

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Patrick DeCoste: 13 Moons and a Canoe

On View at the John B. Aird Gallery: **Tuesday October 17 to Friday November 17, 2017**

Key Dates:

Opening Reception: Thursday, October 19, 6 to 8 p.m.

Cinq à sept (5 to 7 pm): 13 Moons Bonnie Devine in conversation with Patrick DeCoste: Wed, Oct. 25

Cinq à sept (5 to 7 pm): Métis Perspectives Tanya Senk in conversation with Patrick DeCoste: Thurs, Nov 9

The John B. Aird Gallery is delighted to present the upcoming exhibition ***13 Moons and a Canoe***, a solo exhibition featuring recent and new interdisciplinary work by Métis artist **Patrick DeCoste**.

Organized by Aird Gallery director Carla Garnet, the exhibition and the dialogue it fosters will be offered in the spirit of advancing ongoing conversations about Canadian identity, and how together we might take responsibility for our past, present, and future.

In the works that comprise *13 Moons and a Canoe*, DeCoste takes up history as something living and breathing, the conceptual weight of his work lightened by its rich materiality. The installation pairs a canoe, retrofitted with a mast and sail, with a circular room of thirteen canvas walls – each painted with a large, colourful moon – strung across poles hewn from forest trees.

This room-within-a-room evokes a pastiche of environmental, cultural, and personal influences. It is, on the one hand, a monument to the Indigenous lunar calendar, an inner sanctum delineated by the thirteen full moons that mark the passing of each year, and, on the other hand, a kind of family portrait for the artist; the twelve walls represent DeCoste and each of his eleven siblings. The modified canoe, reveals the thirteenth moon on its sail, this white moon represents the baby who did not survive, the thirteenth child. The canoe sits outside the tridecagon room; it conjures up the genesis of the Métis people in seventeenth-century Nova Scotia, where DeCoste's family has its roots. It is a potent symbol of First Contact between Europeans and Indigenous peoples – a hybrid object, deceptively quaint in appearance that literalizes the impact of cultures quickening against and into one another.

For DeCoste, themes of journeys, maps, meetings, and cultural exchange resonate on a personal level as he draws on these concepts to map out his own positionality and identity. The work is not so much a critique of colonialism as an attempt to grapple with the forces of history, culture, family, and identity as they relate to his own experience as a contemporary Métis artist with Nova Scotian roots, living and working in Toronto and Georgian Bay.

The exhibition also includes a series of acrylic paintings on polar bear, spirit bear, and other animal skins, along with paintings and studio objects that reflect DeCoste's journey toward understanding (and fully inhabiting) his Métis identity. The paintings exuberantly meld cultural and highly personal symbolism with dreamlike imagery, alluding to the story of a dream that a young Mi'kmaw woman had over 500 years ago - of a bearded white man standing on an island floating toward her shore, foretelling the arrival of Europeans on the First People's lands. DeCoste's journey of self-knowledge is mirrored in this vision of First Contact as he maps his own experience onto the history that his works evoke.

Following its presentation at the Aird, the exhibition will travel to the Thames Art Gallery in Chatham in early 2018 and to the Tom Thomson Gallery in Owen Sound in 2020. The Thames Gallery will produce a print publication to accompany the exhibition, with a foreword by Garnet, a short essay by DeCoste and text by senior Anishinaabe

John B. Aird Gallery
Galerie John B. Aird

artist and educator Bonnie Devine, commissioned by the Aird Gallery. A major artist in her own right, Devine is also the Founding Chair of OCAD University's Indigenous Visual Culture program, and her analysis of DeCoste's work will provide an important perspective on his engagement with narratives of Indigenous identity.

The exhibition's outreach and education program has been guided by Tanya Senk, an educator, artist, writer, and activist of Métis/Cree/Saulteaux descent, whose work centres on decolonizing and indigenizing education. The educational programs offered during the run of *13 Moons and a Canoe* will include a conversation between Devine and DeCoste about the Moons (Wednesday, October 25), as well as a conversation between Senk and DeCoste about Métis perspectives (Thursday, November 9).

Patrick DeCoste: 13 Moons and a Canoe will be on view from October 17 to November 17, 2017, at the John B. Aird Gallery, located in the Macdonald Block at 900 Bay Street, Toronto. The artist will be in attendance during the public opening reception on Thursday, October 19.

This exhibition is generously supported by a project grant from the Toronto Arts Council.

Patrick DeCoste would like to acknowledge the support of both the Ontario Arts Council's Aboriginal Arts program and the Toronto Arts Council's Indigenous Arts Projects program for assisting in the development of new work for this exhibition.

For press inquiries, please contact:

Carla Garnet, Director/Curator, John B. Aird Gallery
director@airdgallery.org

PARTICIPANTS BIOS:

Patrick DeCoste is an award-winning Toronto-based visual artist who studied fine arts at Mount Allison University and OCAD University, where he received the President's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Graduate Studies in 2014. He has exhibited extensively across Canada and the U.S., has received grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Council, and was awarded a prestigious Chalmers Arts Fellowship in 2011.

Bonnie Devine is an installation artist, curator, writer, and educator, and a member of the Serpent River First Nation of Northern Ontario (Anishinaabe/Ojibwa). She is an Associate Professor and the Founding Chair of OCAD University's Indigenous Visual Culture Program. As an independent curator, she has worked with emerging and established Aboriginal artists since 1997, and she curated and organized "The Drawings and Paintings of Daphne Odjig: A Retrospective Exhibition," which was the first solo exhibition by a female Aboriginal artist at the National Gallery of Canada. Devine's work has been recognized with numerous scholarships and awards, including an Eiteljorg Fellowship for Contemporary Native Art in 2011.

Carla Garnet is the Director and Curator of the John B. Aird Gallery and the JOUEZ curator for the annual BIG on Bloor Festival of Arts and Culture in Toronto. Garnet is on the Trinity Square Video Board of Directors and has worked as the curator at the Art Gallery of Peterborough (2010-2013), a guest curator at Gallery Stratford (2009-2010), an independent curator (1997-2010), and as the founder and director of Garnet Press Gallery (1984-97). Garnet holds an Associate Diploma from the Ontario College of Art and Design and a Masters Degree in Art History from York University.

Tanya Senk is a Métis/Cree/Saulteaux educator, artist, writer, and activist. She is the Centrally Assigned Principal, Indigenous Education for the Toronto District School Board and has been working in the field of education and community for over twenty years. She holds a B.F.A., Specialized Honours Degree in Visual Arts, a B.Ed., a M.Ed., and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at York University in Urban Aboriginal Education. Her work and research interests include Professional Learning, and Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education.

About the John B. Aird Gallery

The John B. Aird Gallery opened in 1985. It was named in honour of the 23rd Lieutenant Governor of Ontario to recognize his support of the visual arts in the province and in Canada. Governed by a Board of Directors, the Gallery's mandate is to create awareness and promote the enjoyment of works of art by professional contemporary artists. In order to fulfill its mandate, the Gallery strives to encourage excellence in visual art; present a variety of media, disciplines, and styles; and to provide opportunities for study and education in conjunction with exhibitions.

For more information, visit: www.airdgallery.org. Hours of operation: Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.