

For immediate release

Inner Space
An installation by Michael Merrill
in the four pavilions of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

Free admission at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts this fall
A season of Quebec and Canadian art to celebrate a reinvented Museum

Montreal, November 2, 2011 – Until January 22, 2011, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts presents ***Michael Merrill: Inner Space***, a series of twelve paintings – vinyl paint on plywood – by Montreal painter Michael Merrill, inspired by the work site and architecture of the new pavilion and the reinstallation of the Museum’s collections. The artist made paintings of places inside the Museum – public spaces, staircases, corridors, storage reserves and so on – and distributed them throughout the buildings’ interior. “As the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has different pavilions, each with a different architectural style,” he explains, “the paintings create an interior dialogue between the disparate sections of the Museum.” An unusual installation that adds the thrill of the hunt to the pleasure of a Museum visit!

Merrill has a strong connection to the museum world – particularly with the Museum, which he has been visiting since childhood – and his artistic practice. Between 1972 and 1975, he studied at the Museum’s School of Art and Design. He remembers that it was a very open-minded environment – in the spirit of the times – where he was able to discover and explore various media and genres like engraving and animation. “I was born in Montreal, and as a child I used to go to the Museum of Fine Arts with my aunt to see the exhibitions. Then, one summer in the early 1970s, I did an internship there; it consisted of moving artworks, as there was major construction going on. Professionally, aside from my practice as a painter, I also worked for years as a technician at the Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts and then at the Canadian Centre for Architecture. So it’s a world I’m perfectly at home in, and I continue to visit museums all over the world”.

The series presented at the Museum is devoted to the representation of some of its spaces, both public and restricted, and to the construction of the new pavilion. It is part of a larger body of work entitled “Painting about Art,” which goes back to the 1990s and starting with photographs. For the past ten years or so, the artist’s work has been examining the point where painting and photography meet. It’s something that fascinates him, because it challenges the fundamental notion of what painting is.

Although they are figurative, Merrill considers his paintings as very abstract. They are usually devoid of any human figures, focussing instead on the representation of architectural elements, artworks or mass-produced objects. “In actual fact, I am fascinated by how an environment – a context – structures the way we look at things. When an exhibition is being mounted, there is a moment of transformation when an artwork is taken out of a packing case and when it is hung

on the gallery wall. This interest is reflected in my choice of subjects, which are often places of transition or passage, like hallways, for example, or staircases or worksites. Pictures of these empty spaces that we regularly see or pass through remind us that our reality is made up of an infinite number of constantly evolving moments”.

Since 1975, Michael Merrill has been painting and exhibiting work nationally and internationally. His work was recently presented in Cologne, Germany, and at the Quebec Triennial. An exhibition of works on paper by Michael Merrill complementing the series at the Museum will be presented this fall, at the McClure Gallery, Montreal.

Stéphane Aquin, curator of contemporary art, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, is in charge of the presentation of **Michael Merrill: Inner Space**.

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Until January 15, 2012

Installations in the Jean-Noel Desmarais Pavilion, Michal and Renata Horstein Pavilion, Liliane and Davaid M. Stewart Pavilion, Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion

Free admission at all times

Images of a number of works in the exhibition are available on the Museum’s website at the following address: mmfa.qc.ca/media. Instructions to follow for reproducing works of art: The work of art is to be reproduced in its entirety without cropping, bleeding, guttering, overprinting or any other alteration of any kind, and the caption and photo credit must accompany the illustration of the work.

About the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has one of the highest attendance rates among Canadian museums. Every year, its 600,000 visitors enjoy its encyclopedic collection, unique in Canada and free to all at all times, and its original temporary exhibitions, which combine artistic disciplines (fine arts, music, film, fashion, design) and feature innovative exhibition design. The Museum designs, produces and circulates many of its exhibitions in Europe and North America. It is also one of Canada’s leading publishers of bilingual art books, which are distributed worldwide. More than 100,000 families and schoolchildren take part in its educational, cultural and community programmes every year. In 2011, the Museum has open a fourth pavilion – the Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion of Quebec and Canadian Art – and a 444 seat-concert hall housing a rare collection of Tiffany stained glass – Bourgie Hall. At the same time, the Museum’s rich collections have been reinstalled in the three other pavilions devoted to world cultures, European and contemporary art, as well as the decorative arts and design. Music is now an integral part of the Museum, providing another perspective on the visual arts, through musical audioguides and other innovative activities organized in co-operation with the new Arte Musica Foundation. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is a private, non-profit institution that must generate the funds for nearly 50% of its annual operating budget and nearly 100% of the acquisition of works for its collection.