

For immediate release

GUILLAUME BIJL
ART BEYOND REALITY
AT THE MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

Montréal, May 20, 1997. From May 23 until September 21, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is presenting the exhibition **Guillaume Bijl**. The installations created by this Belgian artist faithfully reproduce a variety of familiar environments. Organized by the Antwerp Museum of Contemporary Art (MUHKA), the exhibition takes a tongue-in-cheek look at the rites and values of our consumer society. This is the first Canadian showing of Bijl's work.

Principal series

Considered one of the most exciting artists on the Belgian contemporary art scene, Guillaume Bijl produces installations, some of them very large. While their realism seems innocuous at first glance, they quickly reveal their ironic nature. Pierre Landry, curator in charge of the Montréal presentation of the exhibition, has selected works from two of the artist's principal series: his *transformation-installations* and his *compositions*.

A "reality in a non-reality"

The *transformation-installations* reproduce, in true-to-life scale and detail, various readily recognizable locations: body building gym, antique shop, auction house, TV quiz show set. The artist describes these installations, which are always exhibited in places dedicated to art, as being "a reality in a non-reality," taking as his starting point the idea that an artistic space is "unreal" and "functionless," in that it is often seen as having no real usefulness. According to the curator, "these works — at once anonymous and spectacular — are presented as three-dimensional still lifes attesting to the rites and values of contemporary society."

The smaller *compositions* constitute bits of reality taken from everyday situations which are closely related to the consumer society. They are presented in the form of displays, for example. As the curator puts it: "In keeping with the spirit that animates Bijl's work as a whole, these pieces (the *compositions*) suggest a kind of archeology of today's world, whose order and appearances they mimic in order to better reveal its artificiality."

Meeting with Guillaume Bijl on May 22 at 5:30 p.m.

The artist will meet the public on May 22 at 5:30 p.m. in the exhibition gallery. On this occasion, he will comment on his artistic approach and answer visitors' questions. The discussion will be led by the coordinator of visits to the Musée, Marie-France Bérard.

Guillaume Bijl was born in Antwerp. His work has had several major exhibitions since the seventies, at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1981), the Venice *Biennale* (1988), New York's New Museum (1989), and the Kassel *Documenta* (1992), among other venues. A catalogue produced by the Antwerp Museum of Contemporary Art (MUHKA), and available at the *Olivieri* bookstore and the Musée's Boutique for \$49.95, accompanies the exhibition.

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Source: Claude Guérin
Promotions Coordinator

Information: Danielle Legentil
Media Relations Coordinator
(514) 847-6232