

Press release
New exhibition
From February 16 to May 12, 2024

Generations. The Sobey Family and Canadian Art



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Québec City, Thursday, February 15, 2024 ✕ From February 16 to May 12, 2024, the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) is proposing an amazing emotional voyage through works from the outstanding Sobey collection. Presented exclusively in Québec at the MNBAQ, the *Generations. The Sobey Family and Canadian Art* exhibition affords a **unique perspective of Canadian creativity past and present**. The works of the numerous renowned artists assembled and the striking selection of 150 works enable the imposing, diverse exhibition to relate the historic footnotes that underpin our majestic country's great history from sea to sea.

Major Canadian artists

The 30 artists assembled include major artists such as the 19th century painter **Cornelius Krieghoff**; artists from the **Group of Seven**, including



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Lawren S. Harris, Arthur Lismer, and J. E. H. MacDonald, and their 20th century contemporaries David Milne and Emily Carr; masters of Québec art ranging from Maurice Cullen and Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté to abstract painters Jean Paul Riopelle and Paul-Émile Borduas; and major contemporary Indigenous artists such as Brenda Draney, Ursula Johnson, Kent Monkman, and Annie Pootoogook, many of whom have received the Sobey Art Award.

Bold assemblages

Drawing inspiration from the collection principle, the exhibition weaves unique, surprising links between the artists. Hence, visitors will discover works by the contemporary painter Peter Doig juxtaposed with those of the 20th century painter David Milne. Artists from Ontario and Québec will also share the same space, thereby flouting the segregation that art historians have imposed over the years. Lastly, new relationships are established between artists whose works are intertwined despite their differences, such as Emily Carr and Arthur Lismer or James Wilson Morrice and Jean Paul Lemieux.

Eight separate alcoves make up this unique panorama of Canadian creativity reflected both in tormented landscapes and abstractions and personal narratives and striking revisions of Canadian history. The exhibition is sure to satisfy visitors' thirst for beauty and new, timeless voyages at the heart of our majestic country.



The Sobey collection

For the love of art

For more than three generations, the Sobey family from Stellarton, Nova Scotia, has preserved and promoted the heritage of Canadian artists past and present in its varied collections and demonstrated the scope and depth of its commitment to Canadian art and its visionary leadership in the cultural sector.

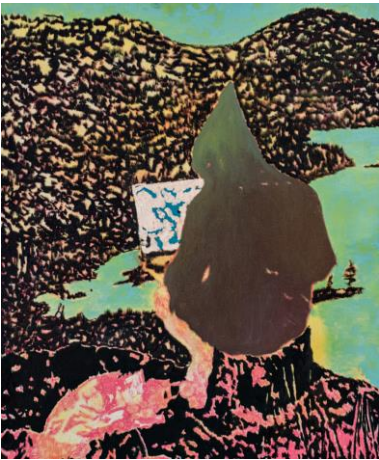
Irene and Frank H. Sobey, founders of the Canada-wide Sobey's supermarket chain, were pioneers in the 1960s and 1970s. Donald Sobey



(1934-2021) displayed the same discernment from the standpoint of art and entrepreneurship as his parents. He maintained the tradition and established the Sobey Art Award, which for over 20 years has highlighted emerging Canadian artists.

Les The artists in the exhibition

- Borduas, Paul-Émile (Québec, 1905 – Paris, 1960)
 Carmichael, Franklin (Ontario, 1890 – Ontario, 1945)
 Carr, Emily (British Columbia, 1871 - British Columbia, 1945)
 Casson, A. J. (Ontario, 1898 – Ontario, 1992)
 Colville, Alex (Ontario, 1920 - Nova Scotia, 2013)
 Cullen, Maurice (Newfoundland, 1866 - Québec, 1934)
 Doig, Peter (Born in the United Kingdom, 1959)
 Doucette, Mario (Born in New Brunswick, 1971)
 Draney, Brenda (Born in Alberta, 1976)
 Gagnon, Clarence (Québec, 1881 – Montréal, 1942)
 Harris, Lawren S. (Ontario, 1885 - British Columbia, 1970)
 Jackson, A. Y. (Québec, 1882 – Ontario, 1974)
 Johnson, Ursula (Born in Nova Scotia, 1980)
 Kriehoff, Cornelius (The Netherlands, 1815 - United States, 1872)
 Kurelek, William (Alberta, 1927 – Ontario, 1977)
 Lemieux, Jean Paul (Québec, 1904 – Québec, 1990)
 Lismer, Arthur (England, 1885 - Montréal, 1969)
 MacDonald, J. E. H. (United Kingdom, 1873 – Ontario, 1932)
 May, H. Mabel (Québec, 1877 – British Columbia, 1971)
 Milne, David (Ontario, 1882 – Ontario, 1953)
 Monkman, Kent (Born in Ontario, 1965)
 Morrice, J. W. (Québec, 1865 – Tunisia, 1924)
 O'Brien, John (New Brunswick, 1831 – Nova Scotia, 1891)
 Pilot, Robert Wakeham (Newfoundland, 1898 – Montréal, 1967)
 Pootoogook, Annie (Nunavut, 1969 – Québec, 2016)
 Pratt, Christopher (Newfoundland, 1935 – Newfoundland, 2022)
 Riopelle, Jean Paul (Québec, 1923 – Québec, 2002)
 Suzor-Coté, Marc-Aurèle de Foy (Québec, 1869 - United States, 1937)
 Thomson, Tom (Ontario, 1877 – Ontario, 1917)
 Tisiga, Joseph (Born in Alberta, 1984)
 Varley, F. H. (United Kingdom, 1881 – Ontario, 1969)



Insights on several selected works

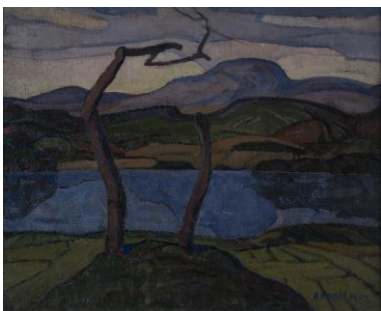
In order to offer a broad, diversified panorama, the exhibition focuses on promising themes and fascinating duos such as *Cornelius Krieghoff/Kent Monkman; Impressionism, Automatism, and the Group of Seven; the Group of Seven; In Troubled Waters; Emily Carr and Arthur Lismer; The Storytellers; David Milne and Peter Doig; James Wilson Morrice and Jean Paul Lemieux*, to enable visitors to discover an array of rare, outstanding works. This brief overview is indeed impressive.



Among the key works in the first alcove, a series of paintings by **Cornelius Krieghoff**, which have lost none of their appeal for history buffs, sustains comforting truths. *Crossing the St. Lawrence with the Royal Mail at Quebec* (1859) is one of Krieghoff's works exhibited alongside the works of Kent Monkman, an artist of Cree ancestry, who mocks the moralizing tradition of genre painting that Krieghoff and his Dutch predecessors embody.



The next area boldly groups together works by Québec impressionists, artists from the Group of Seven and the *Refus global* that have not at first sight been presented together. This novel approach reveals that they all share an energetic touch and a northern palette. *Algoma Hill* (1920) by **Lawren S. Harris**, a skilled draughtsman from the Group of Seven who transposed this energy, is a prime example.



The section devoted to the Group of Seven includes *Au matin, lac O'Hara* (1926) by **J. E. H. MacDonald**, imbued with an almost mystical fervour to paint the wild territories of Northern Canada [see the work on page 1], but several fundamental facets are presented there. *Sentinels* (circa 1925–1928) by **H. Mabel May**, with its two leafless trees standing above a clear lake, is telling. More than half the members of the Beaver Hall Group in Montréal were women, unlike the Toronto artists' group in which there were none.



The section entitled “In Troubled Waters” includes **Kent Monkman’s** impressive masterpiece *Study for “mistikôsiwak (Wooden Boat People): Resurgence of the People,”* (*Variation finale*) (2019). Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, the artist’s gender-fluid alter ego, strikes a heroic pose in a scene that humorously, highly critically reexamines Canada’s colonial history.

At the heart of the same area, *Road Work* (1969) by **Alex Colville**, an expert in images indelibly engraved in memory, provides a perfect example of the coloniser’s intrusion in which the modern road crosses the natural landscape to tame and use it [see the work on page 7].

In the space devoted to *Emily Carr and Arthur Lismer*, visitors can admire the swirling lines and movement through which **Emily Carr** sought to reflect the rhythms of the natural world. The magnificent painting *Macaulay Point* (circa 1924) rapturously illustrates its key source of inspiration [see the work on page 2].

The particularly astonishing alcove devoted to *The Storytellers* highlights the work of **Annie Pootoogook**, who comes from a line of women artists. She has produced revolutionary drawings of her community that offer a contemporary look at Inuit life. *A Friend Visits* (2008) is one of Pootoogook’s imposing, delicate works.



The Storytellers section also includes *1755 (Wonder Woman)* (2005) by New Brunswick artist **Mario Doucette**. It depicts the bloody history of the deportation of the Acadians under British domination in the mid-18th century.

The section devoted to *David Milne and Peter Doig* celebrates the ties that link the artists beyond the generations, i.e., the exploration of the city as a subject. Internationally renowned artist **Peter Doig** divides his time between Trinidad and the United Kingdom and will never forget his experience of Canadian art and landscapes, as *Figure in Mountain Landscape* (1997) reveals [see the work on page 3].



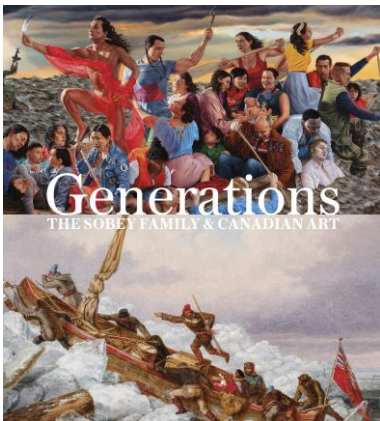
The last section affords a fresh perspective of *James Wilson Morrice and Jean Paul Lemieux*. *Les deux frères 1909* (1978) is part of a rarely exhibited series of paintings by **Jean Paul Lemieux**. It radically simplifies shapes and the application of colour and is part of the 20-odd works inspired by photographs that the artist’s older sister took during summers spent at Kent

House (now the Manoir Montmorency) in Beauport, near Québec City, or in the vicinity.

A remarkable catalogue to celebrate Canadian creativity

Sarah Milroy, Executive Director and Chief Curator of the McMichael Canadian Collection, the Ontario institution that has organized this major travelling exhibition, produced *Generations. The Sobey Family and Canadian Art*, which admirably rounds out a visit to this remarkable exhibition.

The catalogue presents more than 170 works from the Sobey collections. It includes major works by the first European newcomers, the Group of Seven and their contemporaries, Québec impressionist painters and Les Automatistes, and contemporary Indigenous artists. *Generations. The Sobey Family and Canadian Art* focuses on a collection of rare paintings by **Jean Paul Lemieux**, the outstanding works of **Kent Monkman**, and **Cornelius Krieghoff's** vivid winter scenes, and sheds light on several basic aspects of art history in Canada.



The richly illustrated 224-page catalogue also includes fascinating essays focusing on the Sobey collections. In addition to the history of this generous family of philanthropists and a stimulating interview with artist **Kent Monkman** by **Sarah Milroy**, texts from contributors **Jocelyn Anderson**, **Michèle Grandbois**, **Ian A. C. Dejardin**, and **John Geoghegan** shed light on aspects of the collections, including the question of national identity among Canadian painters, the history of the Group of Seven, and its relationship with Québec painters.

Credits

The exhibition *Generations. The Sobey Family and Canadian* was organized and circulated by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection (Kleinburg, Ontario).



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*The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is a state corporation funded by the
Gouvernement du Québec.*

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Remerciements spéciaux

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Generations. The Sobey Family and Canadian Art

Pierre Lassonde Pavilion

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INFORMATION:

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Page 1 –Photos from top to bottom: J.E.H. MacDonald, *Morning, Lake O'Hara*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 76,2 x 88,9 cm, Empire Company Limited, Stellarton, NS. // William Kurelek, *After the Blizzard in Manitoba*, 1967. Techniques mixtes sur Masonite, 50,8 x 73 cm. Collection of Donald and Beth Sobey. © Estate of William Kurelek, Courtesy of the Wynick/Tuck Gallery, Toronto

Page 2 – Photos from top to bottom: David Milne, *Gray Billboards*, circa 1912. Oil on canvas, 61 × 50,2 cm. Collection of Frank and Debbi Sobey. © Estate of David B. Milne Emily Carr, *Macaulay Point*, c. 1924. Huile sur toile, 45,7 × 60,3 cm. Collection of Kent Sobey // Frank H. Sobey with a shipment of lambs, circa 1924

Page 3 – Photos de haut en bas : Peter Doig, *Figure in Mountain Landscape*, 1997. Oil on canvas, 91,4 x 76,2 cm, Collection of Donald and Beth Sobey. © Peter Doig (Copyright Visual Arts-CARCC, 2023) // Tom Thomson, *Moonlight*, circa 1915. Oil on canvas, 88,9 × 72,4 cm. Empire Company Ltd., Stellarton, NS

Page 4 – Photos from top to bottom: Cornelius Krieghoff, *Crossing the St. Lawrence with the Royal Mail at Quebec*, 1859. Oil on canvas, 43,8 × 61,6 cm. Collection of the Sobey Art Foundation // Lawren S. Harris, *Algoma Hill*, 1920. Oil on Canvas, 116,2 × 137,2 cm. Collection of Donald and Beth Sobey. © Family of Lawren S. Harris // H. Mabel May, *Sentinels, date ?*. Oil on canvas, 55,2 × 66,7 cm. Collection of Donald and Beth Sobey © Estate of H. Mabel May

Page 5 – Photos from top to bottom: Kent Monkman, *Study for "mistikôsiwak (Wooden Boat People): Resurgence of the People," (Final Variation)*, 2019. Acrylic on canvas, 107,3 × 213,4 cm. Collection of the Sobey Art Foundation © Kent Monkman // Annie Pootoogook, *A Friend Visits*, 2008. Lithograph on paper (23/50), 38,1 × 56,5 cm. Collection of Rob and Monique Sobey © Estate of Annie Pootoogook // Mario Doucette, *1755 (Wonder Woman)*, 2005. Pastel, ink, pencil, and acrylic on wood, 66 × 121,9 cm. Collection of Kent Sobey © Mario Doucette // Jean Paul Lemieux, *Les deux frères 1909*, 1978. Oil on canvas, 25,4 × 35,6 cm. Collection of Donald and Beth Sobey © Jean Paul Lemieux

Page 7 – Photo: Alex Colville, *Road Work*, 1969. Acrylic polymer emulsion on Masonite, 54,6 × 87 cm. Empire Company Ltd., Stellarton, NS. © A.C. Fine Art Inc.

General Information

OPENING HOURS OF THE MNBAQ*

Until May 31, 2024

Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Wednesday until 9 p.m.

Closed on Monday, except March 4, April 1 and May 20, 2024

** During the construction of the Riopelle Space, only the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion is open.*

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First Sunday of every month: **free**

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