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McMichael head opens his first display

Ian A.C. Dejardin, executive director of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, is delving deep into the gallery's vaults to make a very personal selection of works of art to showcase in the exhibition, The Art of Canada: Director's Cut.

This is Dejardin's first curated show since taking the reins of the gallery in April, and he has great things in store for visitors.

His dip into the treasures of the McMichael collection, a display which will sprawl across four of the gallery's exhibition spaces, will feature artworks by Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven, Emily Carr, Norval Morrisseau, David Milne, Christiane Pflug, Alex Colville and some less familiar names. Dejardin promises many classic favourites, some that have been rarely seen, and others that might surprise an audience already familiar with Canadian art.

Through these choices, Dejardin will take visitors on a storytelling journey, revealing a lot about himself and how he fell in love with Canada along the way, and most importantly, showcase his deep appreciation for Canadian art. In this show he hopes to highlight the strength and depth of the gallery's core collection ? a collection which continues to grow and provide a unique arts and cultural experience for the public.

?In the vaults of the McMichael, I feel like a kid in a sweetshop ? it is so exciting to discover the richness and variety of work in the collection,? Dejardin said. ?As a passionate fan of the art of Canada, I am learning all the time. I am grateful to have the chance to share my first impressions of this wonderful collection with the public. I hope they will like what I have chosen.?

Dejardin's unabashed enthusiasm for the art of Canada is infectious. A Scot by birth, his love affair with Canadian art is longstanding, and began decades ago when he opened a book featuring reproductions of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven. He sees the art of Canada with a fresh eye ? an eye trained in some of the finest old master collections of the U.K. Nonetheless, he has become known over the decades as a passionate ambassador for Canadian art, which he believes deserves its rightful place on the world stage, something he has arguably done more than anyone else to help achieve.

As the Chief Curator and eventually Sackler Director of Dulwich Picture Gallery in London, England, it was this belief that led him to plan the first big Tom Thomson and Group of Seven exhibition outside of Canada in almost 100 years. Painting Canada: Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven was a smash hit and set record attendance at the renowned gallery before achieving equal success at the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Norway and the Groninger Museum in the Netherlands, before its final engagement at the McMichael in 2013. Two years later, Dejardin co-curated From the Forest to the Sea: Emily Carr in British Columbia with the distinguished Canadian curator and writer Sarah Milroy. He is currently collaborating with Sarah Milroy again on a 2018 exhibition featuring the works of revered painter David Milne, which will be on display at Dulwich Picture Gallery in February 2018, and at the McMichael in October 2018.