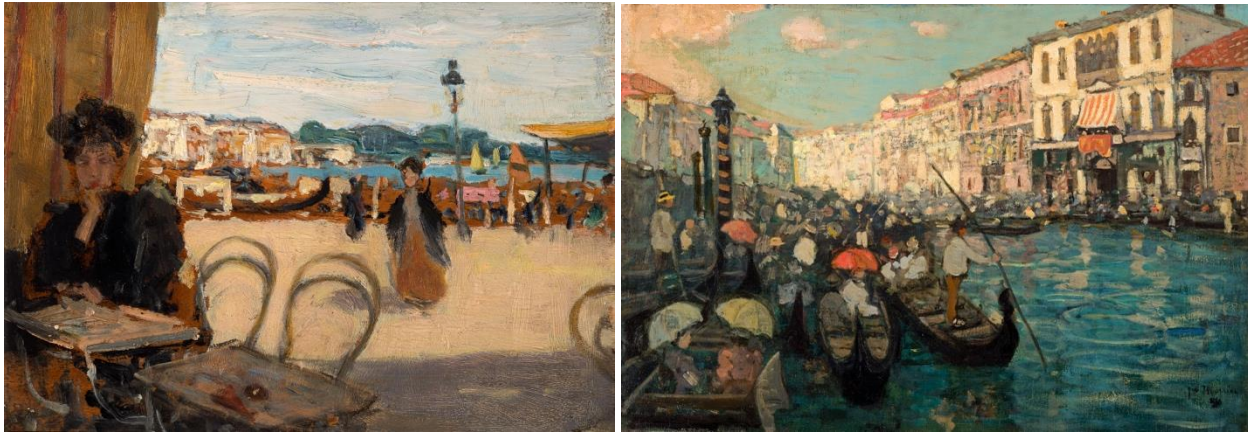


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Morrice in Venice Opens at the McMichael

An Intimate Journey Through the Canals and Courtyards of a Storied City,
Seen Through the Eyes of James Wilson Morrice



Left: James Wilson Morrice (1865–1924), *Woman at a Café*, c.1901, oil on panel, 19 x 25.5 cm, Private Collection, Montreal, photo: Toni Hafkenscheid **Right:** James Wilson Morrice (1865–1924), *Venice Regatta*, c.1900, oil on canvas, 51.4 x 74.6 cm, Mitchell Goldhar, photo: Toni Hafkenscheid

Kleinburg, ON - The McMichael Canadian Art Collection proudly presents *Morrice in Venice*, a new exhibition celebrating Canadian modernist James Wilson Morrice's evocative depictions of one of Europe's most enchanting cities. Opening May 31 and running through September 21, 2025, the exhibition draws on the groundbreaking research of distinguished art historian Sandra Paikowsky, and brings together a remarkable selection of Morrice's canvases, pochades, and sketches sourced from major public galleries and private collections across Canada. Together, these works reveal Morrice's distinctive vision of Venice.

James Wilson Morrice (1865–1924) was the first Canadian artist to make Venice a recurring focus in his work. Between the mid-1890s and 1908, he returned to the city almost annually, drawn to its atmospheric canals and piazzas. At a time when Venice was a magnet for artists from across Europe, Morrice stood apart as one of the few international painters to engage with the city over an extended period, building a nuanced and intimate visual record of the city's character and charm. His Venetian works earned widespread acclaim, appearing in exhibitions throughout Europe, including Paris and London, as well as in Toronto and Montreal, his hometown.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, who gravitated toward sweeping, picturesque views of the city and its landmarks, Morrice focused on capturing its quieter, more intimate moments. His paintings reveal the subtle beauty of the city's secluded calles, tranquil squares, and lively public spaces, rendered with a masterful interplay of light and colour. Whether viewed from a café table or through the winding paths of Venice's labyrinthine streets, Morrice's works offer a deeply personal and evocative glimpse into the soul of the city.

Curated by Paikowsky, a preeminent authority on Morrice's Venetian art and author of *James Wilson Morrice: Paintings and Drawings of Venice*, this exhibition explores the artist's themes, inspirations, and his use of Venice as a site for creative experimentation. Organized as a visual journey through the city, the exhibition offers a window into the artist's creative process and an opportunity to see Venice through the eyes of one of Canada's most accomplished artists.

Special thanks to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the National Gallery of Canada, whose generous support was instrumental to the realization of this exhibition.



Left: James Wilson Morrice (1865–1924), *Rialto Bridge, Venice*, c.1897, oil on panel, 18.1 x 25 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Photo: Jean-François Brière **Right:** James Wilson Morrice (Canadian 1865–1924), *Corner of the Doge's Palace, Venice*, c.1901, oil on board, Bequest of Miss Margaret Rousseaux, 1958, photo: Mike Lalich, 2023, Art Gallery of Hamilton

ABOUT THE ARTIST

James Wilson Morrice (1865–1924) is Canada's first modern painter and the only Canadian to spend substantial time in Venice. Born in Montreal to a textile merchant family, he studied law in Toronto. At that time, he began his lifelong pattern of sending artworks to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts and the Art Association of Montreal's annual exhibitions. Ultimately deciding against a career in law, he was in Paris by early 1890, studying art at the Académie Julian. Morrice would maintain a Parisian studio-residence all his life—one

of the few Canadian artists to settle permanently abroad—exhibiting regularly at prestigious art venues in Paris. He made annual trips to Montreal until 1914, then less frequently, painting his hometown as well as rural Quebec landscapes to the east along the St. Lawrence.

Morrice was a great artist-traveller; his curiosity for new experiences took him regularly to the northern coast of France, to England, the Netherlands, Spain, as well as to Venice. Starting in 1912, his trips to North Africa provided new subjects and a brighter palette. In early 1915, he added Cuba and Jamaica to his itinerary. More painting trips to North Africa and the Caribbean followed. He died in Tunis in January 1924 at age fifty-nine. After his death, major exhibitions in Paris and Canada celebrated his achievements as a painter of the modern world. When Canada opened its first pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1958 Morrice's paintings were again on display—fifty years after his last visit to the city.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Sandra Paikowsky, C.M., is a Canadian art historian, academic, curator, and writer whose career spans five decades. A professor emerita at Concordia University, she was the long-time Editor and Publisher of the *Journal of Canadian Art History* and was appointed to the Order of Canada in 2015 for her significant contributions to the development of Canadian art history as a discipline. From 1981 to 1992, she served as the director and curator of the Concordia Art Gallery. Her recent research has focused on Montreal women abstract painters, modernism in Canadian representational art, art institutions in the Maritimes, and James Wilson Morrice's paintings of Venice.

CURATORIAL TALK | June 29, 2 pm

Join us on Sunday, June 29 at 2 pm for a Curatorial Talk with Sandra Paikowsky in conversation with Sarah Milroy, Executive Director and Chief Curator of the McMichael. This engaging dialogue will explore Paikowsky's research and key highlights from the exhibition.

Ces informations sont aussi disponibles en français.

Media wishing to request interviews, media tours, obtain high-resolution images or review copies of publications are asked to contact Sadie Evans at sevans@mcmichael.com or 905.893.1121 ext. 2290.

ABOUT THE McMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is an agency of the Government of Ontario and acknowledges the support of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, and the McMichael Canadian Art Foundation. It is the only major museum in the country devoted exclusively to Canadian art. In addition to touring exhibitions, the McMichael houses a permanent collection of more than 7,000 works by historic and contemporary Canadian artists, including Tom Thomson, the Group of Seven and their contemporaries, Indigenous artists, and artists from the many diasporic communities. The gallery is located on 100 acres of forested land and hiking trails at 10365 Islington Avenue, Kleinburg, north of Major Mackenzie Drive in the City of Vaughan. For more information, please visit mcmichael.com.

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