

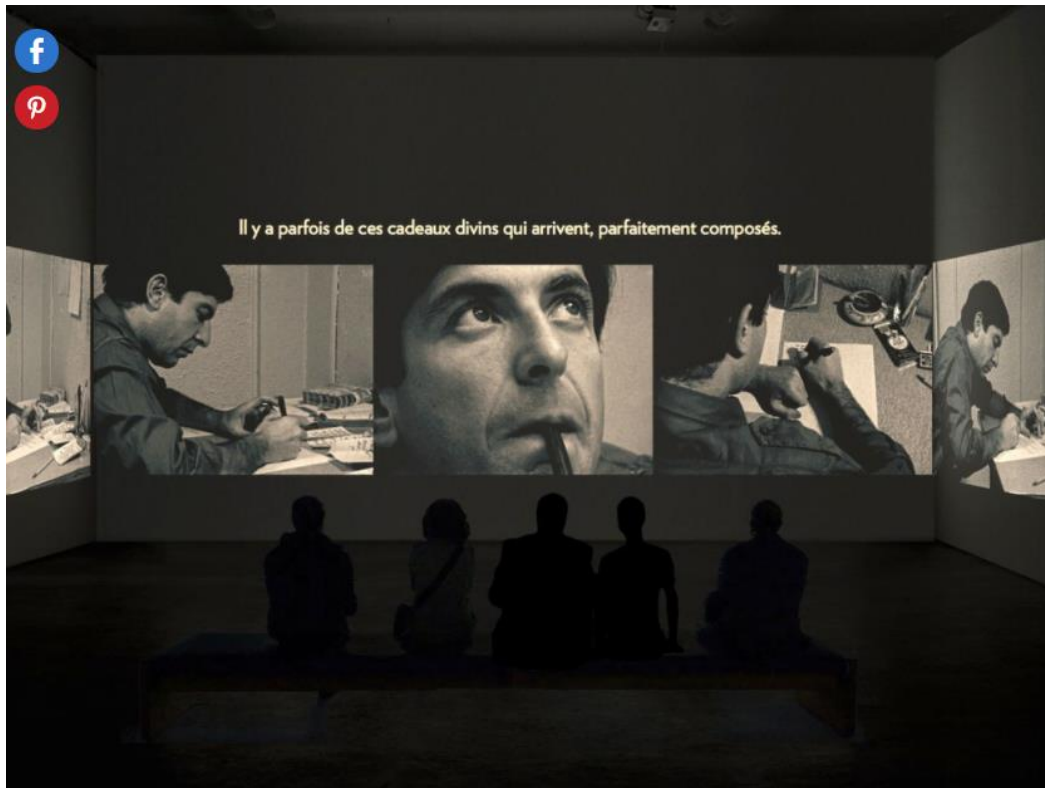


ARTS & CULTURE • MUSEUMS & GALLERIES



## A Leonard Cohen Exhibit Is Coming to Montreal

by Jim Farber • June 15, 2017



Courtesy National Film Board

A clip from the 1965 documentary, *Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Leonard Cohen*, which will be on display at the exhibit.

Canadian artists will pay tribute to their country's most beloved and enigmatic songwriter this fall.

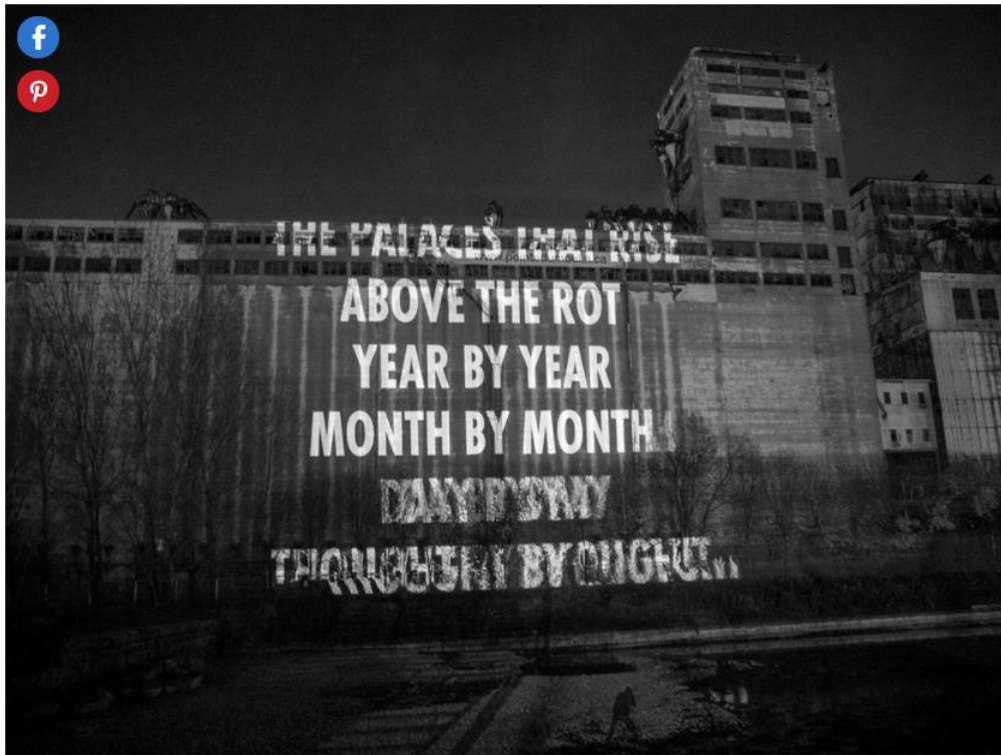
Montreal's [Musée d'art contemporain](#) just announced a bold, new exhibit this fall reflecting on the life, and work, of music's dark romantic poet, [Leonard Cohen](#). Even though the show—which opens November 8 — will mark the one year anniversary of the icon's death, it speaks volumes that the curators chose for its original title: "The Future."

"We never meant this to be a retrospective on Cohen's life," explains John Zappetelli, co-curator of the exhibit. "We wanted to represent how Leonard might be an ongoing part of the conversation."

In fact, at the time of the show's conception, Cohen was not only alive but perhaps at the peak of his very storied career, working on what would be his final, acclaimed album, *You Want It Darker*. Two years ago, Zappetelli and co-curator Victor Shiffman conceived the homage as the museum's contribution to the [375th anniversary](#) celebration of [the city](#). They knew they could never get Cohen's approval, however, if they simply suggested a rehash of his life and art. So they proposed commissioning entirely new works inspired by Cohen's words, melodies and persona—an idea the poet heartily endorsed, Zappetelli says.

Artists like Jenny Holzer, Candice Breitz, Michael Rakowitz and The Sanchez Brothers all signed on, along with nearly forty others. The participants used Cohen's poetry, film footage of the star and quotes from his interviews to create their own multi-media commentaries on his impact. After Cohen died last fall, the curators wondered if the show could go on. But his manager assured them he would very much have wanted them to continue. The curators did, however, change the title of the show to reflect the pain of Cohen's parting. They settled on "A Crack In Everything," referencing a couplet from Cohen's 1992 song "Anthem." ("There is a crack in everything/that's how the light gets in.")

The night before the exhibit's opening, Holzer will project one of her trademark text installations, taken from Cohen's verses, onto Silo Five, a hulking abandoned building in Old Montreal.



Courtesy George Fok

Jenny Holzer will contribute a monumental projection of Cohen's lyrics onto Silo 5, an industrial landmark in Old Montreal.

For the show's centerpiece, the curators approached South African video artist Candice Breitz, who often uses pop culture figures, like Madonna and Bob Marley, to comment on our secular faith in celebrities. For Cohen, she created a video collage of his fans—all of them male, over 65, and from Montreal—singing songs from the star's 1988 comeback album, *I'm Your Man*. The Montreal connection here is key.

"Montrealers took great pride in the fact that this global phenomenon claimed this city as his home," says Zappetelli. "He was one of the few artists loved by both the Anglo and French communities here. Everybody responded to his seriousness and depth."

Many of the artists represented in the show come from [Canada](#), including Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, who created an immersive piece which allows visitors to activate keys on an organ that trigger recordings of Cohen reading from his poetry collection, "The Book of Longing." The Montreal-born Sanchez Brothers went deep, creating a memory film that touches on the death of the writer's father when he was a child, while Israeli film director Ari Folman devised a "Depression Box," which aims to plunge the visitor into Cohen's inner life.

While some of the pieces refer to specific eras in Cohen's life, together they aim to capture the timelessness of his art. "The culture always caught up with Cohen," Zappetelli says. "There was this weird paradox at play. At times, you thought Cohen was out of step, but it was always up to you to catch up to him."

*"Leonard Cohen: A Crack In Everything" opens this November 9 and runs through April 9, 2018. At Montreal's Musée d'art contemporain (MAC), 185 Saint-Catherine St W, Montreal, QC H2X 3X5, Canada*