



**60** ANS • YEARS  
1955 - 2015

## Curiosities and strange wonders at the Stewart Museum

**Montreal, May 4, 2016** – From May 5, 2016 to March 12, 2017, the exhibition ***Curiosities – The Stewart Museum Collection Visited by Jérôme Fortin*** will be presented by the Stewart Museum, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. This original exhibition, created in collaboration with contemporary artist Jérôme Fortin, brings together extraordinary and eclectic objects from the Museum's collections. Fortin is known for his works inspired by 16<sup>th</sup> century cabinets of curiosities. Children and adults will be surprised and delighted by this artistic interpretation of the cabinets and discover worlds that are both remarkable and whimsical



Snuff mull, Scotland, 19th century  
© Stewart Museum

The exhibition ***Curiosities*** assembles more than 370 rare and unique historic objects from the 16th to the 20th century in a mysterious and enchanting contemporary space. Visitors will be drawn in by the innovative and intriguing way pieces from the Stewart Museum collection are displayed. They have to open doors, look through windows or even peek through keyholes! Artist and Curator Jérôme Fortin not only designed the exhibition, he also selected the objects, which outside of their usual context have an evocative power over the imagination. Locks, keys, globes, telescopes, sundials, powder horns, kitchen accessories, antique prints, sculptures, miniature objects, hat boxes and pipe cases are displayed in small concealed spaces.

“This bold exhibition has arrived just in time for the 60th anniversary of the Stewart Museum because it showcases a very diverse selection of objects, highlighting the exceptional wealth and beauty of the Museum's collection,” says Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Stewart Museum. These assorted objects were acquired by the founder of the museum, David M. Stewart (1920-1984) and his wife Liliane M. Stewart (1928-2014). Like collectors who came before them, the Stewarts created their own cabinet of curiosities, inspired by their tastes and many fields of interest. Emerging during the Renaissance in Europe, cabinets of curiosities are the ancestors of museums. Both public and private, they played an important role in the development of science. They often contained antiquities, natural history objects such as stuffed animals, skeletons, herbaria, fossils and works of art.

### **Jérôme Fortin: an artist in search of hidden beauties**

Jérôme Fortin, born in Joliette in 1971, lives and works in Montreal. Since 1996, he has had more than a dozen solo exhibitions in Prague, Pretoria, Tokyo, Paris, Toronto and Montreal. His work has also been shown in many group exhibitions around the world, and he has participated in several artists' residencies during his career

In 2007, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC) presented an exhibition of Fortin's art. He received the Prix Pierre-Ayot from the City of Montreal in 2004. Fortin's works are in several collections, including the MAC, the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, the Musée d'art de Joliette, the Pretoria Art Museum, the National Museum of China, the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, the Canada Council for the Arts and the City of Montreal. In addition, his works are included in corporate and private collections. The artist has also taken part in several projects integrating art and architecture.



Jérôme Fortin, Artist and Curator of the exhibition

At the beginning of his career, Jérôme Fortin created sculpture installations which combine the tradition of cabinets of curiosities with the practice of mass consumption in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Plastic bottles, matches, nails and tin cans are all cleverly manipulated and assembled as visual and material curiosities. Their colours, forms and textures evoke the flowers, seashells, jewelry and amulets once collected for their exoticism. The poetic and enigmatic appearance of these sculptures deflects the ordinary aspect of everyday objects.

### Activities for the curious

At any time, children **from 4 to 12 years of age** can discover mysterious objects and have fun exploring the exhibition with the booklet *Curious Treasure Hunt*. Don't forget that as part of the Museum's 60th anniversary celebration, admission is only 60 cents for **visitors 60 years of age and over** every Wednesday until June 29, 2016.

On October 1, 2016, during les *Journées de la culture*, the public is invited to attend **That makes music?! The wonderful world of weird instruments**. Musicologist Bruno Paul Stenson will give a lecture and demonstrate some bizarre musical instruments. The activity is free of charge and includes access to the exhibitions.

Various activities are also planned for Halloween in conjunction with the *Curiosities* exhibition, which will be haunted for the occasion. On Friday, October 28, families are invited to take part in a nocturnal Halloween experience titled **Strange and haunted objects**, where they'll hear extraordinary tales about objects and ghosts. Parents should also mark their calendars for **Quirky monsters** on October 29 and 30, a series of activities that includes stories, a treasure hunt and a monster-making workshop! The Museum will have other surprises for families during Spring Break.

On March 1, 2017, the public is invited to hear a lecture by historian Evelyne Ferron about the most famous collectors in history and the origins of cabinets of curiosities, beginning in the 16th century. The talk, titled **See, touch, feel and learn: curiosity cabinets as an education strategy**, is part of the series *Les Belles Soirées de l'Université de Montréal* (In French only).

### Not to be missed this summer

From May 18 to October 9, 2016 – A visit to the Stewart Museum would not be complete without stopping by the courtyard to see **St. Helen's Island – Illustrated Chronicles**, a free outdoor exhibition of antique prints illustrating life on the island in the 19th century. From June 24 to September 4, every day Wednesday to Sunday, the Museum offers **guided tours**. Visitors can choose either *History and Memory*, the permanent exhibition covering the history of Quebec over five centuries, from the discovery of the New World to the Lower Canada Rebellion; or *The Fort on St. Helen's Island*, which explores Montreal's most important historic military site. This tour is divided into two themes: the British period (1820-1870), with a musket firing demonstration, and the internment camp of the Second World War (1940-1943), a new feature at the Museum.

### About the Stewart Museum

The Stewart Museum, a private, non-profit history museum, was founded in 1955 by philanthropist David M. Stewart. The institution holds a unique collection of nearly 27,000 artefacts, archival documents and rare books that show the European presence in New France and North America up to the present. The Museum's main mission: to conserve and exhibit these objects, which relate to the voyages, scientific advances, feats of arms, beliefs and daily life of our ancestors. This Montreal organization is located at Parc Jean-Drapeau, in the arsenal of the Fort on St. Helen's Island, a 19th century military construction registered in the *Répertoire du patrimoine culturel du Québec*.

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**Interview possibilities with:** Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Stewart Museum, Sylvie Dauphin, Curator and Head, Collections as well as Jérôme Fortin, curator of the exhibition.

**Press kit available on Dropbox:** <http://bit.ly/1OAVxOp>

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