

# McMichael

CANADIAN ART COLLECTION D'ART CANADIEN

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION ANNOUNCES MAJOR EXHIBITION TO MARK CENTENARY OF THE GROUP OF SEVEN, AND A COMPLIMENTARY EXHIBITION ON CANADIAN WOMEN ARTISTS OF THE 1920s and 1930s**



Lawren S. Harris, *Montreal River*, c. 1920. Oil on paperboard. 27 c 34.7 cm. Gift of the Founders, Robert and Signe McMichael. McMichael Canadian Art Collection. 1966.16.77

**October 21, 2019, KLEINBURG, ON** – On May 7, 1920, a group of artists calling themselves the Group of Seven mounted their first formal exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario). Approximately 2000 visitors passed through the doors during the exhibition’s three-week run. Of the more than 120 paintings on view, only six sold. “Seven Painters Show Some Excellent Work” read the headline in Toronto’s *Daily Star* newspaper, reflecting the moderate opinion of most critics. In a letter to his mother, painter A.Y. Jackson wrote that the exhibition was “attracting quite a lot of attention even if it is not understood.”

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However, the seven exhibiting artists – Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A. Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald and Frederick Varley – wouldn't remain little-understood for long. Although forced to return to their day jobs after that first exhibition, the Group's reputation for rugged, vibrant and alive depictions of the Canadian landscape in a distinct vernacular style grew, and their names are now enshrined in the pantheon of Canadian artists. Today the Group of Seven, later joined by members A.J. Casson, Edwin Holgate and L.L. FitzGerald, and their contemporaries Tom Thomson, David Milne and Emily Carr, are recognized as the definitive progenitors of a distinctly Canadian style of art.

In commemoration of the centenary of that first exhibition, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection will mount a landmark exhibition of the group's finest pieces from the McMichael's permanent collection entitled "*A Like Vision: The Group of Seven at 100*" and opening January 25, 2020 and running through December 2020. The exhibition of more than 280 artworks will span five galleries and include beloved masterpieces by every member of the Group, including Jackson's haunting *First Snow, Algoma* (1919/20), Carmichael's autumnal symphony *October Gold* (1922), and Lawren Harris' magisterial *Mount Robson* (1929). Alongside these masterworks will be lesser-known pieces by the Group including a series of humorous and impressionistic sketches by Arthur Lismer, many depicting his fellow artists, and Lawren Harris's unassuming *Montreal River* (c. 1920), the first work acquired by Robert and Signe McMichael in 1955.

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection, as it is known today, remains the spiritual home to the Group of Seven and a destination for all Canadians who cherish the artistic legacy of the country. The collection that grew out of the McMichaels' personal devotion to Canadian art and their friendships with many Group members has grown to encompass a mandate to collect, protect and promote all of the art of Canada, but the original collection of work by the Group of Seven remains its foundational treasure.

"The Group of Seven not only translated what they saw into a vivid visual language of their own," says Ian A.C. DeJardin, Executive Director of the McMichael, "but through that language they taught us to appreciate the natural beauty of Canada in all its vast scale and variety. Many Canadians continue to see the country through the Group's eyes, and it is thrilling to have an occasion to share the breadth and richness of the McMichael's collection with visitors on this seminal anniversary."

"The Group of Seven and their female contemporaries sought to capture Canada's natural strength and beauty in their own way, and in doing so, gifted us with a style all our own that truly showcases all of the beauty and talent that our province and country have to offer the world," said Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. "I encourage all Ontarians to visit the McMichael gallery and share in the celebration of these iconic artists."

"*A Like Vision: The Group of Seven at 100*" is curated by DeJardin who joined the McMichael in 2017. An internationally respected art historian and champion of Canadian art, DeJardin was lead curator for the record-breaking exhibition *Painting Canada: Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven* in his previous position as Director of the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London, and co-curated *From the Forest to the Sea: Emily Carr in British Columbia*.

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This exhibition has been financially assisted by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, a program of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, administered by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund Corporation. It is supported by Bolton Mills Retirement Community and the Group of Seven Circle of Supporters.

Opening on June 27, 2020 *Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment* is a major exhibition of Canadian women artists timed to coincide with, and offer commentary on, the centenary celebration of the Group of Seven. *Uninvited* will gather more than 200 pieces of art by a generation of extraordinary women painters, photographers, sculptors, architects and filmmakers from a century ago — pioneers who opened new frontiers for women artists in Canada — as well as works made by their Indigenous female contemporaries working in traditional media, for a cross-country snapshot of female creativity in this dynamic modern moment.

For the first time, the art of the famed Beaver Hall Group of painters from Montreal (among them Anne Savage and Liliias Torrance Newton) will be shown alongside the paintings of Emily Carr from British Columbia, and sculptures by Toronto artists Elizabeth Wyn Wood, Frances Loring and Florence Wyle. *Uninvited* will also include the contribution of women from immigrant communities in this period, such as the painters Regina Seiden and Paraskeva Clark, as well as the work of Canadian expatriates like the avant-garde photographer Margaret Watkins, who left her home in Hamilton for the US and Scotland.

The exhibition will stand as a testament to the talent and sophistication of these women, who often turned to themes that diverge from the landscape focus of the Group: urban life, portraiture, the industrial hinterland and the marginalized peoples left behind in Canada's march to modernity.

"The art made by Canadian women in this period is second to none in quality," says Sarah Milroy, McMichael Chief Curator and curator of the exhibition. "All of us at the McMichael are delighted to shine the spotlight at long last on this overlooked cohort of creative Canadians. This show builds on the scholarship of many curators who have been at the barricades for decades championing women's art. With *Uninvited*, we will bring all of these passionate voices together."

*Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment* is curated by McMichael Chief Curator Sarah Milroy. It will be accompanied by a catalogue featuring more than 30 essays by Canadian writers, artists and art historians from coast to coast.

*Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment* is made possible with the generous support of presenting sponsor BMO and the McMichael Women's Art Council.

An exclusive media preview for "*A Like Vision*": *The Group of Seven at 100* will be held on January 24, 2020 from 10 am to 12 pm. Media wishing to attend the media preview, speak with Executive Director Ian A.C. Dejardin, Chief Curator Sarah Milroy or to request high-resolution images are requested to contact Sam Cheung at [scheung@mcmichael.com](mailto:scheung@mcmichael.com) or 905.893.1121 ext. 2210.

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## 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 Sport, and the McMichael Canadian Art Foundation. It is the foremost venue in the country showcasing the Group of Seven and their contemporaries. In addition to touring exhibitions, its permanent collection consists of over 6,500 artworks by Canadian artists, including paintings by the Group of Seven and their contemporaries, as well as First Nations, Métis and Inuit artists. The gallery is located on 100 acres of northern landscape 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](http://mcmichael.com).

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