

Press Release

New Exhibition

From October 12, 2017 to January 7, 2018

Mitchell | Riopelle

Nothing in Moderation



Parc des Champs-de-Bataille
Québec (Québec) G1R 5H3

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mnbaq.org

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Québec City, Wednesday, October 11, 2017 ✕ The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) is proud to present from **October 12, 2017 to January 7, 2018** for the very first time in the history of art the exhibition *Mitchell | Riopelle: Nothing in Moderation*, a unique encounter between the works of two giants of modern art, the American painter Joan Mitchell (1925-1992) and the Canadian artist Jean-Paul Riopelle (1923-2002). Following the example of such celebrated couples as Auguste Rodin and Camille Claudel, Man Ray and Lee Miller, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner, their unique creative passion reflects the constellation of romantic and artistic mythologies. The exhibition is meant to be an ode to creation, a genuine celebration of the strength and magnificence of painting.

A celebration of two giant practitioners of modernity

Some 60 majors works have been assembled to examine their respective artistic careers in terms of their relationship, from their first meeting in 1955 until their separation in 1979. Designed by the MNBAQ and organized in partnership with the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO),

supported by the Joan Mitchell Foundation in New York and the Estate of Jean-Paul Riopelle in Montréal, the exhibition mainly presents large-format paintings, a number of works on paper and archival documents from more than 30 French, Canadian and American lenders, private and museum collections. The presentation explores how the two artists, who shared their lives for nearly 25 years, in Paris, then in Vétheuil in the Seine valley, developed a studio practice and a distinctive body of work while sustaining a broad dialogue focusing on abstraction. Their tastes for the impressionist heritage, nature and a form of provocation certainly drew them together. Their deeply singular conception of painting and work methods were entirely shaped by their romantic relationship.

Essential works

Seven inviting themes structure the exhibition in four temporary galleries of the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion: *Prologue: Before the Encounter*; *The Encounter and Its Consequences: 1955-1958*; *The Rue Frémicourt Years: Resonance and Dissonance, 1959-1967*; *The Studios in Vétheuil and Saint-Cyr-en-Arthies: Separate Territories, 1968-1974*; *Canada and the North: Reflections of Two Solitudes, 1975-1977*; *Heading towards the End: 1978-1979*; and *Epilogue: The Death of Joan Mitchell, 1992*. They guide visitors to the heart of this story of creative passion.

The essential works in the exhibition include Jean-Paul Riopelle's *Saint-Anthon* (1954), one of a remarkable series of "white" paintings inspired by the snow-capped peaks of the Austrian Alps. The abstract landscape painting from a private collection in New York is a vast white expanse magnified by the presence of delicate, coloured calligraphy. It very likely attracted the attention of Joan Mitchell, who also focused on the dual nature of the white field, perceived at once as a background and as a space.

Mention should also be made of *Sans titre (La Fontaine)* (1957), a work that reveals the complex bonds between the two painters. Indeed, Mitchell apparently discreetly wrote in the upper left-hand margin of the painting "Le Laboureur et ses enfants, La Fontaine!!" referring to the well-known fable but also to *Labours sous la neige*, a work that Riopelle had recently produced. The painting, which the painter kept for a long time, can be perceived as a tender nod to Riopelle.

Un jardin pour Audrey (1974), another masterpiece by Mitchell, comes from a private collection in Paris and is one of her most accomplished



works. Specialists maintain that it embodies the quintessence of her painting. Riopelle's painting *Mitchikanabikong* (1975), loaned by the Centre Georges-Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, one of the world's foremost collections, is a harbinger of the *Icebergs* series, a triptych that reflects an identity process in which Riopelle signs each component with linear lines that evoke certain enigmatic profiles of the owl, his animal fetish, found both in his sculpture and works on paper. This major work is a must.

Tribute to Rosa Luxemburg, *an apotheosis*

To round out the exhibition, be sure to visit or re-visit *Tribute to Rosa Luxemburg* located in the Riopelle Passage by CGI linking the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion to the rest of the museum. The MNBAQ's masterpiece, a monumental triptych produced in a single sweep when Joan Mitchell's death was announced, is a long fresco comprising 30 paintings whose signs and codes hint at his meeting with his former companion. Here, it assumes its full majesty and meaning.

Two interactive experiences devotes to the works of Mitchell and Riopelle

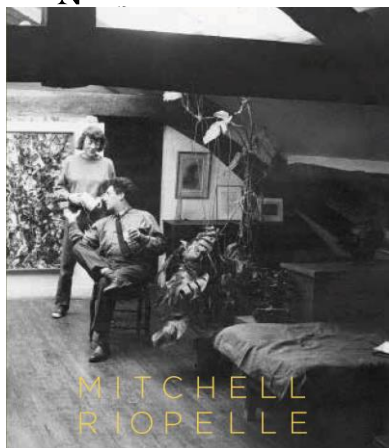
The Hydro-Québec mediation space will enable visitors to engage in two digital experiences linked to the exhibition: *Peindre le geste* and *Mitchell | Riopelle. Dans l'intimité*.

The fascination engendered, in particular, by the works of Mitchell and Riopelle can express itself through a stimulating virtual experience in the exhibition galleries. *Peindre le geste*, a 3D interactive device produced by SAGA, allows for the reproduction of the two artists' creative gestures using a brush, a knife or a spatula. Participants will also have access to a palette of 10 colours that the artists used. The resulting work, projected on a wall, can also be shared on Facebook or sent by email.

Visitors can also consult the tablet computers in the mediation space, where 36 archival photographs of the couple accompanied by captions and divided into four major periods afford a fascinating glimpse of the intimate lives of two artists at the peak of their artistic powers.

An essential catalogue for a unique exhibition





Mitchell | Riopelle. Nothing in Moderation, the first exhibition to offer a fresh perspective of the two painters and their 25 years of conjugal life and respective fame, calls for a major publication. The catalogue has over 200 pages and includes texts by guest curator Michel Martin, Yves Michaud, a philosopher and contemporary art specialist, and Kenneth Brummel, Assistant Curator of Modern Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and will be a revelation both for the public and for specialists. The publication stems from an initial collaboration between the MNBAQ and 5 Continents, a prestigious Milan publishing house that will ensure international distribution and raise the profile of this unique exhibition created in Québec City.

After Québec City, Toronto and Landerneau

The exhibition, created in Québec City, is a vibrant illustration of the creative passion that united Mitchell and Riopelle. It will be presented at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) from February 17 to May 12, 2018, and from December 9, 2018 to March 10, 2019 at the Fonds Hélène et Édouard Leclerc pour la Culture in Landerneau.

Credits

The exhibition *Mitchell | Riopelle. Nothing in Moderation* is conceived by the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec and organized in partnership with the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Fonds Hélène & Édouard Leclerc pour la Culture, with the support of the Joan Mitchell Foundation and of the Succession Jean Paul Riopelle.

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Québec 

Mitchell | Riopelle. Nothing in Moderation
Pierre Lassonde Pavilion of the MNBAQ
From October 12, 2017 to January 7, 2018

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Biographical note on Joan Mitchell



1925

Joan Mitchell was born on February 12 in Chicago, Illinois, the second daughter of Marion Strobel, a poet, short story writer and critic (co-director of the review *Poetry*), and James Herbert Mitchell, a physician. She spent her childhood in an especially stimulating environment. Her father frequently took her to museums. Cézanne, Van Gogh, Matisse and Kandinsky attracted her attention.

1942-1944

Joan Mitchell was admitted to Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, where she studied English literature and took art and art history courses. She painted in watercolours outdoors.

1944-1947

She registered at the Art Institute of Chicago to obtain a BFA degree (equivalent to an undergraduate degree in applied arts). She obtained a scholarship to study abroad but the tensions still agitating Europe caused her to postpone the trip until 1948. In December 1947, she went to New York.

1948-1949

In the spring of 1948, a scholarship enabled Joan Mitchell to travel to France, first to Paris, then to Lavandou, in Provence. It was there that she married Barney Rosset.

1950

Joan Mitchell returned to New York, where she settled. There, she met Franz Kline and Willem De Kooning, who initiated her to variations of abstract expressionism and participated in the effervescence of New York artistic life. She became member of the Artists' Club, to which few women were admitted.



1951

Joan Mitchell participated in the Ninth Street Show exhibition, organized by the Artists' Club and Leo Castelli, which assembled 61 avant-garde

artists including Rauschenberg, De Kooning and Motherwell. During the summer, she registered at Columbia University in art history and in French literatures courses at New York University

1952

Joan Mitchell held her first solo exhibition at the New Gallery in New York. She divorced Rosset, but the two remained friends.

1955

Joan Mitchell spent part of the summer in Paris, where she met several artists, including Sam Francis and Jean-Paul Riopelle, who would be her companion until 1979. Until 1959, Mitchell spent the summer in Paris and the winter in New York. In 1955, she participated, with the members of the Club, in two major group exhibitions that assembled the first generation of abstract expressionists.

1957

She participated in the *Artists of the New York School: Second Generation* exhibition organized by Meyer Schapiro at the Jewish Museum in New York.

1959

Joan Mitchell permanently settled in Paris, where she rented a studio on rue Frémicourt.

1961

She received the Prix Lissone in Milan.

1962-1967

This period was marked by a series of bereavements that affected her deeply, although she did not halt her activities.

1967

Her first solo exhibition was held at the Galerie Jean Fournier in Paris (she collaborated with Fournier until the end of her life). Upon her mother's death, she used her inheritance to buy a house in Vétheuil, a small village along the Seine west of Paris, attracted by the recollection of Monet, who lived there before settling in Giverny.

1974

The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York devoted a solo exhibition to Joan Mitchell documenting her career over the previous 10 years.

1977

Mitchell participated in the major exhibition *Paris - New York* at the Centre Georges-Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne.

1982

The Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris hosted her first solo exhibition: *Joan Mitchell : choix de peintures 1970-1982*.

1984

Jean Fournier exhibited the works painted in memory of her sister, who died two years earlier. Joan Mitchell was stricken with jaw cancer and underwent numerous operations and treatments.

1989

She received the Grand prix national de peinture.

1991

She received the Grand prix des arts (peinture) de la Ville de Paris.

1992

Joan Mitchell died in Paris on October 30.

Biographical note on Jean-Paul Riopelle

1923

Jean-Paul Riopelle was born on October 7 on rue De Lorimier in Montréal.

1943-1946

Riopelle studied at the École du meuble under Paul-Émile Borduas. He participated in the first exhibition of Les Automatistes in Montréal in 1946.



1947

Riopelle met André Breton in Paris. He signed the surrealist manifesto *Rupture inaugurale*.

1948-1949

The manifesto *Refus global*, written by Borduas, appeared in Montréal in August 1948. Riopelle was one of the 16 signatories. He settled in France at the end of the year and held his first solo exhibition in Paris in 1949.

1954

Riopelle exhibited his work for the first time at the Galerie Pierre Matisse in New York. He also participated in the Venice Biennale with Paul-Émile Borduas and Bertrand Charles Binning.

1955

Jean-Paul Riopelle went to join American painters Sam Francis and Norman Bluhm in a café in Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris, where he met Joan Mitchell, who would be his companion until 1979.

1962

Riopelle represented Canada at the Venice Biennale. He obtained an award from UNESCO, after which the National Gallery of Canada organized the exhibition *Jean-Paul Riopelle. Painting and Sculpture*, which was presented in several Canadian cities and in Washington.

1967

The Musée du Québec (now the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec) organized a retrospective of his work: *Peintures et sculptures de Riopelle*. The artist offered the Musée du Québec *Sans titre*, a large assemblage.

1974

Riopelle had a studio built in the Laurentians and divided his time between France and Québec.

1980-1982

The Canadian Department of External Affairs presented the major retrospective exhibition *Jean-Paul Riopelle: Painting 1946-1977*, in collaboration with the Musée du Québec and the Musée national d'art moderne (Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris). The exhibition was presented in France, Québec, Mexico and Venezuela.



1981

The Québec government awarded Riopelle the prestigious Prix Paul-Émile-Borduas.

1991

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts organized the exhibition *Riopelle* to mark the opening of the Jean-Noël Desmarais Pavilion.

1992-1996

In his studio on Île-aux-Oies, Riopelle produced *Tribute to Rosa Luxemburg*, which was exhibited in 1993 at Michel Tétreault Art International in Montréal. During the summer of 1995, the imposing triptych was exhibited in France at the Château de La Roche-Guyon near Paris, in collaboration with the Musée du Québec, which exhibited it in 1996. The event attracted 33 000 visitors in five weeks.

2000

In May, the Musée du Québec permanently devoted a gallery to Jean-Paul Riopelle and his work.

2002

Jean-Paul Riopelle died on March 12 on Isle-aux-Grues.

Figures:

Page 1 – Joan Mitchell, *Untitled*, about 1969. Oil on canvas, 194.8 × 113.7 cm. Private collection, Paris © Estate of Joan Mitchell. Photo: Patrice Schmidt // Jean-Paul Riopelle, *Untitled*, about 1968. Oil on canvas, 200 × 300 cm. Private collection © Succession Jean Paul Riopelle / SODRAC (2017). Photo: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Idra Labrie

Page 2 – Jean-Paul Riopelle, *Untitled*, 1964. Oil on canvas, 130 × 160 cm. Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris © Succession Jean Paul Riopelle / SODRAC (2017). Photo: Archives Yseult Riopelle // Joan Mitchell, *Untitled*, 1961. Oil on canvas, 228.9 × 206.1 cm. Joan Mitchell Foundation, New York © Estate of Joan Mitchell. Photo: Joan Mitchell Foundation, New York

Page 3 – Passage Riopelle par CGI. Photo Bruce Damonte // Work: Jean-Paul Riopelle, *Tribute to Rosa Luxemburg*, 1992. Acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 155 × 1 424 cm (1st part); 155 × 1 247 cm (2nd part); 155 × 1 368 cm (3rd Part) Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec. Gift of the artist (1996.96). © Succession Jean Paul Riopelle / SODRAC (2017). Photo: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Idra Labrie

Page 4 – Cover of the publication: Heidi Meister, photographer, Joan Mitchell and Jean-Paul Riopelle in the living room of the studio-apartment on Rue Frémicourt, Paris, 1963. © Heidi Meister. Presented work: Jean-Paul Riopelle, *Pleine Saison* (detail), 1954. Oil on canvas, 129 × 160 cm. Private collection. © Succession Jean Paul Riopelle / SODRAC (2017)

Page 6 – Anonymous photographer, *Joan Mitchell*, about 1962. Archives Joan Mitchell Foundation // Joan Mitchell, *Untitled*, 1951. Oil on canvas, 187.6 × 203.2 cm. Private collection, Paris © Estate of Joan Mitchell. Photo: Bill Orcutt.

Page 8 – Anonymous photographer, Jean-Paul Riopelle at the Venice Biennale, 1962. Photo: Archives Yseult Riopelle // Presented work: Jean-Paul Riopelle, *Par-delà*, 1961. Oil on canvas, 89 × 116 cm. Private collection. © Succession Jean Paul Riopelle / SODRAC (2017)

Page 9 – Jean-Paul Riopelle, *La Ville*, 1949. Oil on canvas, 100 × 81 cm. Private collection © Succession Jean Paul Riopelle / SODRAC (2017). Photo: Christine Guest

General Information

OPENING
HOURS OF THE
MUSEUM COMPLEX

Until 31 May 2018

Tuesday to Sunday,

10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Wednesdays till 9:00 p.m.

Closed Mondays (except January 1st,
2018)

Closed 25 December

*Important: Updating of the Gérard Morisset Pavilion for the third phase of
the reorganization of the collections. Reopening in 2018.*

ADMISSION

Adults: **20 \$**

Seniors (65 and Over): **18 \$**

Ages 18 to 30: **11 \$**

Ages 13 to 17: **6 \$**

Families (2 adults and 3 children
13 to 17): **44 \$**

Families (1 adult and 3 children
13 to 17): **22 \$**

Children 12 and under: **free**

Members: **free**

Wednesdays from, 5:00 to 9:00
p.m.: **half-price**

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