

# **Leonard Cohen: Everybody Knows**

**Organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario, with the exceptional support of the Leonard Cohen Family Trust and Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.**

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## **LEONARD COHEN**

Unified Heart  
from *Book of Mercy*  
1984  
book cover

## **Everybody Knows**

Leonard Cohen (1934–2016) is recognized as a poet, novelist, and songwriter of the first order. Born into a prominent Jewish family in Montreal, and blessed with a gift for language, Cohen

evolved into a global icon who filled arenas worldwide and performed to widespread acclaim.

Cohen had a strong sense of destiny and a drive to assert his place in history. As part of his artistic development, he preserved all of his work in its various stages. He considered this archive to be his masterwork.

The exhibition introduces viewers to the breadth of Cohen's legacy through a selection of the contents of his archive, including letters, notebooks, photographs, drawings, prints, fan mail, musical instruments, and books from his personal library. Only a fraction of this material has ever been shown publicly. Providing fresh insight into Cohen's creative output over six decades, *Everybody Knows* illuminates a journey he summarized in a song lyric with his trademark irony: "I was always working steady but I never called it art."

*All works on view are courtesy of the Leonard Cohen Family Trust, unless otherwise stated.*

## **Early Life in Montreal**

Leonard Cohen was the second child born into a wealthy family of rabbis, Talmudic scholars, and businessmen in Westmount, Montreal. His family name translates to "high priest" in Hebrew, and from an early age Cohen was shaped by a compelling sense of destiny and a confidence in his singular gifts. He had a comfortable upbringing, attending Hebrew day school and summer camps in rural Quebec and Ontario. At his neighborhood synagogue Shaar Hashomayim, he hungrily absorbed the power of language and its capacity to inspire and transport.

His father, Nathan, died when Leonard was only nine years old, leaving his mother, Masha, widowed, and his older sister, Esther, bereaved on the eve of her thirteenth birthday. Leonard inherited his father's leather-bound poetry library, in which he lost himself as a way to numb his grief.

Presented on the wall:

## **ARNAUD MAGGS**

born Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1926

died Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2012

## **Leonard Cohen**

1977

gelatin silver print; printed around 2007

Courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **“With a Peacock’s Feather”**

date unknown

handwritten poem on paper

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Spice-Box of Earth**

around 1960

ink on cardboard

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,

University of Toronto

Published in 1961, *Spice-Box of Earth* was the most popular and commercially successful of Cohen's early books, and established his reputation as a leading poet in Canada. Its title draws from the ceremonial object—usually made of silver and decorated with elaborate filigree—used in the Havdalah (“separation” in Hebrew) ritual that marks the end of the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday evening. Cohen's poem “Out of the Land of Heaven” celebrates the joy and sacredness of the Sabbath and the role of the spice box in it. This distinctive sketch made by Cohen, drawn in ink on a scrap of cardboard, includes his family name—Kohen—written in Hebrew in the flag attached to the finial.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Napkin Sketch**

1976–1980

ink on napkin

Cohen drew consistently over the years, and the practice of doing so brought him calm and joy. He produced drawings, such as this doodle on a napkin, using a wide range of media—including watercolour, oil pastel, pencil, and ink and charcoal—as well as digitally generated images. He once remarked: “Just as play is deadly serious for children, so doodles are deadly serious for me.”

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Notebook inscribed “Fraud Cohen”**

1966

## **Campfire Notebook**

1966

**Notebook inscribed “Please return this to someone else”**

around 1960

notebooks

Cohen’s instinct to gather and preserve complemented his practice as a writer. He often had a notebook, letter pad, or sheaf of papers with him, ready to jot down ideas for his poems, prose, and songs. These three pocket-sized notebooks date back to the 1960s, the inscribed covers signaling their author’s tendency towards irony and self-deprecating humour. Over the course of his life, Cohen accumulated dozens of such notebooks in all shapes and sizes. They are a rich and intriguing resource that reveal his varied creative interests.

## **HAZEL FIELD**

Canadian, born 1951

**Leonard Cohen Reflected in the Mirror, Montreal**

1977

gelatin silver print

A close friend of Cohen’s for many years, Hazel Field took this photograph in his Montreal home, on the Parc du Portugal, which reveals his taste for spare surroundings and his obsession with mirrors. In addition to collaborating with Field on the composition of the image, Cohen frequently used mirrors to make self-portraits in a variety of media. He understood the power of photography to

simultaneously expand his persona and control access to his personality.

## **ETHAN HILL**

born Hawaii, United States, 1972

### **Sharon Robinson and Leonard Cohen**

2001

instant print (Polaroid Type 672)

Cohen appears here with Sharon Robinson, who first joined him as a vocalist on his 1979 world tour and went on to collaborate with him on projects for more than three decades.

They co-wrote the song “Everybody Knows,” and later Robinson co-wrote and produced Cohen’s 2001 album, *Ten New Songs*. This photograph was taken in Cohen’s back garden in Los Angeles as part of a feature that ran in *Rolling Stone* at the time of the album’s release.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **“You Know Where I Have Been”**

1960

typed poem

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Let Us Compare Mythologies**

1956

printed poster

*Let Us Compare Mythologies* is Cohen's first collection of poems, published in 1956 as part of the McGill Poetry Series and illustrated by Freda Guttman. This work was critically well-received and propelled Cohen to revered status among Montreal's small community of poets. The collection includes many of the themes that Cohen continued to explore in his literary and song-writing pursuits, such as sex, death, love, and religion.

## **LEONARD COHEN FAMILY TRUST**

### **Home Movies**

1936–1945

video (black and white/colour, sound, 2 min. 56 sec.)

This short loop of home movies, mostly shot by Cohen's father, Nathan, provides a glimpse into Leonard's carefree childhood with his sister, Esther, growing up in the affluent Montreal neighbourhood of Westmount. The comfort and privilege of their upbringing is evident, as a parade of well-dressed family members appear on camera. The family dog, a black Scottish terrier named Tovarich ("comrade" in Russian), was a birthday gift to Cohen from his parents. He fictionalized this period of his life in his 1963 debut novel, *The Favourite Game*.

## **HYDRA**

In 1959 Cohen received a writing grant and headed for Israel, followed by London, but after a few months he tired of the grey winter skies and left in search of the sun. He ended up on the small Greek island of Hydra, where he enjoyed the community of expat artists, writers, and intellectuals. It was here in May 1960

that he met and fell in love with a Norwegian woman called Marianne Ihlen, who became his lover and one of his most influential muses.

When Cohen's grandmother left him \$1,500, he used it to buy a house on Hydra—which had become a sanctuary for him—and lived there with Marianne and her son, Axel. For much of the 1960s, he divided his time between Hydra and Montreal.

During this time on the Greek island, Cohen wrote his second and final novel, *Beautiful Losers*. Hydra became central to Cohen's identity during the 1960s and he kept strong ties with it for the rest of his life.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Marianne Ihlen**

around 1960

gelatin silver print

Marianne Ihlen was a Norwegian model and Cohen's primary partner during the 1960s. She inspired many of his most famous songs like "Bird on a Wire," "So Long, Marianne," and "Hey, That's No Way to Say Goodbye."

They met in 1960 after Marianne separated from her husband, writer Axel Jensen, with whom she had a son, Axel Joachim Jensen. In addition to the time that they spent together on Hydra, Marianne accompanied Cohen on trips to Montreal and New York.

During this period, Cohen acted as a surrogate father to Axel. Although his relationship with Marianne was fraught with infidelity and separation, the pair remained friends long after their romantic

relationship ended.

**UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**

**Leonard Cohen on Hydra**

1961–1964

gelatin silver print

**LEONARD COHEN**

**Marianne Ihlen**

1961–1964

gelatin silver print

**UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**

**Leonard Cohen on Hydra**

1961

gelatin silver print

**LEONARD COHEN**

**Axel Joachim Jensen**

1964

gelatin silver print

**UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**

**Leonard Cohen Dancing**

1961–1964

gelatin silver print

## **UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**

### **Hydra House**

1964

gelatin silver print

### **Presented in a table case:**

#### **1. Shaar Hashomayim Religious School Report Card**

1945–1946

report card

#### **2. LEONARD COHEN**

##### **Letter to Masha Cohen**

around 1961

handwritten letter

#### **3. UNKNOWN MAKER**

##### **Campers Report**

1948

typed page

#### **4. LEONARD COHEN**

##### **Camp Wabikon**

1948

handwritten letter

Beginning in 1946, Cohen spent several summers at Camp Wabikon on Lake Temagami, Ontario, about 250 miles north of Toronto. His time there proved to be a formative experience, as

he thrived in outdoor sports as well as in social activities such as singing by the campfire and storytelling. In this letter to his mother, Masha, Cohen describes his delight at catching a fish and remarks that he is writing lots of letters. Camp Wabikon features prominently in the closing chapters of *The Favourite Game*, Cohen's debut novel.

## **5. Westmount Junior High School Grade 9 Report Card**

1948–1949

report card

## **6. LEONARD COHEN**

### **My Sister's Birthday**

around 1960

typed letter

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

Cohen's father, Nathan, died when Leonard was just nine years old. This unpublished semi-autobiographical account stoically describes a nine-year-old boy and his twelve-year-old sister learning of their father's death, and the grim rites that take place on what happens to be the eve of her thirteenth birthday.

The final sentence on the second page reads: "I remember looking in the large dictionary for another word for 'happy.'"

**Presented in a table case:**

## **1. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Notebook**

around 1960

notebook

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

## **2. LEONARD COHEN**

### **“A Jew Looks at Rembrandt”**

around 1960

typed poem

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

## **3. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Portrait of Georgianna (Anne) Sherman and Leonard Cohen**

around 1958

gelatin silver print

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

Cohen's first serious love affair was with Georgianna Sherman, whom he referred to as Anne or Annie. They met at Columbia University in New York City, where Cohen was pursuing graduate studies in literature and Sherman was a program coordinator. The

innocence of their young love is captured in this gem-like, framed photo-booth portrait. Their relationship ended due to Cohen's strong resistance to settling down, but he continued to write to Sherman and send poems such as the following, which was published in *Selected Poems: 1956–1968*:

For Anne

With Annie gone,

Whose eyes to compare

With the morning sun?

Not that I did compare,

But I do compare

Now that she's gone.

#### **4. LEONARD COHEN**

##### **Self-Portrait**

1957

gelatin silver print

#### **5. LEONARD COHEN**

##### **Self-Portrait**

1957

gelatin silver print

#### **6. LEONARD COHEN**

##### **Portrait of Leonard Cohen and Morton Rosengarten**

around 1960

gelatin silver print

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

## **7. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Morton Rosengarten**

1964

ink on paper

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

Morton Rosengarten grew up in close proximity to the Cohen family home in Westmount, Montreal. He became a lifelong friend of Cohen's after they met at Camp Hiawatha in the Laurentian Mountains during the summer of 1944. Rosengarten later became a sculptor and in the 1950s, he and Cohen opened the Four Penny Gallery as a haven for contemporary poets and artists in Montreal. This expressive, rapidly drawn ink sketch is typical of the kind of drawings found in Cohen's notebooks from the period.

## **8. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Letter from Morton Rosengarten**

around 1960

letter

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

**Presented in a table case:**

## **1. LEONARD COHEN**

### **“Gift” from *The Spice-Box of Earth***

around 1960

handwritten poem

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

## **2. LEONARD COHEN**

### **The Spice-Box of Earth**

1961

book

Edward P. Taylor Library & Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario

## **3. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Flowers for Hitler**

1964

ink on paper

Edward P. Taylor Library & Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario. Gift of  
Susan Houston, 2005

## **4. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Flowers for Hitler**

1964

book

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

Cohen's third volume of poetry, *Flowers for Hitler*, is a dark, surreal collection that includes poems about the Canadian parliament, Quebec separatists, and Nazi-era concentration camps—an intentional attempt to debunk his reputation as a romantic poet. While Cohen's ink-drawn sketch of a goat's skull bears little resemblance to the final cover art for the book (at left), it does reveal his interest in combining images and words in inventive ways to augment his ideas. This impulse extends further to include the whimsical form of his signature at the centre of the sheet.

## **Presented in a table case:**

### **1. LEONARD COHEN**

#### **Letter to Marianne Ihlen**

1961

letter

In the spring of 1961, soon after the Bay of Pigs crisis, Cohen made a trip to Cuba. In this letter to Marianne Ihlen from Cuba, he writes: "Revolution is not hospitable to neurotic melancholy, which is just as a Revolution should be." Cohen was fascinated by firearms, military life, and the legacy of his father, who served as a lieutenant with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War

### **2. LEONARD COHEN**

#### **Letter to Marianne Ihlen**

1962

letter

### **3. LEONARD COHEN**

#### **Airmail**

around 1960

ink on paper

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

### **4. LEONARD COHEN**

#### **Hydra Pocketbook**

around 1960

ink on paper

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

### **5. Hydra House Key**

1961

key

Courtesy of Aviva Layton

### **6. I Ching Coins**

1960–1965

coins

Courtesy of Aviva Layton

Cohen explored many alternative religions and philosophies, from Scientology to Buddhism and Catholicism, without ever giving up his Judaism. His inquiring mind also led him to the I Ching, an ancient Chinese manual of divination, which he used as a tool of self-examination and as a means of gaining insight into his “true” personality. Cohen practiced the I Ching with his lifelong friends,

Aviva and Irving Layton, who owned these coins. Always on a quest for knowledge, he stated that “the I Ching has been a sort of teacher for me.”

## **7. AVIVA LAYTON**

Australian, born 1933

### **Letter from Aviva Layton**

around 1960

letter

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

## **8. AVIVA LAYTON**

Australian, born 1933

### **Postcard to Leonard Cohen**

around 1960

postcard

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

## **AVIVA LAYTON**

Australian, born 1933

### **Postcard to Leonard Cohen**

around 1960

postcard

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

## **TENNESSEE NOTEBOOK**

In September 1968, Cohen moved to a cabin in Franklin, Tennessee, with his partner Suzanne Elrod. He recorded material for his second album, *Songs from a Room*, in nearby Nashville while staying at the Noelle Hotel. During this time, Cohen kept a journal of photographs as well as poetry and prose reflections on life, love, law, the body, and mortality.

Cohen strictly observed ritual and discipline. This notebook shows that photography and writing were integral to his daily routine as part of his exploration of self. To make the photographs, Cohen used a Polaroid Swinger Model 20 Land Camera, which was portable and easy to use. Its compact roll film accommodated eight exposures and created prints that fit comfortably in the palm of the hand. Made for private viewing, the results are intimate and provide a compelling glimpse of Cohen's inner life at this pivotal moment of transition from writer-poet to singer-songwriter.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Self-Portrait**

1968

### **Woman's Torso**

1969

### **Self-Portrait**

1968

instant prints (Polaroid Type 20)

The serial numbers on the backs of these Polaroids reveal the year and month that the film was manufactured, as well as on which exposure the photo was on the roll of film. These particular

prints retain the edges of the Polaroid tear-off paper and, as far as we know, were never added to the notebooks on display in the case to the left.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Desk in Room 1219**

1968

notebook page with Polaroid Type 20 instant prints

### **Cohen on Guns**

1968

typed page

Cohen collected a variety of pistols and rifles during his life, and guns appear often in his music, art, and writing. The first gun that attracted him was his father's WW1 service pistol. In Nashville, one of his favourite places to visit was the Woodbine Army Surplus Store, where two of the photographs on this page were made. Elsewhere in this notebook, Cohen recorded his response to seeing the guns on display. Later he typed out the original handwritten diary entry, which underscores the extent of his fascination with the subject.

Cohen once remarked: "I don't hunt, I like target practice. I kind of fell into [gun ownership] because I was interested in becoming a cowboy at one time.... When I lived in Nashville, I had a lot of admiration for these guys I saw around. They were very attractive. I liked the way they spoke...a lot of them carried a gun or had rifles in the back of their trucks. That's when I started getting interested in firearms."

Presented in a table case:

**1. LEONARD COHEN**

**About 11 am**

1968

notebook with photo-booth portraits

**2. LEONARD COHEN**

**View from Window**

1968

notebook page with Polaroid Type 20 instant prints

**3. LEONARD COHEN**

**6 am False Faces**

1968

notebook page with Polaroid Type 20 instant prints

**4. LEONARD COHEN**

**Forlorn Harvest**

1968

notebook page with Polaroid Type 20 instant prints

**5. LEONARD COHEN**

**Nude Torso**

1968

notebook page with Polaroid Type 20 instant prints

**6. LEONARD COHEN**

**She Yawned**

1968

notebook page with Polaroid Type 20 instant prints

## **7. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Cohen Cut-Out**

1968

notebook page with Polaroid Type 20 instant prints

Cohen's Tennessee notebook, shown intact, to the left, as item (1), reveals the self-contained activity of an artist-writer working alone in a room. On one loose page (4), more than 20 Polaroids are scattered across the bed and captioned as "a forlorn harvest of self-portraits," suggesting the extent of Cohen's preoccupation with recording and image-making. His lifetime fixation with self-care and body image is evident in other pages from the notebook, which include multiple headshots and close-up views of his torso (2, 3 and 5). Cohen's creative explorations also included collaging cut-up fragments of Polaroids (7) and individually mounting them in photo corners, accompanied by text.

## **JONI MITCHELL**

born Fort Macleod, Alberta, Canada, 1943

### **Telegrams from Joni Mitchell to Leonard Cohen**

1970

printed paper

Cohen met the singer and musician Joni Mitchell in 1965 when they participated in a workshop at the Newport Folk Festival. Both were born and raised in Canada and were at the early stages of their performing careers. They began a romantic relationship that

was stormy and ended after a year, and while the pair remained friends, Mitchell later voiced contradictory sentiments about Cohen. On the one hand, she acknowledged that he had exerted a positive influence on her lyrics, while on the other she dismissed him as a “boudoir poet.”

## **ARNAUD MAGGS**

born Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1926

died Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2012

### **Leonard Cohen, Nashville**

1972

gelatin silver print

Courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery

## **ARNAUD MAGGS**

born Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1926

died Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2012

### **Leonard Cohen Meditating, Nashville**

1975

gelatin silver print

Courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Self-Portrait**

1970

instant print (Polaroid Type 108)

**Presented in a table case (Library books – adjacent to Tennessee notebook):**

**1. IRVING LAYTON**

born Târgu Neamt, Romania, 1912  
died Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 2006

**HAROLD TOWN**

born Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 1924  
died Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, 1990

**Love Where the Nights are Long**

1962  
book

**2. ELI MANDEL**

born Estevan, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1922  
died Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 1992

**Five Modern Canadian Poets**

1970  
book

**3. MICHAEL ONDAATJE**

born Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1943

**Leonard Cohen**

1970  
book

**4. LEONARD COHEN**

**New Poems**

1968  
book

## **5. LEONARD COHEN**

**Like a Bird on the Wire, Hebrew**

1973

book

**Presented in a table case:**

### **1. DYLAN THOMAS**

born Uplands, United Kingdom, 1914

died New York, New York, United States, 1953

**Under Milk Wood**

1954

book

### **2. EDITH FULTON FOWKE**

born Lumsden, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1913

died Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 1996

**RICHARD JOHNSTON**

born Chicago, Illinois, United States, 1917

died Calgary, Alberta, Canada, 1997

**Folk Songs of Quebec**

1957

book

### **3. VARIOUS ARTISTS**

**Zero vol. III**

1979

poetry magazine

#### **4. VARIOUS ARTISTS**

##### **Zero vol. V**

1980

poetry magazine

#### **5. BESSIE REDFIELD**

date unknown

##### **Capricorn Rhyming Dictionary**

1980

book

#### **6. FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA**

born Fuente Vaqueros, Spain, 1898

died Viznar, Spain, 1936

##### **The Selected Poems of Federico García Lorca**

1955

book

Cohen's personal library features hundreds of volumes and encompasses a range of subjects, including poetry, religion, spirituality, and philosophy. The Spanish poet and playwright Federico García Lorca (after whom Cohen named his daughter, Lorca) is represented here by a well-worn copy of selected poems from 1955. An anthology of Canadian love poems from 1962, illustrated by Toronto-born artist Harold Town (1), includes five poems by Cohen, and also features a rare selection of Cohen's poetry from 1973 that was translated into Hebrew (5).

#### **THE OFFERINGS**

## **Kara Blake**

born Cambridge, Ontario, 1974

### **The Offerings**

2017

five-channel video installation (black and white / colour, sound, 35 min.)

Courtesy of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

Commissioned by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal,  
with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts

*The Offerings* is an immersive audiovisual experience that explores the creative mind of Leonard Cohen, in his own words. Drawing from a wealth of archival sources, Kara Blake uses excerpts from Cohen's interviews and recordings to construct a composite portrait of the artist as he touches on a variety of subjects, ranging from his personal writing practice to universal themes of love, humility, and spirituality.

Blake is a Montreal-based filmmaker whose creative projects include short films, music videos, live performance visuals, and installation pieces. Interested in fusing fact with fiction and past with present, she often works with archival materials to construct new narratives that encourage a re-examination of the world around us.

## **UNKNOWN MAKER**

### **Shaar Hashomayim Bulletin**

1961

printed paper

Leonard Cohen archives, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

Attending synagogue as a child had a profound impact on Cohen. The sense of ritual and the charged language, where every word seemed to count, resonated deeply for him. He maintained close contact with his home synagogue, Shaar Hashomayim, throughout his adult life. This bulletin from the synagogue reproduces one of his early poems, “Prayer for the Messiah.”

Cohen can be seen reciting some of its verses in the video by artist Kara Blake in the adjacent room.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Max’s Kansas City**

1967

inscription on printed menu

Max’s Kansas City was a nightclub and restaurant located in New York City, renowned for its frequent patronage by elite members of the city’s art community—notably Andy Warhol and his entourage.

Here Cohen encountered a young Lou Reed, who recognized him as the author of *Beautiful Losers*, and Nico, the German songstress who pulled at his heartstrings but continuously rebuffed him. This diaristic inscription, penned on the back of a wine list in June 1967, details Cohen’s dalliance with a mystery woman named “Joan.”

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **You Broke the Thin Highway**

1963

written poem

## **COHEN AS A MUSICIAN**

In the mid '50s, Cohen was part of a country band called The Buckskin Boys. After hearing Bob Dylan's music, he realized the impact Dylan was having on pop culture. In a *New York Times* interview in 1969 he said: "There is no difference between a poem and a song. Some were songs first, and some were poems first, and some were situations. All of my writing has guitars behind it, even the novels."

In 1966, Cohen went to New York City where musicians such as Judy Collins and Joan Baez were reviving the folk music scene. He formed a friendship with Collins who was looking for new material to record. She included Cohen's song "Suzanne" on her record *In My Life* in 1966. Collins encouraged Cohen to perform publicly and guided him through his first live performance of the song. He found public performance challenging but he persisted. His first record, *Songs of Leonard Cohen*, was released in 1967.

## **SUZANNE ELROD**

born Miami, Florida, United States, 1950

### **Acapulco**

1971

gelatin silver print

Suzanne Elrod, Cohen's then-partner and later the mother of his two children, made this photograph of him on a year-end holiday trip to Acapulco. Standing in a tiled bathroom, his hair closely cropped, Cohen brandishes a panatela cigar and looks very much like a rock star. Another photograph from the same occasion was used as the front cover of Cohen's first live album, *Live Songs* (1973), based on recordings from the Isle of Wight concert in 1970 and his subsequent European tour in 1972.

## **SAM TATA**

born Shanghai, China, 1911

died Sooke, British Columbia, Canada, 2005

### **Leonard Cohen, Montreal**

1973

gelatin silver print; printed in 1998 by Gabor Szilasi

Courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery

## **UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**

### **Portrait of Leonard Cohen Stamped with the Rosarium Philosophorum**

1974

gelatin silver print

This portrait of Cohen includes an image that he designed and stamped on the print. Cohen drew his inspiration for this symbol from the *Rosarium philosophorum*, a book of European alchemy from the 1500s, based on ancient theories of the transformation of matter. The stamp illustrates for Cohen the ideal union of male and female beings.

Cohen used this same illustration on the cover of his 1974 album, *New Skin for the Old Ceremony*, and on editions of his 1978 book of poetry, prose, and lyrics titled *Death of a Lady's Man*.

## **ALEXANDER AGOR**

dates unknown

### **Leonard Cohen Reclined Smoking**

1972

gelatin silver print

## **RICHARD IMRIE**

born Edinburgh, Scotland, 1946

### **Leonard Cohen Performing at the Royal Albert Hall, London**

1970

gelatin silver print

In early 1970, Cohen's record label, Columbia, decided to send him on a European tour. Cohen's musical career in Canada and the United States was relatively modest, but in Europe he was already a bit of a cult star, an embodiment of the dark, existential worldview that was prevalent in the culture. The tour was chaotic, to say the least, and would result in one of Cohen's most lauded performances during his set at the Isle of Wight Festival, where he tamed a crowd of 600,000 people who were setting fires, throwing bottles at the stage, and generally causing mayhem.

## **UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**

### **Leonard Cohen Silhouetted Onstage**

around 1970

gelatin silver print

## **SHEPARD SHERBELL**

born Brooklyn, New York, United States, 1944

died Poughkeepsie, New York, United States, 2018

### **Leonard Cohen Playing Guitar**

1972

gelatin silver print

## **EVA FELKAI**

dates unknown

### **Leonard Cohen Reading**

from *The Energy of Slaves*

1972

gelatin silver print

## **UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**

### **Leonard Cohen Performing**

1972

gelatin silver print

## **MICHAEL PUTLAND**

born London, United Kingdom, 1947

died United Kingdom, 2019

## **Leonard Cohen Smoking in Chair**

1974

gelatin silver print

## **1972 TOUR**

### **TONY PALMER**

born London, England, 1941

### **ROBERT DE YOUNG**

born Melbourne, Australia, 1957

### **1972 Tour**

1972

video scanned from 16mm film (black and white / colour, sound, 6 min.)

Under pressure from Columbia Records to expand his audience, Cohen assembled a band for a 21-show world tour beginning in Ireland on March 18, 1972, and ending in Israel. Filmmaker Tony Palmer accompanied the band on their travels and was permitted extensive access. The footage he captured presents a raw and undiluted look at Cohen's public and private personas. This unseen digitized 16mm footage of Cohen's 1972 tour is sourced from a new film directed by Robert de Young. The Cohen archives contain 11 complete audio concerts of the 1972 tour and 22 hours of unseen footage.

## **UNKNOWN MAKER**

### **Bird on a Wire**

1972

poster

## **UNKNOWN MAKER**

### **Poet of Rock Music**

1972

printed poster

This poster was produced as a promotional tool for Cohen's 1972 tour, positioning him for the first time as "the poet of rock music." His signature is visible in the blank orb at the bottom-centre of the composition. In its typography, colour scheme, and aesthetics, the poster bears many of the hallmarks of rock poster art that became a booming genre in the graphic arts following the 1967 "Summer of Love."

## **1972 TOUR: THE SET LIST**

The set list for Cohen's 1972 tour drew largely from songs that appeared on his first three albums: *Songs of Leonard Cohen* (1967), *Songs from a Room* (1969), and *Songs of Love and Hate* (1971). The selection included songs that are now established as some of his classics, including "Suzanne," "Bird on a Wire," "Sisters of Mercy," "Chelsea Hotel #2," "Passing Through," and "Famous Blue Raincoat." Cohen also performed various covers, including Pete Seeger's version of "Passing Through," the civil

rights anthem “We Shall Not Be Moved,” and the Irish folk song “Kevin Barry.”

## **COHEN’S FAMILY**

Cohen began a relationship with Suzanne Elrod in 1968. They never married but had two children together: Adam (born 1972) and Lorca (born 1974). Their relationship was seldom easy and was wracked by jealousy as they both took other lovers, resulting in their breakup in 1978. Cohen was a loving father but was often absent and separated from his children. Adam has described being raised by Elrod and Cohen as a “circus with two tents.”

On the subject of parenting and raising a family, Cohen later remarked: “The demand and urgency that kids present is unavoidable. It’s the only time in your life that you stop thinking about yourself, so I didn’t like it.... But I’m sure glad I had them because they are about the best company I have in my life.”

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Lorca’s Cup**

2007

ink and watercolour collage on paper

Cohen took great pleasure in commonplace household objects and paid close attention to them in his domestic surroundings, whether in Montreal, Hydra, Miami or Los Angeles—places where he spent the most time with his children over the years. This drawing of his daughter’s cup has been cut out and collaged onto

a blank page in one of Cohen's sketchbooks and is signed by the artist in pencil below the handle.

**HAZEL FIELD**

born Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1951

**Leonard Masked with Lorca**

1977

gelatin silver print

**UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**

**Leonard Cohen at Home in Montreal**

1975–1980

gelatin silver print

**HAZEL FIELD**

born Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1951

**Adam and Lorca Cohen with Alfie**

1977

instant print (Polaroid SX 70)

**HAZEL FIELD**

born Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1951

**Leonard, Adam, and Lorca Cohen**

1977

instant print (Polaroid SX 70)

## **HAZEL FIELD**

born Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1951

### **Adam and Lorca Cohen with Alfie**

1977

instant print (Polaroid SX 70)

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Lorca Cohen and Nanny**

around 1980

chromogenic print

## **UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**

### **Leonard Cohen at the Wailing Wall, Jerusalem**

1973

gelatin silver print

## **Presented in a table case:**

### **1. LEONARD COHEN**

#### **Ethiopia Notebook**

1974

notebook

Cohen's personal life was often chaotic. Travel was a way for him to escape and find new inspiration. In the early spring of 1974, he set off for Ethiopia, and checked into a hotel in Asmara for several days. The hotel room was a refuge for Cohen and often spurred him into creative endeavors. As this journal entry shows, it was

here that he finished the song “Chelsea Hotel #2,” having started it two years earlier in Miami. He also made time to buy grey cloth and be fitted for a suit by an Ethiopian tailor, which became the foundation of his wardrobe.

## **2. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Lorca, Leonard, and Adam Cohen Photo-Booth Strip**

1978

gelatin silver print

## **3. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Notebook 27–16**

1973–1976

notebook

## **4. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Postcard to Esther Cohen**

1973

handwritten postcard

Recovering on Hydra from a whirlwind world tour the previous year and the birth of his first child, Adam, Cohen abruptly left the island and set off for Israel at the outset of the Yom Kippur War. Cohen spent the next 20 days with the Israeli Defense Force, performing—often several times a day—for troops on the front lines of the conflict between Israel, Egypt, and Syria. He sent this postcard to his sister, Esther, who was then living in New York

City, summarizing the situation on the ground in Israel as “tragic human madness.”

## **5. Facsimile of Postcard to Esther Cohen (front)**

**LEONARD COHEN**

**The Order of the Unified Heart**

1984

Developed by Cohen in the early 1980s, the Order of the Unified Heart symbol acts as his artistic signature and frequently accompanies his poetry, drawings, and album cover designs. The form alludes to the star of David but features softened edges at the top and bottom, resulting in two interwoven hearts that symbolize love, harmony, and Cohen’s abiding faith in humanity.

**Presented in a table case:**

**1. LEONARD COHEN**

**“Democracy Is Coming to the USA”**

1992

ink on paper

Cohen first drafted the song “Democracy” as the Soviet Union was collapsing (1988–1991) and the spread of democratic ideals was emerging in eastern Europe. He wrote the song as a biting critique of the experiment of democracy in the United States.

Cohen's lyrics suggest a bleak vision of the future, blending world events to examine religion, politics, and the spread of ideology across the globe.

## **2. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Draft for the song "Anthem"**

around 1992

loose page from notebook

## **3. LEONARD COHEN**

### **"Anthem" Notebook**

1991

notebook

## **4. LEONARD COHEN**

### **"First We Take Manhattan"**

1986

typed page

## **5. UNKNOWN MAKER**

### **Fan Mail**

1979

letter

## **6. UNKNOWN MAKER**

### **Fan Mail with Drawing**

March 9, 1980

drawing and letter

Cohen received massive amounts of correspondence from fans and acquaintances throughout his career. Most of the letters were from women, some of whom he had dalliances with while on tour.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Self-Portrait**

1984

instant print (Polaroid Type 600)

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Bottles and Candles**

1991

instant print (Polaroid Spectra)

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Various Position Outtakes**

1984

instant prints (Polaroid Type 600)

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Cow Butter Dish, Salt & Pepper**

1991

instant print (Polaroid Spectra)

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Cup**

1991

instant print (Polaroid Spectra)

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Work Desk**

2000

instant print (Polaroid Type 600)

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Self-Portrait**

1979

instant prints (Polaroid Type 667)

This trio of self-portraits show Cohen's dual fascination with the creative possibilities of the instant camera along with the photographic exploration of his physical and psychological identity. In all three exposures, Cohen turns the camera on himself, his left arm reaching out of the frame and pointing the instrument back at him. His face carries a questioning, almost suspicious expression, as if doubting the ability of the camera to capture the particularities of his mood at the time.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Work Desk, Los Angeles**

1991

instant print (Polaroid Spectra)

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Kleenex Box**

1976–1980

ink on paper

Cohen had an uncanny obsession with Kleenex tissues, which are a recurring theme in his first novel, *The Favourite Game* (1963). The book's main protagonist, Lawrence Breavman (understood to be modelled after Cohen's adolescent self), overcomes his insecurity of being nearly a head shorter than his friends by stuffing his shoes with Kleenex to appear taller for his night out with a date. Throughout the novel, Breavman's relationships, romantic or otherwise, turn out to be temporary and disposable, much like a Kleenex tissue. This quick ink sketch, executed more than a decade later, suggests that Cohen's fixation with the product, and its symbolism, was surprisingly enduring.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **This Is the Pen I Was Speaking About**

1976–1980

crayon and pastel on paper

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Besamim (Havdalah Spice Box)**

1976–1980

grease pencil and pastel on paper

Cohen's Jewish faith remained important to him throughout his life. Here he depicts the spice box or *besamim*, a ceremonial object used during the Havdalah ritual which marks the end of the Holy Sabbath. By smelling spice essence, such as myrtle, contained within the box, the human spirit is strengthened before returning to daily life. The *besamim* is a recurring motif in Cohen's work, as he previously titled his second volume of poetry *The Spice-Box of Earth* (1961).

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Hydra Heater**

1978–1980

crayon and marker on paper

Cohen's son, Adam, recalls his father often waking up earlier than the rest of the family to take advantage of the quiet in order to write and draw. "By the time we would wake up ... there would be a collection of new lyrics and often new drawings on the breakfast table." The children regularly sat around the table with their father to draw. The doodling and subject matter was often mundane but as Adam remarked, "even in something he scribbles, there's this inimitable and distinct voice evident in his work."

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Still Life**

1976–1980

ink and crayon on paper

Central to Cohen's personal taste and way of life was a deep attachment to everyday household objects, such as a table, chair, or mirror. There is a studied purpose to this still-life arrangement,

with a can of paint thinner, a candlestick, a salt shaker, and a soda can forming a quartet of objects to which he has given his full attention.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Woman with Candlestick**

around 1980

ink on paper

## **HAZEL FIELD**

born Canada, 1951

### **Leonard Cohen in Hat, Montreal**

1977

gelatin silver print with ink and graphite

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Drawing after Portrait by Hazel Field**

1977–1980

ink and pencil on paper

In an unusual exercise, Cohen added pencil and ink hatching and shading to the cheeks and hat of the print of this portrait made by his photographer friend, Hazel Field. He went one step further by later copying the photograph in the form of a drawing on a large sheet of brown paper. This act of effacing, marking, and subtly adjusting his appearance suggests an inner state of mind or perhaps a sense of interior agitation.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Photo-Booth Self-Portrait**

around 1975

gelatin silver print

Often photographing himself in photo booths or with traditional portable cameras, Cohen was an early adopter of the instant photograph. He enjoyed the process and technology of photography, and over the course of his life owned multiple cameras, including several different models of Polaroid. He photographed himself and those around him intensively. His self-portraits (of which there are hundreds) reveal his ever-present preoccupation with his appearance, which he carefully controlled.

## **LYNN BALL**

born Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 1943

### **Contact Sheet**

around 1983

chromogenic print

## **LYNN BALL**

born Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 1943

### **Leonard Cohen on Boulevard Saint-Laurent, Montreal**

around 1983

chromogenic print

## **LYNN BALL**

born Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 1943

### **Leonard Cohen on Boulevard Saint-Laurent, Montreal**

around 1983  
chromogenic print

## **LYNN BALL**

born Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 1943

### **Leonard Cohen with His Casio Synthesizer**

around 1983  
chromogenic print

In the 1980s the synthesizer—a desktop-sized electronic keyboard in its most common form—became a mainstay instrument in popular music and featured prominently in Cohen’s 1988 album, *I’m Your Man*. At the touch of a button, the user could access a variety of standard rhythms, from the waltz and foxtrot to rock, polka, and reggae. Cohen took to using a synthesizer as much as his guitar to explore musical ideas, once remarking that “with all these advantages, it makes the instrument very lovable.”

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Dominique Issermann**

1985  
gelatin silver print

## **ACCEPTABLE DECORATIONS**

Cohen’s lifelong interest in the graphic arts was kept largely private until a trio of exhibitions presenting some of these materials were staged in 2007. He produced work in a variety of media, including napkin doodles, notebook drawings, pastels, watercolours, charcoal sketches, and custom prints made from

scans of his original artwork or from digital images produced on a computer tablet.

Cohen wryly described his artwork in its various forms as “acceptable decorations.” While he certainly had no desire to seek recognition for, or be remembered as, a visual artist, the profusion of visual material in his archive makes evident its importance to his overall creative output. Most of his published volumes, albums, and touring merchandise feature imagery generated directly from his artwork.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Green Chair**

2011

inkjet print

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **My Mother’s Last Hand (Watercolour Notebook)**

1980–1985

notebook with 13 watercolours

This watercolour notebook contains 13 drawings made by Cohen over several years and executed in a consistent style. The full selection can be seen on the monitor to the left. Many are annotated with a single line or couplet that responds to the content and mood suggested by the drawing. The notebook is open at the page that shows the hand of his mother, Masha, who died in 1978. He later explained: “Drawn in the last few months of her life, it is her hand and my hand drawn as one.”

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Untitled (Pastel/Crayon Notebook)**

1980–1985

notebook with 16 pastel and crayon drawings

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Drawings from Watercolour Notebook**

1980–1985

notebook

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Drawings from Pastel and Crayon Notebook**

1980–1985

notebook

## **PASSING THROUGH**

### **GEORGE FOK**

born Hong Kong, China, 1969

### **Passing Through**

2017

multi-channel video installation (black and white / colour, sound, 56 min. 15 sec.)

Courtesy of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

Commissioned by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

In the room directly ahead, the immersive video work *Passing Through* celebrates Cohen's singular voice, music, charismatic persona, and inimitable stage presence. Drawing on a vast archive of audiovisual material, George Fok pays tribute to Cohen's monumental, five-decade-long career as a singer-songwriter and performer. This composite portrait of Cohen recalls and reconstructs various pivotal stages in his career, from his early years in bohemian 1960s Montreal to his later life, when he was recognized as a global cultural icon. The audience time travels through a collage of collective memories, musical moments, and emotions that have enchanted generations of fans around the world.

Fok is a new media artist whose practice primarily involves installation, digital art, and filmmaking. Based in Montreal, his work explores the mixed medium of immersive experience and other digital-born mediums. He investigates subjects such as memory, speculative narratives, reconstructed histories, and aesthetics.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Draft lyrics for "Everybody Knows"**

1987

notebook

Cohen co-wrote one of his most iconic songs, "Everybody Knows" (1988), with Grammy-winning recording artist Sharon Robinson, a faithful friend and collaborator who performed with him for many years. This modest notebook includes an early draft of the song written in Cohen's distinctive handwriting with the refrain "That's how it goes / Everybody knows" inscribed at the end of the verse.

The two lines near the bottom of the page—reminiscent of lines from The Police’s 1983 song “Every Breath You Take”—did not make the final cut.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **SHARON ROBINSON**

born San Francisco, California, United States, 1958

#### **“Everybody Knows”**

1988

Song sheet

This song sheet—which features the lyrics and music for Everybody Knows written in flowing handwriting—was created for the recording studio and for rehearsals. It is designed in a way that it can be opened and closed on a music stand as needed. Cohen was diligent in his preparations for live performance and put his band through lengthy rehearsals prior to embarking on his international tours.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **“Hallelujah” Notebook**

1979–1984

notebook

#### **“Hallelujah”**

1983–1984

song sheet

One of Cohen’s most iconic songs, “Hallelujah” took him almost five years to complete. It is included on the album *Various Positions* (1984). Cohen wrote multiple versions— he apparently

experimented with more than 150 verses—and it was years before he settled on the final lyrics. This notebook contains several pages of draft verses, with numerous notes, revisions, and crossed-out elements. The song shows Cohen’s embrace of biblical imagery, and his gift for combining the sacred and the profane.

## **PRINTMAKING**

In 1992, Cohen met Michael Petit, a graphic designer in Los Angeles who became a collaborator on many projects, including books, album covers, and merchandise for Cohen’s tours. They worked together on *Book of Longing* (2006), which was the first of Cohen’s printed books to extensively combine his poetry with his own drawings and related graphics.

Petit also introduced Cohen to Nash Editions, a custom fine art and digital print studio in Southern California. Together they produced limited-edition prints of images created from scanned files of Cohen’s drawings and sketches, and from digitally generated original artwork.

Cohen enjoyed exploring different forms of imaging technology. He was an enthusiastic adopter of the Apple iMac in the early 2000s, and worked with Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator to produce many of the images visible on the nearby monitor.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Digital Self-Portraits**

2003–2005

digital file (5 min. 34 sec.)

Courtesy of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

Beginning in 2003, Cohen set about making a self-portrait in the mirror every day. He worked primarily with a computer tablet, which allowed for rapid expressionistic drawing and immediate revisions as needed. After looking closely at the finished work, he frequently annotated it with a phrase or sentence that corresponded with the mood or emotion suggested by the drawing. There is often an ironic and amusing interplay between the character of the drawing and the accompanying commentaries.

From a mirror on my desk

In the very early morning

I copied down

Hundreds of self-portraits

Which reminded me of one thing

or another...

I call my work

Acceptable Decorations.

— “If There Were No Paintings,” Leonard Cohen, 2007

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Grecian Woman**

2006

pastel on paper

**LEONARD COHEN**

**Montreux Jazz Festival**

2008

pencil, ink, and highlighter on cardboard

**LEONARD COHEN**

**Our Lady**

2008–2010

ink, pastel, and gold leaf on paper

**LEONARD COHEN**

**House in Winter (Montreal)**

2014

inkjet print

**LEONARD COHEN**

**Little Bird**

2013

inkjet print

**LEONARD COHEN**

**Red Guitar**

2013

inkjet print

**LEONARD COHEN**

**Montreal Still Life (Guitar)**

1976

magic marker on paper

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Bird on a Branch**

around 2000

magic marker on paper

During his five-year stay at the Zen Center on Mount Baldy, as well as in Los Angeles, Montreal, and Mumbai, Cohen wrote *The Book of Longing*, a compilation of poems and drawings that grapple with his relationship to Buddhism and his teacher, Roshi. Many of the book's black-and-white drawings are derived from colourful artworks Cohen produced earlier in his career. This rendition of a bird on a tree branch was used as the book's cover, and was also reproduced as a limited-edition custom art print (visible at right).

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **The Kitchen**

2013

inkjet print

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **The Kitchen (Montreal)**

2007

ink and watercolour on paper

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **It Was the Hat**

2012  
inkjet print

**LEONARD COHEN**  
**Deeply Familiar**

2012  
inkjet print

**LEONARD COHEN**  
**Angry at 11 pm**

1991  
instant print (Polaroid Spectra)

**LEONARD COHEN**  
**Let Us Be True to One Another**

1976–1980  
crayon and pastel on paper

**LEONARD COHEN**  
**The Room**

1976–1980  
pastel on paper

**LEONARD COHEN**  
**Woman Under Heat Lamp**

1976–1980  
crayon on paper

## **UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**

### **Leonard Cohen, Elton John, and Others in the Recording Studio**

around 1980

chromogenic print

## **PHILIP GLASS**

American, born 1937

### **Leaving Mt. Baldy**

2006

music sheet with inscriptions

Philip Glass and Leonard Cohen collaborated on a musical interpretation of the *Book of Longing*, a song cycle presented as a stage show based on Cohen's poems and images. It was commissioned by the Luminato Festival of Arts and Creativity in Toronto, and performed here as well as in the United States and United Kingdom in 2007. This song sheet, executed in pencil in Glass's writing, includes the first three lines of Cohen's 1999 poem, "I Came Down From The Mountain":

I came down from the mountain

after many years of study

and rigorous practice.

## **DON WAS**

born Detroit, Michigan, United States, 1952

### **Leonard Cohen and Iggy Pop**

1989

instant print (Polaroid SX 70)

## **UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**

### **Leonard Cohen and U2**

2001

instant print (Polaroid Type 600)

## **UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**

### **Leonard Cohen at Mt. Baldy, California**

1995

instant print (Fuji FP-100C)

Shortly after completing his 1993 world tour and his break-up from fiancée Rebecca De Mornay, Cohen committed himself to the life of a monk. Taught by a Japanese Zen master named Joshu Sasaki Roshi, he spent the following five years practicing Buddhism at Roshi's Zen Center on Mount Baldy in the San Gabriel Mountains east of Los Angeles. In 1996, Cohen was ordained as a Zen monk and given a new name: Jikan. As this photograph suggests, Cohen sat meditating in half-lotus for many hours a day. While genuinely embracing Buddhism, Cohen would never relinquish his Jewish identity.

Presented in a table case:

## **1. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Salute to Roshi**

1999

magic marker on notebook page

When Cohen became an ordained Buddhist monk on Mount Baldy in 1996, he took the name Jikan—which, for his Zen master, Roshi, had several meanings beside “Silent One,” including “ordinary silence” or “the silence between two thoughts.” Cohen readily embraced the name and the rituals of monastic life for the almost six years that he was a resident in the community.

## **2. LEONARD COHEN**

### **The Drunk is Gender-Free**

2004

printed page

## **3. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Guides to Notebooks**

1994

notebooks

Shortly after completing his world tour in 1993, Cohen practised Buddhism for the following five years at Roshi’s Zen Center on Mount Baldy. As part of his rigorous daily regimen, he decided to compile an index for his many notebooks created over the years. This helped him organize his thoughts and review ideas for poems and song lyrics that he would reference upon his departure from the monastery in 1998.

## **4. LEONARD COHEN**

### **Notebook 2–40**

2008

notebook

## **5. LEONARD COHEN**

### **The Flight from Barcelona**

2012

notebook

In October 2012, Cohen performed his last concert at the Palau Sant Jordi sports stadium in Spain with an audience of 12,000. He was on stage for more than three hours. On the flight home he started a new journal, decorating the cover in brightly coloured handwriting.

Presented in a table case:

## **1. LEONARD COHEN**

### **There Was a Child Named Bernadette**

1986

handwritten poem

Cohen developed many close professional relationships with women during his career, including American singer-songwriter Jennifer Warnes. She toured with Cohen's band in 1972, first as a back-up singer and later as a vocal arranger. Warnes wrote "The Song of Bernadette" while on Cohen's 1979 tour. Initially the lyrics were about a conversation between herself and the child she might have been, and later developed into one of many

collaborative projects with Cohen. “The Song of Bernadette” appeared on Warnes’s 1986 tribute album, *Famous Blue Raincoat*—the only song on the album that Cohen himself never recorded.

## **2. K.D. LANG**

born Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, 1961

### **Note from k.d. lang to Leonard Cohen**

2013

handwritten letter

## **3. JOAN BAEZ**

born Staten Island, New York, United States, 1941

### **Letter from Joan Baez to Leonard Cohen**

1994

handwritten letter

Joan Baez and Cohen met for the first time in New York City in 1967 at the Chelsea Hotel. While they never became close friends, they admired one another’s artistry and kept in touch over the years. Baez performed Cohen’s song “Suzanne” on multiple occasions, altering the lyrics in several places. In 1994 she wrote Cohen this touching letter and sent with it a sheaf of poems, including one inspired by Andrew Wyeth’s iconic 1930 painting *American Gothic* at the Museum of Modern Art.

## **4. JOAN BAEZ**

born Staten Island, New York, United States, 1941

## **Reflections on *American Gothic***

1991

typed page

### **ALBUMS**

Cohen released 14 studio albums, 8 live albums, and 44 singles— all distributed globally—in a recording career spanning almost five decades. His songs also appeared on five compilation albums and were covered by numerous artists over the years.

In the weeks following Cohen’s passing on November 7, 2016, his catalogue of albums, songs, and on-demand streams increased dramatically in sales. This trend has barely slackened in the years since, a testimony to the strength of his songwriting and enduring appeal.

#### **Row 1, left to right:**

Leonard Cohen, around 1980

Take This Waltz, 1986

My Radio Sweetheart, 1968

Leonard Cohen: Live Songs, 1973

Starsound Collection, 1983

First We Take Manhattan, 1988

Greatest Hits, 1975

**Row 2, left to right:**

Greatest Hits & Various Positions, around 1980

First We Take Manhattan, 1988

Death of a Ladies' Man, around 1980

Death of a Ladies' Man, 1977

The End of Love vol. II, 1993

Songs of Leonard Cohen, 1967

New Skin for the Old Ceremony, 1974

**Row 3, left to right:**

New Skin for the Old Ceremony, 1974

Recent Songs, 1979

Songs from a Room, 1969

Songs from a Room, 1969

Songs of Love and Hate, 1971

I'm Your Man, 1988

The Future, 1992

**Row 4, left to right:**

Various Positions, 1984

Golden Highlights, 1985

**LEONARD COHEN**

**SHARON ROBINSON**

born San Francisco, California, United States, 1958

**Ten New Songs**

2001

**LEONARD COHEN**

**A.J.M. SMITH**

born Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1902

died East Lansing, Michigan, United States, 1980

**LOUIS DUDEK**

born Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1918

died Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 2001

**F.R. SCOTT**

born Quebec City, Canada, 1899

died Montreal, Canada, 1985

**A.M. KLEIN**

born Ratno, Ukraine, 1909

died Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1972

**IRVING LAYTON**

born Târgu Neamt, Romania

died Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 2006

**Six Montreal Poets**

1957

## **BECK**

born Los Angeles, California, United States, 1970

### **Songs of Leonard Cohen**

2009

## **LEONARD COHEN**

### **Old Ideas**

2012

### **Popular Problems**

2014

### **You Want It Darker**

2016

### **Thanks for the Dance**

2019

album covers

When Cohen began touring again in 2008, for the first time in 15 years, it sparked great interest in his past recordings. An increased international reputation also sent him back to the studio for a highly productive period. When he released *Old Ideas* (2012), it peaked at No. 3 on the Billboard 200 Albums Chart.

This was the highest ever for a Cohen record, and the first to top the Canadian Albums Chart, a feat he repeated with his follow-up, *Popular Problems* (2014). He released his final studio album, *You Want It Darker*, in October 2016, just a few weeks prior to his death. *Thanks for the Dance*, produced by his son, Adam, was released on November 22, 2019.

## **BECOMING A GLOBAL ICON**

Over the course of his long career, Cohen played hundreds of concerts all over the world—though doing so did not become second nature until he was in his seventies. In 2007, he conceived a world tour with a full band, including three backup singers, two guitarists, a drummer, keyboard player, bassist, and saxophonist (later replaced by a violinist). He rehearsed with the band rigorously for three months. The tour started in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and travelled everywhere during the next five years: 380 shows in packed arenas from New York to Nice, Moscow to Sydney, ending in Auckland in late December 2013. Cohen gave it his all, several nights a week.

Sharon Robinson, his frequent co-writer, close friend, and backup singer on the tour, would quip about the length of his shows, which sometimes lasted as long as four hours. Typical of Cohen's humour, he would frequently sing "I Tried to Leave You" during the final encores. These concerts were critically acclaimed and brought him considerable personal and creative satisfaction.

## **UNKNOWN MAKER**

### **Cloth Flat Cap**

around 2000

### **Trilby Hat**

around 2010

## **THE RECORDING ACADEMY**

### **Cohen's Grammy Award**

2017  
sculpture

## **UNKNOWN MAKER**

### **4 Jews Harps, H/G/D/A**

date unknown

Jews harp

### **Cohen's Dress Shoes**

around 2010

## **UNKNOWN VIDEOGRAPHER**

### **Live in Tel Aviv**

2009

video (colour, sound, 1 min.)

Courtesy of the Leonard Cohen Family Trust

In September 2009, Cohen performed at Tel Aviv's Ramat Gan Stadium, his first appearance in Israel since 1985. The concert was controversial, set against the backdrop of the recent end of hostilities between Palestine and Israel during the Gaza War. Cohen dedicated the concert to the cause of "reconciliation, tolerance, and peace" and the song "Anthem" to the bereaved. He donated the proceeds (\$1.5–2 million) to Israel-Palestinian peace organizations. At the end of the concert, Cohen raised his hands in a rabbinical gesture and recited in Hebrew the *birkat kohanim*—the priestly blessing—to the crowd.

## **LEONARD COHEN**

**Anjani Thomas**

2000

instant print (Polaroid Type 600)

**ETHAN HILL**

born Hawaii, United States, 1972

**Leonard Cohen at Home**

2001

instant print (Polaroid Type 672)

**LEONARD COHEN**

**Keyboard and Menorah**

2009

crayon and pastel on paper

**LEONARD COHEN**

**Self-Portrait with Mirrored Glasses**

2009

crayon and ink on paper

**LEONARD COHEN**

**Self-Portrait in Mirror**

2000

instant print (Polaroid Type 600)