

THE MMFA CREATES A FUND FOR THE ACQUISITION OF WORKS BY ARTISTS UNDERREPRESENTED IN ITS COLLECTION

The artist Manuel Mathieu was the prime mover in the launching of the Marie-Solange Apollon Fund



Images: 1) Leila Zelli (born in 1981), *Birdsong*, 2019, HD video and animation. MMFA, purchase Marie-Solange Apollon Fund.
2) Manuel Mathieu. Photo: Jessica Plautz

Montreal, December 5, 2019 – The Foundation of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) is pleased to announce the creation of a fund devoted solely to the acquisition of works by emerging Quebec and Canadian artists who are underrepresented in the Museum’s collection. Thanks to a gift from the Haitian-Canadian artist Manuel Mathieu and support from other donors who share his vision, the Marie-Solange Apollon Fund came into being.

Marie-Solange Apollon Fund

In 2018 Manuel Mathieu became the first Haitian-Canadian artist to have a work acquired by the MMFA, thanks to the H el ene Couture Fund. On being offered this historic opportunity, the artist decided to make a real impact on the art scene in Quebec and worked with the Museum Foundation to create the Marie-Solange Apollon Fund.

The Marie-Solange Apollon Fund is the first endowment to be devoted solely to the acquisition of works by Quebec and Canadian artists whose oeuvre is under-represented or absent from the Museum’s collection. It was inspired by a woman who had played a major role in the artist’s life, his grandmother, who died of cancer in 2016. The creation of this fund was triggered by the Museum’s acquisition of *Self-portrait*, a painting by Mathieu depicting Marie-Solange Apollon in her garden in Blainville. The fund was established not only to pay tribute to her but above all to assure all artists who work in obscurity that their stories are also important.

Thanks to Mathieu’s generosity and leadership, this new fund will encourage the acquisition of works by artists that comply with the following requirements:

- Not represented or only minimally represented in the Museum’s collection;
- Living and ideally aged 45 or less;
- Works of art executed since the year 2000;
- Parity of representation of male and female artists;
- Living in Quebec.

A first acquisition

Thanks to this fund, the MMFA was able to acquire an initial work: *Birdsong* by **Leila Zelli**. An emerging artist, Zelli was born in Tehran in 1981 and came to Canada in 2004. It was in 2019, during her Impressions residency at the Museum, that she executed the video *Birdsong*.

Creating *in situ* video installations using existing media images and videos found on the Internet, she provides visual and sound experiences that create an opportunity to reflect on the state of the world, our relationship with the Other and the actual effect of our actions on humanity. In her oeuvre Zelli is never far from the region where she was born. She seeks to understand the source of the conflicts that are part of the daily life of the peoples of the Middle East and how they persevere under such difficult conditions. In this work she pays particular attention to children and the lot of women.

Contrary to her usual practice of finding her images on the Internet, during her Impressions residency Zelli took inspiration directly from the Museum's collection of Persian ceramics and added to her work short phrases based on tweets on Twitter (hence the # and the bird that wander across the screen), mainly referring to the lot of women in Iran since the Islamic of 1979.

The collection of the MMFA

Guided by humanistic values of inclusion and dialogue, the Museum aims to be an engine of change in the community of Montreal and to transmit through its collections the vision of a united and cohesive society.

Almost all of the MMFA's acquisitions are dependent on the generosity of donors and collectors who wish to enrich the holdings for the benefit of our society. Over the more than 160 years of its existence, the collections comprising more than 43,000 works have been assembled and continue to expand thanks to those visionary individuals who share the Museum's aims.

The Museum wishes also to thank the donors who have generously contributed to the Marie-Solange Apollon Fund to date: Geneviève Clermont, Michael St. B. Harrison, Lilian Mauer, Manuel Mathieu and Michael D. Penner.

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About the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

Drawing over 1 million visitors annually, the MMFA is one of the most visited museums in Canada and North America. Its highly original temporary exhibitions combine various artistic disciplines – fine arts, music, film, fashion and design – and are exported to the four corners of the world. Its rich encyclopedic collection, displayed in its five pavilions, includes international art, arts of One World, decorative arts and design, and Quebec and Canadian art. The Museum has seen exceptional growth in recent years with the addition of two new pavilions: the Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion, in 2011, and the Michal and Renata Hornstein Pavilion for Peace, in 2016. The MMFA complex also includes Bourgie Hall, a 460-seat concert hall, as well as an auditorium and a movie theatre. The MMFA is one of Canada's leading publishers of art books in French and English, which are distributed internationally. The Museum also houses the Michel de la Chenelière International Atelier for Education and Art Therapy, the largest educational complex in a North American art museum, enabling the MMFA to offer innovative educational, wellness and art therapy programmes. mbam.qc.ca