

## THE McCORD MUSEUM HAS ACQUIRED AN OUTSTANDING COLLECTION OF POSTERS FROM THE WORLD OF MAGIC, THE LARGEST IN CANADA

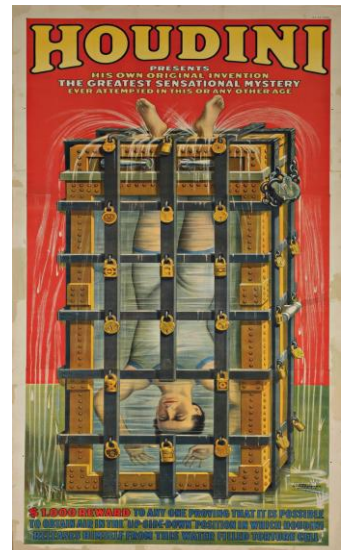
Montreal, February 10, 2015 - The McCord Museum has acquired an outstanding collection of posters and documents related to magic, the only one of its size in Canada. It is considered one of the five most important private collections on the subject in the world. No other public institution has such a collection, particularly one so well conserved. This acquisition was made possible through a donation from La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso, a philanthropic foundation based in Toronto.

Established in 2013, La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso actively supports a number of not-for-profits in the medical and cultural arenas, through both financial donations and fundraising assistance. Chief among these are Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation, Camp Oochigeas, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the McCord Museum.

Valued at approximately \$3 million, this collection contains 600 posters from the golden age of magic, the 19th and early 20th centuries. It also includes 200 rare books and more than 200 documents – programs, display ads, photographs, memorabilia, correspondence, autographs, and objects linked to the famous magician Harry Houdini (1874 – 1926). The collection is the ultimate reference for all collectors of objects from the world of magic.

“This is an extraordinary acquisition,” said Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum. “We are very pleased to see it become an integral part of Canadian heritage and the wealth of the Museum. We wish to express our deep gratitude to La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso for its exceptional generosity. Thanks to the foundation, the collection will be listed, catalogued and digitized under the direction of Christian Vachon, Curator, Paintings, Prints and Drawings, and the McCord Museum will become a documentation centre on the subject. The public and researchers from around the world interested in magic will have access to the collection online. It will also be the subject of a major exhibition in 2017.”

Emmanuelle Gattuso chose to entrust the collection to an institution in her hometown of Montreal. “I wanted to honour my husband, Allan Slaight, who has been fascinated by magic since he was a child and has written an



*Houdini Presents His Own Original Invention  
The Greatest Sensational Mystery Ever Attempted in This or Any Other Age  
The Strobridge Litho. Co., 1916  
213 x 102 cm  
© The McCord Museum*

important three-volume work, *The James File*, about the magician James Stewart (1908-1996). The most appropriate museum for this collection seemed to me to be the McCord, not only because it is dedicated to social history, but also because of the many great magicians who appeared in Montreal,” said Ms. Gattuso.

Magic and vaudeville shows were extremely popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They attracted large crowds in every city where the best-known illusionists appeared, travelling the world with large amounts of equipment.

Posters were the most common form of advertising. Most of the posters are about 50 cm by 75 cm, but others are much larger, measuring 2 m by 2.75 m. Half of them were created by some of the best American lithography workshops of the time, including Strobridge and Otis, the others by European workshops, such as Friedländer in Germany. The posters promoted artists who toured the world, a number of them performing in Montreal. Alexander Herrmann appeared in Montreal several times in 1892, where he performed at Queen’s Hall, before the construction of the Eaton’s store, and in 1894. His rival, Harry Kellar, levitated his assistant before amazed Montreal spectators between 1896 and 1906. The two men fought a veritable poster war in Montreal, which was the subject of several articles in local newspapers. Howard Thurston, Kellar’s successor and a friend of Harry Houdini, appeared at Loew’s in Montreal in 1933. Houdini gave a series of performances in Montreal, in 1911, 1915, 1925 and 1926. On the latter occasion, during a show at the Princess Theatre, Houdini was invited by some McGill University students to make a presentation about magic, which took place in the ballroom of McGill’s social centre, now the McCord Museum!

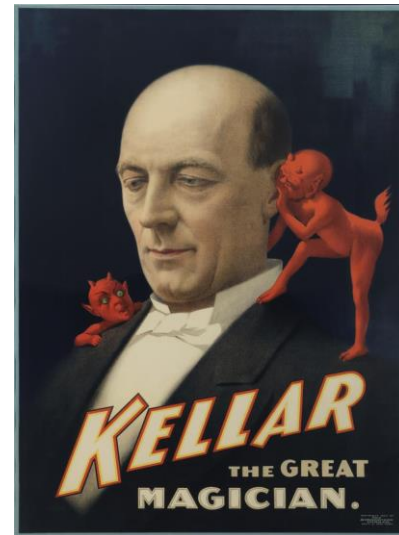
### About the McCord Museum

The McCord Museum is dedicated to the preservation, study and appreciation of Montreal's social history, both past and present, as well as its people, artists and communities. It is home to one of the largest historical collections in North America, consisting of First Peoples objects, costumes and textiles, photographs, decorative and visual artworks, and textual archives, totalling more than 1,440,000 artefacts. With its contemporary perspective on history, the McCord Museum produces exciting exhibitions that captivate visitors from Montreal, Canada and beyond. It also offers educational and cultural activities, as well as innovative projects on the Internet. **McCord Museum, Our People, Our Stories.**

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Photographs available: <http://bit.ly/1vqcLah>

Interview possibilities with Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum and Christian Vachon, Curator, Paintings, Prints and Drawings



**Kellar the Great Magician**  
The Strobridge Litho. Co., 1894  
92 x 67 cm  
© McCord Museum

**Source and information:**

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