

# PRESS RELEASE

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE



## **THERE ONCE WAS A SONG BY ARTIST MERYL McMASTER A REFLECTION ON THE RELATION BETWEEN HUMANS AND NATURE**

**Montreal, March 30, 2021** – As part of its Artist-in-Residence program, the McCord Museum is presenting *There Once Was A Song* by Meryl McMaster, an artist of nêhiyaw (Plains Cree), British and Dutch heritage. Running from April 2 to August 15, the exhibition examines the relation between humans and nature through works inspired by objects in the Museum’s collection.

For the first time, Meryl McMaster has created an exhibition where she combines photography, her preferred art form, with other media like video and sculpture.

*“We are very happy to exhibit the work of Meryl McMaster as part of our Artist-in-Residence program. Meryl is an exceptional emerging visual artist whose unique reflective process never fails to produce compelling work. **There Once Was a Song** beautifully illustrates her creative approach, inviting viewers to question their relationship with nature,”* notes Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum.

***There Once Was a Song** takes visitors into the heart of three original works inspired by late 19th century glass bell jars from the Museum’s Material Culture collection. Symbols of another era, these jars containing mounted animals and dried plants were the starting point for Meryl McMaster’s creative process, in which she questions the desire to capture and confine the natural world in order to freeze it in time.*

*“Within the jars, taxidermized animals and preserved plants appear as restricted and silenced creatures of utility, perpetually at the service of humanity’s often self-destructive desire to exert control over time and nature. This desire is a reminder of how easily the wisdom of the land and its history has been disregarded. The works in the exhibition consider and accept this fear of loss as a natural aspect of our experience: something that we all share and from which we should seek wisdom,”* explains Meryl McMaster.

These reflections inspired the creation of an installation featuring three complementary works made of various media. ***When The Storm Ends I Will Finish My Work, The Feather That Tomorrow Will Form*** and ***For The Song That Is To Follow*** borrow in part from the tradition of vanitas in their observation of correlations between life and death, growth and decay—universal conditions shared by all living things.

## MERYL McMASTER

Meryl McMaster earned her BFA in Photography from the Ontario College of Art and Design (2010) and is currently based in Gatineau. Known for her large-format self-portraits that have a distinct performative quality, she explores questions of self through land, lineage, history, and culture, with specific reference to her mixed nêhiyaw (Plains Cree), British and Dutch ancestry. McMaster's work has been included in solo and group exhibitions throughout Canada and internationally. Her awards include the Scotiabank New Generation Photography Award (2018), REVEAL Indigenous Art Award (2017), Canon Canada Prize (2010) and more. Her work is widely represented in the collections of the National Gallery of Canada, Art Gallery of Ontario, Montréal Museum of Fine Arts, Canadian Museum of History and the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC.

## THE McCORD MUSEUM'S ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

Launched in 2012, this program invites artists to take a critical and conceptual look at the McCord Museum's collection, reflecting on the connections between their artistic practice and the artefacts and stories they uncover during their research.

At the end of each residency, the artist presents a solo exhibition of works created for the occasion. As part of this research-oriented creative activity, artists are encouraged to communicate their own interpretation of the collection and propose new ways of interpreting history in its many forms.

## NOT TO BE MISSED!

**June 2, 2021 at 12 noon**

### ***Silenced Nature: The Taxidermy of the Living***

A virtual panel discussion in English that asks what taxidermy reveals about our relationship with nature through an examination of objects from the McCord Museum's collection linked to this tradition. Moderated by Bénédicte Ramade, a lecturer in the Department of Art History and Film Studies, Université de Montréal.

### **Speakers**

- Meryl McMaster, artist
- Sara Angelucci, artist
- Giovanni Aloï, art historian and professor, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Register online on the [Museum's Website](#).

Bell jar  
1870-1890  
Gift of Sandra Lang and Sarah Powell  
M994.48.2.1-2  
© McCord Museum





## COVID-19: PROVEN MEASURES FOR A SAFE VISIT

The Museum adheres to strict hygiene measures to ensure a safe and pleasant visitor experience. Since a limited number of people are being admitted, visitors are strongly advised to plan their visit by purchasing their Museum tickets [online](#). For more information on the safety measures in place, please visit the [Museum's Website](#).

## OPENING HOURS AND ADMISSION FEES

Due to current safety measures, a limited number of visitors are being admitted into the Museum at the same time. You must reserve your visit by purchasing tickets through our virtual [Admission Desk](#).

Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. | Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.  
Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Adults: \$19 | Seniors: \$17 | Students (13-30): \$14 | Ages 12 and under: Free | Indigenous people: Free

Wednesday evenings: Free (\$9.50 for major temporary exhibitions)

First Sunday of the month: Free for Quebec residents

*The McCord Museum sincerely thanks BMO Financial Group for free admission on Wednesday evenings and the J.A. DeSève Foundation for free admission for children ages 12 and under.*

## ABOUT THE McCORD MUSEUM

The McCord Museum is the museum of all Montrealers, a social history museum that celebrates life in Montreal, both past and present—its history, its people, and its communities. Open to the city and the world, the Museum presents exciting exhibitions, educational programming and cultural activities that offer a contemporary perspective on history, engaging visitors from Montreal, Canada and beyond. It is home to over 1.5 million artefacts, comprising one of the largest historical collections in North America, organized into the following departments: Dress, Fashion and Textiles; Photography; Indigenous Cultures; Documentary Art; Material Culture; and Archives.

– 30 –

Possibility of interviews with Hélène Samson, Curator, Photography, McCord Museum.

### PRESS KIT AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Interview requests:

Ludovic Iop

Officer, Public relations

514-402-0515

[ludovic.iop@mccord-stewart.ca](mailto:ludovic.iop@mccord-stewart.ca)



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO  
an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



Montréal

