

# *où est le fragment*

(in a fragmentary mode)

Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal  
March 1 – May 24, 1987

A travelling exhibition organized by  
the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal  
with the collaboration of  
the Département d'Histoire de l'art  
of the Université de Montréal



## CONTENTS

An exhibition organized by:

Christine Bernier  
Christine Dubois  
Emeren Garcia  
Sylvie Janelle  
Line Laroche  
Geneviève Marot  
Yvan Moreau  
Anne-Marie Régol

and coordinated by:

Alain Laframboise, professor,  
Département d'Histoire de l'art of  
the Université de Montréal,  
and

Réal Lussier, curator in charge of travelling  
exhibitions, Musée d'art contemporain  
de Montréal,

as part of a Master's seminar on art history  
and museology at the Département  
d'Histoire de l'art of the Université de  
Montréal (Fall-Winter 1986-1987)

Originally published as *où est le fragment*  
© Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal,  
1986

Coordination of catalogue:

Alain Laframboise and Réal Lussier

Texts by Réal Lussier, Alain Laframboise,  
Line Laroche, Christine Bernier, Geneviève  
Marot, Yvan Moreau, Emeren Garcia,  
Christine Dubois, Sylvie Janelle, Anne-  
Marie Régol

Photographs: Denis Farley

Typing of texts:

Dolorès Dubé, Roxanne Labrosse

English translation: Elly Mialon

Proofing: Fleming Art Research

Cover: Alain Laframboise

Graphic design:

Bélanger, Legault Designers

Typography: Typo Express Inc.

(English version: Zibra inc.)

Printing: Boulanger inc.

(English version: Copie-Express)

This publication was produced under the  
direction of the Communications  
Department.

Printed in Canada.

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal  
is supported by the ministère des Affaires  
culturelles du Québec and  
Communications Canada.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## FOREWORD

Marcel Brisebois

## GENESIS OF THE EXHIBITION

Réal Lussier

## A QUESTION OF FRAGMENTS

Alain Laframboise

## MIREILLE PERRON: Pitfalls of Poetic Licence

Line Laroche

## CHRISTIANE AINSLEY: Inner or Outer Fragments

Christine Bernier

## HARLAN JOHNSON: Remanence

Geneviève Marot

## MARY-ANN CUFF: Order Amidst Chaos

Yvan Moreau

## MARC GARNEAU: Excursions

Emeren Garcia

## DENIS PELLERIN: Media Chips

Christine Dubois

## PAUL LACROIX: Beyond Illusion and Reality

Emeren Garcia

## MONIQUE GRENON: Sculpture Adrift

Sylvie Janelle

## THOMAS CORRIVEAU: A Leap Through A Time Lapse

Christine Dubois

## CÉLINE SURPRENANT: Detached Memories

Anne-Marie Régol

## LIST OF WORKS



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would first like to express our gratitude to the artists who agreed to take part in this exhibition.

We are also indebted to Galerie J. Yahouda Meir and Galerie Aubes 3935 for their cooperation.

And we wish to thank Lise Lamarche, chairperson of the Département d'Histoire de l'art of the Université de Montréal, who was very receptive to the idea of the project, and Dolorès Dubé for her meticulous contribution to the preparation of the catalogue.

Lastly, we thank Gaétane Marsot for providing us with background material, and Johanne Lamoureux and René Debanterlé for their discerning comments throughout the project.

Exhibition Team

## FOREWORD

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is pleased to present to the public an exhibition staged in collaboration with university students in art history.

*où est le fragment* originated in a joint proposal by a professor at the Université de Montréal, Mr. Alain Laframboise, and a Musée curator, Mr. Réal Lussier. The project was greeted with interest by the Musée, which defines itself not only as an exhibition site, but as a centre for research into its particular field, using the methods proper to this type of institution.

Out of several months' work arose an exhibition to be shown at the Musée before travelling across Québec and the rest of Canada. In addition to displaying a number of contemporary Québec art works, the show is designed to stimulate thought about the work required in organizing an exhibition in a museum, by highlighting the objectives of an exhibition, the curator's thought processes and research methods as well as the often implicit references that guide his approach.

We thank Mrs. Lise Lamarche, chairperson of the Département d'Histoire de l'art of the Université de Montréal, for approving this project, which has made it possible for all those involved to benefit from an exchange of different viewpoints and experiences. The exhibition takes a novel critical look at the Musée. The students were not only able to serve an apprenticeship in the profession of curator, but were afforded an opportunity to make real contact with a public that is keen to learn what goes on behind the scenes in a museum in addition to viewing what is displayed on its walls. We hope the exhibition will be the first step in interaction between the Musée and universities for the benefit of all involved.

The Musée wishes to thank Mr. Réal Lussier, the curator in charge of the exhibition, Mr. Alain Laframboise and the students, who agreed to stage this original and enriching experiment for the public.

Marcel Brisebois  
Director



# Genesis of the Exhibition

by Réal Lussier

What is an exhibition? More specifically, what is the purpose of an exhibition in a museum? A museum of contemporary art? It is to display objects, works of art. An exhibition is primarily a presentation of the aesthetic statements of the artists, but it also embraces other propositions, such as the establishment of theoretical models, the construction of history or a glance at its own methods and mechanisms. An exhibition is also a medium, a tool for communication.

An exhibition always indicates how the works should be viewed. Its ability to combine, integrate and organize many varied messages enables it to define a manner of reading the proposals "exhibited": it may even be said that this "reading" of the exhibition as a whole guides, frames and regulates the spectator's "reading" of what is displayed. The staging of the exhibition orients the spectator's perception and reception of the works, whereas the exhibition catalogue "explains" and "justifies" the staging. An exhibition does not offer juxtaposed objects, but related ones. The purpose of mounting or staging an exhibition is to construct a discourse in space and time through an organization of the way in which the objects are presented.

## CONTEXT

An exhibition is initially an intuition, a working hypothesis, a sudden revelation or the result of research: either the subject itself engenders what it is to be or it is the issue of reflection. There are art exhibitions of an historical nature that review an age, a period, a school or a movement, exhibitions that consist of a retrospective of an artist's work or present recent works, and those that explore a specific theme (linked to an iconography, a discipline, or a region, for example) or propose an analysis of an artist's production. The approaches are as diverse as the subjects, but, more than ever before, exhibitions state their thesis or position explicitly.

Organizing an exhibit requires, above all, that the "site" of the exhibition, the mandate of the institution and its objectives be taken into consideration. The status of the exhibition within the institution's programming is also an important consideration. How does the show fit in with previous and subsequent events? What role will it fulfil with regard to other exhibitions planned? Furthermore, the exhibition must always be envisaged in a broader context, i.e. taking into consideration events taking place in other institutions. Hence, one must bear in mind that an exhibition is not an isolated event: on the contrary, it is one initiative among many similar events occurring on the local, national or even international scene.

Defining the concept of an exhibition must be the result of an extensive study of the intended subject, in this instance, the realm of artistic creation, and maintaining continual contact with the works of art. A theme will then emerge or become singled out from this relationship between the works and their observation. An exhibition can only be developed in terms of the works, and can only be based on the observa-

tions and reflections that they evoke. However, these reflections are also nurtured by the entire information network of specialized publications and artistic events reflecting global artistic activity, and, simultaneously, by the identification of contemporary concerns.

Staging an exhibition means choosing what is to be shown and the manner in which it is to be displayed. Given the multiplicity of aesthetic projects by artists, we can either limit ourselves to one general rule or play an active role in formulating aesthetic values that recur throughout the individual works. In choosing a given artist or a selection of works, a discourse is constructed that is, in fact, merely the expression of a point of view. The person ultimately responsible for this choice — the curator — acts as an indicator of trends; more precisely, he provides his interpretation of those trends. The exhibition is then no more than a "reading" of today's art. It appears to propose how a given production should be viewed, whereas it actually reflects how the curator views it. Consequently, one must be aware of the limitations this implies, i.e. the exhibition can only be an incomplete and necessarily subjective statement.

*où est le fragment* should be approached from this perspective. In fact, all these considerations constitute the *a priori* premise of the exhibition and, in a sense, the context introduced by the organizers.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The goal of this exhibition was to establish cooperation between university students and the Musée by making MA candidates aware of the considerations involved in organizing an exhibition. It was, in a manner of speaking, a question of shedding some light on one of the most significant aspects of the duties and responsibilities of a museum curator.

The concept originated in an idea that I voiced at an informal meeting with Alain Laframboise, a professor of art history at the Université de Montréal. Given his enthusiastic response, I suggested that we study together the possibility of carrying out this cooperative exhibition project, which was developed during subsequent working sessions and aroused the interest of authorities of the Musée and of the Département d'Histoire de l'art of the Université de Montréal. A discussion of the principles and conditions governing the mounting of an exhibition was proposed as part of a seminar on art history and museology. It was this discussion that, in fact, led to the present exhibition.

The project's main objective was to make art historians who are not yet practising professionally, but just beginning their careers, aware in practical terms of the scope and implications of the work involved in mounting an exhibition. The project also provided an opportunity to stimulate thought on recent artistic production in Québec and the questions it raises.



As part of the seminar, conducted by Alain Laframboise and myself, the participants were to mount an exhibition that, given the academic calendar and framework, would have last September as a deadline. From that point onward, the participants were in charge of the various theoretical and practical steps in preparing the exhibition: conception, selection of works, background material, writing of texts, transport and installation of works, catalogue publication, publicity and so on.

Our role as seminar leaders was to supervise the team throughout the project by suggesting pertinent bibliographies, asking thought-provoking questions, leading discussions, and ensuring that the group worked together and that the objectives and timetable were respected. It should be added that the students brought to the team a definite interest in contemporary art and an enthusiasm which was evident in the numerous suggestions for readings they made. Given the limited budget and time allotted, the proposed field of study — contemporary Québec art — imposed no restrictions with regard to the age or medium the artists worked in. In this sense, we achieved one of the main objectives of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, which is to disseminate contemporary Québec art.

The initial meetings were first spent pondering the museological context and determining the role of the Musée as compared to that of other exhibition locations, such as commercial and parallel galleries, and in relation to art criticism and the varying interests of the public. The theme of the exhibition was defined only after the Musée's programming was considered and the distinctive natures of Québec artistic productions were analysed. Stimulated by the suggested reading and by visits to scores of artists' studios and current exhibitions, the participants were gradually able to pinpoint a number of traits and concerns that seemed to characterize the work of these artists. Aware that an exhibition can never reflect the full extent of an artistic reality, and that one's viewpoint, perspective and even intuition play major roles, the students sought to deal with what seemed to them to be one of the specific characteristics of current art production, and perhaps of Québec artists in particular.

All the stages in preparing the exhibition, from its conception to the selection of the artists and their works, the editing of the catalogue text and even the exhibition announcement, were agreed upon unanimously by the members of the group. They carried out all the work as a team and each member had to justify his choices and convince his colleagues. Indeed, the exhibition reflects not the viewpoint of a single person, or that of those in charge of the project, but a consensus that emerged and established the theoretical and technical framework. The mounting of the exhibition was discussed and experimented with in order to elaborate the proposition and to establish an itinerary which did, however, permit digression.

*où est le fragment* claims solely to be an assessment of current artistic production in Québec and to reflect one of its specific characteristics. It is the result of both the learning of museological "rules" and "considerations", and a critical approach to the subject of contemporary art.

I would like to underline the participants' rigour and the quality of the work they accomplished, as well as the unusual team spirit they displayed throughout this venture. The challenge was not a meager one: they had to prepare an exhibition in a relatively short period of time, while being introduced to museum practices, getting to know one another, and learning to work together and arrive at a consensus. We invite you to share in the fruits of this experiment by viewing the exhibition and reading the catalogue.

R.L., January 1987



# A Question of Fragments

by Alain Laframboise

Order is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language; ...

Michel Foucault<sup>1</sup>

## MAPPING THE TERRAIN

The first step in this project was to propose a group of works that made it clear why each work was included in the exhibition, without reducing each work to the one key connecting it to the others. The objective was transparency and the rejection of any one theme or universal title, without thereby concealing digressive readings, the suggested courses to be followed.

It was also necessary to avoid making the proposition linking the works an abstract, disconnected exercise, but one which responded to the concerns and issues of a contemporary Québec reality.

A plethora of avenues was available to us in a context of fragment genres, practices and references. As the territory was mapped out, one course, among several possible itineraries, emerged, practically of its own accord, a course indicative of the questions that had already arisen within the working group: the same theoretical references, the same observations about works, exhibitions and a whole creative context, confluent and converging.

There were reflections in which critical references of various origins converged, observations of international art production and questions regarding regional or national specificity. Need it be added that the geographic and socio-cultural position of Québec artists has its counterpart in the work of Québec art historians, curators and critics?

Drawing up a map of the exhibition, a route to be followed, also involves, if only implicitly, a consideration of all these elements, first integrating the works selected into a contemporary Québec artistic reality, and then enlarging the framework to a Canadian and international scale. There were also queries about the theoretical tools that were to be used and the need for them to be adjusted (given their various origins: European, American, Canadian, Québécois) to new works that require the spectator to shift his/her point of view if he/she wishes to understand them; otherwise, the exercise is nothing more than the application of preconceived ideas to original works.

## CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All of these issues must be confronted every time an exhibition is proposed. The pertinence of the choice of works must be affirmed, and this choice must be coherent; new readings must be suggested, and one must be prepared to defend and take responsibility for the choices by drawing parallels and illustrating contrasts, confluences and frictions.

There must be consistency and convergence, but a certain openness as well. And along with all this, one must also reckon with the accumulated effect of history (of art and of exhibitions) in order to position oneself in terms of these different layers of meaning, and to proceed with openness. One's intention should be that each work, each series of works, have

the power to extend beyond one interpretation, in other directions, and that what is said or proposed as an interpretation should not be offered as a means to end the discussion, but rather to prompt further investigation and other readings which, like the works themselves, variously obvious and obscure, derive from the history of art production, theory and criticism. Here too the stakes are considerable.

But doesn't every exhibition (as well as every critical evaluation) invoke similar considerations? An exhibition evaluates; it criticizes in its own way, not so much in what it excludes as in what it shows a preference for. It displays its preferences as it becomes part of the history that connects the local and the international, the practical and the theoretical. The artist, curator, critic and art historian must always juggle many pieces and many approaches.

Our team, with all these parameters in mind (in all our minds!) then attempted, as lucidly as possible, to calculate how we would intervene, by asking ourselves first of all where we should begin.

At this point, one requirement became apparent. It was in fact at the very root of what made the project interesting for its participants: they had to go beyond the university walls, the margins of books and specialized reviews, and see what could be found elsewhere, i.e. in studios. An exhibition is not the result of more or less "learned" readings; one does not simply come up with a quaint "theme", a container to be filled with objects. Nor can the objects speak for themselves. They communicate to those who, like artists, curators, critics, art historians and art lovers, frequent the galleries and read history.

Visits to galleries and studios stimulate reflection about the emergence of new works and enable us to see the effect the works have (on us), how they question our ideas. Such visits show us the components of the history of contemporary art, even before they have become part of history.

What then remains is to draw up a map or set out on a course. The map often plays the role of the "all-embracing scene".<sup>2</sup> It seeks maximum legibility and homogeneity of the terrain, whereas the course often allows one to digress or sidestep. It would perhaps be appropriate to oscillate between the map and the course. If the aesthetic vision of an exhibition is not primarily based on the conceptions and readings governing it, but on the specific figures that make up the works, then there is an immense *terra incognita* just waiting to be discovered by the Robinson Crusoe that each visitor becomes, between the suggestions offered him and the works, and between the works themselves.

## MADE IN QUÉBEC

It is often said that Québec art operates in a fragmentary mode. In fact, just recently, a well known figure on the Montréal art scene stated: "Is there anything more particular to Québec than painting that is detached, shattered, in



pieces?"<sup>3</sup> Although the statement was an observation as much as a reproach, it is in keeping with many of our own observations, on the one hand, and is additional proof of the existence of a practice that should be questioned, on the other.

Our working group was not to propose a "panorama" of the fragment, or see, or display, fragments everywhere, but to present what seemed to us to be some of the most pertinent and significant aspects of work dealing with the fragmentation, in painting as well as in sculpture, or in works that, more or less, fit into one of these categories.

Whether the work is composed of fragments or is fragmented, whether it is intended as a whole or imposes a fragmented perception-interpretation, whether it makes readings obvious or obscure, it is indicative of the methods used in a large proportion of contemporary Québec production. The question is why such art is emerging here while other options are embraced elsewhere, why it has such specificity, such identity. Those familiar with current research find no alternative but to view the fragmentary as a perfect medium for theoretical inquiry of and resistance to certain increasingly informative and "perceptive" discourses. Hence, let us try to see how these works are in keeping with current artistic and theoretical questioning, since the fragment must continue to be analysed as long as artists insist on conceptualizing it.

The human mind seems to require intelligibility or at least the impression of totalizing.

Pascal Guignard <sup>4</sup>

But I would say that, in my opinion, he who would like to produce two paintings of the highest perfection, as, for example, of an Adam and an Eve, the most noble bodies in the world, should have Adam drawn by Michelangelo and painted by Titian, borrowing the proportions and agreement of the parts from Raphael, whereas Eve would be drawn by Raphael and painted by Antonio Corregio; these two (works) would then be the most beautiful paintings ever produced.

Giovan Paolo Lomazzo <sup>5</sup>

## SCATTERED REFERENCES FORM A DOTTED LINE

### PIECES

In 1436, Leon Battista Alberti, the first true theoretician of the modern era, said that the function of the painter was to "describe, with lines and colors, in any painting or on any support given him, surfaces similar to any object".<sup>6</sup> He explained that paintings consisted of bodies, the bodies of members, the members of surfaces. The whole, at a certain distance and from a certain perspective, became organized and the semblance worked. It was a matter of carefully arranging the *pieces* (colour schemes) so that the image took shape in the eye of the spectator.

Outstripping the philosophers in this regard, thanks to Brunelleschi's and Alberti's perspectives, art at this point was transformed from a vision of things, organized in and for the eye of God, into a "detheologized"<sup>7</sup> vision made by and for man, who related his experience, thereby attempting to impart it, literally to share his "point of view" with his fellows.<sup>8</sup>

Marquetry clearly *represented* what was the fundamental work of painting and geometric perspective. Executed in monochrome, in a tone-on-tone motif of strips of wood laid next to each other, it displayed the multitude of *pieces* that a

well organized image was composed of. A masterly, re-trained division of a surface (Alberti had already indicated the elimination of depth) could provide *unified*, coherent images of the world.<sup>9</sup>

From this point on, the partial representation on canvas (or in stone) of the perceived universe was accomplished in many mutable fashions. For example, 18th century Europeans were infatuated with *vedute*. Everyone wanted to have a view of Venice in their home.<sup>10</sup> The English in particular brought home "souvenir paintings", in which "the representation of a 'given motif' was meant to have the objectivity of an eye-witness account".<sup>11</sup> The use of the *camera obscura* guaranteed the authenticity of these "samples of reality".

During the same period, all the artists who travelled to Rome produced views of the city and of the ruins of the Forum, which became traditional subjects. Again in this instance, works were produced from a vanished entity: Rome and its ruins.

Much earlier, Raphael had been placed in charge of protecting these ruins. The objective was to reconstruct a lost identity, a *totality*, from archaeological inventories and maps of the city. Baldassare Castiglione, the celebrated author of *The Courtier*, rendered homage to Raphael: "You restored the body of mutilated Rome".<sup>12</sup> Archaeological works devoted to the evocation and exaltation of ancient Rome and to the "restoration" of its architecture re-appeared in the 16th century.

The same applied to sculpture: it was restored and completed by adding the missing parts, it being unacceptable for the bodies of broken statues to be left incomplete. For example, the forearm of the main figure in *Laocoön and His Sons* was restored; subsequently, a fragment was discovered that showed how wrong the restorer was. The fragment was "a part unduly detached from the whole".<sup>13</sup> Beauty was defined in terms of the harmony of all the parts, of an ordered unity to which nothing could be added and from which nothing could be taken away (Alberti). Hence, the fragment alone was meaningless.

### MONSTERS

The monster provides a contrast to the work to be restored. "The result of a composite of activities, the monster holds no secrets for a Cartesian. It is perfectly transparent to the logical mind that examines it. It need only be described to 'disarm' it, to deprive it of the unjustified prestige that it at first appears to enjoy; by describing it, it is broken down into its component parts, the disparate fragments that form it, and each fragment is situated with respect to the others: 'the chimera had a lion's head, a goat's body and a serpent's tail'... Reason thereby makes the monster comprehensible".<sup>14</sup> Gilbert Lascault explains that one way in which the monster can be read consists in breaking down its unity and isolating each of its various elements. "The monstrous form is reduced to a mosaic of elements, each of which is endowed with meaning".<sup>15</sup>

### HEDGEHOGS

The hedgehog is in direct contrast to the monster. It has been a symbol of modernism from the time of the German Romantics and that famous phrase of Friedrich Schlegel that the fragment should be as unbreachable as a hedgehog.<sup>16</sup> It is not a question in this instance of the "classical" fragment, but of an indivisible fragment, an "integral shard", "the special, unsurpassable figure of the infinite, the unique, the totality".<sup>17</sup>



If, as Anne Cauquelin has written, the discursive disperses its elements on the chains of reason, the fragment brings instantaneity into play (everything is given in a single instant). On the one hand, there is a unity in its connections; on the other, there is the search for the intensive. The fragment is no longer meaningless; it has regained meaning, but a concentrated meaning.<sup>18</sup> Hence, the hedgehog becomes a model for the work.

The classical work was complete in itself, its components explained (and explainable), its definition specific. The modern work is open, discontinuous, the hierarchy eliminated; it acts on several levels, changing the references. The perspective has shifted from the eye of God to the eye of man and, finally, to the centre of things, to a loss of the distance required to read the whole. This marks the end of scenographic Euclidean-Albertian space and the beginning of new, open, shattered, broken space.

## PHAGOCYTES

Dictionaries tell us that phagocytosis is a bodily defence mechanism. Phagocytes have a destructive function: they are able to engulf and destroy pathogenic micro-organisms, the waste products of the blood and tissue, by digesting them.<sup>19</sup> According to Gilles Lipovetsky, post-modernism is a phagocyte, digesting all styles and justifying the most disparate constructions.<sup>20</sup> It has often been said that, compared to certain aspects that seemed fundamental to the definition of modernism, these works break the flow of a logical-theoretical-temporal continuity.

If contemporary art does swallow up, incorporate, all styles, all history, all processes, and if many works display — sometimes unobtrusively, sometimes blatantly — the elements of which they are composed (and at this point it is impossible not to see *everything* in new productions), while the aspects common to current productions are noted, a very broad diversification is also observed in practices said to have been freed from the coercive modernist credos and shackles: ascetic search for specificity, exclusion of the extra-artistic (religious and social precepts, viewpoints), gradual, negative conquests of a purity of the “art” statement, rejection of former standards, but a new dogma of auto-referentiality and *dirigisme* in pursuit of a universal code.

These are all values that upset the apple cart of current practices. Modernist art was devoid of all meaning, except as “painting” or “sculpture”. Pure art was empty. Contemporary art is filling up with elements that conceal its desubstantialization. The shift is from an absolute vacuum to a cluttered vacuum, from the refusal of content to an indifference to content, from the monolithic block to the mosaic. On a broader level, there is a search for a particular identity, no longer the universality that could now motivate social and individual actions, but for the dissemination of criteria of the genuine and of art, of cohabitation of all options.<sup>21</sup> Broader still, the “reflection”<sup>22</sup> of the diversification of lifestyles, of the erosion of social identities, and of ideological and political alienation is often seen in the splintering of artistic languages. All interpreters of this development are then tempted (and quite legitimately) to find, to propose, *one* principle that would govern these diverse manifestations.<sup>23</sup>

## WHICH FRAGMENT?

Today, the difficulty in dealing with the fragment, with the fragmented, in current production lies in, among other things, the fact that, as we have seen, modernism has theorized the work as a fragment and continues to do so.<sup>24</sup> This does not prevent us from attempting to see how certain aspects of the fragment play a role in “post-modern” works.

What is involved here is not the work as a fragment according to the meaning that the German Romantics gave it, i.e. the work wielding its intensity, its novelty, its insularity (though it does this as well...),<sup>25</sup> but the appearance and organization of the works, which at times seem to be heaps of incompatible, unidentifiable fragments (as opposed to the Cartesian monster, which is easy to decipher) and at times dubious vestiges of an improbable totality. However, it is not a question of *putting the works together* (perhaps a poor choice of words!), of grouping the works at all costs under one label, for there is no school, movement or common claim (outdated words). Moreover, the attempts to read the works, the comparisons, the analogies are always piecemeal and disjointed; they require constant adjustments from one level to another. Once the connections have been made, once the precarious bridges have been established, the tools that were operative a moment ago become inappropriate and must quickly be reconsidered. This circuitous route, these bifurcations that must constantly be retraced, these uncertain passages from one level to another, from one style to another, from one space to another, all resemble what the authors of *Rhizome* compared to the loves of the wasp and the orchid, the cat and the baboon.<sup>26</sup>

This is more or less what we imagine the spectator's approach will be:<sup>27</sup> the temptation, the virtuality of an infinite number of associations, of comparisons, of going from one work to another, the relinquishing, each time, of what had permitted meaning or authorized recognition. Also apparently indispensable are, in each work, the same ruptures, the same use of materials, the same manipulations and what would relate to the “subject” (stories, references, quotations, periods, artistic styles) as those experimented with in moving from one work to another. A great many elements of “information”: “the eclecticism, the heterogeneity of styles within one work, the decorative, the metaphorical, the playful, the vernacular, the historical memory become preeminent”.<sup>28</sup>

## THE EFFECTS OF THE FRAGMENT

- Firstly, it fails to meet our expectations in regard to unity, univocity and communicability. Our images of reality, the world and works of art are broken up, frustrating our desire to find ourselves on familiar ground, our longing for totality and clarity.
- Furthermore, the objects themselves seem, in varying degrees, constitutively unstable on all levels: at the pragmatic level (that of experience, i.e. the conformation of the object and the disparity of materials, techniques and processes) and at the semantic level (that of information, memory, references and symbols).
- The clash of these two levels of reading and the confusion it can cause must also be reckoned with.<sup>29</sup>
- After the didacticism of modernist works, freer movement is involved here, as elsewhere. This implies what some have called a decontraction, others a demystification of



the notion of innovation, of revolution at any cost, of experimentation *ad infinitum* of the modernist thesis, which is at the root of the multiplication of artistic virtualities.

- Then the question of what would justify this movement, these choices and practices, emerges. One possible answer consists in maintaining that "if there are no parameters that can be used to express a judgment about the world, then there is no particular viewpoint that makes it possible to choose between the innovative and the traditional".<sup>30</sup> In this context, "the possibility of the fragmentary, of an experience presided over by detail and nomadism, arises".<sup>31</sup>
- Also in this context, i.e. the failure of the modernist movement to build a sociocultural unity within which all elements find meaning, the risk is great that one will end up in a "semantic no-man's land".<sup>32</sup>
- The next question also concerns the interpretation of these practices. Is it a question of going beyond modernism (which is the same as posing the problem in modernist terms: pursuit, rupture, progress), or are we liquidating the heritage of the avant-gardes?<sup>33</sup>

## A FRAGMENT IN A FRAGMENT

The works in this exhibition seem to push their discontinuity beyond that of the works that preceded them. They are intrinsically doubly difficult to read and are less reassuring in regard to the fragmentary. They do not fragment truth (the impossibility of putting, of pasting, the pieces back together in a whole as in the classical work), but redouble, through the organization of the components of the work, what Romantic-modernist discourse had to say about the fragment-work, since, in the works themselves, the structure of the modernist work — its appearance, its integration — in this context is *reproduced* in the sense that it is exposed and multiplied. The effect of the emergence, heterogeneity and allotropy of the fragment is repeated in the framework of the very components of each work, in their relationships, associations and dissociations. By shifting the fragment, by cheating, what Pascal Quignard writes can be applied to the fragment in the work: "Fragmentation is violence inflicted or endured, a cancer that tears the body asunder as it tears apart any attempt to devote attention or thought by those who seek to cast their gaze upon it".<sup>34</sup>

The fragment-work of the Romantics was the infrangible incandescent shard concentrated on itself, splitting off from all that was external to it; it was a stronger entity than the discursive totalities, the great assemblages. It broke with previous forms and practices.

The fragmented work also exposes the work of the fragment by displaying its ruptures, its dissociations, its internal incompatibilities, its difficult accommodations, its gaps, what makes/would make a system and what ruptures systems. It should not be surprising that it most often is filled with, built with, evocative materials and arrangements. However, what we then have is no longer the *whole-in-the-whole*, nor that "most cynical eclecticism",<sup>35</sup> and the meaningless is not the most insignificant.

What is at work in the fragment is aimed at undoing the positivist utopia that believed it could understand and master objects of study and knowledge. The effect of the work carried out in these productions tends increasingly to distance

the object from the spectator. The object is no longer provided in advance, it is no longer awaiting the spectator. He must invent or construct it. His "uneasiness" stems as much from the attraction of the object (in its materiality, its visible articulations, the triggering of memory) as from what he does with it. The object refuses to appear in its totality, in its insularity (it flees in all directions...), in a system, save that of fragmentation, of scattering, which is never totally systematic. Never does it resort to history, for iconographic investigation, a display of erudition, formal analysis or even pragmatic vigilance fails to provide the answers. The object resists.

## IN ROME

These are works that lend themselves particularly well to a reading in a discontinuity that would mimic the "discontinuity of thought processes (themselves)".<sup>36</sup> However, each work also becomes Rome, not as the archaeologists since Raphael have wished it to be, but as Freud constructed a theoretical model of it; this "Rome, whose eras *all* survived in the *same* place, intact, and mutually stimulating"<sup>37</sup> — a city capable of "making the fragments of heterogeneous strata work together",<sup>38</sup> where "past and present are alive in a single polyvalent place".<sup>39</sup>

A desire for totality? Provided it is not acknowledged that the interpretations of the dream are conceived in terms of a forever-postponed reconstitution (identity). Nothing has ever stopped forever making sense. In theory, the analysis is endless, and it is recognized that, in the discourse of what is analysed, every representation makes sense. *Nothing should be excluded.*

The modern age may already have advanced the infinite polysemia of the work (Schlegel, Schelling, Freud, *et al.*), but it has not always shown this diversity as obviously as some would have liked. On the contrary, the works in the exhibition would, at best, appear so inexhaustible that they would end up being indecipherable because they were too meaningful, too "exhausting".<sup>40</sup> This is a critical relationship with the *fragment*, rather than simply a reiteration of the modernist stance and its injunctions, which are then shaken and questioned.

In addition to inviting the visitor to this dispossessing, interminable, vertiginous archaeology, which modernist discourses have already spoken of, these works play on it (and with it) to the extent that they multiply the challenge of interpretation through the arrangement of their component parts (clues and traps). They overtake it and mimic it, thereby thwarting many of its strategies.... The reading can less than ever claim to be innocent or objective!

A.L., January 1987

- 1 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (trans. of *Les mots et les choses*), London, Tavistock Publications, 1970, p. XX.
- 2 Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien I, Arts de faire*, Paris, 10/18, "Inédits", 1980.
- 3 Claude Gosselin in an interview with Jocelyne Lepage, "L'art contemporain/Du problème de sortir du Québec"; *La Presse*, Montréal, Saturday, January 10, 1987, Section F, pp. 1-2.
- 4 "Une gêne technique à l'égard du fragment", *Furor*. Paris, 1984, p. 12.
- 5 *Idea del Tempio della Pittura*, (Milan 1591), Florence, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1974, pp. 152-153.



- 6 Leon Battista Alberti, *De pictura*, Rome-Bari, Gius. Laterza & Figli, "Biblioteca degli Scrittori d'Italia degli Editori Laterza", 1975, pp. 56 and 58.
- 7 Erwin Panofsky, *La perspective comme forme symbolique*, Paris, Les éditions de Minuit, 1975.
- 8 From one standpoint/vanishing point, Alberti's linear perspective organizes representation on the basis of the visual pyramid erected between the observer's eye and the objects he looks at. Each spectator can then direct his eye toward the apex of the pyramid that each work implies.
- 9 On the question of marquetry, see Chapter V of *La représentation en peinture et en sculpture et l'enquête de Varchi*, by Gilles Godmer, doctoral thesis, Paris X-Nanterre, 1982. The question of fragmentation in Mannerist painting is skillfully explored and explained.
- 10 "True" and false ones, accurate and fantasy ones were produced.
- 11 Michael Levey, *La peinture à Venise au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, René Julliard, 1964.
- 12 Quoted by André Chastel in *Le Sac de Rome, 1527*, Paris, Gallimard, "Bibliothèque illustrée des histoires", 1984, p. 202.
- 13 Anne Cauquelin, *Court traité du fragment*, Paris, Aubier, "Res — L'Invention philosophique", 1986.
- 14 Gilbert Lascault, *Le monstre dans l'art occidental*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1973, p. 104.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 337.
- 16 See Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe/J.L. Nancy, *L'absolu littéraire — Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand*, Paris, Seuil, "Poétique", 1978.
- 17 Cauquelin, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 11 ff. We will not faithfully pursue the author's train of thought in the direction she takes when she specifies that the two attitudes implied above meet at one point, that of the "vocation of the meaning", and that criticism would have to be produced in which the fragment is reconsidered to be singular "logic", i.e. a "shard diverted from the routine of concatenation". Moreover, all this restates the question of what prompts the interpreter's work: a (closed) practical subject or an (absolute) subject, such as a system inherent in history and criticism's vanishing point. For various viewpoints, see Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *La pensée 68 — Essai sur l'anti-humanisme contemporain*, Paris, Gallimard, "Le monde actuel", 1985.
- 19 See *Phagocytose* by André Martin, May-June 1982, a series of 15 objects, formed by incorporating various materials of rich and multiple semantic scope. These works display their unshakable consistency, unicity and insularity as much as their compositional and referential multiplicity.
- 20 Gilles Lipovetsky, *L'ère du vide — Essais sur l'individualisme contemporain*, Paris, Gallimard, "Les Essais", 1983. We are extrapolating once again, but without relying on a whole context that would be difficult to discuss here, i.e. the notion of phagocytosis, which Lipovetsky skims over without really explaining. Time should also be taken to give the author's point of view, particularly his explanation that post-modernism is only a superficial break. See Ferry and Renaut, *op. cit.* for their reading of Lipovetsky's work.
- 21 Lipovetsky, *op. cit.* Only individualism, the "cardinal virtue," would remain.
- 22 The eternal question: is art transparent?
- 23 With the exception of a number of organicist and Marxist theorists, who would now propose simple formulas for modernism or post-modernism? Do economics, politics and culture obey the same principle? Here is Lipovetsky's answer as an illustration: "The modern (and post-modern) lifestyle stems not only from changes in sensibility sparked by artists of a century ago and more, but more profoundly from the transformations of capital that occurred 60 years ago" (*op. cit.*, p. 95).
- 24 Anne Cauquelin, in *Court traité du fragment*, reduces the art work to a logic of the fragment, thereby opening a new aesthetic field.
- 25 Although the "insularity" of modernist works is not as secure as it may appear. It is in fact threatened by what Rosalind Krauss has called the temporal perspective substituted for the spatial perspective expunged from works by flatness. The perspective of history then links fragment-works or associates them with one another. See "A View of Modernism", *Artforum*, September 1972. The effect of painting-in-series on the fragment should also be questioned.
- 26 Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Rhizome*, Paris, Les éditions de Minuit, 1976. As a reminder: "Let us summarize the main characteristics of a rhizome: in contrast to trees and their roots, a rhizome connects any point with any other point, and each of its characteristics is not necessarily connected with characteristics of the same type. It actualizes very different sign systems and even non-sign states" (pp. 60-61).
- 27 An imaginary spectator, since mounting an exhibition necessarily entails marking out one or more approaches, inventing an ideal reading or rather the ideal of open readings.
- 28 List borrowed from Lipovetsky, whose explanation of the diversity of forms of post-modern art in terms of the manifestation of the process of personalization — a rise in individualism resulting from the succession of different phases of capitalism — under way in post-industrial societies is, however, not discussed here.
- 29 Johanne Lamoureux, in a catalogue published in 1986 by 49th Parallel - Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art, entitled "Roland Poulin - Sculptures and Drawings", very clearly poses this problem of the oscillation between the two levels involved: "Of course, the evident and unstable 'construction' of these works soon rerouted the impact of the semantic reference. The assembled facture returns us from representation to action: the action of constructing and that, more problematic, ... of visible construction. But the pragmatic effect of the construction does not annihilate the semantic possibility outright and does not entirely substitute itself for it. The 'construction' lets itself be virtually shaken to a certain extent (by the possible re-emergence of the sarcophagus in the very centre of an exploration of these pieces), so that in each of these occurrences it can in turn revive the disturbance and refute, scramble the invoked form.... We would then have, as first difference, the fact that the semantic virtuality, far from assigning the object to a transcendent referent, participates in its destabilizing rhetoric without being expelled". (p. 24)
- 30 Achille Bonito Oliva, "Points d'histoire récente", *Nouvelle biennale de Paris — 1985 catalogue*, Milan, Paris, Electa France, 1985, p. 56. The question can only be raised here, not debated at length, although we should first wonder whether the question is correctly posed in those terms....
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- 32 Marie Luise Syring, "De quelques aspects de l'historicisme contemporain", *Nouvelle biennale de Paris — 1985 catalogue*, p. 68.
- 33 See Jean-François Lyotard, *Le post-moderne expliqué aux enfants*, Paris, Galilée, 1986.
- 34 Quignard, *op. cit.*, p. 12. It should be added that this heterogeneous effect is a fleeting one, since the fragmented work immediately appears as a new code. Numerous are the manifestations in modern art (without going back to the Mannerists, though that is a most interesting avenue for study) from the surrealist work to the performance, where the clash and reconciliation of "opposites" occur. The works that we are considering seem to seek to preserve some of that heterogeneity.
- 35 Lyotard, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
- 36 Quignard, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
- 37 de Certeau, *op. cit.*, p. 337.
- 38 *Idem.*
- 39 Michel de Certeau, *L'écriture de l'histoire*, Paris, Gallimard, "Bibliothèque des histoires", 1975, p. 317. It was, in fact, a model of psychological life (rather than an "oneiric model" as de Certeau wrote in *L'invention du quotidien*) that Freud actually judged to be inadequate, since a city was required "... in which nothing that once occurred would ever be lost, and in which all the recent phases of its development would subsist along side the former ones". (*Malaise dans la civilisation*, Paris, P.U.F., "Bibliothèque de psychanalyse", 1971, p. 13). Consideration of a totality here, since "... nothing in psychological life can be lost, nothing that has been formed disappears ..."; *ibid.*, p. 12. See "Le tableau trouvé de la peinture perdue: Rome, Panini, Freud" by Johanne Lamoureux in the September 1987 issue of the review *Trois* for this aspect of "Rome" according to Freud.
- 40 Either the abundance of the fragments or the evidence of their simultaneous presentation or even an excessively apparent ease in reading them, of which one can only be wary, would be intriguing.



# MIREILLE PERRON: Pitfalls of Poetic Licence

by Line Laroche

If one alludes to something, one was first charmed by it. An allusion is, above all, a work of, and about, seduction. It initially surfaces as a reference point from which a work may be read and becomes a preferred starting point, from which recognition begins to dawn, even before the work is understood.

The allusion prompts the spectator to prolong his/her reading of the work, to establish an intimacy with it. A deliberate seduction, the allusion, through its dynamic, draws the eye toward the space occupied by the work and encourages the construction of mental objects.

These completely arbitrary little shocks<sup>1</sup> experienced by the artist are, in turn, experienced by the spectator upon first glimpsing the work of Mireille Perron. Two major allusions emerge from her recent sculptures: the allusion to the Infanta Margarita, drawn from Velasquez' *Las Meninas*, and therefore specifically from the field of art history, and the allusion to Don Quixote, the character in Cervantes' novel, who, it may be said, belongs in the realm of popular culture. The long, emaciated silhouette, mounted on a horse, mechanically highlights the fragments of an oft-repeated tale. At once recognized and evocative, the image beckons the spectator to approach the work and find other pleasures in it.

The facture of the characters is already intriguing: an assemblage of greys, whites and blacks... Scrutinizing the work, the spectator suddenly recognizes a face, an arm, a leg, a mass of ceramic figurines, with traces of the seams of their molds visible.

The artist's work consisted in amassing a jumble of freshly cast commercial ceramic figurines, and photographing them. The photograph was then enlarged, cut out and mounted on a support. Lastly, the artist restored sculptural qualities to the montage. It should be emphasized that the transition from sculpture (ceramics) to photography is an initial step and the return to sculpture, a final step: the circle is complete.

The profusion, excess, juxtaposition and transposition of media are factors that, far from detracting from the work, help to define it.

However, the abundant, scattered clues are confused by the shape into which the work is cut: a silhouette flattened by monochrome photography, yet "recognizable" at first glance. The cutting-out of the photographs has made it possible to recreate identities from these "tiny disasters". The objects that serve as the "subjects" of the photography are actually small: the enlargement of the figurines to life size makes discovery of their nature (origin) even more remote.

Though photography has almost always had a classification function, here it appears to be much more the intrusion of a new medium that relieves the work from a formal point of view, though from the standpoint of content, it superimposes a series of avenues through which the meaning of the structure can be traced.

The very installation of the characters places them in an environment that clearly reflects the titles. *L'aventure côté cour no 1* shows us "the Knight of the Woeful Countenance", having put his weapons aside, pursuing his quest in his world of personal, subjective representation, where differences, not similarities are important. The elements of this sculpture refer to common objects, but the retouching work, or even the straightforward imitation, changes the point of view. The artist made some of the objects out of manufactured shapes, while others were covered again with a thick, textured coat of paint; they show the artist's intervention at all levels of the production.

*L'aventure côté no 1* prompts a reading process related to the construction of mental objects. It is a matter of imagining, of recreating, from the stock of our memories, using fragmentary details, a narrative unit that does not exist in the work.

*L'histoire côté jardin* functions in another manner. Of course, there are similarities, since the manufacturing process is of the same type. This installation also may seem to make use of the same type of relations; but, such is not the case. One must realize that, although the character's silhouette evokes the image of a girl, the emergence of the figure of the Infanta Margarita from the Velasquez' painting requires more profound knowledge of the corpus of art history, and even of the corpus of images of the artist herself.

The objects surrounding the Infanta (the trellis, gardening (agricultural) tools and fountain) are also the artist's stock-in-trade. However, whereas the edge of the fence, perched diagonally, throws the space off balance and distances us from reality in *L'aventure côté cour no 1*, the cement sidewalk (on which the Infanta's faithful friend waits and watches) proposes a more classical perspective through its strict arrangement.

It may be said that the ornamentation contributes to the mechanism of the work by clarifying the narrative and formal staging. It gives us the work with more emphasis than an indicator or admonisher would; it exhibits the work. Hence, there are two forms of the desire to display: the allusion and the ready-made items of ornamentation (trellis, fence, cement slabs), both of which are traces of the same desire.

Therefore, no memorization effect should be evident in the mechanism of the work and the use of the allusion. On the contrary, the repetition of an element through its shape and own meaning is a visual lever that actuates thought about the relations between reality and the various ways in which it is recorded. Not memory, but repetition is involved here; not a one-time, constant use, but a changing, flexible itinerary.

1 Antoine Campagnon, *La Seconde Main ou le Travail de la Citation*, Paris, Seuil, 1979, p. 24.



### **Mireille Perron**

Born in Montréal in 1957.

Studied at the Collège du Vieux-Montréal (Diplôme d'études collégiales, plastic arts, 1977), John Abbott College, Ste-Anne de Bellevue, (Diploma of Collegial Studies, ceramic technology, 1978-1980); Université de Montréal (BA in art history, 1981-1983); is preparing an MA in art history).

Lives in Montréal.

### **Solo exhibitions**

Galerie Interaction, Montréal, 1983

Galerie Interaction, Montréal, 1984

La Chambre Blanche, Québec City, 1985

The Isaacs Gallery, Toronto, 1985

Galerie Powerhouse, Montréal, 1986

Centre de céramique Bonsecours, Montréal, 1987

Galerie Articule, Montréal, 1987

### **Selected group exhibitions**

Haystack Mountain School, Maine, USA, 1983

Galerie Interaction, Montréal, 1983

Galerie du Centre Bonsecours, Montréal, 1984

Galerie Barbara Sylverberg, Montréal, 1985

Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, Alberta, 1985

*Mostra della nazione*, Faenza, Italy and Mâcon, France, 1985-1986

*où est le fragment*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1987

(travelling exhibition)

### **Selected bibliography**

Chantal Charbonneau, "Retour de Faenza", *Vie des Arts*, Montréal, Vol. XXXI, No. 123, June 1986, p. 77.

*Québec-Faenza*, Centre de céramique Bonsecours, Montréal, 1985. Exhibition catalogue.

*Première Biennale nationale de céramique*, Corporation de la Biennale nationale de céramique, Galerie d'art du Parc, Trois-Rivières, 1984. Exhibition catalogue.

Hedwidge Asselin, "La première biennale nationale de céramique", *Le Devoir*, Montréal, 1984.

Janice Selline, "Action en terre", *Vanguard*, Vancouver, Vol. 12, No. 9, November 1983, p. 47.



# Christiane Ainsley: Inner or Outer Fragments

by Christine Bernier

Christiane Ainsley's painting is provocative. It is impossible at first glance to escape the extravagant generosity of its shapes and colours. The artist juxtaposes blacks and whites, strident colours and subdued hues. She contrasts the flat coloured surfaces and the areas dense with detailed motifs and teeming with graffiti. The paintings simultaneously display various treatments: motifs — angular or sinuous — painted or pasted on the canvas, or beyond the canvas, painted wood or masonite shapes. All are tangled, and interpenetrate freely and easily.

The work entitled *cette nuit-là il faisait très noir. oui très noir* is composed of two elements: a painting tilted slightly to the right, and a wood cutout, which the artist places below the painting, directly on the floor. The two parts of this diptych touch at one point to simulate a precarious state of balance. Logically, the relation of these two dissimilar, inseparable objects is merely odd. However, the way they are arranged, which produces that allusive, incongruous contiguity, exacerbates their incompatibility and gives the spectator a desire to separate them from one another. It is the arrangement of the two elements that both produces and resolves their contradiction.

The furtive equilibrium is upset in another painting: *à quoi penses-tu*. Here, the exacerbated movement, carried to its extreme, is disturbed. One shape "has fallen" on the floor, or is emerging from the floor, it does not matter one way or the other, since the tension of the ambiguity has apparently been transformed into an obvious confrontation of antinomies: the shapes collide, are telescoped and rend the canvas. Separated into two distinct areas by a slanted line, the work has both a smooth, metallic surface as well as a brightly coloured, irregular one. This binary composition creates a ventilation of the pictorial space rarely seen in Christiane Ainsley's painting.

However, just like the other work, *à quoi penses-tu* finally reveals its complexity. By looking at it closely, we discover that many of the motifs, dots and lines, and much of the hatching, those little flourishes that the artist has a predilection for, have been driven back to the edges of the painting. Her very manner of painting, evident here, shows us that what we have found is not exactly where we were looking for it. The truth of this painting could therefore be in the accumulation of false trails and artifices.

Furthermore, note that the titles of the paintings seem to have no relation to the works. Their role is much more indirect. The titles offer pathos — ironically (?). But, then again, it is these traps that point to the theme of the painting: flower pots.

The artist always works with motifs that she periodically alters and is carefully to name explicitly. There have been "cat", "eggs" and "flower pot" cycles. This merits study since Christiane Ainsley has already accustomed us to the themes connoting unselfconsciousness. It will probably be said that this new "flower pot" cycle should be dealt with lightly: all the symbolism of the Garden of Eden often emerges from a flower bouquet. And then we may surrender to the temptation to see only a playful intent in a funny, animated, colourful, stylized, decorative and electrifying painting. Try not to give in. There are many more controlled touches than joyous spontaneity in this Ainsley production.

The flower pots first show us how the artist loses the figuration in the abstraction, since it is not obvious that these are flower bouquets when one looks at the painting for the first time. These multiple transplantations of shapes delay our recognition of the flower pot, which resists being anecdotal. There is no continuous thread that could serve to conceal the contradictions in the work, only the motif within which these contradictions can coexist and animate one another.

Once we know the theme, we can multiply the possible interpretations. By viewing *cette nuit-là il faisait très noir. oui très noir* afresh in the context suggested by the flower pot motif, the shape on the floor may be perceived as a flower fallen from the bouquet, wilted and monstrous. The nature of an object which, in its relation to its concept, manifests itself as discordant is said to be monstrous: this monstrous, dubious flower denies it is a flower while preserving the flower concept. We are already remote from the floral motif this painting initially suggests. At this point, a re-reading of the poem *À celle qui est trop gaie* could seem appropriate in order to compare these heteromorphic flowers with the *Fleurs du mal* (it should be added that Baudelaire defined his task as "creation through the logic of opposites").

Thus, the titles and motifs are apparently contradictory in order to encode the works more elaborately and momentarily mislead the spectator. And a play of artifices is seen to emerge from this proliferation of meanings, forms and colours. The "merry flower pots" will be revealed as shams; they provoke us not only through the display of the decorative, but through the continuous manifestation of an ambiguous stability. The works often suggest that one of their elements is about to fall — though this is improbable — and the paintings, which are always supported by the floor (literally or in a simulated manner) resist being hung on the wall.

Christiane Ainsley's painting appears to be an allusive montage that favours instability of form and heterogeneity of the fragments of which it is composed. Therefore, a second look should be taken at the integration of a lighthearted mode linked to the flower bouquet, and even more, at the exacerbation of the decorative that this motif conveys, until it is impossible to grasp an overall significance and a troubling dimension emerges from all these latent meanings.



## Christiane Ainsley

Born in Valleyfield, Québec, in 1955.

Studied at the Cégep de St-Laurent, Ville St-Laurent (Diplôme d'études collégiales, plastic arts, 1975); Université du Québec à Montréal (plastic arts, 1975-1979).

Lives in Montréal.

## Solo exhibitions

Galerie Laurent Tremblay, Montréal, 1979

Galerie Graff, Montréal, 1982

Galerie Daniel Beaudesne, Montréal, 1985

*Le bruit des vagues me fera-t-il oublier ton silence*, La Troisième galerie, Québec City, 1987

## Selected group exhibitions

New York State University, Plattsburg, 1978

*Bourse Greenshield*, Galerie UQAM, Montréal, 1978

*Colloque ART*, Galerie UQAM, Montréal, 1978

*L'Art à l'université: constat*, Musée du Québec, Québec City, 1978

Centre culturel de Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France, 1980

*Spécial Graff*, Galerie Graff, Montréal, 1981, 1982, 1985, 1986

*Biennale de dessins et d'estampes du Québec*, Montréal and Québec City, 1983

*Artaire*, Pavillon Mont-Royal of the Université de Montréal, 1983

*Hypothétiques confluences*, Galerie Jolliet, Montréal, 1983

*Affinités électives*, Galerie UQAM, Montréal, 1983

*Development Arts: Canadian Exhibit*, The University of Michigan-Flint, Chicago, 1983

*Artistes de la galerie*, Galerie Daniel Beaudesne, Montréal, 1984

*Artistes de la galerie*, Galerie Graff, Montréal, 1984

*Noël 1985*, Galerie Treize, Montréal, 1985

*L'impureté*, Galerie Aubes, Montréal, 1985

*Picasso vu par*, Galerie Treize, Montréal, 1985

*Peinture au Québec: une nouvelle génération*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1985

*Conservateur invité: George Curzi*, Galerie Treize, Montréal, 1985

*Graff 1966-1986*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1986

*À propos de ...*, Art diffusion international, Montréal, 1986

*Absurde*, Galerie J. Yahouda Meir, Montréal, 1986

*III Premio de Grabado*, Maximo Ramos, Spain, 1986

*Nouvelles acquisitions*, Musée du Québec, Québec City, 1987

*où est le fragment*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (travelling exhibition)

## Selected bibliography

Gilles Daigneault, "Sur les cimaises", *Le Devoir*, Montréal, January 19, 1986, p. 30.

Jocelyne Lepage, "Quand le lazer s'en mêle. D'une galerie à l'autre", *La Presse*, Montréal, February 16, 1985, p. S-1.

Manon Blanchette, "Galerie Treize, Montréal, du 13 janvier au 10 février", *Vanguard*, Vancouver, Vol. 14, No. 3, April 1985, p. 45.

Marie Perrault, "Chats animés", *Spirale*, Montréal, April 1985, p. 9.

Jean Tourangeau, "Peinture au Québec. Une Nouvelle Génération", *Vanguard*, Vancouver, Vol. 14, No. 7, September 1985, pp. 13-14.

*Peinture au Québec: une nouvelle génération*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montréal, May 1985. Exhibition catalogue.

Pascale Beaudet, "La Peinture au Québec — Une Nouvelle Génération", *Vie des Arts*, Montréal, Vol. XXX, No. 120, Fall 1985, pp. 18-21.

Suzanne Lemire, "Christiane Ainsley ou la générosité mise en peinture", text for the exhibition *Le bruit des vagues me fera-t-il oublier ton silence* at the Troisième galerie, Québec City, January 1987.

Marie Delagrave, "Christiane Ainsley à la Troisième Galerie. Des papiers découpés exubérants et rieurs", *Le Soleil*, Québec City, January 31, 1987, p. D-6.



# Harlan Johnson: Remanence

by Geneviève Marot

A sense of mystery means the viewer is always uncertain, is confronted with double or triple meanings, hinted meanings (images within images), forms that are going to or will be, depending on what is in the viewer's mind; all things more than suggestive, since they are *visible*.

Odilon Redon, "À soi-même"

The inscription of figurative motifs in pictorial material is at the heart of the problematic in Harlan Johnson's work. However, whereas these motifs made broader play possible in the more informal space of the "tents" (unstretched canvases), through a deliberate camouflage in the effusion of pigments, here they confine the complexity of the statement to a smaller, intimist format. Approaching the problem of figuration directly is naturally somewhat of a challenge to modernism.

There is a genuine tendency toward the figurative in the artist's recent production, the figurative as an apparent manifestation of the desire to take possession of the pictorial space at the very centre of the canvas.

A whole series of clues are provided: the rectangular structure of the support, reinforced by the frontality of the work, the allusion to a triptych that retains the appearance of an icon. However, ironically, an accumulation of "accidents" destabilizes the planned icon effect. The work is fractured, the rupture contaminates the motifs in an attempt to dismantle the image, reducing it to an uncertain existence in a broken space where it vainly attempts to put itself back together.

This thwarting of the meaning, induced by an excess of "errors", introduces the spectator to an enigmatic reading that holds him captive and keeps him wandering in a space that continues to contradict its boundaries, in a perpetual transition from what is contemplative of the image to the seduction of the material.

The question of figuration is posed here in a singular manner. It is not posed automatically in a deliberate attempt to assert itself, whether through recourse to a certain Expressionist violence or a return to innocence, to a "primitive barbarity". The figuration itself is the object of this questioning. Violence is always contained here. Clearly, there is erosion occurring somewhere, through these cuts, breaks and sectioning of shapes and structures. But it does not occur as a succession of rejections aimed at a given specificity, an affirmation, a clarification of meaning. It is not offered as a destructive act. Rather there is a declaration of visual and formal possibilities, which deliberately keeps the setting of any one process or experience of the work at arm's length. Adopting the unstable position of "possibles" means highlighting the geneses, the mechanisms.

This is why the role of the figurative in this work is seen, not as an element appended to the formal propositions of which it apparently is not the woof, but as a destabilizing agent of the canvas and representative space in which it serves as the site of its own staging.

Composed of three panels, distinct in format, materials and treatment, but enclosed in the frame of the canvas-stretcher, this work, *Racines*, suggests neither dislocation nor unification of the elements composing it. Its reasoning revolves around the incomplete, the unfinished and the hidden. The rupture is already there, in the absence of any stable refer-

ence point and in the ineffectiveness of a purely formal approach. It disposes the spectator, through its calm, meditative strength, to a certain intimacy rather than to an immediate search for how it operates. It encourages an approach similar to that which Antonin Artaud admired in Balinese theatre, a kind of "primordial physicality", a "sign language", "directly communicative".<sup>1</sup> Those disembodied, duplicated heads, those rooted trunks that interact in the multi-leveled structure of the work, suggest that seeing is not a simple act here. One glimpses, one divines more than one sees, feeling that one has always missed something. Through their visual strangeness, these signs compose a sort of figuration of desire, a trope,<sup>2</sup> and generate an intense, immediate appeal for meaning in memory. Subject to the rules of the accidental or precarious, they create a permanent chasm between the form and what is intelligible, which freezes them in ambiguous images. The duplicated heads may be interpreted as figures on this side of the image, since they reflect the other side of the visible beyond the canvas and appear to be a sort of internal writing: the divisions of the work encourage one to imagine something hidden in the very midst of the anfractuosités of the painting.

If the work has an icon effect, it is the result of the concentration of the eye on the pictorial material and not of the imagery originating in a representative or narrative code. Paradoxically, the fragility of the image brings out this effect of presence. Through their ability to fascinate and attract the eye, these signs never fail to keep one's attention on the intense field of the work. Seeming to ensure their pre-eminence in what is visible, the forms emerging primarily from the wood panel, the cleared cavities of the metal and the pigmentation of the canvas remain integrated with the material in order to magnify its effects. Here, pictorial material and mental force are strangely combined. The representation is subject to dramatization of the tangible and the visible in a permanent retreat toward an absent centre, the origin of the retreat *ad infinitum* toward what is slipping away.<sup>3</sup>

This memory effect runs counter to the notion of the completeness of the work. Associative and fragmentary, it twists and turns, with no compulsory referential logic. It provokes a decontraction of the figurative and formal codes, not a breaking up, but a convergence with no continuity. This convergence is expressed in the figurative signs that extend from one surface to the other without forming a single, homogeneous image. Each image-panel seems to reproduce and reformulate the previous one with the sole intention of recalling the process or act of painting that initiated it. There is an obvious desire to make a surprise gesture in the act.

Superimposed over this memory effect is one of repetition, which produces this re-examination throughout the composition. It ensures the constructive and deductive aspect of the work, which is attached primarily to its formal elements. A sort of ritual is summoned up here: symmetrical repetition of the heads, trunks, roots and panels, that refuses to be inferred and is the origin of the necessity for a permanent break.



The repetitive formula amplifies the resonance of each element. Each one imitates the whole by interrupting it, and confines itself to being merely able eternally to become, never to be completed.<sup>4</sup> A whole metaphor of the incomplete is apparent here: the roots indicate what remains underground, the trunks are merely sketched and the heads seem to want to leave the site where they remain immobile.

From a formal standpoint, the frame does not confirm or cancel the image; it argues on its own merits. By "intruding" in the work, the frame reformulates the terms of the work and makes any setting of its limits in the work inoperative: it suggests that another panel could be added and that the manner in which it appears is random. Simultaneously, it questions the format, resulting in the varying dimensions of the frame in the work in many different formulations. The work itself is not a closed two-dimensional structure. It reproduces itself beyond its own structure, allowing the image to develop without introducing a figure-background dialectic.

There is a single site of tension in *Augure*: The canvas has been subjected to a series of interventions aimed at distorting its space through the use of the ingenious staircase motif. While duplicating the repetitive structure of the support, the motif acts as an instigator of space: the surface stretches and contracts, and produces an overhanging or deepening effect. This surface contradiction is reinforced by the panel metaphor, which reflects "in all directions". Furthermore, the inverted position of the bird neutralizes any reference point at the top or bottom. Hence, a surface that fails to provide the "background" of the work corresponds to these images which represent nothing and narrate nothing.

This deconstruction of limits does not only bring about a series of refusals of the definitive, it produces a true discourse on matter. The material — in this case, pieces of copper — becomes purely a colour notation that blends in with the pigment. In *Racines*, the metal panel produces a diffused light throughout the composition, recalling something Byzantine, while the wood panel evokes something from the Middle Ages. These connotations do not intentionally refer to a "history" of the materials, but arouse a memory effect in the same way as the motifs do. The pictorial material suffuses itself with meaning. What may be read extends beyond the figuration-abstraction question, through the adoption of a rhizome structure opening onto a multi-dimensional space. Each material magnifies the possibilities of its use, allowing the artist to be the master of his own decisions. The roots become pure flowing colour, the trunks and heads become stains and give the surface rhythm by casting the spectator's eye over a multiplicity of effects of matter, which are similar to shocks and chants.

Here is a work that demands feeling and perception, that combines sensitivity, expressed in an affirmation of the act of painting as giving both signals and meaning, with strictness of approach; a work that insists on preserving the flow of the processes by which it was created. It enables one to discover things little by little, while ensuring that experience takes precedence over knowledge, experience that, like memory, is associative and fragmentary. From a memory of the work painted comes the staging of the very act of representation. Here, the key figure is memory as a complement of experience, which is precisely what gives this work a certain confusion or disarray.

- 1 Quoted in an article by Anne-Marie Duguet, "The Videos of Bill Viola, A Space-Time Poetic", *Parachute*, No. 45, Montréal, December, January, February 1986-1987, p. 50.
- 2 Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La raison baroque*, Paris, Éditions Galilée, 1984.  
Trope: "The advantages of tropes are firstly to designate things that have no name and, secondly, to give meaning and colour to things that do not come under regular meanings".
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe, J.-L. Nancy, *L'absolu littéraire*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1980.

### Harlan Johnson

Born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1956.  
Studied at Concordia University, Montréal, Québec (BA in visual arts, 1976-1979, MA in visual arts, 1985).  
Lives in Montréal.

### Solo exhibitions

Galerie Bourget, Concordia University, Montréal, 1980  
Galerie d'Art Monkland, Montréal, 1982  
Galerie J. Yahouda Meir, Montréal, 1984  
Strutts Gallery, Sackville, N.B., 1984  
Galerie J. Yahouda Meir, Montréal, 1985  
Galerie Horace, Sherbrooke, Québec, 1985  
Galerie J. Yahouda Meir, Montréal, 1986

### Group exhibitions

2 X 4, Galerie Optica, Montréal, 1978  
*Constat*, Musée du Québec, Québec City, 1979  
*Troisième Biennale du Québec*, Saidye Bronfman Centre, Montréal, 1981  
*Directions nouvelles, Montréal-Toronto*, Queen Elizabeth Building, Second International Art Fair of Toronto, Toronto, 1982  
*Aspects de la peinture montréalaise contemporaine*, Pavillon du Québec, Man and His World, Montréal, 1982  
*Faye Fayerman et Harlan Johnson*, Galerie Sommerville, Montréal, 1982  
*Treize à Optica*, Galerie Optica, Montréal, 1982  
*Exposition de la Collection prêt d'oeuvres d'art*, Musée du Québec, Québec City, 1983  
*Group Exhibition*, Grünwald Gallery, Toronto, 1983  
*Québec Connection*, Harbourfront, Toronto, 1983  
*Quatre jeunes peintres montréalais*, Bishop's-Champlain Gallery, Bishop's University, Lennoxville, 1983  
*Recent Acquisitions - Works on Paper*, Confederation Arts Centre, Prince Edward Island, 1983  
9" X 9", Galerie J. Yahouda Meir, Montréal, 1983  
*Faculty Exhibition*, Bishop's-Champlain Gallery, Bishop's University, Lennoxville, 1984  
*La Collection prêt d'oeuvres d'art*, Musée du Québec, Québec City, 1984  
*The Figure: A Selection of Canadian Painting*, Burlington Cultural Centre, Burlington, Ontario, 1984  
*Face à face*, Galerie Powerhouse, Montréal, 1984  
*L'eau et le vent*, Festival du Vieux-Port, Québec City, 1984  
*Montréal tout-terrain*, Clinique Laurier, Montréal, 1984  
*Faculty Biennial*, Concordia Art Gallery, Montréal, 1985  
*où est le fragment*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1987 (travelling exhibition)

### Selected bibliography

Fela Grünwald and Diana Nemiroff, "The Return to the Image at Art Toronto '82", *Art Magazine*, January 1983, pp. 21-23.  
Diana Nemiroff, "Harlan Johnson: Monkland Art Gallery", *Vanguard*, March 1983, p. 28.  
John Collins, "Harlan Johnson; Y Y Z Toronto", *Arts Atlantic*, Spring 1984, p. 8.  
S.V. Gersovitz, "Harlan Johnson Paintings; Galerie J. Yahouda Meir", *Arts Atlantic*, Spring 1984, p. 10.  
Jean-Jacques Bernier, "Shelters", *Canadian Magazine*, Fall 1985, pp. 96-97.  
Gillian Bond, "Harlan Johnson: Recent Works", *Arts Atlantic*, Spring 1985.



# Mary-Ann Cuff: Order Amidst Chaos

by Yvan Moreau

The organization of the coloured, textured expanses in Mary-Ann Cuff's work establishes relationships between the forms proposed. The play of matter activates the contours, produces shifts between the figures and makes associations possible between the component parts of the pictorial language. The colours, the unbridled motifs, direct the eye in order to demarcate the surfaces, just as the strokes and lines do, creating visual links. The coloured spaces, which bear traces and marks, make the surface dynamic.

The discovery of a motif, at times abstract, at times figurative, generates an experience of the painted surface, a display of colour, stroke, line, scale, frame and format, and refers to an iconic self-referentiality, in which the motif evokes, for example, the chain of motifs.

Furthermore, through a confusion of localized effects, a perpetual back-and-forth movement between the plastic shapes makes possible the identification of the pictorial processes whose structural and technical mechanics are unveiled by observation, emphasizing the modes of the pictorial.

The combination of ambiguous motifs — complete or incomplete — makes it possible to recognize the fragments proposed by the material. These fragments — irreducible to a whole, permutable, retractable — are constantly being rearranged in space. Autonomous and linked, they generate the production of rhizomatic networks. The fragments are neither totalitarian nor all-encompassing. The fragmentary piling-up of matter and plastic forms draws attention to a detail, but, in a second, the perspective changes and a new detail emerges. The detail effect becomes one of discovery, resulting from the positioning of references at several locations. The detail limits the field of observation while it broadens the gaze toward other spatial locations, forcing the spectator to change position.

The visual information or data within an expandable combination of perceptions makes the spectator want to see. The fragments are inventoried through the memory that reunites the paths taken, according to an inscription/erasure/record-ing phenomenon. In this way, the functioning of memory produces multi-directional associations that make it possible to reformulate the work randomly. The series of evocations and the bits of images that the material elicits reduces the complexity of the object to a "mechanical" fabrication of the system exhibited. The ability of the elements to interact creates scaled-down vanishing points in which forms appear, textures take shape and figures emerge, while others disappear. The experiments in pictorial and plastic organization compel a shifting, fleeting glance at a multiplicity of bifurcations. The possible trajectories suggest temporary, arbitrary assemblages of fragments. What appears chaotic is actually well organized, since what must be visible in the partial perception of the manifestation of matter are the technical procedures governing the composition in a fabrication/perception time continuum. As a medium, the composition highlights the construction of the works as a sequence of deci-

sions. The course or act of painting intervenes in the form of instinctive impulses that require continuous invention to be transformed into pictorial sensations.

The overflowing surfaces and planes, which insulate the clues to interpretation, require the spectator to scrutinize all the recesses of the support, seeking thick, blurred forms. The materiality of the support, a cardboard framework, is amplified by the way in which the cardboard is cut out, i.e. by the way in which the painted space is sliced and demarcated in order to show the relationships between the plastic forms. Through the excess of the facture, the itineraries, courses and vanishing points shape the pictorial means supporting a potential narrative process. Unity and legibility are broken, short-circuited by the concept of abstraction that conditions the painting on the basis of the structure. Mary-Ann Cuff takes full advantage of the resources of disorder, producing an interrupted course in which the draft and the sketch approach finitude. The chromatic system, a destabilizing agent, also participates in the requirements of the composition by forming breaks in the tones and textures. In this way, discontinuities and fractures help form the same limits.

The works — mobile and circular paths — offer matter and its "fragmenting" possibilities as movements of energy that correspond to gestural impulses. The fragments are captured as instantaneous manifestations that intimate no idea of unity, which would restrict the meaning, but rather as entities of the work that make directional axes possible. They produce ruptures and imbalances that assure their presence in the structuring process of the works. The chaotic accumulation of structural elements — uncompleted puzzles — stimulates perception, which panics at the appearance of distortions, digressions or imbalances in the apprehension of the materiality and, at the same time, belies the impossibility of occupying an ideal point of view.

The multiple faces of the procedures and the material factors offer diffuse, broken images that cannot be assimilated into a whole. The camouflage effect, the idea of the erasure of the detail or the whole, conceals the visual information and creates ambiguities in the relationships between the components of the work. The fractured assemblage disturbs vision and makes it possible to query the way in which the components are placed in space and the volumes of the motifs that are left incomplete are rendered. The spectator believes at all times that he has succeeded in seeing everything he is able to see from his vantage point; however, something that he has not considered always emerges. The virtually unlimited observations renew the fabrication processes experimented with by the producer/designer.



### **Mary-Ann Cuff**

Born in Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, Québec, in 1956.  
Studied at Ottawa University, Ontario (BA in visual arts, 1976-1979).  
Lives in Montréal.

### **Solo exhibitions**

*Peintures récentes*, Galerie Jolliet, Montréal, 1984

### **Group exhibitions**

*Hypothétiques confluences*, Galerie Jolliet, Montréal, 1983

*Montréal tout-terrain*, Montréal, 1983

*Papier-matière*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1984

*Peinture au Québec: une nouvelle génération*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1985

*Les expressions de la différence*, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, Alberta, 1986

*À propos de...*, Art diffusion international, Montréal, 1986

*où est le fragment*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1987  
(travelling exhibition)

### **Selected bibliography**

Johanne Lamoureux, "Hypothétiques confluences", *Parachute*, Montréal, No. 31, June, July, August 1983, p. 41.

Martine Meilleur, "Volubilitas", *Galerie Jolliet*, Bulletin No. 15, Montréal, July 1983, pp. 13-15.

Lawrence Sabbath, "Young painters share common themes in city shows", *The Gazette*, Montréal, April 14, 1984, p. 12.



# Marc Garneau: Excursions

by Emeren Garcia

One should keep in mind when attempting to interpret Marc Garneau's pictorial work that his practices are associated with the dramatic modalities of the act of painting.

To view his work, and especially to discuss what Marc Garneau shows us, it is necessary to recognize his manner, for example, of reminding painting of its dynamic function within an autonomous space as more than art related to the modernist experience. One can also see an art that rejoins the language of the informal, with the intent to stress its distance from the proliferation of visual inventions of a technoscientific society. Marc Garneau's methods operate on the fringe of this context of mass communication, but one understands the orientation of his approach toward an art of an expressive and abstract nature in relation to the current environment. The particularity of this choice resides in the fact that he does not only paint abstract forms; he constructs pictorial relationships in order to approach form and matter in different ways, not only within one work, but from one work to another.<sup>1</sup>

Marc Garneau's works are produced as spaces for experimentation. As in the "poetic",<sup>2</sup> each of the artist's works evokes a plastic proposition whose objective is not the outcome of a fact, but the completion of an experiment. *Élégie onirique* and *Élégie diurne* are distinguished through their titles by various marks of flight and various courses taken, which enable one to perceive the works as stagings (dream and diurnal spaces) and to surrender to the pictorial nature of the production of effects.

*Élégie onirique* is a firmly installed canvas, whose entire surface is covered with one layer of paint. The stable background reduces tensions, but violent marks are added to it: pasted pieces of canvas, scratches on the painted background, over which are painted sharp strokes and pronounced vertical lines. These violent contrasts extend over the entire surface of the canvas. In *Élégie diurne*, there is a tendency toward pointed shapes. The pictorial treatment is different in this work. The painted surface emphasizes the shapes emerging from the impasto of colours. The initial layers of colour are glimpsed on this surface, resembling painted stains (the vertical shape in the centre and the shape surrounding it). Pieces of canvas are pasted on the impasto to halt possible movement of these patches. The discordant agreements are balanced through the addition of a painted base (at the bottom of the work) that lends a certain stability within the closed space of the canvas.

Each work is laboured and each sequence in the pictorial process must be meticulously planned to make "material improvisations" (effects of matter) possible. Once this is done, the artist assumes responsibility for the means he uses but does not succeed in controlling the results. It is a directed gesture,<sup>3</sup> which releases the pictorial matter. The gestural components, the brush, pen and hand strokes, produce plastic effects that are more in keeping with the act than with the result.

Marc Garneau succeeds in repeating and reformulating the pictorial inscriptions in his works through a balance between uncontrollable improvisations and voluntary mastery. Hence, he uses contrasting elements: heavy, almost crushing lines in each work, canvas cutouts grasped piecemeal, a flat background of constant resonance that emerges in each work. These elements, which appear in the various works, undergo transformations, thereby redefining the pictorial space. Since the lines are not of the same fullness in each work, the pieces of canvas become original, independent fragments, and the background changes function and appearance. There are only relationships of friction and tension.

It may be said that all his works are a struggle against opposites. They make use of both seduction and violence — obviously seductive in the richness of the matter composed, violent in the various levels of antagonistic, shifting relationships. Each time, the surface is animated by formal innovation that continuously generates renewed interpretations. The canvases criss-crossed with gestural inscriptions produce elaborate spaces on which the expressive traces of the artist's hand survive. This treatment of the surface, endowed with expressive interpretation through bodily contact and, in a manner of speaking, "not clearly intelligible", relentlessly queries the spectator, confronting him with the multiple effects of a material presence.

We are faced with a restrictive, significant use of the space of perception that is now ours.<sup>4</sup> In fact, everything happens as if our eye, saturated with cinema and advertising images, had nothing else to see. This is the background of Marc Garneau's art, an art that does not ask to be evaluated as a medium (i.e. in reaction to "new (media) images"), but an art perceived as a temporary extension of a painting that paves the way for exploration, for a physical and intellectual excursion.



- 1 Marc Garneau explores the modalities of drawing and painting through a series of pictorial exercises, thereby enhancing the works on paper (as spaces of production and not simply as scratch paper); the format enables him to work quickly and the fragile support provided by the paper forces him to give thought to the "irregular" effects of plastic marks. Each of his works is part of a series that should also be taken into consideration, for the artist must reformulate the pictorial space each time he intervenes and herald the process of the work.
- 2 The "poetic" is a way of approaching the experience of knowledge. It is an expression of knowledge open to multiple signifieds, and not a didactic way of expressing oneself. Therefore, a "poetic" work requires several interpretations. Barthes very rightly said that "the 'poetic' is not some vague impression, a kind of undefinable value.... The 'poetic' is, very exactly, a form's symbolic capacity; this capacity has value only if it permits the form to 'depart' in many directions and thereby potentially manifest the *infinite* advance of the symbol, which one can never make into a final signified and which is, in short, always the signifier of another signifier...". Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms* (trans. of *L'obvie et l'obtus*), New York, Hill and Wang, 1985, p. 124.
- 3 The idea is that the use of this gesture originates in an impression that may be considered to be what Barthes describes in terms of *throwing*: "... the materials seem thrown across the canvas, and *to throw* is an action in which are simultaneously inscribed an initial decision and terminal indetermination: by throwing, I know what I am doing, but I do not know what I am producing". Roland Barthes, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-182.
- 4 This refers to one of Michael Newman's comments (as a conclusion to the ICA conference in May 1985). He said: "Perhaps the central problem for postmodernism in the visual arts is that, although we live in a culture of proliferating images, the future has no image". Michael Newman, "Revising Modernism, Representing Postmodernism: Critical Discourses of the Visual Arts", *ICA Documents 4: Postmodernism*, 1986, p. 50.

## Marc Garneau

Born in Thetford-Mines, Québec, in 1956.  
Studied at Concordia University, Montréal  
(BFA, 1976-1979; MFA, painting, 1982-1984).  
Lives in Montréal.

### Solo exhibitions

Atelier 303, Montréal, 1980  
Galerie Motivation V, Montréal, 1982  
Galerie Bourget, Concordia University, Montréal, 1983  
Galerie Skol, Montréal, 1984  
Espace Virtuel, Chicoutimi, Québec, 1985  
Galerie Sans-Nom, Moncton, N.B., 1986  
Galerie Aubes 3935, Montréal, 1987

### Group exhibitions

Sir Georges Williams Gallery, Concordia University, Montréal, 1979  
Galerie Motivation V, Montréal, 1982  
*Aspects de la peinture montréalaise contemporaine*, Pavillon du Québec, Man and His World, Montréal, 1982  
Galerie Bourget, Concordia University, Montréal, 1983  
Galerie Alliance, Montréal, 1985 (with Kina Reusch)  
*Pluralité Québec 1985*, Conseil des artistes peintres du Québec, Montréal, 1985. Travelling exhibition: Musée Pierre Boucher, Trois-Rivières; Cégep de Chicoutimi, Chicoutimi; Centre des Expositions, Val d'Or; Galerie du Centre culturel, Amos; Comité des Expositions artistiques, Rouyn, and Centre d'exposition, Gatineau, 1985-1986  
*Five Painters from Montreal*, Saw Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario, 1986  
*Absurd-e*, Galerie J. Yahouda Meir, Montréal, 1986  
*International Artists' Books Contest of Canada*, Galerie Aubes 3935, Montréal, Galerie Caroline Corre, Paris, and Artist Book Center, New York, 1986-1987  
*où est le fragment*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1987 (travelling exhibition)

### Selected bibliography

Jean-Marie Lapointe, "Je fais un travail de coloriste", *Progrès Dimanche*, Chicoutimi, April 14, 1986, p. 54.  
Johanne Lamoureux, "L'Objet: livre", *International Artists' Books Contest of Canada*, Galerie Aubes 3935, Montréal, 1986. Exhibition catalogue.  
Marc Garneau, Galerie Aubes 3935, Montréal, 1987. Exhibition catalogue.  
Gilles Daigneault, "Des histoires de peinture, de photographie et de mémoire", *Le Devoir*, Montréal, February 7, 1987, p. C-8.



# Denis Pellerin: Media Chips

by Christine Dubois

Denis Pellerin's recent work is in keeping with a long process of plastic translation of the relationship that the human being maintains with the earth. His work ruminates on the Earth-Mother, an approach which was already apparent in a 1985 exhibition and which is continued by the *Échographies* series on origins, the Origin and life. The maternal figure becomes the primary motif; however, rather than making literal use of it, the artist mimics a media version provided by electronics, as the title indicates.

The image of *Échographies* is also hybrid in nature, as are the *Terre-Mère* works, i.e. a mixture of techniques and styles, used according to their interaction rather than their specificity. It evokes the hybrid nature of *Terre-Mère* and breaks away from it by reformulating the form-background relationship through the superimposition of a number of the characteristics of prints and electronic images.

From the print, *Échographies* more specifically borrows the use of the resist, the white area that shares with the electronic image the surprising characteristic that makes the white both the form and the background. The resist draws with the untouched matter of the support itself: the figure appears, but through the absence of construction, a gap. The form emerges from the background, but remains background. In this way, the dark, constructed, pictorial periphery delineates the silhouette in an initial reading of the white form on a black background, but, through the thickness of its pigment and its strong presence, it implicitly states that there has been intervention, that something has been constructed, and it denies any use of the background as a passive receptacle. The entire surface serves as both the support and the body of the work in a visual and logical irresolution, in contradiction to the traditional reading of a positive image: here, what has not been constructed takes shape and what has been constructed serves as background, as in a negative. Thus, the form stands out as depth and flatness, sign and substance simultaneously, and through pure gestalt, what is in the foreground while actually being merely the support itself. The trails of colour on the periphery are not stains, but *maculae*, etymologically, stains on the skin, but also the mesh of a net.<sup>1</sup> Within this network, a weave that originates directly in the engraving process leads us through transparent stratification from the white area to the grainy area, the grain of the work, the grain of the skin. The circumvolutions of the grain of the plywood evoke enlarged fingerprints.

This skin-like, but spider-like texture, this evanescent, alterable net that encloses the void, evokes an electronic image beyond the title of the work — the same fragility, the same disturbing, quivering inconsistency, the same glittering vibration of black and white.

The media transcription process underlying both the engraving and the electronic image is incarnated in the transposition of the iconographic motif of motherhood into a pictorial motif. This is carried out by a strange digression toward ancient sculpture, as we are familiar with it: we recognize bodies with broken limbs, in highly flexible, elegant *contrapposti*. However, although the impalpable, floating shadows in *Échographies* have the characteristics of the electronic image, they borrow from ancient sculpture not the characteristics of this medium (its materiality), but the appearances of "spirit" that seem to breathe life into it; they convey the same calm, wave effect, remote from struggles and conflicts, as if devoid of individual character. However, these works do more than draw on antiquity as a stock of decorative forms: the Apollonian purity of the Greek reference is not frozen in pomp, gravity, or the draping of humanist works; the crushing of the surface of the image, as if by the roller of a press, allegorically prevents any humanist swelling. Thus, the works seem to be mounting a revolt against culture, or rather against the emphatic discourse of culture, to let only poetry filter through.

The serenity of *Échographies* mirrors the very theme of the Earth-Mother and the Origin of life, embryonic life conceived as an Eden-like island; it is this embryonic stage that is indirectly evoked by the colouring. The colour is unostentatious, neither violent nor rich, neither delicate nor refined; it is simply there, like an eyelid that is raised or lowered, in dark brown tones through which the primary cyan blue emerges in the colour series. This emergence of the colour blue is to be understood as the moment when things emerge from an undifferentiated magma and become a part of reality with their local tone.

*Échographies* seeks, in its multiple derivations, the specific modalities of the image offered by each of the media and superimposes them without subordinating any of them, mingling and merging them. Each of these modalities leads us down a similar path, which is, however, quickly barred. The result is a series of trails that extend, not horizontally, but in breadth, in an undecomposable, laminated image, which cannot be reduced to an addition of extractable details, and in which each element borrowed from a medium, justified on the grounds of a number of its characteristics, is preserved in its joint presence with the others.

1 Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms* (trans. of *L'obvie et l'obtus*), New York, Hill and Wang, 1985, p. 179.



### Denis Pellerin

Born in Ham-nord, Québec in 1953.

Studied at the Cégep de Sherbrooke, Québec (Diplôme d'études collégiales, plastic arts, 1975); Université du Québec à Montréal (BA in plastic arts, 1985).

Lives in Montréal.

### Solo exhibitions

Galerie Indépendante, Victoriaville, 1977

Galerie Libre, Montréal, 1980

*Questions sur l'essentiel de l'homme*, Intersection Montréal, 1982

*Installations*, Atelier Presse-Papier, Trois-Rivières, 1982

Département des Arts, UQAM, Montréal, 1984

Galerie du Cégep Édouard-Montpetit, Longueuil, 1984

*Terre-Mère*, Galerie Noctuelle/Michel Groleau, Montréal, 1983

Festival de Musique Actuelle, Victoriaville, 1985

Galerie Port-Maurice, St-Léonard, 1986

Galerie-atelier Jean-Jacques Hofstetter, Fribourg (Switzerland), 1987

### Group exhibitions

Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, 1975

Galerie du Cégep de Trois-Rivières, 1976

Galerie de la sauvegarde, Montréal, 1976

State University of New York, Plattsburg, N.Y., 1978

Centre Culturel de l'Université de Sherbrooke, 1979

Centre UQAM, Montréal, 1982, 1983

Concordia University Gallery, Montréal, 1983

Galerie Aubes 3935, Montréal, 1984

Galerie Port-Maurice, St-Léonard, 1985

Galerie Noctuelle/Michel Groleau, Montréal, 1985, 1986

*où est le fragment*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1987  
(travelling exhibition)

### Selected bibliography

Jean Tourangeau, "Hybridité et impureté", *Vie des Arts*, Vol. 30, No. 122, Montréal, March 1986, p. 65.

Normand Biron, "La terre des origines", *Le Devoir*, October 19, 1985, p. 27.



# Paul Lacroix: Beyond Illusion and Reality

by Emeren Garcia

No man ever created anything.

Arthur Rimbaud

Man is not a creator. He can do no more than arrange things. His creation is apparently limited to this.

Henry Miller

This awareness of the work of art (artistic matter) is at the heart of the conceptions of Paul Lacroix,<sup>1</sup> for whom sculpture is manipulation. One must be sufficiently bold to state that all artistic acts are certainly not inoffensive. It is therefore not surprising to now wonder what exactly are the strategies of a practice that "salvages" objects from nature, usually stones found in the artist's environment.

The spirit in which the works are created closely resembles that of the archaeologist. Paul Lacroix is interested in stone and rock fragments marked/sculpted by the characteristic traces of the elements and time. These natural "scraps" sometimes take unexpected forms, analogous, it may be said, to broken relics of the past. The artist uses these materials in their natural state; their plastic qualities and their unusual shapes inspire him.

The interest of a work such as *Épaupe* resides in the reorientation of a stone that was shaped by time and came to rest on a stone pedestal.<sup>2</sup> The configuration of the stone suggests the remains of a statue, an appearance which is fully evocative of the unique art object; undoubtedly a fetish since it appears to be a part of the body, then becomes an aesthetic object. However, there is also a denial of the fetish in this work; what is shown is not what the viewer believes he sees. It is clearly a stone displayed as is. The gap between illusion and reality paves the way for ambiguity and provokes thought about what a construction of appearances is. There is, in the work, a break in the reading.

The pertinence of this approach is definitely derived from manipulation. Paul Lacroix selects the material and arranges it as he wishes it to be seen. Hence, his works powerfully suggest montages or assemblages. As Nietzsche stated: "There is no objective fact. Everything that happens combines in a group of phenomena, selected and collected by a being who interprets them.... There is no objective state of affairs. It is necessary to introduce a meaning before there can be a fact". In other words, there is no innocence in Lacroix's method. He does not choose just any stone and does not arrange it randomly, but interprets the stones that he patiently arranges.

His approach could be compared to that of Duchamp or Picasso in his use of objects, offered as facts, i.e. imbued with meaning. However, as opposed to Duchamp, Paul Lacroix uses the "ready-made" precisely for the illusion created by the shape of the debris drawn from the real world. This approach contrasts with the tinkering practised by Picasso: his manner of diverting the initial meaning of two forms in order to create a third. The skill in Lacroix's method consists of choosing the objects (showing the natural states of matter) and relating them to one another, which leads us to evaluate the object-as-it-is (the material) vs. the constructed object.

Actually, the construction carried out in Paul Lacroix's works is enriched by expressive concerns that articulate an erotic statement. *Bassin de femme* and *Phallus* are accumulations of various materials, which produce provocative shapes, those of parts of the body, through their relationships. Simply put, what we see here are genitals. However, do these montages truly represent genitals? Is that the primary objective of Lacroix's montage? Lacroix's works may be puzzling to us because they assume a desirable shape that prompts confrontation of desire and evidence. At first glance, by its very presence, *Épaupe* evokes hypothetical readings characterized by their ambiguity.

*Bassin de femme* and *Phallus* appear to be sculptures in which the montage forces us to give them a sexual connotation. And "what is taken for sex is never more than an effect of language".<sup>4</sup> The word "effect" is what is important here. These two sculptures, which are disconcerting because they are unexpected, are sexual because they are caught in the play of the montage: the means by which an image is projected. Two codes sustain each other, that of the fragment (matter and a term indicative of a process, not of a state) and that of language (erotic figure) forming a same perceptible mass. Between reality and fiction, these two sculptures feed our deepest fantasies.

The artist is aware of the effect produced when looking at one part of the body in particular. Sexual organs imply absent or dismembered bodies. Think of the remnants of a statue, but an imaginary statue; the eye is so close that the body cannot be seen. However, through an apparent paradox, it is at the level of the meaning and not of the referent<sup>5</sup> that Lacroix's work may be read (touched). In *Bassin de femme* and *Phallus*, the body is shown in the fragment of the projected image. This fragment is the body reduced to a sexual organ, a figure that maintains the confusion of a society restricted by the aesthetics of consumption in which appearance becomes more important than the fact itself. In Paul Lacroix's work, the initial pleasure clashes with a set of materials that point to a pre-established rearrangement from which an inventive practice evolves.

This practice is now reduced to one of the most profound models of subversion, that which "does not necessarily consist in saying what shocks public opinion, morality, the law, the police, but in inventing a paradoxical discourse: *invention* (and not provocation) is a revolutionary act".<sup>6</sup>



- 1 Initially known for his drawings, Paul Lacroix has perfected a technique that masters bodily textures and figures by fragmentary and erotic impressions. He recently turned to sculpture, an essential practice in his artistic approach, apparently corresponding to the considerations of creation.
  - 2 It is composed of two geometrically shaped, superimposed stone blocks, which support what resembles a remnant of sculpture.
  - 3 Quoted from Paul Rodgers, "The Laugh of Derision. On Georges Bataille", *Artlog USA, Special Issue: The Subject of Art*, Winchester, 1981, p. 43.
  - 4 Sollers, ("Trinité de Joyce", conversation with J.L. Houdebine, *Tel Quel*, No. 83) in: Guy Scarpetta, *L'Impureté*, Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1985, p. 130.
- It is interesting to recall in this regard Barthes' comment on what eroticism is. He explains that "it is never more than a word, since practices cannot be so coded unless they are known, i.e. spoken (it goes without saying that erotic language is elaborated, not only in articulated language, but also in the language of images); now, our society never utters any erotic practice, only desires, preliminaries, contexts, suggestions, ambiguous sublimations, so that, for us, eroticism cannot be defined save by a perpetually elusive word". In Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1976, p. 26.
- 5 Cf. Roland Barthes, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
  - 6 *Ibid.*, p. 126.

## Paul Lacroix

Born in Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce, Québec, in 1929. Studied at the École des beaux-arts de Québec (1946-1950); École des beaux-arts de Montréal (1951-1952). Studied with Alfred Pellan, Montréal (1951-1952); Ossip Zadkine, Paris (1952-1953); Marino Marini, Milan (1954). Lives in Québec City.

## Solo exhibitions

Galerie Zannetin, Québec City, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1969  
 Musée du Québec, Québec City, 1966  
 Galerie Irla Kert, Montréal, 1967  
 Centre culturel de Trois-Rivières, 1970  
 Université Laval, Québec City, 1973  
 Galerie Jolliet, Québec City, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1981  
 Galerie Jolliet, Montréal, 1982, 1983  
 Moulin Seigneurial de Pointe-du-Lac, Trois-Rivières, 1984  
 Galerie René Bertrand, Québec City, 1985

## Group exhibitions

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1965 (travelling exhibition)  
 Montréal Museum of Fine Arts, Montréal, 1967  
*Spring exhibition*, Queen's University, Kingston, 1972  
 Université Laval, Québec City, 1973  
 Montréal Museum of Fine Arts, Montréal, 1975  
 Musée du Québec, Québec City, 1977  
 Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris, 1979  
*Québec 84: l'art d'aujourd'hui*, Musée du Québec, Québec City, 1984  
 Galerie des arts visuels, Université Laval, Québec City, 1984  
*Ouverture de la galerie*, Galerie René Bertrand, Québec City, 1984  
 Galerie Marcoux-Bégin, St-Georges-de-Beauce, 1985  
*En marge de la saison 1984/85*, Galerie René Bertrand, Québec City, 1985  
*Voir et revoir*, Galerie René Bertrand, Québec City, 1985  
 Moulin Seigneurial de Pointe-du-Lac, Trois-Rivières, 1986  
 Galerie des arts visuels, Université Laval, Québec City, 1987  
*où est le fragment*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1987 (travelling exhibition)

## Selected bibliography

*Retour de Rome...*, Québec City, Galerie Jolliet, 1980. Exhibition catalogue.  
 Laurier Lacroix, "Paul Lacroix, Retour de Rome", *Vie des arts*, Vol. XXV, No. 99, Montréal, Summer 1980, p. 73.  
 Laurier Lacroix, "Pygmalion pourchassant Chronos", *Galerie Jolliet, Bulletin no 2*, Montréal, 1980.  
 Michel Philippon, "À propos d'espace"; Laurier Lacroix, "Être en dessin"; Michel Langlois, "Paul Lacroix", *Galerie Jolliet (Paul Lacroix)*, Bulletin No. 12, Montréal, March 1982.  
 Laurier Lacroix, "Paul Lacroix, dessinateur", *Cimaise*, No. 159, Paris, July, August, September 1982, p. 69.  
 Alain Laframboise, "Le référent Lacroix", *Galerie Jolliet, Bulletin No. 14*, Montréal, 1983.  
 Elliott Moore, "Un regard sur l'art actuel", *Québec '84: L'art d'aujourd'hui*, Musée du Québec, Québec City, 1984. Exhibition catalogue.  
 Marie Delagrave, "La virtuosité de Paul Lacroix", *Le Soleil*, Québec City, January 19, 1985.  
 Normand Biron, "Paul Lacroix: les paroles du mouvement", *Le Devoir*, Montréal, February 16, 1985.  
 Michel Philippon, "Les corps transparents", text for the exhibition *des voluptés de remplacement*, Vaults of the Maison Boswell, Québec City, and Galerie d'art de Matane, 1987.



# Monique Grenon: Sculpture Adrift

by Sylvie Janelle

Monique Grenon's *Le Sommeil* appears as ceremonial staging that lends an atmosphere in which the spectator gradually adjusts to the site offered him. He can only find the site intimate, for the space is partitioned off. In this spare environment, the spaces between the sculptural elements assume considerable dimensions. The spectator moves around and interprets the objects in this silent space, where pale light makes the whole uniform.<sup>1</sup> The punctuation (a characteristic trait of the fragment) is carried out in what could be designated as the "empty area" or the "space between" (gaps). This is where the various readings and relationships within the work are fashioned. Finally, the areas between the fragments do not limit them, but extend or prolong them. Each fragment is a dense mass, a constriction possessing "not the nature of debris, but a circular, eternal nature".<sup>2</sup> The fragment is not only a form the work takes, but a construction process; it organizes a space formulated around a single theme, that of sleep.

The scattered objects make the environment seem spare.<sup>3</sup> This effect is heightened by the absence of ornamentation and the great restraint of the configuration and (monochrome) colours. The representation of anthropomorphic figures gives the work a symbolic accent, in contrast to a fashionable complicity (connivance). By extension, a distinction is forged between a long-term memory (myth) and a short-term one (fashion). The effect of long-term memory is reinforced by the use of materials associated with the history of sculpture (clay, plaster, cement) and the casting technique, through which the idea of the trace, imprint, and fossilized or mummified form is introduced. The mould is the model that marks the presence of time; it is witness to the elaboration process. The deliberately rudimentary casting method suggests manual work (or even crafts), as opposed to a mechanical process. The materials are experimented with for the sensations they produce, leaving ample space for the accidental.

The memory effect cannot be mentioned without alluding to the notion of recollection. The silhouetted figures are, in a way, the result of a global vision that lacks detail. They are a recollection of forms glimpsed, forms securely anchored in mnemonic space and thus reiterated in the mode of repetition. The head emerging from one of the supports is the sole element of the work whose detail has been developed. It solicits careful examination and the spectator must approach it and bend down in order to view it properly. The mere suggestion of a female figure in stone, this head is somewhat like the memory of a disembodied face that is more distinct in our mind than the rest of the body.

Monique Grenon's sculptures are based on a compendium of images and sensations (previously experienced by the body, but surviving during fabrication of the pieces), stored (as if persistent) in the memory of the body and psychological memory.<sup>4</sup> The human body is considered to be a core, where information circulates and is transformed. The production of these works causes stimuli and prior states to be revived. These sculptures spring from sensations experienced by the body during the various stages and states through which the body passes when drifting off to sleep. The three attitudes of sleep are shown. The dark grey silhouette is in the stage of wakefulness, conveying resistance, contraction or agitation during sleep. The figure in full round, lying on its back, clearly illustrates the unmistakable position of a body heavy with sleep, inert, surrendering. The third figure, which is white, is set directly on the floor; this spare, metonymic figure is associated with the idea of death or complete abandonment to eternal sleep. It is merely a memory, the trace of a previously animated body. The representation sculpted in bas-relief is devoid of the permanent reality (substance) of the body. There is only an outline with no interiority, merely a semblance, a profile, but also a vacuum: mortal remains, a mummy. What is visibly known is transformed through a process by which all is reduced to essentials and lost: gradual loss of relief, flattening of textures, ultimate reduction to a simple monochrome expanse.

The sculpture tends toward painting in the simplification of forms, through the flatness of the figures as well as the use of plaster material (casting residue), which adds a whitish pigmentation to the black cement. Two of the sculptures are in subtle tones of grey. The colour nuances, the various materials used (black cement, white cement and wood) and the variety of forms produce rupture effects within the work and allow the fragmentary nature of the pieces to subsist.

The three anthropomorphic elements offer an image of rest, of relaxation, but they are arranged on supports that contradict this impression (with the exception of the figure on the floor). Through the play of empty and full spaces and because they are slightly inclined, these arch-like stands accentuate the notions of transition, of passage (from one state of sleep to another), of slipping, which are constantly reintroduced into the work. The idea of movement is felt most in the dark grey profile: the body, in somewhat of a curled up position, resists unbending. The raised head, as if on the lookout, heightens this effect. The sculpture is placed in precarious balance, vulnerable on its unstable, excessively narrow base, fragile like any object in disequilibrium.



Because the work occupies a closed space, devoid of any excess, and undoubtedly because of the sleep theme, the spectator finds himself, against his will, plunged into an oneiric atmosphere. He bends over the sleeping bodies, as if prepared to respect the ritual of silence enveloping him. The four benches (originally used for kneeling in church), arranged around the sculptures at minimally different angles, delineate a circular space. They suggest the four cardinal points and make it possible to see the work as a whole from multiple points of view. In this restrained, spherical space, the spectator is given an opportunity to establish a specific rapport with the objects. The arrangement encourages him to remain in the same spot as well as to move around. Drawn to a sitting position closer to the floor, the observer no longer has a bird's-eye view of the figures (elimination of the appropriation phenomenon). If he agrees to sit down, he then assumes the position of the artist when she created the pieces. The spectator, now viewing the work in a position of relaxation (mimicking the position and the horizontal perspective of the sculptures) and openness, becomes aware of his participation in the reception/perception of the work. He is caught between the desire to see and the memory of previous sensations that resurface as fragments of memory.

The eye seems to reach a point where it can no longer see, no longer focus on the external objects surrounding it. The receiver surrenders to contemplation and reverie; he turns toward the imaginary and back again, caught between sleep and wakefulness. The work encourages prolonged perception back and forth, interspersed with pauses. The eye and thought float and wander from one form to the other, resting (in both senses of the word) on them. The spectator can "conscious(ly) surrender to that blissful unconsciousness".<sup>5</sup>

### Monique Grenon

Born in Terrebonne, Québec, in 1956.  
Studied at the Cégep Lionel-Groulx, Ste-Thérèse (Diplôme d'études collégiales, plastic arts, 1976); Université Laval, Québec City (BA in visual arts, 1977-1980); Université de Montréal (audited courses in the visual arts, 1981).  
Lives in Terrebonne.

### Solo exhibition

*Le Sommeil* (installation), Galerie Appart', Montréal, 1985

### Group exhibitions

Centre sportif de l'Université Laval, Québec City, 1978  
Galerie des Arts visuels de l'Université Laval, Québec City, 1982  
*Artaire 2*, Pavillon Mont-Royal, Université de Montréal, 1983  
*Féministe toi-même, féministe quand même*, La Chambre Blanche, Québec City, 1984  
Espace Oboro, Montréal, 1984  
*où est le fragment*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1987 (travelling exhibition)

### Selected bibliography

Christiane Chassay, "Les états de la matière: matière au théorique?", introductory text for *Événement Artaire 2*, June 1983.  
Marie Décar, "Le sommeil selon Monique Grenon", *Le Devoir*, Montréal, May 11, 1985, p. 27.

- 1 The eye and thought wander in this interspace in which the fleeting links between the various components of the work are found. The (reading) unit is placed as if it were in the background of the objects, where the spectator is.
- 2 Pascal Quignard, "Une gêne technique à l'égard des fragments", *Furor*, April 1984, No. 11, p. 18.
- 3 A phenomenon that contrasts with the overloading or excess that is a characteristic often attributed to contemporary art. In this work, it is no longer so much a question of the filtering by extraction or elimination that was prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, but of a stripping or detachment in which the forms initially appear in all their nudity, though they need not be so portrayed.
- 4 Henri Bergson made a distinction between the two types of memories. One imagines (image-memories) and the other repeats certain mechanisms stored in the body: a discursive representation memory linked to sensations experienced.
- 5 Marguerite Yourcenar, *Memoirs of Hadrian* (trans. of *Les Mémoires d'Hadrien*), New York, Farrar, Strauss and Young, 1951, p. 17.



# Thomas Corriveau: A Leap Through a Time Lapse

by Christine Dubois

Thomas Corriveau's latest works explore the concept of the spatial and narrative unity of a work internally, by working with the fragment, and externally, by a phenomenological reformulation of the point of view and perception of the spectator.

In an earlier work, *Émile et Vincent*, exhibited in *Peinture au Québec: une nouvelle génération*, Thomas Corriveau approached this concept using a practice that *Livreur de journaux* reiterates with several variations.

He took the same conceptual line in *Prénoms*, but used a very different narrative process. In this Arcimboldo-like image of *Prénoms*, it is not surprising to find Corriveau attacking, as a true iconoclast, the human mind as the seat of intelligibility, i.e. etymologically, the perfect site for the unification, convergence and connection of sensory and intellectual fragments. This hypothesis is demolished by the structure of the image. The close juxtaposition of the fragments, with no space between them, produces discontinuity rather than coherence, contrary to the usual ways in which we read the uninterrupted as continuous. This discontinuity is not the result of a break or a rupture, but of elastic collisions among the autarchic, insular motifs. Because of the insular autonomy of the fragments, the eye jumps from one to the other seeking a logical connection, and the repetition of the same narrative content, the faces, renews the unsated plunder.

One would hope that satiety would come with distance, that the overall face would finally emerge from the multiple intertwined faces. This is not possible, for the combination of the Arcimboldo-like image and the anamorphosis causes an abrupt break in any logical, inductive continuity, until it results in the incompatibility of the two systems, which are irreconcilable, but with no hierarchy, one obliterating the other. Grasping the details of the Arcimboldo-like image by approaching it from the front at eye level leads to the loss of any possibility of resolution of the overall anamorphic image, since this would require the spectator to move horizontally or vertically, as the case may be. Given this continuous formation and deformation of the image, the spectator must rock back and forth or leap, a physical transposition of the perceptual leap produced by the image.

By reworking this perceptual non-cohesiveness, this phenomenological straying in isolation, Thomas Corriveau "literalizes" in *Livreur de journaux* the schism at work in *Prénoms*, while reiterating the special topography of *Émile et Vincent*: two canvases facing one another, two poles, an irreparably divided narration. These works amplify the irregular, successive nature of visual deciphering, and, hence, the inscription in time of the reading of an image through the inscription of the spectator's body in space.

In response to the fragmented, non-unifiable reading of *Prénoms* is the split reading between two distinct sites, which are, however, similar and comparable, of *Livreur de journaux*. Nevertheless, both works make use of the logical impulse which, through variation of the parameters and infinite repetition of the combinations, attempts to find a way out of this vicious circle.

According to the distinction made by René Payant,<sup>1</sup> it may be said that this two-poled work nimbly blends "the effects of the history (all the events recounted, fictional, in this case), the story (the syntactic and semantic aspects of the discourse that recounts the events) and narration (the very fact of recounting, the pragmatic aspect of the story)". Because the event is prosaic (the suburbanite picking up her newspaper from the doorstep in the morning) and the history relatively uninteresting, *Livreur de journaux* encourages a search for interest at another level. As for the story, since it is divided into two similar sequences, it rests on a time lapse, but also on a gap: this is another way of giving new impetus to the reading up to the narration. This gap and time lapse (through the similarity of the two canvases) alone produce a place between the two sequences over an extra-pictorial bridge, analogous to the crotch between the legs. The transition from one image to the other (in the narrative sequence) is thereby confused with the boy's stride (in the history's sequence), thanks to the gap in the story. This narrative transition is reinforced by the iconographic coherence between the two canvases: spatial coherence in the lighting (one façade in full daylight, the other in shadow), coherence in the temporality of the action of the various figures (the woman picking up her newspaper after the newspaper boy has delivered it, while the man is still waiting for his).

The sneakers, because of their extraordinary size and importance in the painting as well as the difference in scale between them and the spectator, play a major role in the genesis of this narrative bridge. Their hugeness is logically developed and is the result of a subjective projection through the logical inadequacy between what is represented and what is generally experienced.<sup>2</sup> The colossal effect and the narration in fact interact through reason in *Livreur de journaux*. The narration attempts to compensate for the leap in logic affecting the story. Whereas in *Émile et Vincent*, this logical bridge was affected by a double level of abstraction (in the story, then in the history, through the very nature of the message the two figures exchange), in *Livreur de journaux*, it assumes a certain consistency, though imaginary, and reinforces the phenomenological statement of the work.

Hence, *Livreur de journaux* restates the question of the unsolvable inadequacies of perception interacting with reason. However, whereas Thomas Corriveau fascinated and delighted the spectator with this logical short-circuit in *Prénoms*, he highlights the contribution of the imaginary in the resolution of the incompatibilities in the images in *Livreur de journaux* once a solution presents itself.

Moreover, the problematic point of view of Thomas Corriveau's latest works means that his painting tends asymptotically toward sculpture: while preserving its classical specificity of medium (two-dimensionality and oil pigment), it integrates the problematic point of view as sculpture has specifically developed it, through ambivalence of an iconographic nature, i.e. the schism of the story within a coherent narrative.



- 1 René Payant, "Le pictural de la figure", *Spirale*, Montréal, June 1984.
- 2 Jacques Derrida, *La vérité en peinture*, Paris, Flammarion, "Champs", 1978.

### Thomas Corriveau

Born in Québec City in 1957.  
 Studied at Université Laval, Québec City (visual arts, 1977-1978);  
 Concordia University, Montréal (BFA, 1979-1981); MFA, 1983-1986).  
 Lives in Montréal.

### Solo exhibitions

Galerie Yajima, Montréal, 1984 (with Suzelle Levasseur)  
 Galerie Optica, Montréal, 1986

### Group exhibitions

Exhibition by MFA candidates at Concordia University, Galerie Weissman, Montréal, 1981  
*Création-Québec 81, Troisième biennale de la Peinture du Québec*, Saidye Bronfman Centre, Montréal, 1981  
*Dix artistes de l'Atelier Anima, Artaire*, Pavillon Mont-Royal, Université de Montréal, 1983  
 Exhibition by MFA candidates at Concordia University, Galerie Bourget, Montréal, 1984  
*Montréal tout-terrain*, Clinique Laurier, Montréal, 1984  
*Young Montréal Painters*, University of New Brunswick, St. John, N.B., 1984  
*Peinture au Québec: une nouvelle génération*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1985  
*Baie-Saint-Paul 85, Symposium de la jeune peinture*, Baie-Saint-Paul, 1985  
*Reflets 85*, Galerie Lacerte-Guimond, Québec City, 1985  
 Studio Blanc, Montréal, 1986  
*où est le fragment*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1987 (travelling exhibition)

### Selected Bibliography

René Payant, "Le pictural de la figure", *Spirale*, Montréal, June 1984, p. 16.  
*Montréal tout-terrain*, Montréal, 1984. Exhibition catalogue. Jean Tourangeau, "Thomas Corriveau et Suzelle Levasseur, Galerie Yajima, *Vanguard*, Vol. 13, No. 7, Vancouver, September 1984, p. 31.  
*Peinture au Québec: une nouvelle génération*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montréal, 1985. Exhibition catalogue. Lise Bissonnette, "Baie-Saint-Paul: Une fête de la peinture fraîche", *Le Devoir*, August 17, 1985.  
 René Payant, "Leçons d'anamorphose", *Spirale*, Montréal, November 1986, p. 16.  
 Jocelyne Lupien, "Thomas Corriveau", *Parachute*, No. 45, Montréal, December-January-February 1987, p. 27.



# Céline Surprenant: Detached Memories

By Anne-Marie Régol

Céline Surprenant's work, *Portrait de Groupe*, broaches the container-content concept in a simplified manner, though with a richness of statement. This ostensible simplicity originates in the borrowing of the box motif, which represents the most rudimentary, almost literal, expression of the concept.

A rhizomatic multiplicity of readings is rapidly built out of this initial elementary aspect. In fact, a tangle of multi-directional courses appears, whose readings emerge simultaneously. There are no superimposed, linear, crystal clear layers of analysis here. On the contrary, the various avenues lead in all directions, criss-cross, suggest and overlap one another.

The interaction between the spectator and the box is an important dimension of this work. The very structure of this painting-object produces a number of areas of tension that intervene in the reading. A first area of tension emerges between the two-dimensional plan of the representation, the cutout, and the three-dimensional plan of the work, the box. The box is associated with figurative elements whose narrative role (in contrast to the structural or compositional role) is apparently to convey it.

The tension created naturally by the simultaneous presence of the two dimensions in the same work (flatness/volume) produces an effect that underlines the impression of emergence from the box. The tension is also reinforced by the cutout, which serves as a sort of display case for the box, thereby revealing the decisive role of the box as a parametric instigator of the reading of the work.

The box contains the conceptual tools of the work, and the avenues by which the work will be read will be unveiled through a careful analysis of the box's function within the work.

The first avenues, opened up by the figurative representation, lead automatically in the direction of the iconographic. However, obstacles immediately appear, and the reading is made more complex by the omnipresence of the box. Its appearance, punctuating the work, attracts the spectator's attention, pulling him back and forth. This multi-functional box, which has become a place of transition, draws the spectator into a reading that oscillates between the work perceived as an object and the work approached as a site of narrative representation.

The box has an ambivalent function in the context of the story. On the one hand, it confuses the identity of the figures: three headless individuals transporting an inert body, the identification of which is prevented by the box. Furthermore, the figures painted on the surface of the box are arranged in such a way that they hamper any possible recognition. On the other hand, the box is inserted into the story as a biographical flashback of the figure (each figurative element in/on the box is part of the history of the individual). Hence, the box acts as a stand-in for both the hero and the narrator.

A meaning rendered more complex by the analogy between the box and the prone body is added to the reading of the box as a complementary element of the story, i.e. the figure. It is possible to reverse the relationships and to perceive the body's function as secondary to that of the box.

The morphological details in the cutout would then no longer point to the absence of a body, but would offer the box itself as a body. The logic of the story is cancelled out, leaving room for a new interpretation of the work. The discourse branches off, pausing at the semantics of the box motif. The work is, in a manner of speaking, an example of a broader definition of the "box" concept: the box is literally transported, like an inert body.

By definition, a box is an easily transportable, inflexible container. In short, it is the actual container of a potential content. In the framework of a narrative representation, if the box is intended to be a container of the concealed object, the object to be revealed, here it becomes the place that accommodates the enigma of the story.

The following deduction can be made from the equivalence referred to above: the body-box relationship turns in both directions; the body may be considered a box, hence, the container of a possible content.

At first glance, the figurative element seems to illustrate a very specific, clear and precise narrative. On the one hand, a number of details, such as the costumes, suggest the scene is based on some historical event. On the other, despite the ambiguity of the scene containing these details, the effect produced implies a possible relationship between them. Hence, this initial iconographic analysis is related to the biography of the individual. Therefore, the body is presented as a container of its history.

The idea of the body engulfed appears in the formal aspect of the work, in which an opening has been cut out: a miniature version of the image is provided within the image itself. This inserted image unveils the real content of the body-box. The enigma emerges. The sole information that can truly be unveiled in this story is that the inert, transported body can provide no information about itself, except that it is inert and transported.

Writing, being linear and chronological, can never explain a phenomenon consisting of elements with interchangeable meanings, which fuel a network of rhizoid discursive dynamics. It is important to remember that the work seeks to bring out the construction aspect that may be implied by a narrative, a story or even History.

The spectator's interaction is doubly significant. Initially, he is invited to experiment with the box, to recognize how it is constructed, put together. Then, the work summons up memories. The main factors that permeate the work with this memory effect are the simultaneous perception of the figurative ele-



ments and the ambiguousness of the body engulfed (a reminder of the body in the body). Furthermore, the fact that there is no painted face, that nothing can be identified in this "group portrait", invites the spectator to project his own mnemonic images onto the work.

These effects serve to highlight the arbitrary, artificial, do-it-yourself nature of the works, narratives, stories ... and History.

There is no narrative, only the impression of a narrative. This is not an historical event, but an approximation of History. The effect is to subject the spectator to tension. He is forced to compare the notions of History with his own impressions. Lastly, the work proposes a reading of History as a construction: it offers itself as a construction of History.

The work is the fragment of a memory in images, whose mechanism is provided us. It is the fragment of a poorly understood story, of which we have retained a vague memory.

The work sketches a portrait of the story, the memory of which can only provide the construction, like a box containing History ... a boxed history.

Whereas in *Portrait de Groupe* the spectator must play a decisive role in interpreting the meaning, *les promenades matinales* makes the spectator the main subject. Produced using a theatrical technique, this work shows the cut of a costume composed of two elements: the lower part of a skirt, the upper surface containing two openings suggesting where the legs of the person wearing the skirt would go, and shoes to complete the pose, placed so as to suggest the attitude of the absent body.

The container-content concept introduced in *Portrait de Groupe* is reworked in *les promenades matinales*. Slightly smaller than life-size, this work invites the spectator to fill in the obvious gaps using his imagination.

The special nature of *les promenades matinales* resides in the manner in which it forces the spectator to play a bit part in the work. In *Portrait de Groupe*, the figuration is a catalyst of the memory mechanism, whereas, in *les promenades matinales*, the spectator, who is called upon to become physically involved in the work, himself becomes part of the "figuration" and, thereby, part of the content of the work.

The result is to remove the various reading networks from the work and to reduce the spectator's contact with the work to a direct experience. The spectator will then be projected into the past and made to wander in it, plugging him directly into the multiple networks of his own knowledge of History.

### Céline Surprenant

Born in Ville-Marie, Québec, in 1961

Studied at Cégep St-Laurent (Diplôme d'études collégiales, visual arts, 1980); Concordia University, Montréal (BFA, 1980-1984); The Banff Centre, School of Fine Arts, Banff, Alberta (Art studio, Summer 1985).

### Group exhibitions

Exhibition by students of the Faculty of Fine Arts of Concordia University, Galerie Weissman, Montréal, 1982  
*Sélection 82*, Place des Arts, Montréal, 1982  
*Montréal-Toronto Student Exchange*, Ontario College of Art, Toronto, 1983  
*Dix Artisans de l'Atelier Anima, Artaire*, Pavillon Mont-Royal, Université de Montréal, Montréal, 1983  
*Oeuvres récentes*, Studio 701, Édifice Cooper, Montréal, 1984  
*Young Montreal Painters*, University of New Brunswick, St. John, N.B., 1984  
*Imagined Places*, Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta, 1985  
Galerie Article, Montréal, 1985 (with Paul Smith)  
*Éclats Multiples*, Galerie Powerhouse, Montréal, 1986  
*25 Young Artists*, OR Gallery, Vancouver, 1986  
*Le Musée Imaginaire de...*, Saidye Bronfman Centre, Montréal, 1986  
Galerie Treize, Montréal, 1986  
*À propos de...*, Art diffusion international, Montréal, 1986  
*où est le fragment*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1987 (travelling exhibition)

### Selected bibliography

Françoise Le Gris-Bergmann, "Trois propositions de la jeune peinture", *Cahiers*, Vol. 6, No. 22, Summer 1984, pp. 28-31.  
Françoise Le Gris-Bergmann, "Céline Surprenant, Monique Régimbald-Zeiber, Anne-Marie Bonin", *Vanguard*, Vol. 13, No. 8, October 1984, pp. 44-45.  
*Imagined Places*, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, 1985  
*25 Young Artists*, The OR Gallery Society, Vancouver, 1986.



## LIST OF WORKS

- 1- **CHRISTIANE AINSLEY**  
*à quoi penses-tu*, 1986  
acrylic on canvas and masonite  
201 x 275 cm
- 2- **CHRISTIANE AINSLEY**  
*cette nuit-là il faisait très noir. oui très noir*, 1986  
acrylic on canvas and plywood  
260 x 245 cm
- 3- **THOMAS CORRIVEAU**  
*Livreur de journaux*, 1986  
oil on canvas  
180 x 240 x 370 cm each
- 4- **MARY-ANN CUFF**  
*Sans titre*, 1986  
charcoal, acrylic and cardboard  
217 x 282.5 x 77.5 cm
- 5- **MARY-ANN CUFF**  
*Sans titre*, 1986-1987  
charcoal, acrylic and cardboard  
160 x 236.2 x 45 cm  
and 224 x 225 x 90 cm
- 6- **MARC GARNEAU**  
*Élégie onirique*, 1986  
mixed media on canvas  
198 x 227.5 cm
- 7- **MARC GARNEAU**  
*Élégie diurne*, 1986  
mixed media on canvas  
196.5 x 227.5 cm
- 8- **MONIQUE GRENON**  
*LE SOMMEIL*  
black cement, white cement, wood  
300 x 300 cm
- 9- **HARLAN JOHNSON**  
*Racines*, 1986  
mixed media on metal, wood and canvas  
188 x 102 cm
- 10- **HARLAN JOHNSON**  
*Augure*, 1986  
mixed media on canvas and wood  
90 x 44 cm
- 11- **HARLAN JOHNSON**  
*L'Éveillé*, 1986  
mixed media  
225 x 110 cm
- 12- **PAUL LACROIX**  
*Phallus*, 1986  
stone and wood  
27 x 40.5 x 33 cm
- 13- **PAUL LACROIX**  
*Épaule*, 1986  
stones  
29.5 x 26 x 18 cm  
Private collection, Québec
- 14- **PAUL LACROIX**  
*Bassin de femme (Sylvette)*, 1986  
stones and fossil  
30 x 54 x 26.5 cm  
Private collection, Québec
- 15- **DENIS PELLERIN**  
*Échographies A01*, 1986  
gouache, ink and charcoal on paper  
80 x 120 cm
- 16- **DENIS PELLERIN**  
*Échographies A02*, 1986  
gouache, ink and charcoal on paper  
80 x 120 cm
- 17- **DENIS PELLERIN**  
*Échographies A06-1,2,3*, 1986  
gouache, ink and charcoal on paper  
80 x 120 cm each
- 18- **MIREILLE PERRON**  
*L'aventure côté cour no. 1*,  
from the series *Questions politiques*, 1986  
mixed media  
240 x 400 x 140 cm
- 19- **MIREILLE PERRON**  
*L'histoire côté jardin*  
from the series *Questions politiques*, 1986  
mixed media  
180 x 400 x 240 cm
- 20- **CÉLINE SURPRENANT**  
*Portrait de groupe*, 1986  
acrylic on canvas and wood  
154 x 241 cm
- 21- **CÉLINE SURPRENANT**  
*les promenades matinales*, 1986  
oil, jute, paste, wood  
55 x 66 x 45 cm

\* Unless otherwise specified, all the works exhibited belong to the artists.



