Montreal, April 23, 2013 – The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) was today the meeting point for several destinies, at the heart of the story of two different families, through the gift, restitution and acquisition of three paintings with remarkable histories. On the occasion of Canada’s presidency in 2013 of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), in the presence of families, friends, partners of the Museum and Jean-François Lisée, Quebec’s Minister for International Relations, La Francophonie and External Trade and Minister responsible for the Montreal region, Montreal Mayor Michael Applebaum and the new chairman of the board of the IHRA, Dr. Mario Silva, the MMFA honoured the memory of lost kin during a ceremony that took place in its Bourgie concert hall to the lute music of Sylvain Bergeron.

On the one hand, a painting looted seventy years ago during the Anschluss and later restored to the descendants of its owners, was donated today to the Museum through the generosity of the Jorisch family in tribute to Montreal, the city that offered refuge to so many exiles. This work, stolen from Amalie Redlich in Nazi Austria, is *Children on Their Way Home from School* by the most famous Austrian painter of the Biedermeier period, Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller.

On the other hand, the Museum is returning *The Duet* by the master of the Caravaggesque school of Utrecht, Gerrit van Honthorst, to the Spiro family, whose forebears Ellen and Bruno were robbed of it through a forced sale in Germany. This painting is now restored to the family, whose memory will be perpetuated at the Museum through an acquisition purchased at the recent art fair in Maastricht and unveiled today: a fantasy figure by the same artist, also on a musical subject and executed in the same year.

“This joyous *Woman Tuning a Lute* represents an extraordinary coincidence which will immortalize on the Museum’s walls the memory of the Spiro family”, says Nathalie Bondil, Director and Chief Curator of the MMFA.

The Honourable Jason Kenney, Canada’s Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, stated that “our government is committed to the restitution of cultural property, and is glad to see that the MMFA shares this sentiment. In fact, your groundbreaking initiative in 1999 to see Giorgio Vasari’s *Wedding Feast at Cana* returned to the Fine Arts Museum of Budapest demonstrates your adherence to seeking justice. With this recognition of the Spiro family, the MMFA is once again showing its leadership in the international art community.”
1. Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller (1793-1865)
   *Children on Their Way Home from School*, 1836
2. Gerrit van Honthorst (Utrecht 1590 - Utrecht 1656)
   *Woman Tuning a Lute*
3. Gerrit van Honthorst (Utrecht 1590 - Utrecht 1656)
   *The Duet*
4. Mathilde Jorisch and Amalie Redlich
5. Amalie Redlich
7. Ellen Clara Spiro
Gift: *Children on Their Way Home from School* by Waldmüller, a looted painting finally restored to the family, who are today donating it to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller was the greatest painter of the Biedermeier period in Austria: “Every great museum in the world possesses one of his works (…) this one is to the Belvedere what Ingres is to the Louvre”, according to the directors of the two institutions, Anne Husslein-Arco and Henri Loyrette in the preface to their exhibition in 2009. Waldmüller excelled in portraiture, landscape and depictions of rural life, to which he brought a detailed treatment of the subject and close attention to composition together with a great concern for realism and a highly original approach to rendering natural light out of doors.

Beginning in 1830, Waldmüller spent his summers in the mountainous region of Berchtesgaden between Austria and Germany. “The pyramidal composition, dominated by the legendary peak of the Watzmann, depicts the long road – both literal and figurative – taken by two poor Bavarian schoolchildren coming home from the village. Overtly aware of the problems facing a society in which modernity was censured, beyond the initial charm of the scene the painter suggests the importance of education”, says Nathalie Bondil.

This exquisite painting, in perfect condition and in its original frame, came from a well-known Viennese family. It belonged to the industrialist Viktor Zuckerkandl, a major patron of the Secession and collector of Gustav Klimt’s works. At his death, it went to his sister Amalie Redlich. During the Anschluss in 1938, her property was seized and Amalie with her daughter Mathilde were deported to the ghetto of Lodz, where they disappeared in 1941. Amalie’s grandson Georges Jorisch was hidden in Belgium during the war and survived to move to Montreal in 1957. As the heir, in 2010-2012 he succeeded in recovering some of their looted possessions, including this treasured painting he remembered from childhood. After his recent death, in accordance with his wishes, Jorisch’s widow and children donated the work to the MMFA in gratitude to the city of Montreal for its hospitality in the post-war years.
Restitution: A looted painting, The Duet by Honthorst, leaves the MMFA to return to its original family

Today, the MMFA is returning The Duet by Gerrit van Honthorst, purchased in good faith from an art gallery in 1969, to the descendants of the Spiro family following an in-depth research process by the MMFA’s Archives Department and the receipt of new information from representatives of the family. On the advice of the ad hoc committee chaired by Michal Hornstein, president of the Museum’s Acquisition Committee - Non-Canadian Art before 1900 and Ancient Cultures, notably Nathalie Bondil, Hilliard T. Goldfarb, associate chief curator, Danièle Archambault, head of the Archives Department and Anke Kausch, art historian, the board of trustees under Chairman Brian M. Levitt decided to return the canvas. Steps were taken to obtain the necessary authorization to export the painting to Christie's Inc. auction house, where it will be sold for the benefit of the descendants of the Spiro family. The MMFA will transfer its rights, title and interest in the work to the Spiro family and will in return receive compensation for acting in good faith. On behalf of his family Gerald Matthes, Bruno Spiro’s grandson, has expressed his warmest gratitude to the Museum for its cooperation.

Nathalie Bondil explains: “Although we cannot but regret the loss of this superb canvas by a master of the Caravaggesque school of Utrecht, we feel that justice needs to be done. When, as if by a miraculous coincidence, we recently discovered at the Maastricht fair a joyous fantasy figure by the same artist painted in the same year and on the same subject, we at once decided to acquire it, thanks in part to this compensation fund, in order to perpetuate the memory of the deceased on our walls.”

The Duet belonged to Bruno Richard Spiro, a wealthy Hamburg merchant of Jewish origin. He probably acquired it in May 1931 when the Hermitage Museum of Saint Petersburg sold it at the Lepke auction in Berlin. Five months later, in a handwritten document, dated Oct. 7, 1931, Spiro mentions a Honthorst painting of a “musizierendes Paar” (a couple making music), on display in his music room. In this document, Spiro also transfers the ownership of his stately Berlin house on Heerstraße 85 with all its contents, including Honthorst’s painting, to his wife Ellen Clara Spiro. Under the Nazi regime, he was deported and died in 1936. In 1938, Ellen his wife was forced to give up all her assets. She emigrated to Great Britain the same year.
Acquisition: *Woman Tuning a Lute* by Honthorst to commemorate the Spiro family

Gerrit van Honthorst came from a family of artists and trained in the Utrecht studio of Abraham Bloemaert. While in Rome, where he lived from probably shortly after 1610 until 1620, Honthorst was greatly influenced by the art of Caravaggio and encountered the artists Ribera and Valentin and received commissions from Cardinal Scipione Borghese, a renowned collector and patron of the young Bernini. Shortly after his locally celebrated return to Utrecht in 1620, Honthorst combined the Italian artist’s dramatic light contrasts with a fresh and often light-hearted naturalism in his choice of subjects and their presentation. He was also famous for his nocturnal scenes with artificial lighting. A successful visit to England in 1628 led to growing international recognition for the artist and assured his patronage by royalty and private collectors for the rest of his career.

The MMFA’s painting was unknown until it re-emerged on the art market earlier this year from a private collection in France, where it had been acquired by an ancestor of the then owner in the mid-nineteenth century. Signed and dated (*G. Honthorst fe. 1624*), it corresponds to a number of similar images of male and female musicians executed by Honthorst between about 1623 and 1628, and in about 1624 in particular.

The Honthorst scholar Wayne Frantis, who first confirmed the attribution, associates it with a work formerly in the collection of the Prince of Orange and cited in a 1632 inventory of his residence at Noordeinde (“50. A painting of a nymph playing a lute [luyt] with an ebony frame, made by Honthorst”). The next work in the inventory is of another “nymph” playing a guitar (*bandoor*), also in a black frame and by Honthorst. Frantis associates the painting with this august provenance, although the reference is summary, especially as the artist executed several versions of the subject. This early history is complicated by the fact that two paintings which Napoleon took from the Prince’s collection are now at the Louvre and Fontainebleau (both measuring 82 x 68 cm). There is also a reference to apparently the same subject by Honthorst in the Prince’s collection in 1793, with dimensions of 96 x 74 cm. The latter dimensions may be incorrectly inscribed, however, as they do not correspond to Honthorst’s normal proportions for these images, most of which are essentially the same as our painting (81.5 x 64.5 cm). In the 1793 inventory, a *Woman Tuning a Lute* was hung together with a *Woman with a Guitar*. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the works were originally intended as pendants or that the Prince of Orange’s version is our version.

While Frantis has suggested that the pendant for the picture could be the Louvre painting of a blonde guitarist, Hilliard T. Goldfarb suggests that this picture was a pendant to another work, possibly of a male musician. More research remains to be done on this delightful and dramatic painting dating from Honthorst’s prime.
Research on provenance at the MMFA

Since 2001, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has been working with other museums in Canada and abroad to track down the whereabouts of artworks looted during the Second World War. In updating its Website (www.mmfa.qc.ca/collections/provenance), the Museum has listed its European paintings and sculptures executed prior to 1946 and acquired since 1933 for which details of provenance are incomplete for the years 1933 to 1945. The fact that these works are included does not mean that they were in fact looted, but that the MMFA is seeking details of their provenance. The Museum wishes to emphasize that the known history of most of these works makes it most unlikely that any of them were looted.

The Museum underlines that it follows the discussions between the government of The Netherlands and representatives of the Goudsticker family regarding the Deification of Aeneas by Charles Le Brun. This painting was one of a group of looted works that were returned by the Allies after the War and were officially sold at the auction by the Dutch authorities in 1951: It was purchased by Scheaffer Galleries of New York and acquired by the MMFA, in 1953. The compensation paid at that time to the dealer’s widow leads now to a disagreement between the heirs and the government of The Netherlands. After an in-depth investigation of both points of view, the MMFA, like the two American museums involved with works from the same group, has closed this file until additional facts come to light.

Other works given back by the MMFA

It will be recalled that the MMFA was the first museum in Canada to return a work to the original owner with the assistance of the Canadian government. This was Giorgio Vasari’s The Wedding Feast at Cana, returned to the Fine Arts Museum of Budapest in 1999. The Hungarian museum expressed its gratitude to the MMFA by lending some of the finest works in its collection for the exhibition Great Italian Masters from Raphael to Tiepolo: The Collection of the Fine Arts Museum of Budapest, presented at the MMFA in 2002.

Furthermore, last November the MMFA returned a toi moko to the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, Wellington, at an official ceremony attended by the directors of the two institutions. The restitution of this Maori head followed a request by the indigenous Polynesian population of New Zealand, who for the past two decades have been making efforts to repatriate some 500 tattooed and mummified remains and heads held in public collections across the world.

Publications on the collections of international art

A volume on the European paintings and the cultures of the world, the third catalogue on the Museum’s collections, to be published in 2014, will include detailed descriptions of some 600 works and objects. A fourth volume will appear in 2016-2017 to coincide with the opening of the future Pavilion of International Art, and will be devoted to the Museum’s collections of graphic arts and photographs together with the works of Michal and Renata Hornstein’s collection of Old Masters, currently in process of donation to the Museum.
Images of a number of works are also available on the Museum’s website at mmfa.qc.ca/media.

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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, more than 700,000 people visit its unique encyclopedic collection (free of charge) and its original temporary exhibitions, which combine artistic disciplines (fine arts, music, film, fashion, design) and feature innovative exhibition designs. It conceives, produces and circulates many of its exhibitions across Europe and North America. It is also one of Canada’s leading publishers of art books in English and French, which are distributed worldwide. Over 100,000 families and schoolchildren take part in its educational, cultural and community-oriented programmes each year. The fall of 2011 saw the opening of a fourth pavilion at the Museum – the Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion of Quebec and Canadian Art – and a 444-seat concert venue – Bourgie Hall – housing an outstanding collection of Tiffany stained glass windows. This expansion also brought about the reinstalation of the Museum’s rich holdings in its other three pavilions, which house the world cultures, international art, Medieval to contemporary European art, and decorative art and design collections. Music is now an integral part of the Museum, providing another perspective on the visual arts, through musical audioguides and other innovative activities. In 2012, with the opening of the new Studios Art & Education Michel de la Chenelière, the space available for school groups, families and community groups was doubled. A fifth pavilion dedicated to international art will open in 2017.