

**Jonathan Watkins takes the helm at  
Manif d'art 9 – The Quebec City Biennial**  
*Small Between the Stars, Large Against the Sky*

**Quebec City, February 19, 2018** – Manif d'art is pleased to announce the curator for the ninth edition of its flagship event, the Quebec City Biennial. Jonathan Watkins, Director of Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, England, has made his mark in numerous international events over the years, from Sydney to Turin, Sharjah to Guangzhou, and Milan to Venice. This year he pilots Manif d'art 9 –The Quebec City Biennial. Produced in collaboration with the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ), the biennial event will once again reside in various venues throughout Quebec City between February 14 and April 21, 2019. Jonathan Watkins' program is entitled *Small Between the Stars, Large Against the Sky*, and will be mounted in collaboration with Manif d'art's general and artistic director Claude Bélanger, the MNBAQ's contemporary art curator Bernard Lamarche, and the Biennial's assistant curator Michelle Drapeau.

"It is a great honour to have been appointed curator of the next Biennale de Quebec, to have such an opportunity to proceed with a sense of adventure from its illustrious history. Quebec is a remarkable city, intensely artistic in its character, brimming with creative energy and positive attitude. As much as possible, I intend to engage with it as a whole, to make a very international biennial whilst being mindful of where we are, to present an abundance of contemporary art that is at once stimulating, of the highest quality and relevant." – Jonathan Watkins, curator of Manif d'art 9

**A theme inspired by Quebec City and a song by Leonard Cohen**

The idea for the theme was sparked last summer, during Jonathan Watkins' most recent visit to Quebec City. Inspired by the city's geographic location in the heart of the Laurentian forest, he quickly came upon the notion of uniting art and nature. The time of year of the Biennial, between winter and spring, also influenced his choice of this vast and ambitious theme, thus attuning Manif d'art 9 to both geography and season.

The title of Manif d'art 9, *Small Between the Stars, Large Against the Sky*<sup>1</sup>, comes from the lyrics of a song by Leonard Cohen ("Stories of the Street," 1967). Throughout his life, this extraordinary artist was

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<sup>1</sup> Story of the Street' by Leonard Cohen. Copyright © 1993, Leonard Cohen, used by permission of The Wylie Agency (UK) Limited

preoccupied with our place in the natural order. From Cohen's perspective, our cultural achievements should be seen in a universal context much broader than those that define conventional notions pitting art against nature. Jonathan Watkins intends to use this theme to draw our attention to the continuities between art and everyday (human) life. The questions raised will lead us to apprehend where we are, between and against the immensity we usually take for granted.

"With the main exhibition being presented at the MNBAQ in the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion, Manif d'art 9 – The Quebec City Biennial holds the key to all possible worlds. Jonathan Watkins will gather together, around the expansive and inspiring theme *Small Between the Stars, Large Against the Sky*, artists who will make Quebec City and the MNBAQ destinations of choice in 2019." said Line Ouellet, director and chief curator of MNBAQ.

"Proud of our success with Manif d'art 8, we are enthusiastically diving into the production of this new edition, in collaboration with the MNBAQ. And working with Jonathan Watkins, whose reputation in the contemporary art world is firmly established, is an incredible privilege." to say Claude Bélanger, general and artistic director of Manif d'art. "We are excited for 2019, on our way to the creation of the next edition ! " concludes M. Bélanger.

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### Biographical notes, Jonathan Watkins

Jonathan Watkins has been Director of Ikon Gallery since 1999. Previously he worked for a number of years in London, as Curator of the Serpentine Gallery (1995-1997) and Director of Chisenhale Gallery (1990-1995).

He has curated a number of large international exhibitions including the Biennale of Sydney (1998), Facts of Life: Contemporary Japanese Art (Hayward Gallery, London 2001), Quotidiana (Castello di Rivoli, Turin 1999, Tate Triennial (2003), Shanghai Biennale (2006), Sharjah Biennial (2007), Negotiations (Today Art Museum, Beijing 2010) and the Guangzhou Triennial (2012). He was on the curatorial team for Europarte (Venice Biennale, 1997), Milano Europa 2000, (Palazzo di Triennale, Milan 2000), and Riwaq (Palestinian Biennial 2007). He curated the Iraqi Pavilion for the Venice Biennale in 2013 and *Floating World*, Bahrain in 2017. In 2019 Watkins curates *Small Between the Stars, Large Against the Sky*, at the Quebec Biennial.

Jonathan Watkins has written extensively on contemporary art. Essays have focused on the work of Giuseppe Penone, Martin Creed, Semyon Faibisovich, Yang Zhenzhong, Noguchi Rika, Caro Niederer, Beat Streuli and Cornelia Parker. He was the author of the Phaidon monograph on Japanese artist On Kawara



### ***About Manif d'art***

One of Canada's foremost contemporary art biennials, the Manif d'art – The Quebec City Biennial presents the work of some 100 artists from all disciplines. In addition to exhibitions, the event offers an array of activities based on a central theme, distinct for each edition. Since its inception in the fall of 2000, over 30 cultural organizations have helped to make this international festival an absolute must on the arts scene. Its far-reaching program appeals to specialists and novices alike. Manif d'art 9 – The Quebec City Biennial will be held in the winter of 2019 in collaboration with the MNBAQ.

### ***About the MNBAQ***

The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is a unique museum complex in Quebec City bringing together art, architecture and nature. The museum owns a vast and definitive collection of Quebec art, including more than 38,000 works covering 400 years of history. It includes one of the largest collections of religious art in Quebec, a major collection of Inuit art, and an esteemed collection of contemporary art comprising more than 9,000 works, including sculptures, prints, ceramics, photographs, drawings, videos, installations, digital art, and media art. In 2016, a fourth pavilion, the Pierre Lassonde, was inaugurated to showcase the Museum's contemporary art collection from the 1960s to today. The striking glass and steel building marrying history and contemporary design is where contemporary art from Quebec – including Inuit art, decorative art and design – is now displayed.

Source:

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