

L'ART CONCEPTUEL,  
UNE PERSPECTIVE

## An Interview with Claude Gintz and Juliette Laffon

PIERRE LANDRY

**T**HE EXHIBITION *L'art conceptuel, une perspective*, designed, produced and circulated by the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, will be presented at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal from August 5 to October 21, 1990, after being seen in Paris (November 1989 – February 1990), Madrid (Caja de Pensiones, March-April 1990) and Hamburg (Deichtorhallen-Austellungen, May-July 1990). In its Montréal version, the exhibition will present 150 works by more than 30 "conceptual" artists whose work may be related to the various issues raised by this movement during the sixties and early seventies. ■ The following interview touches on the hanging, or installation, of the exhibition (its relation to the concept), the form taken by the catalogue and the criteria determining the selection of artists. It was conducted last April 25 with Claude Gintz, curator of the exhibition, and Juliette Laffon, curator at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

I would first like to talk about the type of hanging which you chose and which, while not strictly chronological, nevertheless follows a certain chronology in the order of presenting the works. To what extent does this aspect of the hanging reflect the exhibition concept?

CLAUDE GINTZ. I think that, when we do a retrospective exhibition on an artistic movement, we cannot overlook its extension over the period under consideration, in this case a decade or so running from the early sixties to the early seventies. We therefore first tried to show a number of works that could be described as "pre-conceptual" (or "protoconceptual"), in which some of the premises concerning conceptual art were already formulated. I am thinking of some pieces by Robert Morris from the early sixties, for example, of Piero Manzoni, of some of Stanley Brouwn's works, and so on. We then see some thematic orientations or trends emerge, as there is a transition from the visual to the linguistic – from a system of representation using visual signs to a system of linguistic signs – along with that other characteristic of conceptual art, namely the notions of time and space, of temporalization of space and spatialization of time. Next, within conceptual art itself, among its leading figures, we can detect certain contrasts, certain dialectic connections between artists we could identify as heirs to the New York School – the idea of a certain form of purity of art, of its autonomy, being what I call the legacy of the New York School – and those who introduced a thematic orientation that is no longer the purity of art but, on the contrary, a connection between art as an autonomous cultural activity and the world in which this art functions and fits.

Are you thinking of Buren and Haacke, for example?

C.G. I am thinking of Dan Graham, Buren, Broodthaers, Haacke and, in a way, Lawrence Weiner as well. But not just them. We sometimes find an echo of this in the work of Joseph Kosuth when he uses the media as a support, or in that of Robert Barry in certain, specific pieces.

JULIETTE LAFFON. I would like to add that an exhibition must always take a given space into account. At the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris we had the use of a vast, undivided space – a kind of huge hall – as well as two, more independent, large square rooms. This circuit imposed its own limitations. However, it was by sticking as close as possible to the exhibition concept that we made our choices.

Beyond the chronology we just men-

tioned, and in spite of the fact that this art is characterized by a certain loss of visuality, did the strictly visual impact of the works (since they are, after all, "exhibited" works) come into consideration at the time of hanging? To what extent did you have to take this aspect into account?

J.L. The configuration of the spaces, which ruled out a succession of galleries each devoted to one particular artist, gave rise to interesting proximities, to pleasing parallels and to a circuit that is not without poetry.

C.G. Certainly, this is also one of the tensions within conceptual art. Although many works by conceptual artists renounce visuality, we see, when we go through an exhibition like this one, that many works are highly visual. But there are also some that are less so.

J.L. It was also a matter of choosing a very discreet hanging device which, as much as possible, would adhere to the presentation of the period: ordi-

when the catalogue sometimes tended to induce a certain "disorder," a certain complexity of reading, to "be a work"...

C.G. Let us simply say that we made no pretence of trying to reconstruct the conceptual-art catalogues produced at the time. They took place, they exist and are now part of history. The role of a retrospective exhibition is to begin to historicize, whether we like it or not. To start, and carry out, the process. There is consequently a kind of alchemy or transformation that occurs and that it would be pointless to try to resist.

J.L. It is true that it seemed very important to us that the catalogue should also show this process of historicizing conceptual art. We consequently wanted to emphasize information rather than image, although we did not claim to provide a complete picture. We also tried to see that a wide audience would find the exhibition accessible, through the notes writ-

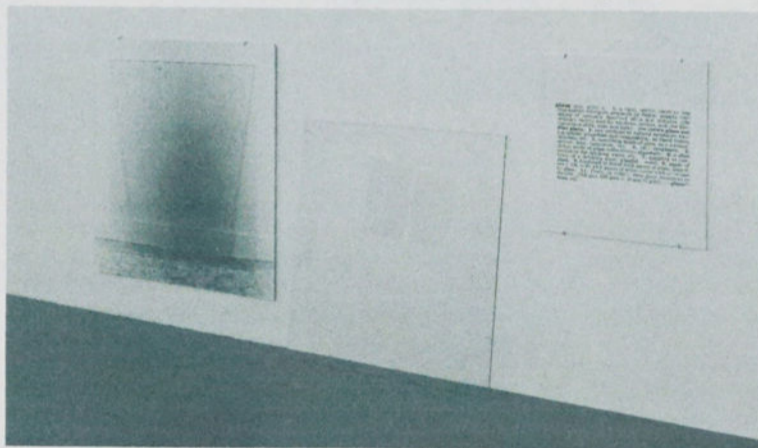
Muhka in Anvers (1989), among others. There was also the exhibition *Art Conceptuel I* organized by CAPC in Bordeaux in 1988, but the intention there was different from ours.

C.G. ... It presented a limited number of pieces by a certain number of conceptual artists.

J.L. ... and it did not stress the emergence of conceptual art, but focused on a few pieces by artists usually considered conceptual. As far as I know, there have been no other attempts in Europe or the U.S.

Let us turn now, in closing, to the selection you made of artists. Could you tell us what main criteria lay behind this selection?

C.G. There are some people whose presence was essential, almost by definition – artists who right away were considered conceptual artists. These might include the Americans Lawrence Weiner, Joseph Kosuth, Douglas Huebler and Robert Barry, as well as the German artist Hanne Darboven (who was then living in New York), the Japanese artist On Kawara, and Sol LeWitt, too. On top of this starting list, we had to add those artists directly or indirectly associated with conceptual art, that is, with such issues as the loss of visuality, and the transformation of the visual sign into the linguistic sign. The presence of artists like Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren and Hans Haacke therefore seemed vital to us, as was that of certain Italian representatives like Alighiero e Boetti and Giovanni Anselmo. An artist like Dan Graham was certainly very important for conceptual art, of which he was also one of the early protagonists. The same goes for Mel Bochner, whose exhibition at the School of Visual Arts, in 1966, represents a kind of start of reproducibility of the artistic project using mechanical means. If we want to talk about preconceptual artists, we have already mentioned Piero Manzoni, Robert Morris and Stanley Brouwn. Some people might be surprised at the "atypical" presence of such names as Claes Oldenburg or Dan Flavin, the former being more commonly associated with Pop art, of course, and the latter, with minimal art. However, some of their works can, in fact, suggest interesting correspondences, "expressive correlations..." Finally, we should not overlook the participation by Michael Asher. He refuses to have his work from that time "re-presented" and hence historicized. In his logical, consistent way, he wanted the subject of his involvement to be the very existence of this retrospective exhibition.



Joseph Kosuth. *Glass One and Three*, 1965. Glass and photographs. Collection: MJS, Paris. Photo: Marc Dubrocca.

nary frames, and plain display cases bringing back models in common use in the seventies, were chosen. A sheet of paper simply tacked to the wall, without a frame, would probably have been the most accurate presentation of some of Robert Barry's works, but impossible here for security reasons.

So you tried to strike a happy medium between the constraints imposed by the preservation of the works and the way they were originally shown...

J.L. ... and to avoid a "design side" which would have been a betrayal. The installation was sometimes a compromise, in fact.

For the catalogue, you chose a form that seems fairly classic to me, in that it contains essays, plus the actual catalogue, with the works presented in alphabetical order of artists' names, and with notes on each work and ample photographic documentation. This form is very different from that adopted by some catalogues in the conceptual period (not all, to be sure),

ten for each work, and would grasp the process involved in producing the works.

C.G. As historical as the catalogue is, it seemed equally important to us, for the exhibition itself, to respect the physical presentation of this form of art, as it might have been shown during that time. We therefore tried, as much as possible, not to change it into something that would be seen differently by 1990 eyes.

Significant research went into the catalogue, particularly for the notes in it. What information did this research give you about the kind of distribution conceptual art has had since it first appeared?

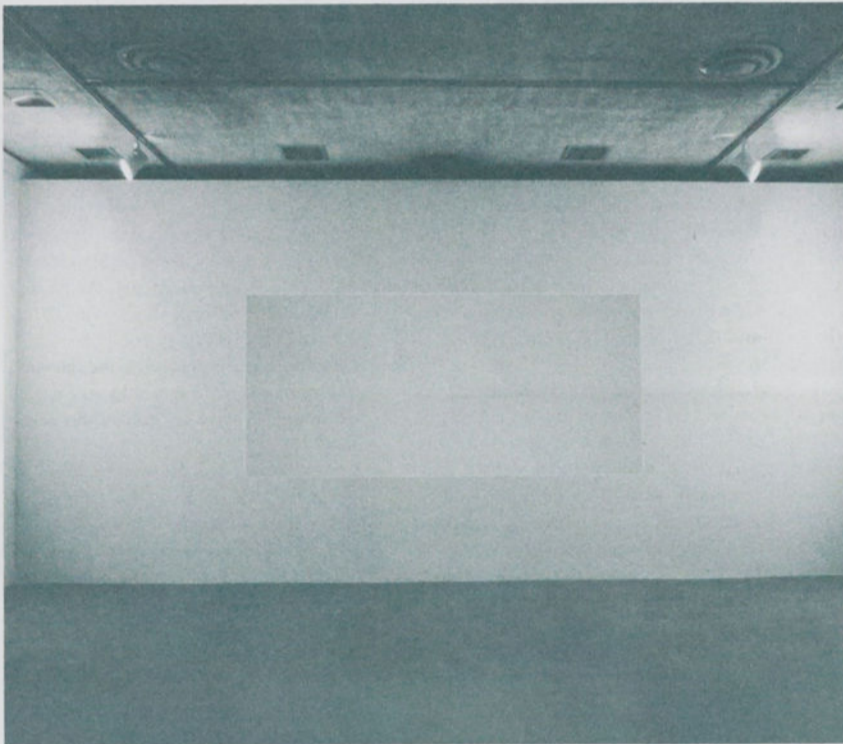
J.L. In the past few years, there have been major retrospective exhibitions devoted to some of the artists present in this exhibition. For example, On Kawara at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm (1980), Lawrence Weiner at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1989) and Joseph Kosuth at the

Exhibitions

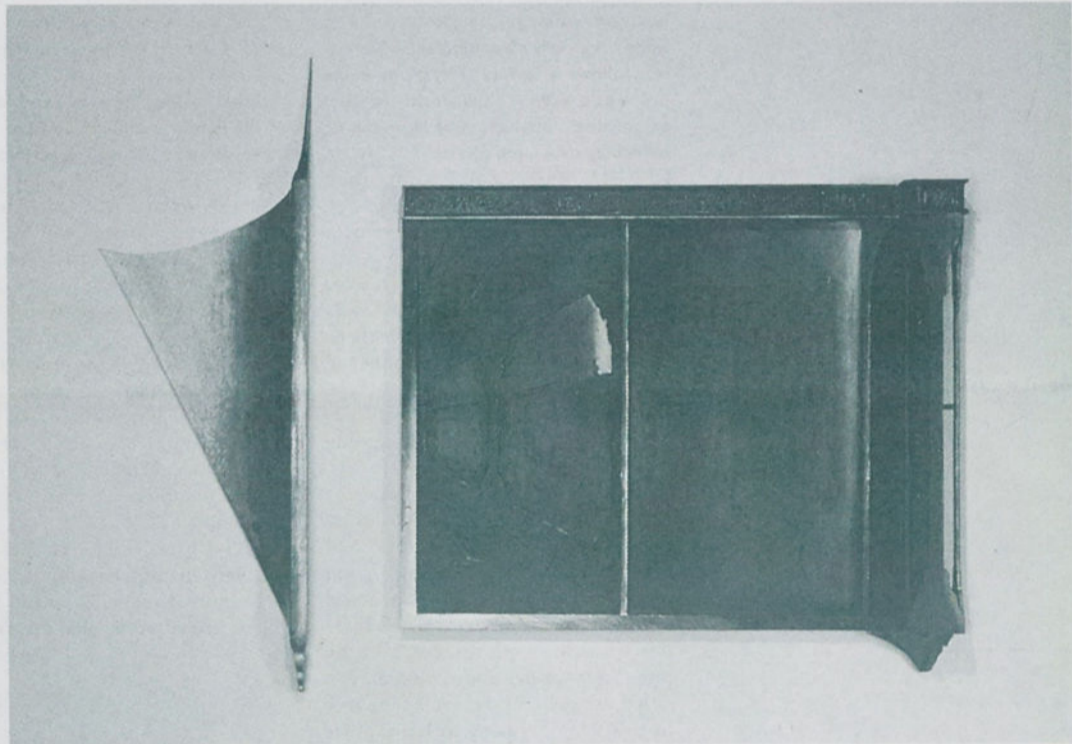
# INVITATION TO AN EXHIBITION

*L'art d'installation: mise en scène de la collection permanente*

S A N D R A G R A N T M A R C H A N D



James Turrell *Atlan*, 1986. Ultraviolet and tungsten light.  
4.25 x 8.88 x 3.70 m.  
Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photo: Richard Wiser.



Jean Lantier *Nocturnes (trois pièces en forme de jardin)*, 1984-1985 (detail).  
Wood, masonite, acrylic and plaster. 2.4 x 6 x 8.5 m.  
Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photo: Guy Couture.

**ONE FEATURE** of an exhibition of installations is that it brings an inevitable questioning into the project. The installation work cannot be produced anew and put back on exhibition without examination. In the specific context of the Musée, the installation work is particular, in that it is intrinsically bound to its presentation space. It commands a place with which it establishes a real connection, its elements acting in interrelation in the space. This basic characteristic of installation art has prompted us to provide distinct spaces for each of the pieces in the exhibition, with the obvious exception of the two works presented outside the galleries.

This orchestration of the spaces has certainly determined the journey taken by the viewer from one installation to the next, a kind of ritual of transition from one place to another, but it has, above all, had a direct impact on the way this selection of eight installations has been put together, in so many solo exhibitions. By inviting the artists to mount their own works, the Musée asked them to re-create the work within a given space, to adapt to specific museum conditions, with the constraints these imply and the possibilities they presuppose. Resolving the tension between the work and the individual architectural space, specially constructed to receive the

spot with its own space, as the elements play off one another, touching and distancing themselves in the space. While, in recent years, Jarnuszkiewicz's sculptures have "come off the wall," they occupy space, in monumental fashion here, without the specific nature of the space being a determining factor in the development of the piece. The preliminary drawing and model of the work already contain the meaning that prevails in its execution. The surrounding space acts as a receptacle for the work, revealing itself, or not, as a condition of perceiving the work. The "sculpture" is installed within it, as if in counterpoint.

**BOTH** "powerful and delicate," light is the material of James Turrell's *Atlan* (1986), shown here for the first time in Canada. His installation entails creating conditions that allow an investigation of the way we perceive things. This work on perception requires a minimum of outside intervention: no object, no symbolism, pure light. The human attraction to light, which, for Turrell, is associated with

proposed by various groupings. In fact, as the viewers move through this installation, "the paradoxes of space and time," in the words of the artist, then unfold. His allusions to history are presented through a "play of diversions by way of the materials," which are raw or manufactured, precariously balanced or bound by an austere gravity. "The suggestions of multiple spaces according to different points of view" impart the work with a complex structure which we apprehend, slowly, in our passage through the echoing images and materials.

**THE INHERENT QUALITY** of the work entitled *Nocturnes (trois pièces en forme de jardin)* (1984-1985) by Jean Lantier is its twofold play: "the play within each element," predominantly a painting space, but also a sculptural space, and "the play between the elements" of the work. "The space of the work is one of interrelation," a kind of "forced interrelation," "predetermined," in this transitional piece with a formal unity from which the artist has since diverged in his work. The

**JOEY MORGAN** is showing *Souvenir, A Recollection in Several Forms* (1985) for the first time in Montréal, in an entire gallery of the Musée. Here, the components take over the space in a grand way, while preserving the work's absolutely intimist character. The work was originally presented in 1985, in Vancouver, on the 31st floor of a building, in a bare, concrete space without history. Absent from this inaugural installation was the photograph representing an upper-class bedroom from the turn of the century (the photograph was used to advertise the event, however). The second presentation of the work took place the following year, in 1986, in Ottawa, as part of the exhibition *Songs of Experience* at the National Gallery of Canada. This time, the photograph became a mural and was introduced in the first part, *VideoPerfume*. A new photograph, also a mural, representing a partial view of the installation in Vancouver, was added to the second part, *Murmurings*, as a "reminder and mirror" of the initial installation. From one presentation to the next, the work

Geleynse experiences in front of older pieces such as this, produced some years ago, allows him "to criticize, to analyse, to try to figure out why he did them."

**DAVID MOORE** says that *Lassithi* (1983) is "curiously, the only kinetic work" he has done and that "it does not really relate to the evolution" of his work. At first glance, a point of interest arises: the recurring question of proportions (the relationship of the body to the miniature windmills) which is still present in his current work. Nevertheless, this exhibition has provided Moore with "the opportunity to redo the piece," "to re-create it" in calling it into question in a significant way. To rediscover the sensation of the invisible form represented by the wind, the piece had to be adapted to the given context of the exhibition space. "Very high in the mountains of Crete, the body of the wind crossed the plateaus, hitting the thousands of windmills" — here, the movement of air over the imaginary windmills, the technical reality of the fans, the sturdiness and stability of the buckets around the edge, and especially, the light and shadow that are delineated. Moore has reworked his elements, reorganized them "so that there is no difference between the spectator's space and the space of the work," and re-created "the effect of the special light cast by the moon." The spectator discovers, in moving about within the image, a new work, "completely within the spirit of the silence of the night" and, all things considered, "improved over its previous presentation, in 1983" (in *Détour, voire ailleurs*).

**JOCELYNE ALLOUCHERIE'S** *Mer de Chine* (1983) is presented here for a second time at the Musée, the first being in 1985, when it was shown as part of an exhibition of recent acquisitions in the collection. According to the artist, this work is resurfacing after a five-year absence from the Musée of her more recent works. Ideally, she conceived of the installation of this piece as a kind of reprise of its previous installation. However, since the exhibition space is totally different, she had to resolve the arrangement of the elements of architecture, drawing, painting, photography and sculpture in terms of a more closed, narrower, site. The necessary circularity between these elements, and the distance between them, are important considerations in positioning the work in the given space. The artist has chosen to present three elements of the four that make up the overall grouping. The way it sets forth the signs at work in it, and the profusion of intertwining references that may be read in it, give the piece a metaphorical dimension and its own dreamlike space.

**THIS VISIT** behind the scenes provided by these snatches of conversations with the artists who installed their works, for the time of an exhibition, may also serve as an invitation to the exhibition, reveal "eight points at which a reading of the exhibition can begin," in the words of curator Michel Huard.

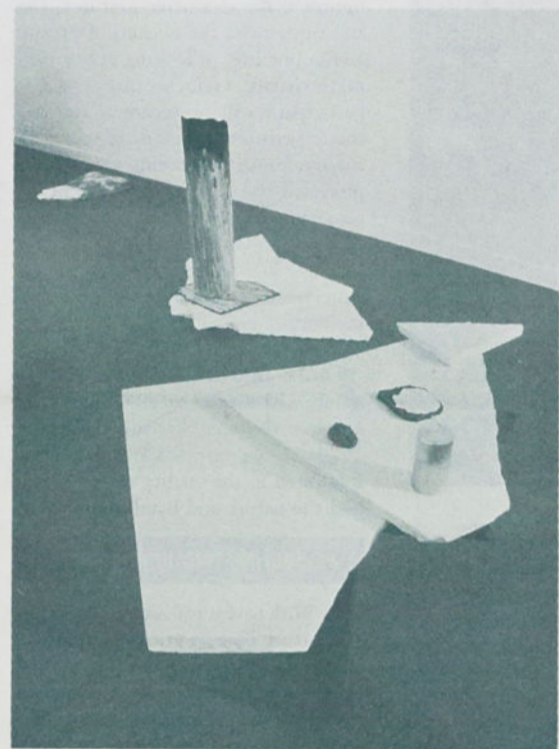
*Sandra Grant Marchand has been a curator at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal since 1978. She has organized a number of exhibitions, including Tendances actuelles au Québec and British Now: sculptures et autres dessins.*

THE ARTISTS TAKING PART  
IN THE EXHIBITION CONSIDERED  
THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THEIR  
PIECES WOULD BE SEEN.

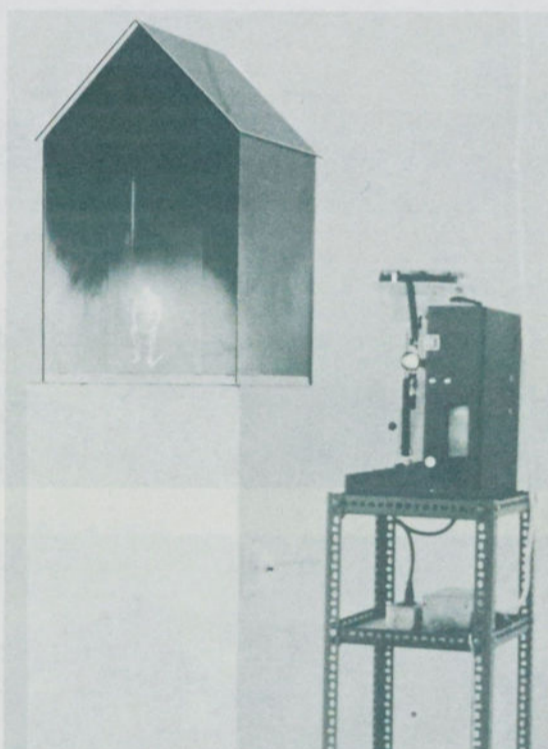
components of the work, occupied each of the artists, determining their reflexive attitudes in many respects. Certain questions on the piece itself then emerged, on the importance it holds in the evolution of the artist's work, and finally, on the role of the museum as an institution.

Differently, but always keenly, the artists taking part in the exhibition considered the context in which their pieces would be seen. A special relationship between the work and its physical surroundings came into play as the components of the installation took meaning from one another and as they transformed the space. For some artists, this process entailed fundamental decisions that influenced the scope and nature of the work itself; for others, it meant a more direct suiting of the work to different conditions from those of its creation or first showing. The artists expressed these concerns involved in the placing of their pieces, and we will journey with them through the presentation spaces, noting some of their thoughts gleaned from various conversations.

**TO BEGIN WITH**, the first space we enter in the exhibition, that occupied by the Jacek Jarnuszkiewicz work, is an open space, perceived gradually (as we climb the stairs), and bathed in natural light: a very particular context, in an exhibition of installations, for *Passe-temps* (1989), a work which the artist prefers to call "sculpture" and which rightly fills the



Claude Mongrain. *La voie lactée/le déjeuner d'Einstein*, 1986 (detail). Various materials. 2 x 7 x 17 m. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photo: Richard-Max Tremblay. Wyn Geleynse. *Home*, 1986. Tinted glass, base, 16-mm projector, stand and timer. 183 x 41 x 178 cm. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photo: W.C. Geleynse.



non-verbal thought, becomes his field of action. The experiencing of light is related to the experiencing of time and space. The architectural elements (walls, floor, ceiling) which are gradually revealed in the darkened space of the room act essentially as signals that give a psychological grasp of the experience of perception. At the Musée, the large size of the room (40' x 50'), along with the particular lighting device, give the piece "the gleam in front of the surface that follows you when you walk across the work." Turrell invites us to share a vision which only this kind of awareness of our perception permits.

**IN CLAUDE MONGRAIN'S CASE**, we immediately enter the space of the work, since the components of *La voie lactée/le déjeuner d'Einstein* (1986) fill up the expanse of the floor, from the threshold right up to the perimeter of the walls. At the same time, and by definition, the space of the work eludes us, contradicting a perception that would encompass the work in a single look. The underlying content is revealed, instead, by different themes

idea of a journey through the piece, which is suggested in the title, is also fulfilled in two separate stages: the initial perception of the work as a painting in three dimensions (hence the importance of an open space that allows frontal access) and the different points of view, the "series of immobile movements," implicit in the viewer's path through the work.

**PREVIOUSLY SHOWN** at the Musée in 1985 (in *Peinture au Québec: une nouvelle génération*), this work by Lantier "reemerges" in 1990 as part of an exhibition of works from the collection, "although no other piece has been presented since then" by this artist at the Musée. In this way, Lantier questions how the museum has followed the evolution of his art. More generally, his comment gives rise to thoughts on the conceptual distance that comes between the artist and his earlier works. The exhibiting of an old work confirms to Lantier the clarity of the concepts inherent in the work, its aesthetic qualities, which are still present and become differentiated with the passing of time.

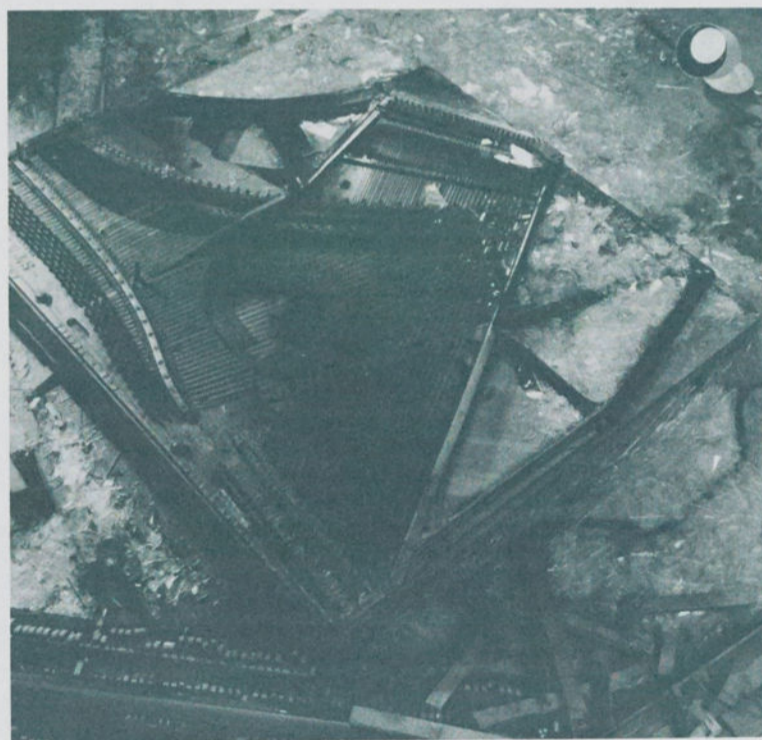
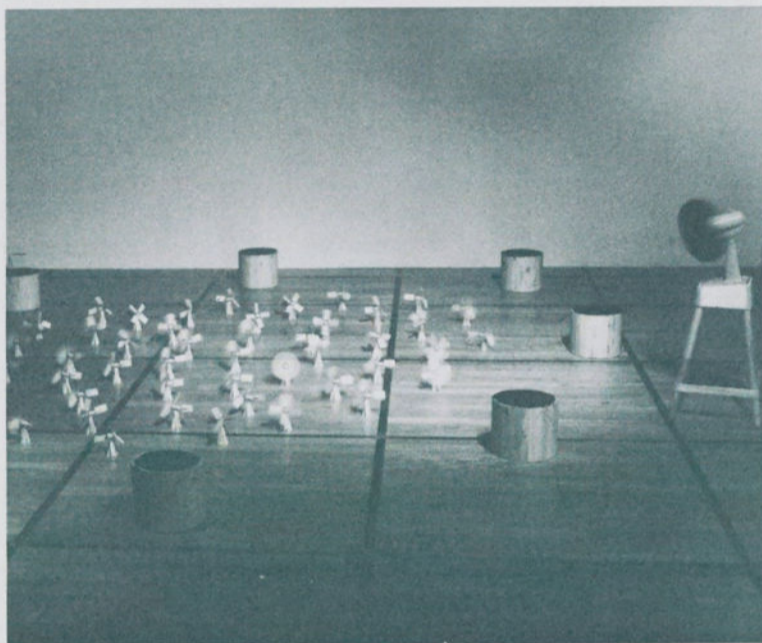
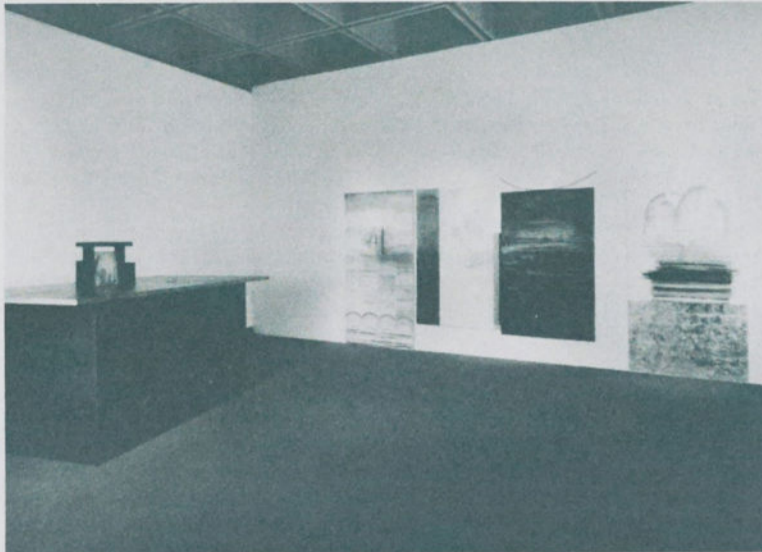
has been transformed by the physical organization of the three sections, and also completed by the addition of signs of its own exhibition past. At the Musée, the fragments of gypsum, left as traces of the artist's intervention, are incorporated into the third part, *Oratorio*. Like the multiple forms of a recollection being described, this current work is itself a memory of its successive, ephemeral installations.

**WYN GELEYNSE'S** *Home* (1986) readily established itself in the open space provided, around the stairwell, a sort of negation of a defined context. This "film work," as the artist calls it, "has its own identity," "is self-contained," and consequently "could be put anywhere." It is the psychological relationship connecting the viewer to the work that interests the artist. Moreover, whether this work is called an installation, sculpture, photograph or other work, Geleynse freely associates it with the film tradition, in line with Chaplin's movies. The repetitive, staccato sequences are of comparable humour and expressive intensity. Also, the "emotional distance" which

# JOURNEYS

*L'art d'installation:  
mise en scène de la collection  
permanente*

MICHEL HUARD



Jocelyne Allouche. *La mer de Chine*, 1983 (detail). Various materials. 8 x 8 m.  
Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photo: Denis Farley.

David Moore. *Lassithi*, 1983 (detail). Approximately 50 miniature windmills, 2 electric fans,  
8 wooden buckets. 30 cm x 8 m x 9 m.  
Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photo: Yvan Boulerice.

Joey Morgan. *Souvenir, A Recollection in Several Farms*, 1985. Dimensions vary according to the installation. Various materials. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photo: Robert Kézière.

**JOCELYNE ALLOUCHERIE.** Born in Québec City in 1947. Lives and works in Montréal. Jocelyne Allouche has moved away from modernist concerns for more than 15 years now. Her work is nurtured by drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture and photography. The diversity and richness of the materials, combined with the use of several different scales of perception, project this artist's works into a poetic space that is highly plastic and narra-

## Poetic journey

tive at the same time. Surface, volume; garden, landscape, reflection: the artist proposes contemplation and the association of diverse images. In the presence of her work, viewers are invited to apply their own experience; the arrangement of the components of her works gives rise to a constant muddling of any definitive understanding of the piece.

**WYN GELEYNSE.** Born in Rotterdam, Holland, in 1947. Lives and works in London, Ontario. For some 10 years, Wyn Geleynse has made and assembled objects. His investigations consider the photographic image, the filmed image and the devices used. His works present "metaphors of our own

## Intimate journey

psychological forms of projection,"<sup>1</sup> writes the artist. With his projections on a glass house, in which human figures make repetitive gestures, the artist questions the notions of private and public life, in looking at our intimate rituals. Geleynse suggests our participation in his technical and aesthetic gestures: in addition to seeing the equipment, to seeing the subject projected and hearing the sound of the projector, the visitor may also play a technical role in the projection. An intimate journey, in everyone's eyes, as a metaphor of our social and collective memory.

**JACEK JARNUSZKIEWICZ.** Born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1952. Lives and works in Montréal. Starting in the late 1970s, Jacek Jarnuszkiewicz became interested in the quality of perception and the nature and handling of mate-

## Journey into ambiguity

rials. With patent realism, his drawings of abstract objects critically examine illusionistic space. Later, he worked on the ambiguity of the traditional natures of painting and sculpture. His constructions hang from the wall, while also using the space and the floor. He now makes the space of his work interact (sheets of copper, cardboard, wood and paper), and includes voids as well. His recent sculptural work, which is more monumental, questions the notions of time and distance travelled; the precariously balanced arrangement of the elements, which are now figurative, points to change or an imminent transformation.

**JEAN LANTIER.** Born in Québec City in 1953. Lives and works in Montréal. Jean Lantier's work is based on a critical presentation of modernist conventions. He brings painting,

## Journey of specific natures

sculpture and architecture into his work, changing and varying the forms and motifs. In the artist's words, it is through "the mixing up of linear structures and the perversion of contents"<sup>2</sup> that the openness and multiple readings of the work emerge. Lantier continually proposes a reformulation of the images of art which, in the complexity of their meaning, go beyond the first levels of reading.

1. *Résonances boréales*. 19th São Paulo International Biennial. Winnipeg. The Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1987, p. 41.
2. Jacques Doyon, "Jean Lantier," *Parachute* No. 52, Sept.-Oct.-Nov. 1988, p. 53 [Translation].
3. Quoted in *David Moore, Recent Works, 1985-1987*. Montréal, Concordia Art Gallery, 1987.

**CLAUDE MONGRAIN.** Born in Shawinigan in 1948. Lives and works in Montréal. The sculptural work of Claude Mongrain takes shape through assembly and reassembly. In the 1970s, he used abstract, schematic, interconnected elements, and, since the mid-1980s, elements combined in a more experimental, independent fashion. A poetic effect emanates from this artist's work through the variety and subtleties of his solu-

## (Un) balanced journey

tions to the problems of tension and balance he presents. In his words, he creates "images of images." He repeats certain situations structurally by using various materials cut off from their usual function. The accumulation of elements (fragments) in comparison with the overall work (the whole) enhances the visitor's role. Just recently, the artist made an abrupt change in his work by introducing figurative elements.

**DAVID MOORE.** Born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1943. Lives and works in Montréal. Like an alchemist, David Moore is "less concerned with the perfection of the development of form than the semi-magical transformations

## Journey through concept / material

that art and science have always taken for granted."<sup>3</sup> To achieve this, the objects in his works are often heavy with symbolism and metaphorical allusions. The artist relentlessly questions the cycles of life and nature by comparing ancient and modern technologies, movement and immobility, large and small, the functional and the symbolic. He creates situations in which psychological effects encounter the great metaphysical questions. He invents a contemporary mythology. The conceptual aspect is of prime importance in his work, even though the object retains all its materiality, its mysterious presence.

**JOEY MORGAN.** Born in Yonkers, New York, in 1951. Lives and works in Vancouver. Visitors to Joey Morgan's environmental works are struck by the notion and importance of the time

## Mnemonic journey

factor. To fully apprehend the work, they must devote their own time and draw from their own experience. The artist, for her part, makes use of the accumulated data of memory, through fragmentation and stratification. Past and present are thus brought together on the ephemeral ground of the work. She also handles, with intensity, the desires, needs and difficulties of communicating with others.

**JAMES TURRELL.** Born in Los Angeles, U.S.A., in 1943. Lives and works in Arizona. James Turrell has worked in California, and then in Arizona, since the mid-1960s. Space and, in particular, light define the materials used by this artist. With his works, he leads visitors to perceive light as a physical entity. As he says himself, "the medium is perception; the content is wordless thought (like

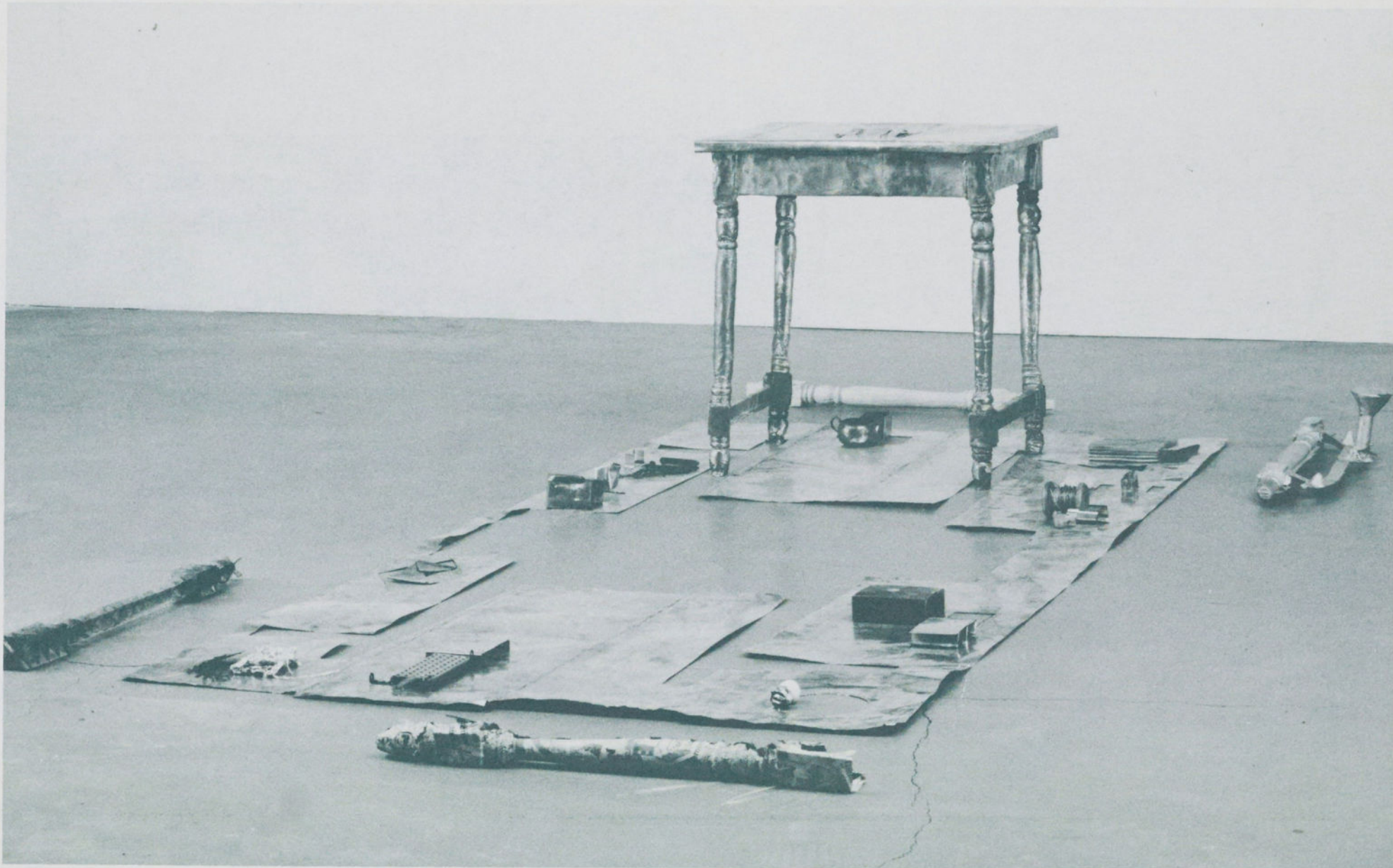
## Journey at the speed of light

our contemplative state in front of a fire in a fireplace)." For Turrell, the art object calls into question the very notion of materiality, along with the illusory nature of perception.

*Michel Huard is an art historian. In the past six years, he has worked as a curator at the Musée d'art de Joliette, and then at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. He has published a study of the written work of Wilfrid Corbeil, founder of the Musée d'art de Joliette, and, at our museum, provided the concept for the exhibitions Propos d'art contemporain - Figures d'accumulation and L'art d'installation: mise en scène de la collection permanente.*

**M**ICHEL GOULET'S WORK is associated with an industrial mode of production and relates to an organized effort applied to volumes and planes in space. The rigour of the formal construction is indicative of this artist's body of work. He develops thoughts on the materials and the production process of sculpture. Ever since *Fac-similé*, created in 1983, furniture has become a special part of his work. He first inventorized table systems, then beds, and finally chairs. In *Autour/Atours*, 1983, for which he cut out a sheet of copper, the main characteristic of the work lies in the organization of the parts that make it up. These assemblages and accumulations of objects, marked out by four table legs made of different materials and laid flat, lead

Michel Goulet. *Autour/Atours*, 1983. Copper, wood, galvanized steel, aluminum foil and various objects. 183 x 274 x 69 cm. Anonymous gift. Collection - Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photo: Centre de documentation Yvan Boulerice.



the eye to fall on the cutout, in the pattern of a copper table, of the metal sheet placed right on the floor. The precise line of the cutout refers back, in a curious way, to a catalogue of abstract forms, of a balanced construction whose motif delineated by the void gives the metal plane a certain pictorial character. The eye attempts to re-create the original structure so cleverly outlined. On the sheet of metal, there appears an odd assortment of such accessories as a ball, a spool of wire, a creamer, a piece of Meccano, etc. Some of the objects are clearly formed out of the sheet of metal, establishing a playful relationship between the various elements. The table, standing like a sculpture, is no longer a simple object to be looked at, since it contains its own system of creation. The sculpture is thus organized around a metaphorical space, the table and its objects. More than a critique of industrial society, Michel Goulet's work proposes a poeticization of everyday objects. This table tells us the story of its construction and institutes a series of relational systems between emptiness and solidity, mass and volume, the referential object and the sculptural object. The acquisition of this major work adds an important link to the group of works by this artist in the collection, and gives the Musée a significant reference point on Québec sculpture. ■ *Paulette Gagnon has been curator of the collection at the Musée since 1977. Her credits include the exhibitions Les vingt ans du Musée à travers sa collection, La magie de l'image and, more recently, Une histoire de collections – Dons 1984-1989.*

#### *A New Acquisition*

## A Work by Michel Goulet

PAULETTE GAGNON

Carl Solari at work setting up an installation.  
Photo: Michel Pétrin



### *A Sector of the Musée*

**A** VISITOR walking through the Musée's galleries moves from one work to the next without the slightest idea – and that is how it should be – of the work and sometimes the technical feats which setting up any exhibition demands. Each of the often complex components of an installation owes its presence to planning which is more successful the more it goes unnoticed.

An exhibition exists first in the mind of the curator, who gives it concrete shape with the help and support of the Musée's technical services. The main job of this team is to set up exhibitions. This is never a simple task; sometimes the challenge is enormous.

For the Jannis Kounellis exhibition in fall 1987, the team had to find a way to hang, without any visible attachment, a metal mural weighing over a ton! For several days, the museum was practically turned into a foundry. "Once we have set up a Kounellis show, nothing is beyond us," says Pierre Duchesne, Technical Services Coordinator. Along with Mr. Duchesne, Carl Solari, Exhibition Technician, and Michel Pétrin, Audiovisual Technician, make up the technical services permanent staff.

In addition to the physical constraints, there is the time factor. The team has only two to three weeks to transform the museum. It is always a race against the clock. Between the time one exhibition is taken down and the next one appears, there are partitions to be demolished and others to be rebuilt according to new plans for the exhibition spaces, before the crew can move on to actually setting up the pieces, putting the different elements of the work into place, making a final adjustment with the artist, arranging the lighting, and so on. Then the

## TECHNICAL SERVICES

LOUISE ISMERT



museum becomes a place of contemplation again, the calm after the storm.

This kind of work cannot be improvised in such a short time. It has to be planned long in advance, down to the smallest details, with the curator and with the artist. The equipment, installation difficulties and necessary personnel all have to be seen to. Everything has to be anticipated and found. It is up to the technical services crew to unearth all the items the artists will need to mount their works at the Musée. From a bale of hay to a Ferrari, the range can be immense.

When the artist is not on hand, the technical services team takes charge of mounting the piece according to the drawing or plan provided, or sometimes from a model. In their effort to

be faithful to the artist's vision, they discuss all stages in the materialization of the work with the artist ahead of time.

More often, the artists will be there. The team is once again at their service but, as Carl Solari explains, their presence changes the nature of the work. "Handling the piece from all angles, going over its raw material with the artist, helping the artist in this development towards the final work, and taking advantage of the artist's explanations about what the work is, what it represents, the reasons for its existence, give us a special understanding of the work."

Special, yes, but at this stage, with the impending deadline, the job becomes more pressing and more intense. The crew must display

ingenuity and renewed flexibility until the artist and the curator obtain the desired effect.

As the visitor approaches the piece, the technical crew continues its work behind the scenes. It oversees the exhibition and looks after the daily details: storage facilities, buildings, security, not to mention administration. And what else? Well, as a matter of fact, there is a work by Ulrich Rückriem to be moved, a stone sculpture weighing five tons. Would you know how to do it? ■

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*Louise Ismert is a radio and television journalist on cultural affairs. She holds a master's degree in art history, and has contributed to research on works in the Musée's collection.*

## PAUL HUNTER

*Cityscapes and Bodyscapes*<sup>1</sup>

LOUISE DÉRY

**T**HE NAME Paul Hunter conjures up the memory of enigmatic boxes shown at Cent jours d'art contemporain in Montréal in 1986.<sup>2</sup> These "light-traps" suggested the atmospheres of confinement and solitude characteristic of megalopolises like New York, and invited a voyeuristic approach, turning spectators into active explorers, made to sit down, look through small slots and mentally continue the view of the interior scene between each stop. ■ Because of the interest it sparked in Hunter's works, the 1986 exhibition stands out as a key event in the career of this young Québec artist who has made New York his home base since 1981. For nearly 10 years now, his artistic practice has been relentlessly superimposed on his daily exploratory voyages through Manhattan. For Paul Hunter shows he is mindful of the determinisms of the city, he knows he comes under its mesmerizing powers, its abrupt changes in scale, its contrasts, and its way of swallowing people up. ■

with organic accents that continued the investigation of his own body, while the familiarization of the work of the hand and its imprint, the interest of modelling, and the pleasure of shaping wax enabled him to quickly recognize the potential of placing segments of the body of view. Other, concomitant works resulted: *Fragments*, several paintings in encaustic, sculptures made of plastic, and prints. ■ Prolific changes took place in his work during this period of production. The pursuit of the lost-wax bronze technique and encaustic, as well as the execution of two- and three-dimensional landscapes, led to a consolidation of Hunter's main lines of work. He started to use heat as a tool for fashioning the work: melting wax, casting bronze, warming the material with the palm of his hand. As well, the artist's particular landscape-like pictorialness continued in his exploration of patinas, as if he were painting in bronze, wood or plastic. Finally, there was a transition from the plinth



He is fascinated by the things of New York, and pays them an almost Darwinian attention which forms the basis of his artistic approach. This is characterized by inventory, selection and classification, of views, panoramas and buildings, but also little nests of grass, and minute objects found in the street, the kind referred to so charmingly as "street jewels." In this panoply of suggestive finds and materials offered by New York, we see a second fundamental aspect of his practice: the scale of things is tried out as a key element in his production, and is the direct result of transitions in the viewer's gaze – upwards and into the distance, the eye magnetized by the alternating solid and luminous verticals that punctuate the cityscape as the streets come and go; downwards to the ground strewn with objects, artifacts, traces, twigs, which lead the eye to make a horizontal "sweep," make the viewer come closer, prompt the viewer to bend over, look and take. ■ Scale asserts itself as the driving force behind a transitive approach contributing to inaccessibility and playing on physical and psychological distance, on the one hand, while at the same time eliminating distance by a miniaturization of objects which catches the eye and forces a coming close and proximity between the body and the work. Hunter stirs up perceptual habits with this paradoxical device which can create security, understanding and complicity of the viewer's gaze or, equally well, uncertainty, even impossibility, of reaching, seeing more clearly, or grasping. ■ To live and work in New York no doubt means being surrounded by such paradoxes. The crowds, the simmering New York energy, the agitation and excitement, but also the anonymity, loneliness, isolation and risk. Hunter makes these contrasts one of the traits that mark his artistic activity. There is a porousness, a permeability between the concrete facts of the work and those of his life in the city. We can discern, like a thread running through his work, the gigantic size of New York which makes us feel ever so small, the signs of its frenzy and its anonymity. The subject is actually the human condition, and the artist wavers between the conspicuous, obvious, dazzling reality of the city and that which shies away, conceals itself, and makes up its own mystery. ■ In his ongoing relationship with the city, the artist one day brings his exploratory telescope and ends up discovering his own body, like a landscape with multiple viewpoints, like a garden to be catalogued. As an extension of *Petrefacta*,<sup>3</sup> between 1988 and 1990 he produced small bronzes



to the wall, from the horizon to the vertical space, from the landscape to the body. The little bronzes now become gardens fixed to the wall, with an anthropomorphic reading that commands the upright position. ■ Stepping into Paul Hunter's studio is like discovering a room full of curiosities, where the "collections" of objects, as well as the processes, materials and techniques used, attest to an artistic labour that does not spare its references to the history of knowledge, the history of art and museography. The use of Latin names, and of plinths, little boxes, display cabinets, columns and showcases, the "viewings" created by the arrangement of the frames and the lighting devices evidently allude to the world of museography. The treatment of genres – portrait, landscape or still life – and the faithfulness to traditional

ABOVE: Paul Hunter, New York, February 1990. Photo: Patrick Altman. BELOW: Paul Hunter, *Urban Night*, 1984. Wood, plastic, paper, acrylic and varnish. 6.2 x 182 x 60 cm. Photo: Patrick Altman.

**the artist wavers between the conspicuous, obvious, dazzling reality of the city and that which shies away, conceals itself, and makes up its own mystery.**

techniques and materials evoke an artistic heritage that is, however, enriched with highly contemporary processes.

1. This article stems from the exhibition and catalogue *Paul Hunter. Oeuvres en vue* produced by the Musée du Québec (April-May 1990).
2. See the catalogue of the exhibition *Lumières – Perception – projection*, Montréal, Centre international d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1986.
3. Some of the sculptures in this series were presented in 1988 by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal in its exhibition *Les temps chauds*.

Louise Déry has a master's degree in art history and has just presented her doctoral thesis at Université Laval on the prospects for public art in Québec. Since 1987, she has been curator of contemporary art at the Musée du Québec and director of the Galerie du Musée. Her design and organization of the exhibition *Territoires d'artistes: Paysages verticaux*, presented during the summer of 1989 at a number of outdoor sites in Québec City, earned her the 1990 award of excellence of the Canadian Museum Association.

## Educational Activities

### Activities for Families and Friends

FRANCE AYMONG

#### CÔTÉ CARTON-JARDIN

**T**HIS ACTIVITY, planned in connection with the exhibition *L'art d'installation: mise en scène de la collection permanente*, follows the one held on May 27 (Museum Day). On that occasion, visitors were free to join in a collective installation experience with artist Marie-Anne Cuff. The public is now invited to continue the experience, which still focuses on the work of this artist, in the company of professionals from the Musée. Cardboard boxes and rolls will merrily assemble and unfold in the Musée gardens, ready to receive lines, colours, and dreams of all kinds.

Weather permitting, the activity will be held in the Musée gardens. In case of rain, it will take place under the canopy.  
July 8, 15 and 22, 1 to 5 p.m.

#### VOICI MON MUSÉE

**T**HIS ACTIVITY introduces a series that will accompany the exhibition *L'art conceptuel, une perspective*, and examines the idea of a "museum," and the museum as an idea. Under the guidance of Musée staff, participants will look at the museum concept, and its social, ideological and cultural functions, while developing their own project for an ideal museum. Drawings, models, construction with building blocks, written description of a museum project - all these possibilities, and more, are open to visitors taking part.  
August 5, 1 to 5 p.m.

#### UN MUSÉE PORTATIF

**V**ISITORS are invited to bring miscellaneous small objects to the Musée. There, together with Musée professionals, they will have an opportunity to present their "exhibitions" in a box, suitcase or vest pocket. Labels, descriptions, catalogue, documentation, "staging" and presentation will be considered at the same time as the work and the museum.  
August 12, 1 to 5 p.m.

#### QUESTIONS À L'ŒUVRE

**A**LL OF THE QUESTIONS we ask ourselves about the concept of a work of art will have a chance to surface in the various experiments the Musée staff will offer visitors: tours of preset length, objects hidden in closed containers, descriptions of real or non-existent objects, telepathic messages, etc.

August 19, 1 to 5 p.m.

#### 37,492 CHAUSSURES NOIRES DE GRANDEUR 38

**T**HE SUBJECT of this activity is the cataloguing, classification and recording of objects, facts, writings, etc., as well as classification and archiving methods used in conceptual art. It refers not only to a questioning about art and the work of art, but also to a part of museology and art history. On view will be postcards received from the public, on which the senders are asked to carefully indicate the day, date and time as well as a description of themselves in exactly ten words.

August 26, 1 to 5 p.m.

All are welcome to attend these free activities. Children under 13 should be accompanied by an adult.

**Y**OUR POSTCARD must contain the following information, no more, and no less: *Day* (e.g. Monday), *date in digits* (e.g. 15.07.90), *time* (e.g. 5:23 p.m.), *self-description in ten (10) words*. Send your postcards in now, to the following address:

37,492 chaussures noires de grandeur 38  
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal  
Cité du Havre  
Montréal, Québec  
H3C 3R4

France Aymong has served as Cultural Coordinator in the Activities and Education sector of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal since 1982. She is the creator of Activities for Families and Friends.

**C R E D I T S**  
Le Journal du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is published every two months by the Direction des communications. In charge of publication: Suzanne Bourbonnais. Planning and execution: Lucette Bouchard. Contributors to this issue: France Aymong, Louise Déry, Paulette Gagnon, Michel Huard, Louise Ismert, Sandra Grant Marchand, Pierre Landry. Le Journal also thanks Jean Tourangeau. English translation: Susan Le Pan. Design: Lumbago Typesetting. Zibra. Printing: Interglobe. ISSN: 1180-128 x. Legal deposit: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec. National Library of Canada. Printed in Canada. 3rd quarter 1990. The reproduction, even partial, of any article in Le Journal is subject to the approval of the Direction des communications of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Le Journal du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is available free of charge at the Musée, and is mailed to subscribers. Subscription for issues 2, 3, 4 and 5: \$15.

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is a provincially owned corporation funded by the ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec. The Musée receives additional financial support from Communications Canada and the Canada Council. Director: Marcel Brisebois. Members of the Board of Directors: Mariette Clermont, President, Sam Abramovitch, Luc Beaugard, Léon Courville, Manon Forget, Claude Hinton, Claudette Hould, Paul Noisoux, Marissa Nuss, Monique Parent-Dufour, Robert Turgeon.

The functions of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal are to make known, promote and preserve contemporary Québec art and to ensure a place for international contemporary art through acquisitions, exhibitions and other cultural activities. National Museums Act, Section 24

## PRIX RENÉ-PAYANT aux jeunes artistes en arts visuels du Québec

The Fonds des Amis de l'Art will hand out a new award this coming September 30: the *Prix René-Payant aux jeunes artistes en arts visuels du Québec*.

This prestigious award, worth \$2000, is intended to encourage the work of a young professional artist who has distinguished him/herself on a Québec-wide level.

Eligible candidates must meet the following criteria:

- be no more than 35 years of age as of January 1, 1990;
- have taken part in at least three group exhibitions outside a university or other teaching institution;
- have to his/her credit at least one such group exhibition in the past two years.

Applications must be accompanied by a résumé and a minimum of ten (10) slides, and must be sent by August 1, 1990 to the following address:

*Prix René-Payant aux jeunes artistes en arts visuels du Québec*  
Université de Montréal  
Faculté des arts et des sciences  
Département d'histoire de l'art  
P.O. Box 6128, Station A  
Montréal, Québec  
H3C 3J7

The award ceremony will be held at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal on Sunday, September 30 at 3 p.m. For further information, call: (514) 343-6182

## EXHIBITIONS

### L'ART D'INSTALLATION: MISE EN SCÈNE DE LA COLLECTION PERMANENTE

Until July 22

Les Arts du Maurier Ltée

Works by Jocelyne Allouche, Wyn Geleynse, Jacek Jarnuszkiewicz, Jean Lantier, Claude Mongrain, David Moore, Joey Morgan and James Turrell.

### L'ART CONCEPTUEL, UNE PERSPECTIVE

August 5 - October 21

More than 30 artists represented, including Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Lawrence Weiner and the Art & Language group. An exhibition designed, produced and circulated by the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

### Travelling Exhibitions PROPOS D'ART CONTEMPORAIN FIGURES D'ACCUMULATION

Until August 10

Maison de la Culture La Petite Patrie, Montréal.

## EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

### Activities for Families and Friends

#### CÔTÉ CARTON-JARDIN

July 8, 15 and 22 from 1 to 5 p.m.

#### VOICI MON MUSÉE

August 5 from 1 to 5 p.m.

#### UN MUSÉE PORTATIF

August 12 from 1 to 5 p.m.

#### QUESTIONS À L'ŒUVRE

August 19 from 1 to 5 p.m.

#### 37 492 CHAUSSURES NOIRES DE GRANDEUR 38

August 26 from 1 to 5 p.m.

#### Meeting

August 5 at 2 p.m.

#### LE PARCOURS DE CLAUDE GINTZ

Meeting with Claude Gintz, curator of the exhibition *L'art conceptuel, une perspective*

## MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

Cité du Havre, Montréal, Québec, H3C 3R4  
Tel.: (514) 873-2878

#### Free Admission

All voluntary contributions will be added to the Musée's art acquisition fund.

#### Access to the Museum

**By car:** Bonaventure autoroute south of University Street, "Cité du Havre - Port de Montréal" exit, then Pierre-Dupuy Avenue. Free parking.

**By bus:** S.T.C.U.M. bus service via line 168 from McGill, Bonaventure and Square Victoria metro stations, from Tuesday to Friday only. An S.T.C.U.M. group taxi service is operating between Bonaventure Metro Station and the museum every Saturday and Sunday.

The service is available at 30-minute intervals from 12 to 6 p.m. A one-way trip costs \$1.25, without transfer privileges. For further information: A-U-T-O-B-U-S.

#### Museum Hours

Exhibitions: daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., closed Mondays.

Documentation Centre: Tuesday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

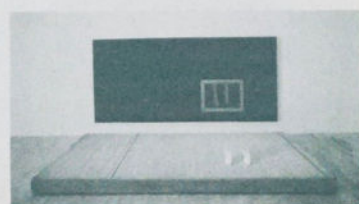
Boutique: daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., closed Mondays.

Café: daily from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., closed Mondays.

#### La Fondation des Amis du Musée

A non-profit organization providing essential support for the mission of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Individuals, associations and corporations can help the Fondation des Amis du Musée reach its objectives as contributors, members and volunteers. Annual membership in the Fondation, including free mailing of the *Journal du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal*: \$25 (students and senior citizens: \$15). Information: (514) 873-4743

We are reprinting the reproduction of this work by Geneviève Cadieux, which was unfortunately reversed in the May-June 1990 issue of *Le Journal du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal*. We extend our apologies to the artist and to our readers.



Geneviève Cadieux. *L'inconstance du désir*, 1988.