

## WAR Flowers—A Touring Art Exhibition

An Innovative, Multi-Sensorial Exhibition Exploring Human Nature in the Landscape of War through Floriography, Sculpture and Scent

Now Showing at Montreal's Château Ramezay  
Through March 31, 2019



Download Photos and Press Kit Materials: <http://bit.ly/2DMvfs4>

What People Are Saying About WAR Flowers: <http://bit.ly/2DM43t7>

Visit the WAR Flowers website: <https://warflowers.ca/>

Château Ramezay Hours, Admission, etc.: <https://www.chateauramezay.qc.ca/>

Montreal, Quebec, October 30, 2018 – During the First World War (1914-18) Canadian soldier **Lieutenant-Colonel George Stephen Cantlie** picked flowers from the fields and gardens of war-torn Europe, pressing and drying them within a book. Every day, he sent one flower home, along with a short, affectionate note to one of his children, including his one-year-old baby daughter Celia in Montreal, so that, as she grew up, she would have something to remember him by in the event he didn't survive that terrible war.

Flash forward. A century has passed, and with it all living memory of the First World War. But Cantlie's letters and flowers have been preserved and ultimately passed to his granddaughter, the late **Elsbeth Angus**, in Montreal, who lovingly preserved them in a special red box. And that's where, four years ago, a Canadian filmmaker, Viveka Melki, to her utter amazement, first encountered them, speaking to her from the past, and the germ of an idea was born in Melki's mind.

Now, more than one hundred years after he picked the flowers, and on the 100th anniversary of the end of that horrific conflict, Cantlie's touching wartime ritual can be experienced anew in **WAR Flowers – A Touring Art Exhibition, now running through March 31, 2019 at Château Ramezay - Historic Site and Museum of Montreal.**

“**WAR Flowers**”, developed by exhibition curator **Melki** and produced by Les Jardins de Métis/Reford Gardens (**Alexander Reford**, director) in Grand-Métis, Quebec, is an art show presenting Cantlie's original century-old preserved letters and flowers, but only as a starting point. From that, Melki has created a multi-sensorial, emotionally-involving vision of the effects of war on all who experience it personally. The exhibition provides visitors with a unique, immersive experience centred around Melki's intense personal belief in the resilience of the human spirit.

Melki has reinterpreted ten of Cantlie's flowers using floriography, a Victorian-era method of communicating meaning and emotion through flowers, to tell a larger story of human nature in the landscape of war.

As conceived by Melki, the exhibition is comprised of ten stations, representing ten of her core beliefs about the nature of war. Each station showcases a different flower picked by Cantlie and draws on his wartime letters, exhibited publicly for the first time. Actual artifacts of the First World War era complement each station.

Each station also profiles a Canadian of The Great War era who exemplified, through their personal story, one of curator Melki's ten core beliefs about war. **WAR Flowers** features **John McCrae, Georges Vanier, Elsie Reford, Jean Brillant, Talbot Papineau, A.Y. Jackson, Percival Molson, Julia Drummond, Edward Savage and George Stephen Cantlie.** The links between these individuals provide diverse perspectives on the Canadian contribution to the war effort. All these men and women had strong roots in the city of Montreal.

For each station, optical crystal sculptures created by award-winning Toronto-based artist **Mark Raynes Roberts** portray scenes that illustrate different aspects of human nature, while scents at each station developed by Magog, Quebec, olfactory specialist and perfumer **Alexandra Bachand** evoke memory.

Other members of the **WAR Flowers** creative team are **Céline Arseneault**, botanist and librarian for over three decades at the Montreal Botanical Garden, who oversaw the conservation and mounting of the fragile 100-year-old flowers and letters; **Normand Dumont**; the exhibition's designer, who transformed Melki's creative vision into a unique, sensory and physical reality for exhibition visitors; **Marie-Claire Saindon**, the exhibition's music composer; and **Claude Langlois**, creator of the sound montage.

Complementing the exhibition is the dedicated website [www.warflowers.ca](http://www.warflowers.ca), featuring profiles of the artists who created the elements of the show and offering behind-the-scenes access to the design process.

“Château Ramezay is excited and proud to be hosting the remarkable ‘WAR Flowers’ exhibition in Montreal,” said **André Delisle, Executive Director and Curator, Château Ramezay.** “This exhibition has already been a huge popular success, emotionally moving tens of thousands of visitors during the first four stops of its tour in Canada and France. Now it reaches its final destination, ‘coming home’ in the truest sense, to Montreal. ‘WAR Flowers’ is a jewel of a show, and an imaginative, innovative example of the power of art to enrich and transform our understanding and experience of history in unexpected ways.”

The exhibition is presented at Château Ramezay from October 24, 2018 to March 31, 2019. This will be the final stop for the exhibition on its five-location tour that began in June 2017 at Les Jardins de Métis/Reford Gardens in Grand-Métis, Quebec, and then travelled to the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, Campbell House Museum in Toronto, and the Visitor Education Centre of the Canada Memorial in Vimy, France.

**VIDEO – Elspeth Angus & The Exhibition’s Inspiration:** <https://bit.ly/2CqcGLE>

**VIDEO - The Exhibition’s Creative Team:** <https://bit.ly/2OxaJE4>

**WAR Flowers: A Touring Art Exhibition** is produced by Les Jardins de Métis/Reford Gardens, and made possible thanks to the generous support of The Department of Canadian Heritage, and with private support from the 78th Fraser Highlanders, the Drummond Foundation, the Hay Foundation, the Jackman Foundation, the Montreal Council of Women, the Molson Foundation, the St. Andrew’s Society of Montreal, the WCPD Foundation, the Zeller Family Foundation, and many individual donors.

### **About Château Ramezay – Historic Site and Museum of Montreal**

The *Château Ramezay – Historic Site and Museum of Montréal*, a non-profit organization, safeguards and makes accessible a collection that reflects and attests to the history of Montréal and Quebec. It was the first building in Quebec to be classified an historic monument and is the province’s oldest private historical museum. Visit our website: <https://www.chateauramezay.qc.ca/en/>

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### **For interviews and further information about WAR Flowers: A Touring Art Exhibition:**

Jeremy Katz,  
Publicist, WAR Flowers: A Touring Art Exhibition  
Office: 416-656-6970  
Mobile/Text: 416-997-6970  
[jeremyk@sympatico.ca](mailto:jeremyk@sympatico.ca)

### **For information about Château Ramezay hours, ticket and group sales, etc.**

Karina Trautmann  
Client services officer  
Château Ramezay – Historic Site and Museum of Montréal  
Office: 514 861-3708 ext. 227  
[info@chateauramezay.qc.ca](mailto:info@chateauramezay.qc.ca)

## ABOUT 'WAR FLOWERS' CURATOR VIVEKA MELKI



**WAR Flowers: A Touring Art Exhibition** curator Viveka Melki (pron. ViVEKa MELkee) is a Canadian filmmaker and screenwriter. She has lived, worked and travelled in cultures where repressive regimes are dominant. From these experiences are born her projects around conflict - and the capacity of the human spirit for resilience. Reflecting on the subject of war, she says: *“My goal as an artist is to tell history using the tools of our time. Our voice as artists in this era is unique. How we look at history, our understanding of the past, determines and defines the attachment to that story by audiences today. I bring my film experience into all my work so, in the end, I am a storyteller. I alwa–ys ask one question when looking at Canadian history - what did it feel like? And if we can capture a fraction of that and bring you into that experience, then we have succeeded.”*

Born in The Gambia, West Africa of Brazilian/Lebanese descent, and educated in the UK before immigrating to Canada, Melki sees the world through a multicultural lens. In 2014, she directed the two-part series *War Correspondence* (Radio-Canada, RDI). Her feature-length documentary *After Circus (2015)* received acclaim after screenings at several North American film festivals, including *Hot Docs* in Toronto and the *Rencontres Internationales du Documentaire de Montréal*, as well as at the prestigious *Sunny Side of the Doc Festival* in La Rochelle, France. It was broadcast across Canada on CBC’s *documentary Channel* in June 2016.

Melki makes films within Canadian Francophone culture as well. Her 2017 documentary *Carricks: dans le sillage des Irlandais* (Radio-Canada & RDI) tells the tragic story of Irish immigration to Canada in 1847, and the Francophone-Irish diaspora in Canada.

Viveka is currently working with the New Chapters Canada Council for the Arts on her new docu-animation, *Alouette*, about the Asia-Pacific experience during the Second World War. She is also directing a new docudrama feature, “The Fence”, on the Battle of Hong Kong, for *documentary Channel*.  
<http://vivekamelki.com/>