoulder where Death comes to cry
There’s a lobby with nine hundred windows
There’s a tree where the doves go to die
There’s a place that was torn from the morning
And it hangs in the Gallery of Frost

Ay, Ay, Ay, Ay
Take this waltz, take this waltz
Take this waltz with the clamp on its jaws

Oh I want you, I want you, I want you
On a chair with a dead magazine
In the cave at the tip of the lily
In some hallways where love’s never been
On a bed where the moon has been sweating
In a cry filled with footsteps and sand

Ay, Ay, Ay, Ay
Take this waltz, take this waltz
Take its broken waist in your hand

This waltz, this waltz, this waltz, this waltz
With its very own breath of brandy and Death
Drag its tail in the sea

There’s a concert hall in Vienna
Where your mouth had a thousand reviews
There’s a bar where the boys have stopped talking
They’ve been sentenced to death by the blues
Ah, but who is it climbs to your picture
With a garland of freshly cut tears?

Ay, Ay, Ay, Ay
Take this waltz, take this waltz
Take this waltz with the clamp on its jaws

So you can stick your little pins in that voodoo doll
I’m very sorry, baby, it doesn’t look like me at all
Oh, a hundred floors above me in the Tower of Song

**JAZZ POLICE**

Can you tell me why the bells are ringing?
Nothing’s happened in a million years
I’ve been sitting here since Wednesday morning
Wednesday morning can’t believe my ears

Jazz police are looking through my folders
Jazz police are calling to my niece
Jazz police have got their final orders
Jazz, drop your axe, it’s Jazz police!

Wild as any freedom loving racist
I applaud the actions of the chief
Tell me now oh beautiful and spacious
Am I in trouble with the Jazz police?

Jazz police are looking through my folders
They will never understand our culture
They’ll never understand the Jazz police
Jazz police are working for my mother

Let me be somebody I admire
Let me be that muscle down the street
Stick another turtle on the fire
Guys like me are mad for turtle meat

Jazz police I hear you calling
Jazz police I feel so blue
Jazz police I think I’m failing, I’m failing for you

Yeah I loved you all my life
And that’s how I want to end it
The summer’s gone
The winter’s tuning up

I can’t forget but I don’t remember what
Yeah, I loved you all my life
And I can’t forget, I can’t forget
I can’t forget but I don’t remember what

—
Written by Leonard Cohen and Jeff Fisher
©1987 Stranger Music, Inc. (BMI) / Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC

**I CAN’T FORGET**

I stumbled out of bed
I got ready for the struggle
I smoked a cigarette
And I tightened up my gut
I said this can’t be me
Must be my double
And I can’t forget, I can’t forget
I can’t forget but I don’t remember what

I’m burning up the road
I’m heading down to Phoenix
I got this old address
Of someone that I knew
It was high and fine and free
Ah, you should have seen us
And I can’t forget, I can’t forget
I can’t forget but I don’t remember what

I’ll be there today
With a big bouquet of cactus
I got this rag that runs on memories
And I promise, cross my heart,
They’ll never catch us
But if they do, just tell them it was me

Yeah, I loved you all my life
And that’s how I want to end it
The summer’s almost gone
The winter’s tuning up

Yeah, the summer’s gone
But a lot goes on forever
And I can’t forget, I can’t forget
I can’t forget but I don’t remember what

—
Written by Leonard Cohen
©1987 Stranger Music, Inc. (BMI) / Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC

**TOWER OF SONG**

Well, my friends are gone and my hair is grey
I ache in the places where I used to play
And I’m crazy for love but I’m not comin’ on
I’m just payin’ my rent everyday in the Tower of Song

I said to Hank Williams “How lonely does it get?”
Hank Williams hasn’t answered yet
But I hear him coughing all night long
Oh, a hundred floors above me in the Tower of Song

I was born like this, I had no choice
I was born with the gift of a golden voice
And twenty-seven angels from the Great Beyond,
They tied me to this table right here in the Tower of Song

So you can say that I’ve grown bitter but of this you may be sure:
The rich have got their channels in the bedrooms of the poor
And there’s a mighty Judgement comin’ but I may be wrong
You see, I hear these funny voices in the Tower of Song

I see you standin’ on the other side
I don’t... How the river got so wide
I loved you, baby, way back when...
And all the bridges are burnin’ that we might’ve crossed
But I feel so close to everything that we lost
We’ll never, we’ll never have to lose it again

Now, I bid you farewell, I don’t know when I’ll be back
They’re movin’ us tomorrow to the tower down the track
But you’ll be hearin’ from me, baby, long after I’m gone
I’ll be speakin’ to you sweetly from a window in the Tower of Song.

Yeah, my friends are gone and my hair is grey
I ache in the places where I used to play
And I’m crazy for love but I’m not comin’ on
I’m just payin’ my rent everyday in the Tower of Song

—
Written by Leonard Cohen
©1987 Stranger Music, Inc. (BMI) / Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC
I first became captivated by Leonard Cohen’s writing in 1979 when I was singing with him on the Field Commander Cohen tour. After intermission, Leonard would go out and do a couple of songs alone, with just his guitar. I sat in the dark on the stairs at stage right, transfixed by the haunting brilliance of The Stranger Song.

I’ve watched Leonard put pen to paper many times over the years, slowly and deliberately distilling so much of the human heart into every verse, every line, every letter. Now, in the deepest realms of the soul, where there is no sun, no gravity, no morning or night, his words are a compass, an anchor and a light.

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.

The Stranger, untouchable in his tower of song, but with so much love in his heart, has departed, but his words, in their wisdom and luminous beauty, will live forever. S.R.
If there were no paintings in the world,
Mine would be very important.
Same with the songs.
Since this is not the case, let us make haste to get in line,
Well towards the back.
Sometimes I would see a woman in a magazine
Humiliated in the technicolour glare.
I would try to establish her
In happier circumstances.
Sometimes a man.
Sometimes living persons sat for me.
May I say to them again:
Thank you for coming to my room.
I also loved the objects on the table
Such as candlesticks and ashtrays
And the table itself.
From a mirror on my desk
In the very early morning
I copied down
Hundreds of self-portraits
Which reminded me of one thing or another.
The Curator has called this exhibition
Drawn to Words.
I call my work
Acceptable Decorations.

– If There Were No Paintings, Leonard Cohen, 2007
now we need more time
this is all we want to do
2/12/03
The temptation of the halos resisted.

My mother learned English, but I didn't.
My mother forgot her Russian.
My dog died.
 Too soon to be real. We have a house that was sold.

When she is not talking you.

Just one little guy with an old road in against the while.

These portraits are far better than my mental development.

I have abolished the throne, both the temporal and the spiritual.

Whereas on this page it appears to be deeply concerned about the thing or another this is merely an old habit of my face.

Los Angeles September 30th, 2013

[Signature: Sofi]

Now we need more time.

[Signature: Same as before: Sofi]
bring on the year

it was the hat after all

Paris again the great Heath Celia
depth by repetition and breathlessness

a new determination
yes, a strength heretofore
missing from the old pac
resolution, in every line
the snow will go on

one of those days
when the hat doesn’t fit
For over fifteen years, we’ve collaborated in various media, all of which are linked to storytelling. Beginning in 2001, we focused primarily on creating staged photographs in which the production of each image was similar to that of a film; we built sets in our studio, used actors, etc. Although we’ve never created a series of images, there’s always been a common thematic thread that’s woven throughout each work. Our images deal with the darker sides of our existence; they shine light onto unspoken topics, and focus on studying the psychological states of the people and spaces captured within our frames.

In 2006 we created an installation piece entitled *Between Life and Death*. This project was an exciting shift for us as we experimented with new techniques, primarily that of holographic video. The installation allowed us to fully submerge the viewers within our created world, and it was liberating to have the opportunity to push an idea in a different manner than we had been capable of in photography.

*I Think I Will Follow You Very Soon* will mark our second project in which we use holographic video technology. During our research we were deeply inspired and touched by one of the last photographs taken of Leonard by his long-time friend Dominique Issermann. This image solidified our intention of wanting to make a piece about the man and not the celebrity. The image, taken from inside his modest Los Angeles home, depicted Leonard on his front balcony staring out into the distance. Knowing that he had passed away two months after the picture was taken, we were drawn to contemplate what he might have been thinking in that moment. Was he satisfied with his life and legacy? Was he thinking about things he would have done differently? Or was he simply enjoying the warm L.A. breeze with nothing at all on his mind?

In our installation the public enters a re-creation of his home, walks into his study and watches Leonard through a window, projected as a three-dimensional ghostly figure, sitting on his balcony looking out at the suburban L.A. landscape before him. With this installation we offer viewers the opportunity to spend a quiet and intimate moment with the man behind the legend, a moment to reflect on Leonard’s life and what he meant to all of us, and hopefully also a moment to reflect on our own lives.  

Carlos and Jason Sanchez are Canadian photographers and filmmakers known for their large-scale dramatic recreations. Their work centres thematically on the psychological and emotional states of their subjects, inviting the viewers, through self-analysis, to immerse themselves in the drama of the open-ended scenes. It has been the subject of solo exhibitions in North America and Europe. The Sanchez brothers have recently completed their first feature film, *Allure*. 
Both Leonard Cohen’s work and my own can be inscribed in the literature of quest, autobiographical narratives and travel memoirs. We are dark romantics who explore to find the Other and to find ourselves. Today the self is seen to be in serious trouble, a fiction of dubious ontological status. The boundaries between order and chaos, of inner and outer, of separation and reunion are subverted.

The seeker in Legendary Reality, bandaged by silence, frozen from his creative juices, knows whom he must seek out. While acknowledging with T.S. Eliot that each attempt at writing is a raid on the inarticulate, Cohen adds a condition that was perhaps the most significant for me—that we must be able to embrace death and failure. This was the interpretation that I gave to the phrase “a crack in everything,” and the honesty of this remark marked a breakthrough. I must destroy the versions of myself that provide too easy a solution, murder the selves that whisper untruths. The declared “real” world has been exposed as commodified, totally constructed, predigested and groundless, with no reference points in history, legacy or religion. Repentance and redemption used to be our spiritual tools, but these pathways have been ruined or abandoned. Here is only the war to recover what has been lost and found and lost again under conditions that seem more and more unfavourable.

Cohen and I both encounter the city with double identities and as rootless cosmopolites, characteristic of Jewish history; our experience and expression carry humour and irony, melancholy and loss. They are core features in Cohen’s poetry as is the thin line between ethics and aesthetics in the search for truth. Recognizing these in my own work led me to recognize how Cohen has helped me find my voice as a Montréal Jew. I have tried to make the portrayal of the search for self as painful yet beautiful as the search for the poet.  

J.R.
When Even The, 2017
Dance performance/installation
Solo dance performance in the presence of the sculpture *Coaxial Planck Density* (1999) by Marc Quinn, with music, lighting effects and video installation

*When Even The* is a cycle of performances choreographed and performed by Clara Furey and inspired by the eponymous poem by Leonard Cohen. In this work, Furey engages in an existential reflection on memory, the passage of time and death—all major themes in Cohen’s work.

In this, her first solo choreographed work, Furey abandons traditional performance spaces in favour of the space of the museum gallery, which encourages a more extreme breaking of the so-called “fourth wall”—an important motif in her work—and thus a more profound and intimate engagement with the public. Exploring the sensuality of the dead and the living, of non-permanence and non-existence, of the memory of physicality and touch, and the absence of the self, Furey places a mirror in front of our own human condition, one bound by ultimate mortality and the perishable state of being, offering us incarnations of our own finality, our own relationship to existence and disappearance.

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.”

It is Cohen’s way of always trying to reach some kind of emptying that I am very much in conversation with in my work.

*When Even The*, situated in what we’ve called the “Meditation Room,” is my way of getting closer to Cohen’s Zen practice, which so deeply informed his life and work.

It attempts to be a crucible in which to cohabit with silence, simplicity, resonance and sincerity—a place where people can just sit in emptiness. This is the quintessential arsenal Cohen has handed down to me as an artist.

So I will dance for ninety minutes a day for ninety days, coexisting with his life. I am complicit, in solidarity with Cohen, sitting next to his language, standing by his constant play between saying a lot and saying nothing, knowing that language is everything, and acknowledging the limit of language.

I keep questioning every breath I take, every position I’m in, inspired by his search for the exact words to say what he had to say. C.F.
CLARA FUREY with a work by
MARC QUINN
LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, 1964
LIVES AND WORKS IN LONDON.

Coaxial Planck Density, 1999
Lead
Collection of the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal

Coaxial Planck Density continues the artist’s investigation of our relationship with our mortal bodies, and specifically with our sensibility to a death that has become commonplace. Made of solid lead, this casting of the artist’s body seems to have caved in after it was removed from its mould. The flattened form resembles a heavy, empty skin anchored to the ground through the absence of a redemptive spirit or, snake-like, the lead moulting of a man who has shed his old skin and left it there.

A notable member of the “Young British Artists” and a central figure in contemporary British art, Marc Quinn examines the body’s mutability over time, its physical presence in space and the anxiety it undergoes within our culture. His work explores the themes of mortality, beauty, kinship and the interplay of art and science, in a practice that is as existential and philosophical as it is artistic.
An earworm is an expression borrowed from German: *Ohrwurm*. It describes a song or tune that is stuck in one’s head. Often they are the most wretched of tunes, generated unknowingly and adopted unwittingly. In this way, an earworm resembles doodling in its lapse of conscious control, because one is beguiled into humming not what one chooses but what one’s brain chooses.

However, earworms can also be associative, in that they are not necessarily triggered aurally. Sometimes they happen through other means, through some other signifier. For example, in the months after my son was born, I had three consistent earworms. I don’t know where they came from but when I sought to comfort my child, they were there: unbeautiful, ridiculous and unrecognizable ditties. I am not sure they even existed in the real world; they were internal compositions activated when I nursed my son. We called them “born songs.”

A song is a rare form, because of the simplicity and directness with which it can move. It begins as air and travels as air, and then enters our heads like a contagion, as air. This is the songwriters’ art and responsibility. It is both their gift and their gift back to us. Songs are bestowed with this direct route in. In this way, a song is more like a bird than a worm.

There is nowhere more private than inside one’s own head. It is a prevailing silence of thinking that conceals all manner of riotous cacophony that might be circulating within it. Only inside one’s own thoughts is there true privacy.

For years I have listened to music, especially when I draw. There are songs that are embedded deep within the sedimentary layers of my work, as well as lodged inside the private and silent vaults of my mind. A song, once it is set free to enter these internal spheres of our unique and collective universes, can never be taken away again; it becomes ours to keep. When a song lands on the neurological fibres in my brain, it is mine. 

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**Ear on a Worm**, 2017
Single-screen film installation
16-mm colour film, sound, 3 min 33 s, looped

*Ear on a Worm* is a film projected high up on the wall. The title plays on the German expression *Ohrwurm* (“earworm”), which refers to a song or a catchy piece of music that continually repeats in one’s head after it is no longer playing. The film shows a life-size bird, a house finch, sitting on a wire for 3 minutes and 28 seconds before flying off.

Tacita Dean’s art is carried by a sense of history, time and place, light quality and the essence of film itself. The focus of her subtle but ambitious work is the truth of the moment, the film as a medium and the sensibilities of the individual. Dean was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1998 on the basis of her films, drawings, photographs, audio recordings and installations. She has since been awarded the DAAD scholarship and artist residency in Berlin (2000-2001), the Aachen Art Prize (2002), the Hugo Boss Prize (2006) and the Kurt Schwitters Prize (2009). She was an artist in residence at the Getty Research Institute (2014-2015), participated in dOCUMENTA (13) in 2012 and has participated in the Venice Biennale on several occasions.
Our work seeks to enhance the power of individuals coming together, exploring how people relate to one another and their surroundings. Our studio is continuously investigating new forms of storytelling to expand ideas of connection and community, as Cohen did with his poetry and music.

Revisiting Cohen’s body of work, we kept returning to one basic question: why is *Hallelujah* so popular, in so many places around the world, with people from different backgrounds and from different generations? As we write this, a single version of the song’s official video online has been viewed over ninety-nine million times by people across the planet. This ever-increasing number inspired us to expand our research into collective experiences to virtual space. It attests to Cohen’s ability to make that leap from the personal to the universal that is so critical in our own practice as we strive to connect strangers to one another. The way he observes and questions the human condition reveals the power artistic works can hold when they succeed in tapping into the collective spirit.

Could some of Cohen’s magic rub off on us somehow? Could it provide another layer from which to expand our own work? By spending enough time with this song, we hoped to learn from it and build on its affective qualities to discover new means of touching people.

*I Heard There Was a Secret Chord* is an homage to this universality. It celebrates the emotional thread that connects us as humans; it imagines a sense of unity through a transcendent experience. As it can be difficult to understand large numbers cognitively, we chose to embody the data (these millions of listeners) in a physical and emotional frame—both online and in the exhibition—that focused on the mystical experience of the song. Using humming instead of words, we hoped to amplify the song’s ability to reach the core inside ourselves, transforming both real and networked space into magical, sensory, pulsating fields that transport people across the planet to a unique shared place—just as Cohen has been doing for decades.

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**I Heard There Was a Secret Chord, 2017**
Participatory audio installation
Octagonal architectural environment, including microphones, speakers, transducers and digital display

*I Heard There Was a Secret Chord* is a participatory humming experience that reveals an invisible vibration uniting people around the world currently listening to Leonard Cohen’s *Hallelujah*.

Real-time user data representing these listeners is transformed into a virtual choir of humming voices that participants can hum along with and feel the collective resonance. It is a scientific and spiritual experiment to highlight the metaphysical connection between people on a common wavelength. The project comprises a room and a website.

The room contains a simple numerical display of current online listeners, each represented by a humming voice in the space. Underfoot, these sounds are transformed into low-frequency vibrations as visitors start humming along.

The website, asecretchord.com, operates as a one-song radio channel allowing people anywhere to tune into the same perpetually fluctuating choir of humming *Hallelujah* voices, and to connect to the Cohen universal magic.

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Daily tous les jours creates large-scale, interactive installations driven by collective experiences. The design studio uses technology and storytelling to explore collaboration, the future of cities and the power of humans. It is best known for its work in public spaces, where passing crowds are invited to play a critical role in the transformation of their environment and their relationships. Daily tous les jours was co-founded by Melissa Mongiat and Mouna Andraos.
Now I've heard there was a secret chord
That David played, and it pleased the Lord
But you don't really care for music, do you?
It goes like this
The fourth, the fifth
The minor fall, the major lift
The baffled king composing Hallelujah

Your faith was strong but you needed proof
You saw her bathing on the roof
Her beauty and the moonlight overthrew you
She tied you
To a kitchen chair
She broke your throne, and she cut your hair
And from your lips she drew the Hallelujah

Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Hallelujah

Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
You say I took the name in vain
I don’t even know the name
But if I did, well really, what’s it to you?
There’s a blaze of light
In every word
It doesn’t matter which you heard
The holy or the broken Hallelujah

I did my best, it wasn’t much
I couldn’t feel, so I tried to touch
I’ve told the truth, I didn’t come to fool you
And even though
It all went wrong
I’ll stand before the Lord of Song
With nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah

Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah
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.

To me, this is most apparent in *Hallelujah*, a song that has been reinterpreted and covered over the years by so many different artists in so many different ways. Any two people can have very different personal reactions to and interpretations of this piece of music. It is a song that can be heard at weddings and at funerals, a song that is both secular and religious, a song that is both grounded in humanity and is also incredibly spiritual. These juxtapositions are what I was most interested in exploring in my own personal perspective on this song, and in creating a visual interpretation of his work.

A cappella is a fifteenth-century style of music which translates from the Italian to “in the manner of the chapel.” We explore this in the work by transporting viewers to the church using bleeding-edge camera and audio technology, in the hopes of creating something entirely new with a song so familiar to all, but seen through fresh eyes and ears in a beautiful, meditative way. Ultimately, I wanted to make something in which listeners could each find their own meaning, a new reason for them to experience hallelujah.

Zach Richter is an award-winning filmmaker, creative director and graphic designer. He is best known for his work in virtual reality and interactive film combining interactive media, technology and storytelling. Richter’s work has been shown at the Sundance, Tribeca and SXSW film festivals, and has been honoured with the highest awards in creativity and technology, including the Cannes Lions, the Webby Awards and the Clio Awards. Richter is currently the creative director of Within, a virtual reality company founded by Chris Milk and Aaron Koblin.
Leonard Cohen had versatility, plain speaking, dry wit and the unreal voice packed with rocks. Cohen came back from a Buddhist monastery to find good words and himself, and to make music despite hard times and disappointment. He was at his best singing, but wrote poetry and novels sometimes related to his lyrics. His melancholy, his romanticism, his refusal to let go of love or grievances, and his craft do the trick. 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 the wire”—Cohen lived wild and long, and travelled 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 was the first woman to represent the United States at the Venice Biennale, where she won the Golden Lion in 1990 for best pavilion. Over the years, she has been honoured with many other awards, among them the World Economic Forum’s Crystal Award in 1996 and the Barnard Medal of Distinction in 2011. She holds honorary degrees from Williams College, the Rhode Island School of Design, The New School and Smith College. Her work is in major museum collections around the world.
CET ACCORD
POUR QUE
PERSONNE D'AUTRE
NE MEURE
IL Y EUIT.
CE BUIU TERRIBLE
ET ON PÉRI
EN JONCE,
UNE BLESSURE TERRIBLE
QUE NOUS
NE POUVONS DÉLIER
LE CHAGRIN
ATTENDRIT TES YEUX
hé
CETTE PASSION
JEUX SERT TENDRENT
JE CHAQUE
JE NE SONGE DEJÀ EN
LISTENING TO LEONARD
Multimedia audio environment

In celebration of Leonard Cohen as a songwriter and recording artist, and in recognition of his vast catalogue of music produced over the past half-century, Listening to Leonard invites visitors to experience eighteen newly recorded covers of Cohen songs, produced, arranged and performed by a selected group of musicians and vocalists.

FEIST
Hey, That’s No Way to Say Goodbye 3:23

HALF MOON RUN
Suzanne 4:22

AURORA
The Partisan 3:00

DOUGLAS DARE
Dance Me to the End of Love 5:45

MÉLANIE DE BIASIO
There For You 3:29

BRAD BARR
Tower of Song 3:44

LEIF VOLLEBEKK
Hey, That’s No Way to Say Goodbye 3:21

DEAR CRIMINALS
Anthem 5:11

ARIANE MOFFATT
WITH THE ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE DE MONTRÉAL
Famous Blue Raincoat 9:08

MOBY
Suzanne 5:57

JULIA HOLTER
Take This Waltz 6:10

SOCALLED
I’m Your Man 4:00

CHILLY GONZALES AND JARVIS COCKER
WITH KAISER QUARTETT
Paper Thin Hotel 4:47

THE NATIONAL
WITH SUFJAN STEVENS, RAGNAR KJARTANSSON AND RICHARD REED PARRY
Memories 7:28

BASIA BULAT
Dance Me to the End of Love 4:10

LITTLE SCREAM
I Can’t Forget 4:13

LI’L ANDY AND JOE GRASS
Democracy 6:50

LOU DOILLON
Famous Blue Raincoat 4:24
FEIST
I chose this song 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.

Hey, That’s No Way to Say Goodbye
I loved you in the morning
Our kisses deep and warm
Your hair upon the pillow
Like a sleepy golden storm
Yes, many loved before us
I know that we are not new
In city and in forest
They smiled like me and you
But now it’s come to distances
And both of us must try
Your eyes are soft with sorrow
Hey, that’s no way to say goodbye

I’m not looking for another
As I wander in my time
Walk me to the corner
Our steps will always rhyme
You know my love goes with you
As your love stays with me
It’s just the way it changes
Like the shoreline and the sea
But let’s not talk of love or chains
And things we can’t untie
Your eyes are soft with sorrow
Hey, that’s no way to say goodbye

I loved you in the morning
Our kisses deep and warm
Your hair upon the pillow
Like a sleepy golden storm
Yes, many loved before us
I know that we are not new
In city and in forest
They smiled like me and you
But let’s not talk of love or chains
And things we can’t untie
Your eyes are soft with sorrow
Hey, that’s no way to say goodbye

—
Written by Leonard Cohen
© 1967 Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC

Produced by Feist and Renaud Letang
Engineered by Thomas Moulin
Arranged by Leslie Feist with additional vocal arrangement by Daniela Gesundheit
Mastered by Mandy Parnell
HALF MOON RUN

Considering the work of Leonard Cohen, one can get a better understanding of the very function of the artist. His art is essential. It shines a light into dark corners of our collective human soul. It gives a magical spark of hope that perhaps life can be more transcendentally beautiful than you can even imagine. He speaks to the poet inside all of us, and reinforces our life with meaning. He is a true heir to a set of traditions that are as old as articulated speech—a master of song, verse and narrative. One gets the sense that he could have been born in any century, and still his voice would have found a way to cut through to communicate with and illuminate those around him. It is an honour to pay tribute to the timeless soul of Leonard Cohen.

Suzanne

Suzanne takes you down to her place near the river
You can hear the boats go by
You can spend the night beside her
And you know that she's half crazy
But that's why you want to be there
And she feeds you tea and oranges
That come all the way from China
And just when you mean to tell her
That you have no love to give her
Then she gets you on her wavelength
And she lets the river answer
That you've always been her lover
And you want to travel with her
And you want to travel blind
And you know that she will trust you
For you've touched her perfect body with your mind
And Jesus was a sailor
When he walked upon the water
And he spent a long time watching
From his lonely wooden tower
And when he knew for certain
Only drowning men could see him
He said “All men will be sailors then
Until the sea shall free them”
But he himself was broken
Long before the sky would open
Forsaken, almost human
He sank beneath your wisdom like a stone
And you want to travel with him
And you want to travel blind
And you think maybe you'll trust him
For he's touched your perfect body with his mind
Now Suzanne takes your hand
And she leads you to the river
She is wearing rags and feathers
From Salvation Army counters
And the sun pours down like honey
On our lady of the harbour
And she shows you where to look
Among the garbage and the flowers
There are heroes in the seaweed
There are children in the morning
They are leaning out for love
And they will lean that way forever
While Suzanne holds the mirror
And you want to travel with her
And you want to travel blind
And you know that you can trust her
For she's touched your perfect body with her mind

Written by Leonard Cohen
© 1967 Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC

Performed, recorded and mixed by Half Moon Run
When I was little I loved to run in the rain... and if it rained, as I was walking home from school, it usually took me thirty minutes longer. I remember my mother understanding the magic in it, but also constantly trying to explain to me the risk of getting ill. And every time I changed out of my wet clothes, getting quite cold, my mother put on “Leonard Cohen” in the background. It made me really fall in love with the rain, and autumn. And being cold and wet knowing you’ll soon get dry and warm again. The calmness his songs gave my heart and mind, I haven’t felt from any other music since.

It also makes me calm to know that his music will always remind me of being a child, of a warm home and a warm mother, if I ever find myself without both. It gives me the feeling I can’t truly lose anything, as long as I have these songs to remind me of them. Two of Mr. Cohen’s songs have always found their way into my skin, built little warm places in my veins and felt home in me: Suzanne and The Partisan. There is something in the melody and nerve that explains to you what the song is about without even knowing the words. I knew it a long time before I could speak English. I felt it. I’ve always cherished songs that could communicate with humans on several levels. Not only with words, melodies and rhythms, but also energy, pain, happiness and in ways you can’t even make sense of yourself.

Words are power. And I’m very glad and grateful that there are people in this world that can remind us of that. It inspired me a lot in the beginning of my little career as a musician, to choose my words with care. And not waste space in people’s minds. Fill music with beautiful information, whatever that information might be. If it’s in the words, in a melody, or in the silence. All equally important. Cohen was a part of teaching me that.

Leonard Cohen will always be a very beautiful mark on human history, a mark that started when he was born but didn’t end when he went away.

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The Partisan

When they poured across the border
I was cautioned to surrender,
This I could not do
I took my gun and vanished

I have changed my name so often
I’ve lost my wife and children
But I have many friends
And some of them are with me

An old woman gave us shelter
Kept us hidden in the garret
Then the soldiers came
She died without a whisper

There were three of us this morning
I’m the only one this evening
But I must go on
The frontiers are my prison

Oh, the wind, the wind is blowing
Through the graves the wind is blowing
Freedom soon will come
Then we’ll come from the shadows

Les Allemands étaient chez moi
Ils me dirent : « Résigne-toi ! »
Mais je n’ai pas peur
J’ai repris mon arme

J’ai changé cent fois de nom
J’ai perdu femme et enfants
Mais j’ai tant d’amis
J’ai la France entière

Un vieil homme dans un grenier
Pour la nuit nous a cachés
Les Allemands l’ont pris
Il est mort sans surprise

Oh, the wind, the wind is blowing
Through the graves the wind is blowing
Freedom soon will come
Then we’ll come from the shadows

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Original French version (La Complainte du partisan) written by Emmanuel D’Astier de la Vigerie and Anna Marly
Adapted by Leonard Cohen and Hy Zaret
© 1969 Universal Music Publishing Group

Produced by Magnus Skylstad and Aurora
Recorded and mixed by Magnus Skylstad
My introduction to Leonard Cohen wasn’t through hearing his records or reading his poetry, but rather playing his songs on our old upright piano from sheets in my mother’s songbooks. I would have been around nine or ten at the time, and Suzanne, Dance Me to the End of Love and Hallelujah were my favourites to play and sing. Since I had not yet experienced Cohen’s originals, my interpretations turned out to be quite different. Years later, after being exposed to his recorded work, I was able to appreciate the music in the same way someone might first read a novel and later see the film adaptation. I feel extremely lucky to have made my own connection with these songs before ever hearing Leonard’s versions. This is why the opportunity to reinterpret a piece from the catalogue resonated with me so greatly. Cohen’s work has always said to me, “here’s a story, but it’s not mine to keep, you can take it and do with it what you will.”

My recording of Dance Me to the End of Love is inspired by how I first played it when I was young but even more prominently from what I learned reading interviews with Cohen. He talked about the string quartets that were forced to play as their loved ones died in the concentration camps of WWII, and with respect I felt compelled to reflect this harrowing image in my interpretation of the song.

I thank Leonard Cohen and the museum for allowing me the opportunity.

DOUGLAS DARE

Dance Me to the End of Love

Dance me to your beauty
With a burning violin
Dance me through the panic
Till I’m gathered safely in
Lift me like an olive branch
And be my homeward dove
Dance me to the end of love
Let me see your beauty
When the witnesses are gone
Let me feel you moving
Like they do in Babylon
Show me slowly what I only
Know the limits of
Dance me to the end of love
Dance me to the wedding now
Dance me on and on
Dance me very tenderly and
Dance me very long
We’re both of us beneath our love
We’re both of us above
Dance me to the end of love
Dance me to the children
Who are asking to be born
Dance me through the curtains
That our kisses have outworn
Raise a tent of shelter now
Though every thread is torn
Dance me to the end of love

Written by Leonard Cohen
© 1984 Leonard Cohen and Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC
MÉLANIE DE BIASIO
My most intimate relationship is with Leonard Cohen's written work _Book of Longing_ and the wonderful collection _Stranger Music: Selected Poems and Songs_.

I turn to Leonard Cohen's work when I need to release myself to my heart. He opens so many doors. _There For You_ is an example of this.

My connection to Leonard Cohen has many facets. His visions of purity, his humility, his vitality and curiosity, his quest to discover the boundaries of his fears, his ability to embrace this darkness, his commitments to love and to life, his attempts to understand the tiniest detail and be in service to it and in service to the universal. In other words, his dialogue of understanding with God. So many of his works are prayers.

Participating in this tribute is my humble, modest and incomplete way of thanking Leonard Cohen for opening my heart.
One of the virtues of a great songwriter is to populate the world with songs that other people want to sing. Even more unique is to populate the world with songs that other people can reinterpret and somehow make their own. Leonard was particularly good at this, as his songs retain the characteristics of the clay he used to mould them. Complete, but open-ended. I am happy to live in a time when such an artist’s music is available to me to learn from, to grow into and to reinterpret to whatever end.

I chose Tower of Song because it was the inspiration behind one of my own songs, a collaboration with my friend Nathan Moore called I Know I Know. I based it on the Tower of Song meter and progression. I introduced my arrangement back into Leonard’s song in a sort of full-circle allegory.

Well, my friends are gone and my hair is grey
I ache in the places where I used to play
And I’m crazy for love but I’m not comin’ on
I’m just payin’ my rent everyday in the Tower of Song

I said to Hank Williams “How lonely does it get?”
Hank Williams hasn’t answered yet
But I hear him coughing all night long
Oh, a hundred floors above me in the Tower of Song

I was born like this, I had no choice
I was born with the gift of a golden voice
And twenty-seven angels from the Great Beyond
They tied me to this table right here in the Tower of Song

So you can stick your little pins in that voodoo doll
I’m very sorry, baby, it doesn’t look like me at all
I’m standin’ by the window where the light is strong
Ah, they don’t let a woman kill you, not in the Tower of Song

Now, you can say that I’ve grown bitter but of this you may be sure:
The rich have got their channels in the bedrooms of the poor
And there’s a mighty Judgement comin’ but I may be wrong
You see, I hear these funny voices in the Tower of Song

I see you standin’ on the other side
I don’t... How the river got so wide?
I loved you, baby, way back when...
And all the bridges are burnin’ that we might’ve crossed
But I feel so close to everything that we lost
We’ll never, we’ll never have to lose it again

Now, I bid you farewell, I don’t know when I’ll be back
They’re movin’ us tomorrow to the tower down the track
But you’ll be hearin’ from me, baby, long after I’m gone
I’ll be speakin’ to you sweetly from a window in the Tower of Song

Yeah, my friends are gone and my hair is grey
I ache in the places where I used to play
And I’m crazy for love but I’m not comin’ on
I’m just payin’ my rent everyday in the Tower of Song

—

Written by Leonard Cohen
©1987 Stranger Music, Inc. (BMI) / Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC
LEIF VOLLEBEKK

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

Hey, That’s No Way to Say Goodbye
I loved you in the morning
Our kisses deep and warm
Your hair upon the pillow
Like a sleepy golden storm
Yes, many loved before us
I know that we are not new
In city and in forest
They smiled like me and you
But now it's come to distances
And both of us must try
Your eyes are soft with sorrow
Hey, that's no way to say goodbye

I’m not looking for another
As I wander in my time
Walk me to the corner
Our steps will always rhyme
You know my love goes with you
As your love stays with me
It’s just the way it changes
Like the shoreline and the sea
But let’s not talk of love or chains
And things we can’t untie
Your eyes are soft with sorrow
Hey, that’s no way to say goodbye

I loved you in the morning
Our kisses deep and warm
Your hair upon the pillow
Like a sleepy golden storm
Yes many loved before us
I know that we are not new
In city and in forest
They smiled like me and you
But let’s not talk of love or chains
And things we can’t untie
Your eyes are soft with sorrow
Hey, that’s no way to say goodbye

—
Written by Leonard Cohen
© 1967 Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC
DEAR CRIMINALS

Great artists like Cohen leave a profound mark on the imagination, creating a kind of timeless nostalgia, as if they were able to reveal memories, even to the person who was discovering them for the first time. Also, while he was always rooted in reality, Cohen taught us to transcend meaning by using, in music, a poetry that is sometimes so close to painting, a literature that plays with shapes, colours and their resonances to create impressions, images.

For all these reasons, and because his creative output is so personal, we initially found it a bit daunting to pay tribute to him. So we approached his work with humility. Before all else, we wanted to convey our love of the great man’s words, which were at once soft, potent and significant.

These words have become an instrument in themselves, one whose music, for us, was merely a score to be followed. The melody of the song Anthem is disarmingly simple and lovely. And since the power of a melody lies in the fact that it can be rearranged in many different ways, we found ourselves in the midst of a gigantic sandbox.

Faced with so many possibilities, it seemed obvious to us that we should wrap it sparingly, as minimally as possible, in order to let the words breathe, give free rein to the interpretation. A very modest attempt to fix the timeless for a few instants. “There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.”

---

Written by Leonard Cohen
© 1992 Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC

Anthem

The birds they sang
At the break of day
Start again
I heard them say
Don’t dwell on what
Has passed away
Or what is yet to be
Yeah the wars they will
Be fought again
The holy dove
She will be caught again
Bought and sold
And bought again
The dove is never free
Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That’s how the light gets in
We asked for signs
The signs were sent
The birth betrayed
The marriage spent
The widowhood
Of every government
Signs for all to see
I can’t run no more
With that lawless crowd
While the killers in high places
Say their prayers out loud
But they’ve summoned up
A thundercloud
And they’re going to hear from me
Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That’s how the light gets in
You can add up the parts
You won’t have the sum
You can strike up the march
There is no drum
Every heart, every heart to love will come
But like a refugee
Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
The opening is meant to be mystical. The sound produced by the keyboard suggests a church organ, and the voices held in its reverberation replace—for this reinterpretation—the poet’s legendary nylon string guitar.

You have to do something original.

On fingertips, setting out along the long hallway with glitchy walls, with the voice of the original Famous Blue Raincoat as my raw material. Bringing in and out as I please Simon Leclerc’s arrangement—performed by the OSM—which I’ve taken the time to carefully rework.

Thank you to the OSM for this precious gift. I am aware and appreciative of its value.

Rhythmically, moving back and forth between the ternary and the binary while guarding the song’s mysterious narrative.

Constantly asking myself whether the arrangement is organic enough... feeling Leonard’s intrigued presence over my shoulder that’s keeping the beat.

Changing course momentarily for a new section that to me feels epic and liberating. A kind of taking flight, or ultimate love song.

Completing the journey in an atmosphere of calm chaos. Improvising on the piano, so that the raw material breaks down, producing an end-of-life noise as the sounds decay.

As a final mantra, the “Sincerely, L. Cohen” which we rightly hang on to. Realizing in the darkness of the studio that the piece is nearly ten minutes long...

And that the exercise was utterly life-saving.

—

Written by Leonard Cohen
© 1971 Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC
MOBY

One of my earliest memories is my mom playing piano and singing *Suzanne*. Until I was four or five 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 favourite of Leonard’s songs.
My first experience of Leonard Cohen was my dad playing *First We Take Manhattan* on guitar, when I was a kid. “He’s a poet, he’s different,” my dad would say. It’s true the words he was singing were more elusive to a child than those of the other songs my dad would play, like by the Byrds or even Bob Dylan. The words were that kind that somehow work but don’t “make sense” at the same time, and that he was put in this weirdo “poet” box in my mind may have intimidated me before I became more aware of Cohen’s music, although I found the mystery of the phrases I initially heard weirdly welcoming. Without being too dramatic about it, upon reflection, I do think my dad playing Cohen’s music on guitar may have been one of the first realizations I had of the truth that hides in abstraction—that the madness we experience in our heads can be the building blocks of beauty and understanding. Of course, most interesting art can potentially do this for young people, but I guess for me it might have been those nights listening to my dad playing Cohen.

His songs function in a different way than a lot of popular music, and yet they are celebrated all over the world. He has many whispers, often accompanied by otherworldly women’s hums, alongside soaring melodies, and uses incongruous but familiar imagery. I can see it as a kind of healing music—we need the reassurance that the ordinariness of our day-to-day lives has a beauty, in a world that is usually so goal-oriented. The music has a quiet acknowledgment of the feeling behind the simple things like “tea and oranges” or “blue raincoats,” maybe a spirituality for some. I think it is his playful, humble approach to writing, as found in this famous quote of his, that allows for the magic: “It’s like a bear stumbling into a beehive or a honey cache: I’m stumbling right into it and getting stuck, and it’s delicious and it’s horrible and I’m in it and it’s not very graceful and it’s very awkward and it’s very painful and yet there’s something inevitable about it.”

*Take This Waltz* has a dementedly seductive vibe and I wanted to “translate” it in my own way. Cohen’s text is a loose translation of a poem by Federico García Lorca, whose work also tends to feature surreal symbolic imagery. I feel more in touch with this play on ¾ time than, say, with Ravel’s “La Valse.” I like the fragility and creepiness here: the song dances playfully through some painful kinds of longing and human desperation.

I like to think that art is always some kind of a “translation”—in *Take This Waltz*, Cohen is telling someone else’s story in a Cohen form, and in other songs of his, maybe there are translations of experiences he had in the world, or conversations, or visual art, or other writings. All the recordings he made have a loving mystery that allows them to be appreciated and further translated by a world in growing need of a softer yet resonant, more subtle beauty.

---

**Take This Waltz** (after Federico García Lorca)

Now in Vienna there’s ten pretty women
There’s a shoulder where Death comes to cry
There’s a lobby with nine hundred windows
There’s a tree where the doves go to die
There’s a piece that was torn from the morning
And it hangs in the Gallery of Frost
Ay, Ay, Ay, Ay
Take this waltz, take this waltz
Take this waltz with the clamp on its jaws

Oh I want you, I want you
On a chair with a dead magazine
In the cave at the tip of the lily
In some hallways where love’s never been
On a bed where the moon has been sweating
In a cry filled with footsteps and sand
Ay, Ay, Ay, Ay
Take this waltz, take this waltz
Take its broken waist in your hand

This waltz, this waltz, this waltz
With its very own breath of brandy and Death
Dragging its tail in the sea

There’s a concert hall in Vienna
Where your mouth had a thousand reviews
There’s a bar where the boys have stopped talking
They’ve been sentenced to death by the blues
Ah, but who is it climbs to your picture
With a garland of freshly cut tears?
Ay, Ay, Ay, Ay
Take this waltz, take this waltz
Take this waltz it’s been dying for years

There’s an attic where children are playing
Where I’ve got to lie down with you soon
In a dream of Hungarian lanterns
And I’ll see what you’ve chained to your sorrow
All your sheep and your lilies of snow
Ay, Ay, Ay, Ay
Take this waltz, take this waltz
With its “I’ll never forget you, you know!”

This waltz, this waltz, this waltz
With its very own breath of brandy and Death
Dragging its tail in the sea

And I’ll dance with you in Vienna
I’ll be wearing a river’s disguise
The hyacinth wild on my shoulder,
My mouth on the dew of your thighs
And I’ll bury my soul in a scrapbook,
With the photographs there, and the moss
And I’ll yield to the flood of your beauty
My cheap violin and my cross
And you’ll carry me down on your dancing
To the pools that you lift on your wrist
Oh my love, Oh my love
Take this waltz, take this waltz
It’s yours now. It’s all that there is


Performed, recorded and produced by Julia Holter
Includes field recordings made by Julia Holter on Hydra, the Greek island where Cohen lived and spent much time throughout his life.
What an honour to be a part of this active, creative, living celebration of the words and music of Leonard Cohen. 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. His composed melodies also feel familiar, as if they contain the echo of that Yiddish world that I have dedicated so much energy to re-creating, re-discovering, re-learning. In order for me to perform something, I have to make it make sense to me, it has to come through me, to pass freely, honestly through my body and soul, transformed and processed by my brain and breath. In order to be true to myself, to be my own man, to be YOUR man, I did switch one word in the text, did you hear it?

---

**I'm Your Man**

If you want a lover
I’ll do anything you ask me to
And if you want another kind of love
I’ll wear a mask for you
If you want a partner
take my hand
Or if you want to strike me down in anger
here I stand
I’m your man

If you want a boxer
I will step into the ring for you
And if you want a doctor
I’ll examine every inch of you
If you want a driver
climb inside
Or if you want to take me for a ride
you know you can
I’m your man

Ah, the moon’s too bright
the chain’s too tight
the beast won’t go to sleep
I’ve been running through these promises to you
that I made and I could not keep

Ah but a man never got a woman back
not by begging on his knees
Or I’d crawl to you baby
and I’d fall at your feet
And I’d howl at your beauty
like a dog in heat
And I’d claw at your heart
and I’d tear at your sheet
I’d say please, please
I’m your man

And if you’ve got to sleep
a moment on the road
I will steer for you
And if you want to work the street alone
I’ll disappear for you
If you want a father for your child
or only want to walk with me a while
across the sand
I’m your man

If you want a lover,
I’ll do anything that you ask me to
And if you want another kind of love
I’ll wear a mask for you

---

Written by Leonard Cohen
©1987 Stranger Music, Inc. (BMI) / Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC
Paper Thin Hotel is Leonard Cohen’s lesser-known hotel song. He remembered her well at the Chelsea Hotel, but on Paper Thin Hotel, he remembers something more traumatic—a journey through sad denial, self-delusion and resigned acceptance.

Jarvis Cocker and I were searching for an appropriate encore after performing our hotel-themed song cycle Room 29. After rejecting Hotel California, it seemed fitting to turn to my fellow Montrealer for inspiration. I confess that I didn’t know the Death of a Ladies’ Man album very well, but Jarvis suggested Paper Thin Hotel, and its Phil Spector-produced wall of sound lent itself perfectly to our chamber-pop aesthetic.

The walls of this hotel are paper-thin
Last night I heard you making love to him
The struggle mouth to mouth and limb to limb
The grunt of unity when he came in

I stood there with my ear against the wall
I was not seized by jealousy at all
In fact a burden lifted from my soul
I heard that love was out of my control
A heavy burden lifted from my soul
I learned that love was out of my control

I listened to your kisses at the door
I never heard the world so clear before
You ran your bath and you began to sing
I felt so good I couldn’t feel a thing

And I can’t wait to tell you to your face
And I can’t wait for you to take my place
You are the naked angel in my heart
You are the woman with her legs apart

It’s written on the walls of this hotel
You go to heaven once you’ve been to hell

A heavy burden lifted from my soul
I heard that love was out of my control

Written by Leonard Cohen and Phil Spector
Memories
Frankie Lane, he was singing Jezebel
I pinned an Iron Cross to my lapel
I walked up to the tallest and the blondest girl
I said, Look, you don’t know me now but very soon you will
So won’t you let me see
I said “won’t you let me see”
I said “won’t you let me see
Your naked body?”

Just dance me to the dark side of the gym
Chances are I’ll let you do most anything
I know you’re hungry, I can hear it in your voice
And there are many parts of me to touch,
you have your choice
Ah but no you cannot see
She said “no you cannot see”
She said “no you cannot see
My naked body”

So We’re dancing close, the band is playing Stardust
Balloons and paper streamers floating down on us
She says, You’ve got a minute left to fall in love
In solemn moments such as this I have put my trust
And all my faith to see
I said all my faith to see
I said all my faith to see
Her naked body

Written by Leonard Cohen and Phil Spector
BASIA BULAT

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 in my life where every new understanding has brought a deeper mystery, a sigh and a laugh.

—

Vocals, piano, stylophone, organ and hammered harp: Basia Bulat
Acoustic guitar: Andrew Woods
Backing vocals, keyboard: Sydney Lee
Bass: Joel Young
Trumpet: Kaveh Nabatian
Drums: Matthew Woodley
Additional percussion, backing vocals: Laura Jeffrey
Produced by Basia Bulat
Recorded by Mark Lawson and Andrew Woods
Mixed by Graham Lessard
Mastered by Harris Newman

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LITTLE SCREAM
When I was fourteen, a boy sent me a pirated cassette tape of a Leonard Cohen cover album called I’m Your Fan. The boy was handsome and loved poetry, and his father was in prison for gouging a woman’s eye out in a bar. I was of course desperately in love with him. The songs on that tape were all about lust and longing, and they seemed to provide a perfect soundtrack for our burgeoning yet ultimately doomed romance.

When I listened to the stories inside those songs, I always envisioned myself as the protagonist—the seeker, not the sought. I was the one “burning up the road, heading down to Phoenix,” where I had this old address of someone that I knew. I pictured myself there in the future, a somewhat worn-out, tattered, drag version of myself in a roadside hotel, on a quixotic mission to gather together fragments of lost romances in order to reassemble them into some picture of myself that I could recognize. As I listened to those songs then, I felt a duty well up inside me—a duty to author a life for myself that would live up to the passion, romance and tragedy of all those prescient Leonard Cohen lines.

And here I am. And here we are now. In the conscious crosshairs of time’s arrow.

I Can’t Forget
I stumbled out of bed
I got ready for the struggle
I smoked a cigarette
And I tightened up my gut
I said this can’t be me
Must be my double
And I can’t forget, I can’t forget
I can’t forget but I don’t remember what

I’m burning up the road
I’m heading down to Phoenix
I got this old address
Of someone that I knew
It was high and fine and free
Ah, you should have seen us
And I can’t forget, I can’t forget
I can’t forget but I don’t remember who

I’ll be there today
With a big bouquet of cactus
I got this rig that runs on memories
And I promise, cross my heart
They’ll never catch us
But if they do, just tell them it was me

Yeah I loved you all my life
And that’s how I want to end it
The summer’s almost gone
The winter’s tuning up
Yeah, the summer’s gone
But a lot goes on forever
And I can’t forget, I can’t forget
I can’t forget but I don’t remember what

—

Written by Leonard Cohen
©1987 Stranger Music, Inc. (BMI) / Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC

Guitar and vocals: Laurel Sprengelmeyer
Vocals and keys: Lisa Iwanycki Moore
Bass and synths: Michael Dubue
Additional guitar by Alex Moxon
Mixed by Michael Dubue
Mastered by Phil Bova
LI’L ANDY AND JOE GRASS

This recording was made in the underground parking garage of Montréal’s Palais des congrès, a location we did not have permission to record in. It was necessary to complete takes quickly and not every verse of the song as Cohen published it could be accommodated.

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 I covertly set up five microphones in the Palais des congrès parking garage and let its acoustics and background noises act as a third instrument as we performed this version of Democracy.

There are few public spaces in modern civilization as sinister as an underground parking garage. The echo of footsteps, the closing of a car door, the roar of an engine, the squeal of tires—our senses have been trained to interpret these sounds as signalling threat or danger, the possibility of a violent attack. All of these attendant noises can be heard on the recording you hear in this exhibit.

I wanted to mix these ominous sounds with the beauty of the pedal-steel guitar and the fragility of a single human voice. My version of Democracy becomes something of an elegy or dirge for the idea of democracy, but one that by its very act of singing and playing suggests a small act of hope.

Democracy

It’s coming through a hole in the air
From those nights in Tiananmen Square
It’s coming from the feel
That this ain’t exactly real
Or it’s real, but it ain’t exactly there
From the wars against disorder
From the sirens night and day
From the fires of the homeless
From the ashes of the gay
democracy is coming to the U.S.A.

It’s coming through a crack in the wall
On a visionary flood of alcohol
From the staggering account
Of the Sermon on the Mount
Which I don’t pretend to understand at all
It’s coming from the silence
On the dock of the bay
From the brave, the bold, the battered
Heart of Chevrolet
democracy is coming to the U.S.A.

It’s coming from the sorrow in the street
The holy places where the races meet
From the homicidal bitchin’
That goes down in every kitchen
To determine who will serve and who will eat
From the wells of disappointment
Where the women kneel to pray
For the grace of God in the desert here
And the desert far away:
Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.

Sail on, sail on
O mighty Ship of State
To the Shores of Need
Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.

Imperial, mysterious in amorous array
Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.

O baby, we’ll be making love again
We’ll be going down so deep
The river’s going to weep
And the mountain’s going to shout Amen!

It’s coming like the tidal flood
Beneath the lunar sway
Imperial, mysterious in amorous array
Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.

Sail on, sail on
O mighty Ship of State
To the Shores of Need
Past the Reefs of Greed
Through the Squalls of Hate
Sail on, sail on, sail on, sail on

I’m sentimental, if you know what I mean
I love the country but I can’t stand the scene
And I’m neither left or right
I’m just staying home tonight
Getting lost in that hopeless little screen
But I’m stubborn as those garbage bags
That Time cannot decay
I’m junk but I’m still holding up
This little wild bouquet
Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.

© 1992 Sony ATV Music Publishing LLC
My love for Leonard Cohen started when I was very young. I remember being in the back of my father’s car, coming home from a long day of outdoor takes on his movie. I must have been eight or nine. We drove for hours back to his hotel, and I knew him enough to know that when he put music on, one had to shut up and listen...

He played the Songs of Love and Hate album, and I have this vivid memory of feeling like Leonard Cohen was talking to me. My father doesn’t understand English, and I remember being embarrassed by this for the first time. I couldn’t stand the fact that he was not hearing the poetry. I needed to share it with him, my first understanding of poetry.

When the car stopped for gas, I got in the front seat and said I would translate the entire album for him, as the music went along. I remember moving myself to tears as I was translating Famous Blue Raincoat. I had never witnessed such grace, generosity and kindness before: l’ultime bienveillance de Leonard Cohen.

Till then lyrics had always been somewhat binary: one hated or loved, one cared or didn’t care... This was the first time that someone was singing to my intelligence, insinuating what I by then already knew, that love and hate were sides to the same coin, were a point of view, and understanding would lead to kindness, and that was maybe the only way to ride through life.

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.
KARA BLAKE

The Offerings, 2017
5-channel video installation, black and white and colour, sound, 35 min, looped
Projection on three screens
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
With the support of the Canada Council for the Arts
Courtesy the artist

Production Assistance: Alexandre Larose, Becky Blake, Marites Carino

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CANDICE BREITZ

I’m Your Man (A Portrait of Leonard Cohen), 2017
Shot at the Phi Centre, Montréal, May-June 2017
19-channel video installation, colour, sound, 40 min 43 s, looped
18 suspended monitors and one single-screen projection
Commissioned and produced by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
With the support of the Goethe-Institut Montréal
Collection of the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal

Director: Candice Breitz | Project Management: Sophie Cook, Alex Fahl, Gabrielle Gagnon-Fréchette | Casting: Candice Breitz, Sophie Cook | Assistant Director: Sophie Cook | Director of Photography: Yann-Manuel Hernandez | Sound: Max Schneider | Production Assistants: Gaby Girard, Dustyn Lucas, Aly Marguerite Neumann, Ellen Payne Smith, Nasuna Stuart-Ulin, Sarah Tue-Fee | Post Production: Alex Fahl | Still Photography: Edwin Isford

Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue Choir: Roï Azoulay (Music Director), Cantor Gideon Y. Zelermyer (Soloist), Conor O’Neil (Arranger)
Choristers: David Buzaglo, Victor Chisholm, Gabriel Frank, Joshua Goldman, Isak Goldschneider, Conor O’Neil, David Packer, Lorne Shapiro, Jake Smith
Recorded by Howard Bilerman at Hotel2Tango

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JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGE BURES MILLER

The Poetry Machine, 2017
Interactive audio/mixed-media installation including organ, speakers, carpet, computer and electronics
Dimensions variable
All poetry written and performed by Leonard Cohen from Book of Longing, published 2006 by McClelland & Stewart
Dedicated to Leonard Cohen, 1934-2016
Special thanks to Robert Kory and Leonard Cohen Family Trust
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Courtesy the artists, Luhring Augustine, New York, Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, and Koyanagi Gallery, Tokyo

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CHRISTOPHE CHASSOL

Cuba in Cohen, 2017
Single-screen video installation, black and white, sound, 15 min 19 s, looped, including annotated musical scores
Dimensions variable
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Courtesy the artist

Vocals: Sandra Samuel, Carlotta Menozzi, Kenneth Bailey and Jean Pierre Muller, Krisztina Nagy, Pauline Simon, Christophe Chassol | Recorded by Thibaut Javoy at Xavier Veilhan’s “Studio Venezia”

Pages: 9, 61-65

LEONARD COHEN

Self-Portraits, 2003-2016, 2017
Projection of 220 drawings documenting Leonard Cohen’s self-portraits
Editing by Alexandre Perrault
Produced by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Courtesy and © Leonard Cohen Family Trust

Pages: 85-87

DAILY TOUS LES JOURS

I Heard There Was a Secret Chord, 2017
Participatory audio installation
Octagonal architectural environment, including microphones, speakers, transducers and digital display
434 x 590 x 590 cm (wooden structure)
434 x 242 cm (each panel)
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal and the National Film Board of Canada
With the support of the Canada Council for the Arts
Courtesy Daily tous les jours (JoDee Allen, Mouna Andraos, Fady Atallah, Michael Baker, Irene Chaudouet, Melissa Mongiat, Anne Ouellette, Eva Schindling, Bianca Su, Rebecca Taylor, Pierre Thirion)
Recording: Patrick McDowel, Dominique Girard (Tetra Sound Lab) | Choir Direction: Melodie Rabatel | Acoustic Consultant: Tim Hewling (Resonance TJL) | Fabrication: Double Effet | Website Programming: Folklore | Choirs: Ensemble Vocal Les Nanas de Montréal, Choeur Gai de Montréal, Ensemble vocal DivertisSon, La Serre, BAnQ, L’ensemble/Coristi de Laval

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TACITA DEAN

Ear on a Worm, 2017
Single-screen film installation
16-mm colour film, sound, 3 min 33 s, looped
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York


Pages: 10-11, 106

THOMAS DEMAND

Ampel / Stoplight, 2016
Multimedia video installation
Animated video on LED panel, colour, stereo, sound (Tyondai Braxton with Leonard Cohen), 20 min, looped
104 x 63 x 10 cm (panel)
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
© Thomas Demand / SODRAC (2017)

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KOTA EZAWA

Cohen 21, 2017
16-mm animated film installation, black and white, sound, 2 min 30 s, looped
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Courtesy the artist

Pages: 46, 48-49

GEORGE FOK

Passing Through, 2017
Multi-channel video installation, black and white and colour, sound, 56 min 15 s, looped
Projection on three walls
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Courtesy the artist

Assistant Editor and Editorial Research: Matthew Ober | Sound: An Audio Z Co-production | Executive Producer: Serge Laforest | Sound Design and Mix: Martin Rouillard, Rémy Sealey | Sound Installation: Martin Rouillard | Additional Mix: Johan Chacon | Subtitles: Semantikos (Elizabeth Marion Poitras)

Pages: 41-45, 154-155
ARI FOLMAN

Depression Chamber, 2017
Interactive computer-animated video installation, live camera, Kinect sensor, black and white, colour, sound, 5 min 10 s, including resting platform
Projection on three walls and ceiling
Architectural environment: 333 x 250 x 333 cm
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
With the support of the Swiss Foundation for Arts and Culture Pro Helvetia and the Consulate General of Israel in Montréal
Courtesy the artist
Created by Ari Folman | Illustration: David Polonsky | 2D Animation: Sefi Gayego | Technical Direction and Programming: TinkaTinka | Production: Yael Nahlieli

Pages: 1, 35-39

CLARA FUREY

When Even The, 2017
Dance performance/installation
Solo dance performance in the presence of the sculpture Coaxial Planck Density (1999) by Marc Quinn, with music and sound design by Tomas Furey and light design by Alexandre Pilon-Guay, including video installation directed by Kaveh Nabatian
90 performances lasting 90 min each
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
With the support of the Canada Council for the Arts
Courtesy the artist

+  

MARC QUINN

Coaxial Planck Density, 1999
Lead
10 x 185 x 51 cm
Collection of the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Courtesy the artist

Pages: 101-105

JENNY HOLZER

For Leonard Cohen, 2017
Light projection
Grain Silo No. 5, Old Port, Montréal
Text: Lyrics and poems by Leonard Cohen
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Courtesy and © 2017 Jenny Holzer, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SODRAC, Montréal

Pages: 4-5, 121-123

JON RAFMAN

Legendary Reality, 2017
21-seat sculptural theatre installation, featuring video projection, colour, stereo sound, 15 min 45 s, looped
Dimensions variable
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Courtesy the artist, Sprueth Magers, Los Angeles, and Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Montréal
For the film | Poetry and music by Leonard Cohen | Sound Design: Milo Reinhardt | Sound Mix: Xavier Avocha

Pages: 94, 96-99, 152-153

MICHAEL RAKOWITZ

I’m Good at Love, I’m Good at Hate, It’s in Between I Freeze, 2015–2017
Multimedia installation featuring video projection, darkened monitor, archival artifacts and objects
Dimensions variable
Produced with the support of Creative Capital, Chicago, and the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Courtesy and © 2017 Michael Rakowitz
For the film | Director: Michael Rakowitz | Director of Photography: Robert Chase Heishman | Editor: Robert Chase Heishman | Sound Engineer: Nate Sandberg | Leonard: Marc Joseph Berg | Story partially based on Various Positions: A Life of Leonard Cohen by Ira B. Nadel, published by Pantheon Books | A Falafel Western Film

Pages: 50-53

ZACH RICHTER

Hallelujah, 2017
Virtual reality experience
Headset, headphones, computer and electronics, including suspended theatrical drapes
Circular configuration: 335 cm (diam.)
Created by Zach Richter, Bobby Halvorson and Eames Kolar
Produced by Within in partnership with Lytro
Key Collaborators: Chrissy Szczupak, Orin Green, Jess Engel, ECCO VR, International Orange Chorale of SF, Chris Milk and Aaron Koblin

Pages: 117-119, 158

SHARON ROBINSON

Goodbye Stranger, 2017
Video-recorded musical performance, colour, sound, 5 min, looped
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Courtesy the artist
Director: Paula Walker | Producer: Allan Wachs | Director of Photography: Rolf Kestermann | Sound Recording: Keven Brennan

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THE SANCHEZ BROTHERS
*I Think I Will Follow You Very Soon*, 2017
Holographic and mixed-media installation
Reconstructed architectural environment with visual effects
by The Workshop in Montréal, hologram technology by
Mikael “Hologram Master” Fock/The Culture Yard in Elsinore,
and sound design by Mimi Allard
Artwork within the installation loaned by Morton Rosengarten
Dimensions variable
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
With the support of the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec
and Culture Yard, Elsinore, Denmark
Courtesy the artists

Pages: 89-93

TARYN SIMON
*The New York Times, Friday, November 11, 2016*, 2017
Mixed-media installation
Back issue of the *New York Times* newspaper
(dated November 11, 2016), including a glass display cabinet
61 x 30.5 x 56 cm (display cabinet)
Commissioned by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Courtesy the artist and Gagosian Gallery, New York

Pages: 55-57

ARIANE MOFFATT
WITH THE ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE DE MONTRÉAL
AURORA
BASIA BULAT
BRAD BARR
CHILLY GONZALES AND JARVIS COCKER
WITH KAISER QUARTETT
DEAR CRIMINALS
DOUGLAS DARE
FEIST
HALF MOON RUN
JULIA HOLTER
LEIF VOLLEBEKK
LI’L ANDY AND JOE GRASS
LITTLE SCREAM
LOU DOilléN
MÉLANIE DE BIASIO
MOBY
SOCALLED
THE NATIONAL
WITH SUFJAN STEVENS, RAGNAR KJARTANSSON
AND RICHARD REED PARRY

*Listening to Leonard*, 2017
Multimedia audio environment
Sound recordings of Leonard Cohen compositions
Light design by Jocelyn Labonté
Dimensions variable
Commissioned and produced by the Musée d’art contemporain
de Montréal
Master recordings courtesy the artists

Photo credits
Maxence Bilodeau: pp. 104-105
Geoffrey Boulangé: pp. 2-3, 109
Gleb Gombert: pp. 4-5, 121-123
Richard-Max Tremblay: pp. 30, 42-43
The Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal (MAC) wishes to thank the late Leonard Cohen, who in 2015 generously consented to the mounting of this exhibition. We also wish to thank the family, friends and associates of Leonard Cohen, in particular Robert Kory, Adam Cohen and Lorca Cohen, who provided invaluable access to the Cohen archives, writings, recordings, films, videos, photographs and other works.

The MAC is very pleased to be associated with its many institutional partners that have generously contributed to the production of this exhibition.

We are deeply grateful to the CBC/Radio-Canada, our exhibition presenter. The broadcaster generously made its archives available both to us and to our participating artists for the creation of new works for this project. Special thanks go to Carrie Haber, Debbie Hynes, Francine Allaire and Catherine Boivin.

We would also like to extend our appreciation to Alain Gignac and the Society for the Celebrations of Montréal’s 375th Anniversary for their generous support for the project.

We are much indebted to the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), which generously shared its archives with our artists. We are further grateful to the NFB for joining forces with the MAC as co-commissioners to produce a new work of art with Daily tous les jours. Thank you Hugues Sweeney and André Picard.

Thank you as well to POP Montréal—Dan Seligman, Eric Cazes, Sarah Shoucri—for co-presenting the concert series Leonard Cohen: Five concerts – Five albums, and to all our guest musicians and series musical director Li’l Andy.

The MAC also wishes to acknowledge Sony Music and Sony ATV for granting us unprecedented access to a multitude of Cohen recordings, compositions and archival video materials, as well as permission to use them. A special thank you to Caryn Hanlon, George Maloian, Temi Argyropoulos, Janet Baker and Judy Naiberg.

We would like to express our gratitude to McClelland & Stewart and The Wylie Agency for providing us with access to many of Cohen’s poems and writings. Thank you Jared Bland, Percy Stubbs and Katie Cacouris. Our appreciation goes as well to the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, for access to its Cohen archives.

We owe a heartfelt thank you to our curatorial assistants Sophie Cook and Geneviève Senécal and the rest of the MAC team, who worked with great enthusiasm and energy to realize the project. In no particular order: Anne-Marie Barnard, Carl Solari, Denis Labelle, Josée St-Louis, Alexandre Perreault, Marie-Eve Beaupré, Marie-Chantale Poisson, Eve Katingolou, Marie-Renée Vial, Roxane Dumas-Noël, Valérie Sirard, Marlène Chapelain, Annie Alix-Paré, Emeren García, Chantal Charbonneau, François LeTourneux, Luc Perron, Yves Théoret, Anne-Marie Zeppetelli, Patricia DaPozzo, Sylvie Pelletier, Luc Guillemette, Naila Del Cid, Lesley Johnstone and Jocelyn Labonté.

Special thanks go to our collaborators and contributors: Kaveh Nabatian, Daniel Angers, Carmine Starnino, Dominique Issermann, Michel Garneau, Allan Showalter, Louise Simard, Gabrielle Gagnon-Fréchette and Nancy Rosenfeld.

Our appreciation goes as well to the photographers, Michael Putland, Claude Gassian and Barry Masden, for providing us with stunning Leonard Cohen photographs.

The MAC also wishes to thank its exhibition partners: DeSerres, Aéroports de Montréal (ADM) and the Société de transport de Montréal (STM). Thank you, Canada Lands Company and Le Vieux-Port de Montréal.

We greatly appreciate the contribution of our partners that directly supported the creation of works by our artists: the Goethe-Institut and the I.F.A. (Candice Breitz), Spotify (Daily tous les jours), Audio Z (George Fok), the Consulate General of Israel in Montreal and the Swiss Foundation for Arts and Culture Pro Helvetia (Ari Folman), and Lytro (Zach Richter).

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We are sincerely grateful to the following foundations and individuals for their generous support of the exhibition: The Azrieli Foundation, the Stephen and Lillian Vineberg Family Foundation, Nick Tedeschi and Sal Guerrera, the Claudine and Stephen Bronfman Family Foundation and Erin Battat. A particular thank you to the wonderful Lillian Vineberg, who accompanied and supported us from the inception of the exhibition to our opening.

Finally, we must extend our deepest gratitude to the artists and musicians who participated in this project.

J.Z. and VS.
JOHN ZEPPETELLI is Director and Chief Curator of the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal where he oversees a wide-ranging program of exhibitions, public programs and acquisitions, as well as spearheading a building transformation project. Sophie Calle, Simon Starling, David Altmejd, Jon Rafman, Dana Schutz, Ragnar Kjartansson, Teresa Margolies, Olafur Eliasson, and Lizzie Fitch/Ryan Trecartin are some of the exciting artists to have exhibited since his arrival. Before joining the MAC, he was curator at DHC/ART Foundation in Montréal where he organized many important solo exhibitions and an award-winning group show exploring loss and mortality, called Chronicles of a Disappearance. John worked at the ICA in London and in a commercial gallery in New York while he attended the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program. He has lectured at Concordia University and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

VICTOR SHIFFMAN is a guest curator at the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal. Since 1988 he has worked in the arts as a producer, presenter and programmer across a variety of sectors including music, multimedia, film/video and performance. He has had the privilege to work with such artists as Radiohead, Bjork, The Beastie Boys, Boy George, Tears for Fears, Michel Gondry, Fela Kuti, Denis Villeneuve, George Clinton, Massive Attack, Tito Puente and George Benson. Born in Cape Town, South Africa, Victor attended Rhodes University, before moving to New York City in 1988 where he worked as a music publicist at The Ritz. He moved to Montréal in 1992, working as a programmer for the concert promoters DKD, Fogel/Sabourin and the Festival international de jazz de Montréal. He also has worked as a Creative Producer for Cirque du Soleil. Victor was a founding Vice-President at the Phi Centre in Montréal where he was responsible for the music program.

SYLVIE SIMMONS is an award-winning author and music journalist. Born in London, she left for Los Angeles forty years ago to become one of the rare women included in the predominantly male rock-writing elite; the BBC made a documentary about her titled The Rock Chick. Simmons has published fiction and non-fiction books, including a short story collection, Too Weird for Ziggy, and biographies of Neil Young and Serge Gainsbourg. Her most recent is I'm Your Man: The Life of Leonard Cohen, the best-selling biography that Janet Maslin at the New York Times described as “Smart, fearless and mesmerizing,” and Brian D. Johnson at Macleans called “the most discerning, intimate and definitive biography ever written about Canada's pre-eminent singer, songwriter, poet and monk.” Based in San Francisco, she writes about music for MOJO magazine. She is currently collaborating on a book with Debbie Harry of Blondie and working on a new record.

CHANTAL RINGUET is a Canadian award-winning author, scholar and translator. She is the author of collections of poems (2009 Jacques-Poirier literary award) and of works on Yiddish Montreal. With Gérard Rabinovitch, she has published Les révolutions de Leonard Cohen (PUQ, 2016), which received a 2017 Canadian Jewish Literary Award. With Pierre Anctil, she has published a translation of the early biography of Marc Chagall (Mon univers. Autobiographie, Fides, 2017). She has been a Fellow of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York, Scholar-in-Residence at the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute (Brandeis University) and Writer-in-Residence and literary translator in residence at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. She taught the course “Leonard Cohen: In Words and Music” at McGill University (Fall 2017).