

**NR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **LOUIS COMTOIS: LIGHT AND COLOUR AT THE MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL**

Montréal, May 7, 1996. Until October 20, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal presents **LOUIS COMTOIS: LIGHT AND COLOUR**. This exhibition traces the career of artist Louis Comtois, who died prematurely in 1990. The largest show devoted to this Québec painter brings together some 30 works — paintings and drawings — revealing some of the highlights in his artistic output. In a career that spanned a little over 20 years and was cut off in its prime, Louis Comtois was rigorous in his constant endeavour to develop a pictorial language marked above all by his fascination with colour. **LOUIS COMTOIS: LIGHT AND COLOUR**, designed and organized by the Musée, follows up a major gift of works by this artist, which are now part of the Musée's collection.

### **The fascination with colour: a work of light**

IN the view of curator Gilles Godmer, colour, and ultimately the light that creates it, were central to Louis Comtois's aesthetic concerns. Godmer also notes the paradoxical, complex nature of Comtois's painting, which is associated with the spiritual as well as with the sensual, almost carnal aspect of his pictures.

### **The seventies: elusive colour**

Both spirituality and sensuality were ever present in the artist's work. However, each of these two poles would be identified more closely with one of the two decades in Comtois's career. Gilles Godmer describes the seventies as follows: "The extreme rigour and even, occasionally, austerity of the large acrylics on canvas... highlight their ethereal quality, disposing the viewer to meditation and contemplation... What stands out, in the painting of those years, is an elusive, diffuse colour with disembodied accents."

### **The eighties: more material colour**

In the eighties, Louis Comtois's painting underwent major changes. Gilles Godmer explains: "Starting now (the beginning of the eighties) and up to his death, the artist, who gave up acrylic and canvas, first for oil and then for other, more sophisticated processes... experimented extensively, mainly on the support." Comtois used various materials as supports for his painting, such as wood, plaster, cement and jute. He chose these materials for their diverse textures and their tendencies to bring out the tactile aspect. On several occasions, especially in the late eighties, Comtois drew an analogy with the human skin, thereby confirming the highly physical nature of the painting.

According to Gilles Godmer, this exhibition invites us to "become acquainted with a body of work sometimes described as difficult — although it only asks for an open and receptive mind — the subject of an entire creative life... Giving it time is therefore the only instruction visitors must bear in mind. They alone can be stirred, or not, more or less intensely, by one colour or another. For that is one of the powers of colour in Comtois's work: to bring us back to ourselves."

le Musée wishes to acknowledge the gift of works by the artist, offered by Louis Comtois and Reiner Schürmann, and made possible by the generosity of the American Friends of Canada.

***Louis Comtois: La lumière et la couleur* catalogue**

To accompany this exhibition, the Musée and Éditions du Méridien have produced a catalogue entitled ***Louis Comtois: La lumière et la couleur***. Edited by art critic Jean-Émile Verdier, this amply illustrated, 88-page publication contains articles by Jean-Émile Verdier, the artist, Louis Comtois, and the curator, Gilles Godmer. Personal accounts by philosopher Reiner Schürmann, who was the artist's companion, and writer and poet Shirley Kaufman, along with an analysis by art historian René Payant complete this work available at the Olivieri bookstore and all major bookstores for \$39.95, plus tax.

- 30 -

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