ALMINE RECH

THE POP OF LIFE!
Pop Art in the Collection of the MMFA

Aug 31, 2023 — Jul 28, 2024 | MMFA The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Quebec, Canada

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) is inviting the public on a foray into the fascinating world of Pop art. The Pop of Life! is a rotational presentation of some 70 artworks from the Museum's collection – installations, works on paper, paintings, sculptures and prized decorative arts and design pieces – all of which are associated with this movement that had a commanding presence in the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing inspiration from popular culture and mass media, Pop art set in motion a veritable revolution that, to this day, challenges reified notions of what art can be.

Characterized by bright colours, linearity, flatness, cropping, text, series and multiples, the Pop style explicitly evokes, among other things, the mass production associated with consumer culture. The pervasive infiltration of commercialism, technology and the media into the urban landscape is further reflected in Pop art's far-reaching subject matter, which encompasses everyday objects, brand-name products, current events, celebrities and a wide array of female archetypes, including comic-book heroines and housewives.

Replete with the formal language of advertising and comic books, the exhibited works lay out various themes central to Pop art, such as consumerism, the sexual objectification of women's bodies, the space age, a fascination with science and technology, an explosion of new materials designed for mass consumption (in particular, plastic) and political engagement in the time of the Vietnam War and Quebec's Quiet Revolution.

The exhibition brings together works that have rarely or never been shown as well as iconic pieces from the Museum's collection, made by some 30 artists and designers from Canada (Pierre Ayot, Gilles Boisvert, Chantal duPont, Michel Leclair, Guy Montpetit, Joyce Wieland), North America (Félix Beltrán, David Gilhooly, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol, Tom Wesselmann) and Europe (Guido Drocco, Peter Klasen, Sue Palmer, Verner Panton, Eduardo Paolozzi, Pierre Paulin, Eddie Squires), to name but a few.

"Since its presentation of the exhibition Eleven Pop Artists: The New Image in 1966, the Museum has continued to exhibit and acquire works by artists who shaped this movement. The themes they depict still resonate today. Presented this fall in juxtaposition with the major exhibition Marisol: A Retrospective, which is devoted to a little-known icon of Pop art, The Pop of Life! highlights a selection of bold and seductive works from our vast collection," says Mary-Dailey Desmarais, Chief Curator of the MMFA.

"This exhibition offers depictions laced with humour and critical commentary of the real and sometimes frivolous world, alongside works reflecting the social, historical and political events that defined the 1950s to the 1970s," explains Iris Amizlev, Curator – Community Engagement and Projects, MMFA, and curator of the exhibition.

An exhibition organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.
Curator: Iris Amizlev, Curator – Community Engagement and Projects, MMFA