

Press Release
4 New Exhibitions
Opens 20 February 2014

The Charles Baillairgé Pavilion Is Getting a Makeover and Becomes Home to *Four Figures of Modern Art in Québec*

Parc des Champs-de-Bataille
Québec (Québec) G1R 5H3

418 643-2150
1 866 220-2150

mnbaq.org

Press Contact

Linda Tremblay
Media Relations Officer

418 644-6460, ext. 5532
linda.tremblay@mnbaq.org



Québec City, Wednesday 19 February 2014 □ It is with great pride that the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec makes official the arrival of *Four Figures of Modern Art in Québec* in the heart of the Charles Baillairgé pavilion, the first phase in the redeployment of its collections in the new museum complex. Four new exhibitions – *Jean Paul Lemieux: Of Silence and Space*; *Alfred Pellan: The Wide-Awake Dreamer*; *Fernand Leduc, Painter of Light*; and *Jean-Paul Riopelle: Metamorphoses* – will provide an opportunity for visitors to appreciate four moments of our artistic and cultural heritage in a way they have never been seen before! This must-see event opens 20 February 2014 and will reveal the many-sided creative force and insatiable nature of Riopelle, the Surrealist turn of Pellan’s imagination, the light of Leduc and the attractive power of the work of Lemieux. To mark this event in a superlative manner, the crew at the Musée has put together a wide range of cultural programming for the enjoyment of the general public. Creative workshops, films, storytelling, encounters and special events will draw on the new exhibitions devoted to these four illustrious figures.

Remarkable works for a limited period of time

This uncommon inauguration is an opportunity to present an impressive selection of works from the Musée's collection in inventive and original gallery arrangements. It will also make remarkable works available to the public for a limited period of time through a number of exceptional loans. Two of these must-sees are Jean Paul Lemieux's *Julie et l'univers* (*Julie and the Universe*, 1965) and *1910 Remembered* (1962), which will be on view until 30 June. These two masterpieces have fetched dizzying sums at auction in recent years and will be sure to give rise to a host of emotions in lovers of the art of Lemieux. In addition, Alfred Pellan's two impressive murals, *Canada Est* (*Canada East*) and *Canada Ouest* (*Canada West*), will be shown for the very first time in Québec since they were commissioned by the Canadian government in 1943. Until the end of June 2014 they will occupy a prime spot near the gallery devoted to Pellan. Jean-Paul Riopelle's *Le Bestiaire* (*The Bestiary*), a monumental work from 1989 donated by Yseult Riopelle in 2006 which has not been exhibited for eight years, will be an impressive sight in the atrium of the Charles Baillairgé pavilion until 14 April 2014. Finally, the works brought together for the exhibition devoted to Fernand Leduc, that veritable pioneer of Automatism, will form the heart of the very first permanent gallery in Canada to be devoted to the artist. These are some of the excellent reasons to make regular and frequent visits to the MNBAQ, pronounced M-N-BAQ since the adoption of the new and resolutely contemporary brand image created by the team at Studio Feed, echoing the pure, avant-garde lines of the future Pierre Lassonde pavilion currently being built on the Grande Allée.

The completely restored and revamped Charles Baillairgé pavilion

“Offering the public projects that are dear to us and that are part of the history of our institution is always an emotional moment. With the restoration of the former jailhouse designed in 1867 by Charles Baillairgé we have preserved a moment of history, bringing together there for the first time under the same roof four masters of modernity in Québec: Jean Paul Lemieux, Alfred Pellan, Fernand Leduc and Jean-Paul Riopelle. This is a remarkable accomplishment on the part of the Musée's staff members and collaborators with the support of the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications and is a first step towards the great museum complex that will be born with the opening of the Pierre Lassonde pavilion currently under construction!” Line Ouellet, executive director of the MNBAQ, exclaims.

Since 2011, major work with a value of 4.5 million dollars has made it possible to restore the Charles Baillairgé pavilion and make it a worthy showcase for the works of Lemieux, Pellan, Leduc and Riopelle. Multidisciplinary teams of architects and specialized technicians were kept busy redoing the stone work, windows, mechanical and electrical systems and outdoor staircases and in addition installing an adequate lighting system and putting in a new café.

Through the singular careers of four artists whose destinies crossed – Lemieux, Pellan, Leduc and Riopelle – visitors will find in the galleries of the Charles Baillairgé pavilion four visions of modern art in Québec which will then lead to a new pavilion devoted entirely to the contemporary art of 1960 to today, the Pierre Lassonde pavilion scheduled to open in 2015.

Four Figures of Modern Art in Québec

“With this high-profile presentation, the Musée is honouring four important artists who have been championed and supported by our institution throughout its history and who are among the best represented in our collection,” remarks Paul Bourassa, director of collections and research at the MNBAQ.

This exhibition will enable visitors to plunge into the world of Jean Paul Lemieux, an artist who always followed his own path. From the narrative painting tinged with regionalism of his early years, Lemieux gradually moved to existential and universal themes: “The heart laid bare, without fail, in its irrefutable manifestness,” Anne Hébert said. Adopting traditional painting methods and drawing nostalgically on his immediate surroundings, Lemieux set his painting apart from haunting reality, creating instead a dream-like state. By the end of his life, this oneiric quality had achieved a cosmic dimension that was not without a degree of anxiety, modifying his approach to painting. Alfred Pellan, for his part, explored a Surrealist world informed by his extended sojourn in Paris, from 1926 to 1940, where he knew figures such as Pablo Picasso, André Breton, Max Ernst and Joan Miró. Pellan was always sympathetic to that “state of poetry” which, in his view, represented the essential quest of the Surrealist movement. It was only with his return to Québec in the 1940s that this orientation in his artistic idiom was confirmed, taking form initially in illustrations for books of poetry before quickly extending to his entire artistic output. At an early date, Fernand Leduc declared: “As an artist, I see myself working in an Impressionist tradition of ‘painters of light.’” From his early gestural Automatism to the monochrome canvases of his later years, this quest for light through colour was always at the root of Leduc’s work, on his path to “islands of light,” as he announced back in 1942 in a letter to his

friend Paul-Émile Borduas. Jean-Paul Riopelle, multi-faceted like his paintings from the latter half of the 1950s, was always striking out on new paths. This multifarious creative force and insatiable nature will thus be showcased, from his work with colour straight out of the tube to his use of cascading paper in his immense collages.

Together these exceptional artists, beyond the individual paths each chose to go down, played a major role in defining modern art in Québec. Their remarkable work, spread across several decades, will demonstrate this to visitors in the finest way possible, four times over.

The Four Figures of Modern Art in Québec exhibitions have received funding from the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications.