

## News Release

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## The Jewish Museum to Present Contemporary Art Exhibition Inspired by Global Icon Leonard Cohen

***Leonard Cohen: A Crack in Everything***  
**April 12–September 8, 2019**

New York NY, November 13, 2018—The Jewish Museum will present [\*Leonard Cohen: A Crack in Everything\*](#), a contemporary art exhibition inspired by the themes of Leonard Cohen’s life and work. This is the first exhibition entirely devoted to the imagination and legacy of the influential singer/songwriter, man of letters, and global icon from Montréal, Canada.

Organized by the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal (MAC), where it debuted, the exhibition is curated by John Zeppetelli, Director and Chief Curator at the MAC, and Victor Shiffman, Guest Curator. *Leonard Cohen: A Crack in Everything* will embark on a tour, with the Jewish Museum as its first stop, from April 12 through September 8, 2019. Following its New York presentation, the exhibition will travel to Copenhagen and San Francisco.

*Leonard Cohen: A Crack in Everything* includes commissioned works by a range of international artists who have been inspired by Cohen’s style and recurring themes in his work. The New York presentation will include Kara Blake, Candice Breitz, Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller, Christophe Chassol, Daily Tous Les Jours, Tacita Dean, Kota Ezawa, George Fok, Ari Folman, Jon Rafman, and Taryn Simon. The exhibition will also include a video projection showcasing Cohen’s own drawings, as well as an innovative multimedia gallery where visitors can hear covers of Cohen’s songs by musicians such as Lou Doillon; Feist; Moby; and The National with Sufjan Stevens, Ragnar Kjartansson, and Richard Reed Parry, among others.

A world-renowned novelist, poet, and singer/songwriter who inspired generations of writers, musicians, and artists, Leonard Cohen (1934–2016) was an extraordinary poet of the imperfection of the human condition, giving voice to what it means to be fully alert to the complexities and desires of both body and soul. For decades, he tenaciously supplied the world with melancholy and urgent observations on the state of the human heart, in songs such as “Suzanne,” “Bird on a Wire,” and “Hallelujah.” With equal parts gravitas and grace, Cohen teased out a startlingly inventive and singular language, depicting both an exalted spirituality and an earthly sexuality. His interweaving of the sacred and the profane, of mystery and accessibility, was such a compelling combination it became seared into memory.

Among the works in the exhibition is *I’m Your Man (A Portrait of Leonard Cohen)* (2017), a multi-channel video installation by Candice Breitz (South African, b. 1972). The work brings together a community

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of ardent Leonard Cohen fans to pay tribute to the late legend. Each of the 18 participants was offered the opportunity to perform and record his own version of Cohen's comeback album *I'm Your Man* (1988) in a professional recording studio. At Breitz's invitation, the album's backing vocals were sumptuously reinterpreted by the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue Choir, an all-male choir representing the congregation in Westmount, Canada, that Cohen belonged to all his life.

Film director Ari Folman's (Israeli, b. 1962) *Depression Chamber* (2017) allows one visitor at a time into a darkened room, where they are confronted by the demons of depression, a theme that can be traced throughout Cohen's body of work. After the visitor lies down, Cohen's "Famous Blue Raincoat" plays while the song's lyrics are projected on the walls, slowly morphing into letters and icons that symbolize Cohen's multifaceted thematic universe.

*The Poetry Machine* (2017), an installation by Janet Cardiff (Canadian, b. 1957) and George Bures Miller (Canadian, b. 1960), is a vintage Wurlitzer organ surrounded by various old speakers and gramophone horns. When a visitor presses an organ key, they hear Cohen's voice reading a poem from his *Book of Longing*, first published in 2006. Each key on the organ contains a different poem from the book. When numerous keys are pressed at once, a cacophony of Cohen's voice surrounds the visitor.

The exhibition takes its title from Cohen's song "Anthem" from the album *The Future* (1992):

*Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.*

In this song, Cohen suggests that there is always room for redemption and hope, because that very crack is what lets in the light that allows life to grow.

Organized by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC), the exhibition is curated by John Zeppetelli, Director and Chief Curator at the MAC, and Victor Shiffman, Guest Curator. The New York presentation is coordinated for the Jewish Museum by Kelly Taxter, Barnett and Annalee Newman Curator of Contemporary Art, and Ruth Beech, Senior Deputy Director, Programs & Strategic Initiatives.

Following its New York showing, the exhibition will tour to Kunstforeningen GL STRAND and Nikolaj Kunsthal, Copenhagen, Denmark (October 23, 2019 – February 16, 2020) and the Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco (September 17, 2020 – January 3, 2021).



The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue published by the MAC that details this unique exhibition by tracing the two years of preparation preceding its opening at the MAC in 2017 and includes texts by artists, curators, Leonard Cohen's biographer Sylvie Simons, and author Chantal Ringuet.

### **Support**

*Leonard Cohen: A Crack in Everything* at the Jewish Museum is made possible by the Goldie and David Blanksteen Foundation and Jane and Reuben Leibowitz.

Additional support is provided through The Skirball Fund for American Jewish Life Exhibitions, the Melva Bucksbaum Fund for Contemporary Art, and the Joan Rosenbaum Exhibition Endowment.

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC) thanks Leonard Cohen for his support of the exhibition. Robert Kory, Adam Cohen, and Lorca Cohen, provided invaluable assistance to the successful organization of this project.

The MAC is pleased to be associated with local institutional partners who have generously contributed to the production of this exhibition. The MAC extends its warm thanks to CBC/Radio-Canada, the exhibition presenter and creator of exclusive content for the exhibition. CBC/Radio-Canada also made its archives available at no charge to the artists creating work for this project.

Co-curatorial partners provided specific support in the realization of this exhibition. The MAC wishes to thank the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), which also made their full archives available free-of charge to the artists. The MAC and NFB are co-curators and coproducers of a work of art with the *Daily tous les jours* collective.

The MAC thanks Sony Music and Sony ATV for granting permission to use the songs and archival video material of Leonard Cohen to the artists and for the purpose of the exhibition.

### **About the Jewish Museum**

Located on New York City's famed Museum Mile, the Jewish Museum is a distinctive hub for art and Jewish culture for people of all backgrounds. Founded in 1904, the Museum was the first institution of its kind in the United States and is one of the oldest Jewish museums in the world. Devoted to exploring art and Jewish culture from ancient to contemporary, the Museum offers diverse exhibitions and programs, and maintains a unique collection of nearly 30,000 works of art, ceremonial objects, and media reflecting the global Jewish experience over more than 4,000 years.

Location: 1109 Fifth Avenue at 92nd Street, New York City



Hours: Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, 11am to 5:45pm; Thursday, 11am to 8pm; and Friday, 11am to 4pm.

Admission: \$18.00 for adults, \$12.00 for senior citizens, \$8.00 for students, free for visitors 18 and under and Jewish Museum members. Pay What You Wish on Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm. Free on Saturdays and select Jewish holidays.

Information: The public may call 212.423.3200 or visit [TheJewishMuseum.org](http://TheJewishMuseum.org)

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