

McMichael Canadian Art Collection presents *Jon Sasaki:
Homage*, an exhibition of photographic works in
partnership with the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography
Festival



Jon Sasaki, *Microbes Swabbed from a Palette Used by F.H. Varley*, 2020, archival print, 91.44 x 91.44 cm,

Image courtesy of the artist and Clint Roenisch Gallery

May 3, 2021, KLEINBURG, ON - The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is proud to be partnering with the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival, the world's largest photography event, for a seventh year. The McMichael will present the special exhibition *Jon Sasaki: Homage*, featuring the work of Toronto-based multidisciplinary Canadian artist Jon Sasaki (b. 1973, Toronto). The exhibition debuts virtually on June 14 and in person once the McMichael reopens. It will remain on view through September 6, 2021.

Homage gathers a suite of Sasaki's recent photographs depicting bacterial cultures grown from swabs of artist tools once used by the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson, historical artifacts long held in the McMichael's collection. These large-scale works reveal enlarged details of those cultures, reflecting the artist's wry obsession with Canada's canonical painters and his revisiting of the tradition-bound genre of landscape painting through the lens of contemporary photography. Sasaki's works will be on view alongside the historical artists' tools. A short video documenting the process of swabbing these archival items, under the direction of McMichael conservator Alison Douglas, will also be presented.

In the century since the Group of Seven's first exhibition in 1920, the legacy of these extraordinary artists has loomed large over the Canadian art landscape, and that of Canadians more generally. The McMichael, as both the spiritual home of the Group of Seven and one of the leading repositories of their work, has a special responsibility not only to share and preserve their legacies, but also to continually challenge, re-examine, and articulate their relevance for future generations. *Homage* is an opportunity for a contemporary Canadian artist to pay tribute to the "founding fathers" of Canadian art, and to explore the challenge of coming *after*, of finding a fresh relationship to the traditions of the past.

"We're blessed to be working with Jon Sasaki on this project, as he places our collection of the Group of Seven's artist tools under examination," says McMichael Chief Curator Sarah Milroy. "Before Sasaki was anything else, he was a painter, and the Group of Seven his inspiration. His photographs can be read as near-comic in their reverence, yet they also express a devotion to those who have come before. This exhibition demonstrates the McMichael's role not only as a site of Canadian artistic pilgrimage and reverence, but also as an experimental space for contemporary artists."

Jon Sasaki: Homage will be accompanied by a publication of the same name, available through the McMichael's Gallery Shop and eShop. This catalogue includes high-resolution images of all eight petri dishes, photography of the archival items, as well as a trio of essays by Milroy, Sasaki, and Douglas, who provides a scientific outlook on this illuminating project.

A virtual artist's talk, celebrating the Group of Seven's legacy, will take place on May 7, 2021, the 101st anniversary of the Group of Seven's first exhibition. This online event will be hosted by Milroy in conversation with Sasaki and is open to the general public via Zoom. Registration is free via mcmichael.com. The video will also stream live on the McMichael's Facebook page.

Please note that the McMichael Canadian Art Collection is closed until further notice while Ontario is under a provincewide declaration of emergency and stay-at-home order. The McMichael's grounds and trails remain open while the Gallery is closed. For more information about virtual offerings, programs and online shopping, please visit mcmichael.com.

Media wishing to request an interview with Chief Curator Sarah Milroy or artist Jon Sasaki, request a review copy of the *Homage* publication or obtain high-resolution images of the artworks in the exhibition are asked to contact Sam Cheung at scheung@mcmichael.com or 905.893.1121 ext. 2210.

Ces informations sont aussi disponible en français.

ABOUT THE McMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is an agency of the Government of Ontario and acknowledges the support of the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, and the McMichael Canadian Art Foundation. It is the only major museum in the country devoted exclusively to Canadian art. In addition to touring exhibitions, the McMichael houses a permanent collection that consists of more than 6,500 works by historic and present-day Canadian artists, including Tom Thomson, the Group of Seven and their contemporaries, Indigenous artists and artists from the many diasporic communities. The Gallery is located on 100 acres of northern landscape and hiking trails at 10365 Islington Avenue, Kleinburg, north of Major Mackenzie Drive in the City of Vaughan. For more information, please visit mcmichael.com.

ABOUT THE SCOTIABANK CONTACT PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL

CONTACT is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to celebrating and fostering the art and profession of photography with an annual Festival in May throughout Toronto and year-round programming in the CONTACT Gallery. CONTACT embraces an inclusive and accessible approach to the medium, and cultivates collaborations with and among artists, curators, institutions, and organizations.

Each year CONTACT showcases lens-based projects by Canadian and international artists. The Festival's Core Exhibitions are comprised of collaborations with major museums, leading galleries, and artist-run centres, as well as site-specific public art projects. These are cultivated through partnerships and commissions, and frame the cultural, social, and political events of our times. The Juried Call and Open Call Exhibitions present a wide range of works at galleries and alternative spaces across the city. The Festival's Programs include photo-book initiatives, lectures, artist talks, panel discussions, and workshops. CONTACT exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public, with some exceptions at major museums.

McMichael

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Jon Sasaki: Homage

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Media Contact

Sam Cheung

Media Relations and Communications Coordinator
McMichael Canadian Art Collection
905.893.1121 x2210
scheung@mcmichael.com

Shalini Saini

Acting Director, Marketing & Communications
McMichael Canadian Art Collection
905.893.1121 x2294
ssaini@mcmichael.com