

THE RELOCATION of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal to downtown Montréal provides an opportunity to consider the underlying meaning and consequences of this veritable transformation of the institution. Because ultimately, in 1992, we will not just shuffle the works, enlarge the galleries and renovate the offices. The move also obliges us to reassess certain inherited positions and to reformulate some ready-made propositions.

Two problems seem particularly critical and, by themselves, call to mind the importance of the relocation for the museum. The first is the relationship with the public, which will most certainly be totally altered by the

The Musée Downtown

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simple fact that the Musée will finally become truly accessible, by coming to the centre of the city. The second is the relationship with the genesis and development of contemporary art, which will also necessarily be transformed by the mere fact that our expanded institution will now have means that are much better suited to its role of preserving and presenting Québec art.

Geographical Broadening

We must, starting today, begin to realize and gauge the scope of this change. We will soon be done with artistic isolation, cultural "Crusoe-ism." The relocation will

allow the Musée to stand before the world, in the living flesh, as it were. The relocation will force it to communicate with the majority, accept the criticisms, bear the jealousy and sarcasm, fight other people's biases and question its own.

In fact, I sometimes wonder how many of us will be able to bear, without flinching, the presence of the real public, the questionings and surprise of our true contemporaries, about whom we go on so often, claiming to represent their spirit in its most secret complexities. Tomorrow morning, the Musée comes to town... A town our museum has never really rubbed shoulders with, which has never come en masse to

MARCEL BRISEBOIS

shake up the establishment in its convictions. A wide audience of uninitiated, whom we will have to patiently win over and who will help remind us of our initial pedagogical calling, if we have not forgotten it, that is, in our agreeable quarantine.

There we already have our first rule of conduct for the "new" Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal: no more art without the public, nor the public without art, but from now on both together — a contemporary art and a contemporary public, united in the same institution.

To achieve this, to reach the majority, the new site offers proven, concrete solutions. To begin with, there is the fact that the available area will be three times greater than the present premises. Including the underground space, reserved for the various services and storage facilities, the building will total more than 13,000 square metres in area. A large part of this has been set aside exclusively for the eight galleries, four of which will be entirely devoted to presenting pieces from the permanent collection.

In addition, reception areas and space for educational activities are planned, to better fulfil the institution's teaching vocation. Publications are already an impor-

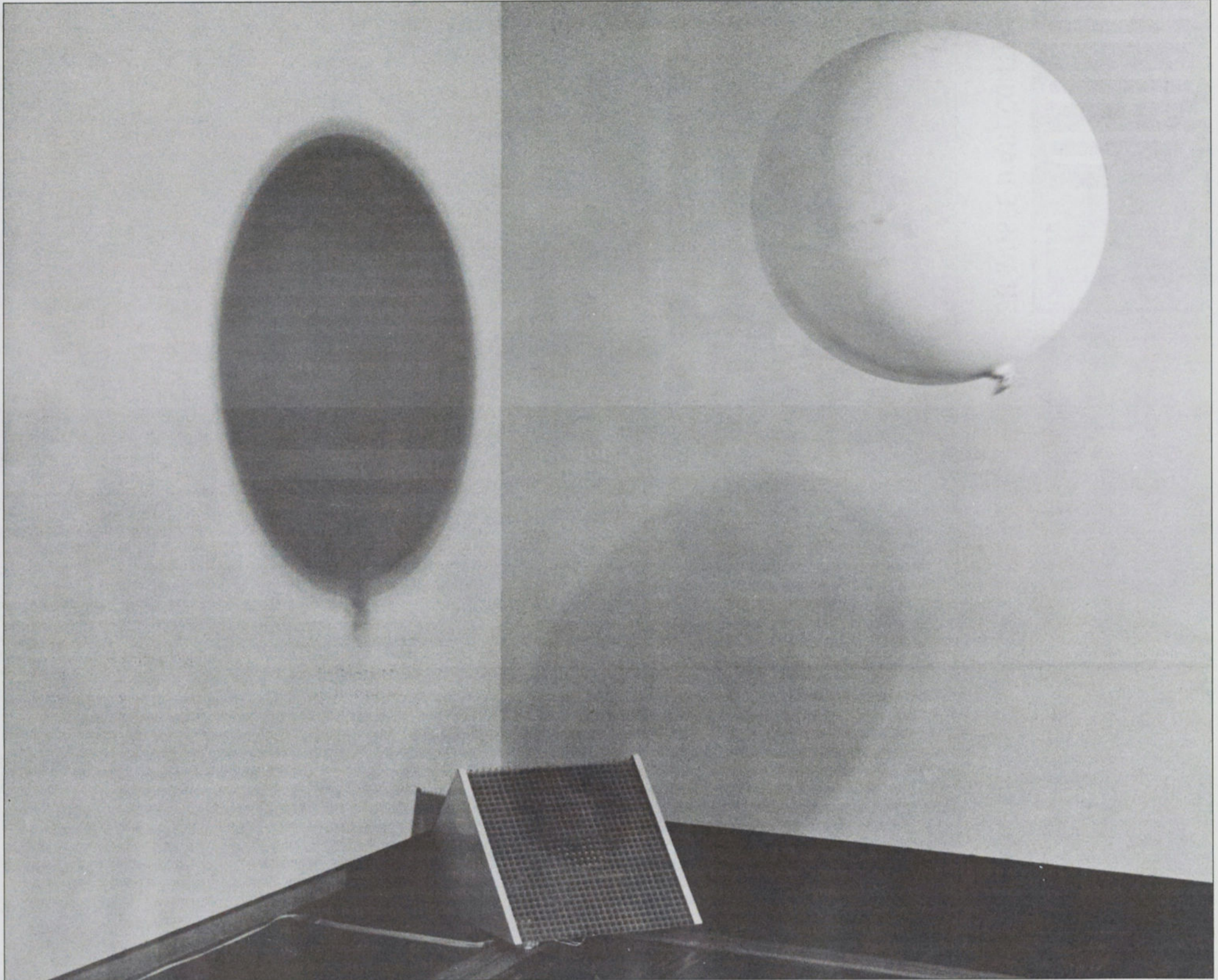
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Construction site,
July 10, 1990.
Photo: Denis Farley.

Conceptual Art in Québec and Canada

N O R M A N D T H É R I A U L T



New Alchemy at the Musée d'art contemporain in 1969. Hans Haacke. *Sphere in Oblique Air Jet*, 1964-1967. Balloon, fan and housing.

THERE IS SOME LOGIC to the fact that the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is hosting an exhibition which, 20 years later, attempts to bring out a perspective on conceptual art. Already, in presenting works by Haacke, Takis, Van Saun and Ross in November 1969, the institution had offered local artists an introduction to what were then called "the latest developments in art." The exhibition in question, *New Alchemy*, was organized by Dennis Young, curator at the Art Gallery of Ontario. ■ It was not until February 1971, however, that a Montréal-conceived and organized event dealt with "process, system, concept." *45°30'N – 73°36'W – Inventory* presented simultaneously at Sir George Williams University (now Concordia) and the Saidye Bronfman Centre, under the leadership of Gary Coward and Bill Vazan at Sir George Williams, and Zoe Norkin and Arthur Bardo at the Saidye Bronfman Centre. ■ The community as a whole only recognized the arrival of conceptual art later, much later. There again, anyone who lived through the time of *Québec 75* will

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understand the resistance to any issue that eluded the narrow conception that works of art are inscribed within a historical, almost stylistic continuum. In Québec's case, this meant Borduas and the Plasticiens. ■ For French-speaking Montréalers, the interest of conceptual art lay in its ability to herald the "death of art," its "dematerialization," to quote Lucy Lippard, the American critic who admitted to a similar naïveté in a 1973 publication. In Québec, 1970 saw the time of participation in art, as exemplified by the Serge Tousignant



Montréal segment of Trans-Canada Line, January 10, 1970. Musée d'art contemporain. Photo: Courtesy of the Musée du Québec.

and Cozic exhibitions in January, and Boisvert in May, also presented at the Musée d'art contemporain.

At almost the same time, in January 1970, Bill Vazan set up one of the eight points of his *Trans-Canada Line* at the Musée d'art contemporain. In September, Gary Coward presented, at the *Concours artistique du Québec 1970*, an *earthwork*: a kind of art commonly produced then in New York and, especially, in Europe.

The organizers of $45^{\circ}30'N - 73^{\circ}36'W$ had to solicit the participation of French-speaking artists. That is how Serge Lemoyne, Jean-Marie Delavalle (whose works were seen in the community as a plastician extension into sculpture), Françoise Sullivan and Serge Cournoyer were added to the likes of Vazan, Coward, Arno Mermelstein, Paul Laberge, Tom Dean, Mervyn Dawes, Harold Pearce, Claude Magnan and Dennis Jones, among others. The debate in Québec was then focused more on the artist's right to survive than on the primacy of the art itself.

We therefore must accept the fact that Québec will be excluded from any undertaking that outlines a perspective on conceptual art. We did not carry weight, even though the piece by Les Levine, shown at Sir George Williams in 1971, displayed a certain poetry. However, the fact that no artist from anywhere in Canada was selected makes no sense.

By way of a monument to physicality, one possible inclusion would have been the grouping presented by Michael Snow at *Aurora Borealis*, which forms an extension of his films from the sixties, *New York Eye and Ear Control* (1964) and *Wavelength* (1966-1967), or of his exhibition staged in early 1968 at the Poindexter Gallery in New York. A work like *Authorization* (1969) indicates one of the concrete perspectives opened up by the practice of conceptual art.

We should also talk about all the work produced by the N.E. Thing Co., an artistic venture launched under cover of anonymity by Ian and Elaine (later Ingrid) Baxter, whose first works originated in Vancouver. The organizers of the present exhibition cannot in any way justify the omission of these artists, especially since their works had been shown at the National Gallery of Canada in June 1969 under the title *Look at the N.E. Thing Company/Voyez la Compagnie N.E. Thing*. Furthermore, an activity report, including sources of documentation and lectures, was published at that time.

English Canada was a Mecca of conceptual art. As early as January 1970, the Vancouver Art Gallery inaugurated 955,000, an exhibition organized by Lucy Lippard. We should also remember the permanent group of artists at Western Front throughout the seventies. Finally, artists as present as Ian Wallace and Jeff Wall still live in Vancouver.

In the east, to close the brackets, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, in Halifax, was a dynamic institution as long as it practised a kind of teaching coupled with experimental research. Its publishing activities are particularly eloquent in this regard, with works published in the seventies on Simone Forti, Snow, Haacke, Reich, Rainer, and others. Of the artists from this region, we should retain the names of Gerald Ferguson and John Greer.

In fact, it is inconceivable for a historian of conceptual art to make an overview without rereading the publications of *Artscanada* magazine, which was a major witness to the developments in art in the late sixties and early seventies. These articles, like the work of the artists already named, could even provide material for another exhibition on conceptual art. If we leave out Snow, Tom Dean or Jeff Wall, we would then return to the initial simplicity of these works in which ideas and how they are organized had first priority.

Art historian, critic and curator, Normand Thériault is the author of a number of publications and has organized numerous exhibitions. He has contributed to the history of Québec art for several years.

tant tool for providing greater visibility for the museum's activities, and the Musée intends to carry on this rich tradition. Similarly, it hopes to be able to increase

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(Continued)

research and publication by its own curators and by critics and theoreticians who make an essential contribution to our understanding of current art.

And then, there is the documentation centre which will also be laid out to facilitate maximum use. It will naturally house the Paul-Émile Borduas collection, richly endowed with 12,500 documents, and the centre's 5,000 files on Canadian and foreign artists, and on museums, galleries and the activities of national and international exhibition centres. It will also contain a constantly growing collection of monographs, exhibition catalogues, slides and photographs.

The Musée will also enjoy priority access to a new, 350-seat theatre incorporated into the architectural complex. The Musée's professionals intend to use it for giving lectures and holding seminars. In addition, in a space like this designed to accommodate all forms of contemporary artistic expression, they hope to offer a unique opportunity for highly innovative presentations, prompted by a desire for confrontation with the present and forms inherited from the past.

Historical Broadening

For lack of space and out of submission to an ideology of change and of newness, we have too often, in the past, tried to be contemporary by leaving behind the past. The problem is that, like the modern period, and even more than it, the contemporary period does not represent an objective notion of date. There is an obvious paradox, but one that is nonetheless helpful to once again recall: our institution is all the more unusual in that it is entirely dedicated to "museumizing" contemporary art. What a strange business! To peg onto the same project, art as it passes by and the establishment that attests to time past; to combine the non-current with the current; in a way, to set up the paradoxical project of a "tradition" of what is intended to be resolutely contemporary.

Of course, as we have repeated often enough, like modern art, and even more so, contemporary art is change. This change is irreparable, irretrievable. And yet, it is possible to follow the progress of this change, of the successive rifts in this movement that goes from one innovation to the next. In fact, this scheme of recording the history of the "contemporary tradition," of that of yesterday and that of today, can only impress the conjurers of historical and aesthetic thinking – those who never wonder how an institution like ours has a right to handle current artistic reality, those who do not understand that the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is keeping a chronicle of our paradoxical time.

To carry out this work, to engrave on the collective memory what we are now and what we were yesterday, our institution has established a policy that is clear, well thought-out and reasonable, although subjective and debatable. The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal has, for some years now, concentrated on the acquisition and presentation of works created after 1939. The new premises will provide the means of concretely updating this landmark. The galleries devoted to the permanent collection, and those reserved for temporary exhibitions, will clearly express a true "contemporary history," will finally make it possible to follow the thread that connects the questionings of today with the answers of another time.

Here we have a second rule of conduct for the "new" Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal: not an apologia for the new, at all costs, but that which is representative in the present, and with the past and the contemporary at the same time, in the same institution.

That is something else we have too often forgotten, with the result that our "geographical" isolation has also too often corresponded to a kind of "historical" isolation. Starting in 1992, in its vast new home, the Musée intends, however, to submit to this wish to bring together the currents that have run, and still run now, through society. It is through that desire that the institution truly succeeds in going beyond its role as a guardian and collector of wonderful, unusual objects and becomes a promoter of questioning and of the current artistic challenge, for the benefit of all. Through its specific mission, in its necessary contemporaneity, the Musée seeks, and will soon manage even better, to serve as a dynamic setting, as a space for dialogue between the artists, their work and their community, which is more and more open, and more and more global. We should put it in words for ourselves: downtown, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal will fully shoulder its responsibilities, going against harmful isolations, and being thoroughly open to Montréal and to the world.



Marcel Brisebois. Photo: Ron Diamond.

Activities for Families and Friends

FRANCE AYMONG

ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1990, the Musée's documentation centre will join the computerized network of Québec government libraries. This stands out as an important event for the entire research sector at the museum. The possibilities offered by computer technology will allow services to be reorganized and integrated into a dynamic concept of information specialized in the field of Québec and Canadian contemporary art.

Two major events have given rise to a systematic analysis of the resources, needs and policies of the documentation centre after 25 years of existence: the impact of new technology on the world of documentation and the prospect of the move to downtown Montréal. Established in 1965, the library (as the present documentation centre was then known) was defined, first and foremost, as a depository of printed documents. Things have changed since then... Everywhere, computer technology has thoroughly altered collection management, the dissemination of information and even researchers' needs. While documentary supports are becoming increasingly diverse (and perhaps even more so in the field of contemporary art), the mass of information circulated is growing in spectacular fashion, unlike the physical resources necessary to acquire it. A new philosophy is needed, based on an efficient sharing and optimum utilization of the available resources.

In the computerization project, the first goal concerns the organization of the collection. The present documentary holdings (at least 22,000 monographs and exhibition catalogues, 290 different periodicals, 36,000 slides, 300 videocassettes, 245 audiocassettes and 7,800 documentary files) constitutes an absolutely unique potential source of information. It is therefore primarily a question of reorganizing the amazing quantity and variety of documents acquired over the years and providing precise, rapid access to them.

At the same time, an intensive program for developing the collection should make it possible to gradually fill in the gaps identified, in order to meet users' expectations. The documentary files play an important part in this regard, and special efforts have been made, over the past three years, to rationalize the acquisition and processing of ephemeral documentation. A clipping agency goes through Canadian dailies, while all ephemeral documentation circulating in the Musée is eventually brought to the Centre, where the staff indexes it. The documentary files may contain brochures, folders, invitations, press clippings, handwritten notes, correspondence and exhibition catalogues of less than 30 pages. Since October 1988, a team of volunteers has been providing its support in filing the items kept. This very significant assis-

A Sector of the Musée

THE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

MICHELLE GAUTHIER



From left to right: Régine Francoeur and Johanne Lefebvre, library technicians, Suzanne Tremblay, research assistant, and Gabrielle Balog, trainee.
Photo: Denis Farley.

tance makes it possible to quickly put the latest data at the users' disposal. A number of artists and organizations (exhibition centres, associations, artists' groups, etc.) regularly take part in updating their files, either by adding the documentation centre to their mailing lists or by making an annual visit to bring in the most recent documents. They are thus using a simple, effective means of publicizing their work. For close to 15 years, the Musée has also been part of an international network for exchanging publications, and consequently receives exhibition catalogues regularly from more than 250 national and international exhibition centres. This preferred method of acquisition compensates for chronically tight cultural budgets.

First set up for the museum staff, an on-the-premises consultation service is offered by the centre to an outside clientele made up mainly of artists, teachers, students, journalists, collectors and visitors to the Musée's exhibitions. Tuesday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., interested individuals may avail themselves of this service, at no charge and without appointment. The reading room has 16 seats, the stacks are open and a staff member is happy to respond to requests for information. Michelle Gauthier, librarian, and Johanne Lefebvre and Jacqueline Bélanger, library techni-

cians, form an enthusiastic team sustained by a working philosophy in which user services come first. In the centre's five-year development plan, numerous projects reflect this philosophy.

Obviously, things must be taken one step at a time, but once the collection is properly structured and all tasks are computerized, it will become possible to consider access to other data banks, setting up a service providing selective distribution of information, and establishing a data bank on the Musée's activities. These are all means for the documentation centre to fulfil its mission of locating, acquiring, preserving, organizing and passing on the information needed to accomplish the Musée's objectives, and of doing so quickly and efficiently.

Michelle Gauthier has been the librarian in charge of the documentation centre since 1987. Previously, she worked as a librarian-archivist at the Canadian architecture collection of McGill University's Blackader-Lauterman Library.

AN INTERACTIVE MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

A surprise is in store for Musée visitors this fall. They will see young people aged 11 to 16 speaking and acting as resource people, thus demonstrating that contemporary art is far from being reserved for an elite. In the age of the interactive museum, there is a need to involve the public more and more directly in the activities developed by our museum. Already, in August, the Musée's first activity of this kind was held. 37 492 *chaussures noires de grandeur 38* offered visitors the chance to contribute throughout the summer to the advent of the activity, by sending postcards which then underwent a sorting process in which the public was invited to take part.

We should recall, for those who do not yet attend them, that Activities for Families and Friends are designed principally to give visitors of all ages the opportunity to enjoy a more enriching contact with works exhibited, through special experiences. These take up certain aspects of artistic approaches found in the exhibitions, in a context in which human relations are emphasized. By sharing an experience with artists, Musée professionals or resource people from the visiting public, participants one and all, whether specialized in a field related to contemporary art or not, thus become aware of their abilities and the personal assets that make them perfectly capable of experiencing current art or, more generally, contemporary art.

If, in reading these lines, you had an idea that you and your friends might be available for a museum experience initiated by the Musée and during which you would be resource people, give us a call at 873-5267 (Manon Guérin), or write us at the following address:

"Resource People," France Aymong, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Cité du Havre, Montréal, Québec H3C 3R4.

DES CHOSES ET DES MOTS

Bee Saint-Gaudens, Virginie Kaugh, Gregory Courtois, Mathieu Jalbert and Alexandra Alarie, of Collège français de Longueuil, warmly invite visitors of all ages to share their new passion: conceptual art. The public will have the pleasure of seeing a thoroughly novel work, created by these young people of 10 and 11, and entitled *Le mot mot*. Visitors will also be able to exchange comments and experiences to do with the relationship between language and object, an issue developed in conceptual art and represented in some works in the exhibition. An eye-opener for those who still believe that contemporary art is impenetrable and inaccessible...

September 16, 1 to 5 p.m.

!XUEGATNOC On this occasion, the passion for words and fantasy will captivate all visitors. At least, that is the hope of Nathalie Soucy, Stéphan Simoneau, Tannada Tan, Tannaka Tan and Cathy Charest, young people from Polyvalente Lucien-Pagé, in Montréal, who will be acting as resource people and performers during this activity at the Musée. Don't be surprised if a businessman or woman carrying a briefcase comes up and speaks to you about some absurd subject in an unfamiliar language. These people will be delighted to hear you reply, in their language, if possible... Words, letters, numbers, additions, subtractions and multiplications leap off the blackboards and suddenly rush to form sounds. To explore various facets of this strange, elocutionary passion, no experience is necessary.

October 14, 1 to 5 p.m.

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

Interview with Jacques Giraldeau

DANIELLE LEGENTIL

ON SEPTEMBER 23, the Musée will screen the films *Le tableau noir* and *La toile blanche*, in the company of their director, Jacques Giraldeau. This interview launches the discussion with the director. ■ *L'art et l'argent: Le tableau noir* (Collage 4), *La toile blanche* (Collage 5), a National Film Board of Canada production, with the participation of Pierre Ayot, Christiane Baillargeon, Marcel Brisebois, Joceline Chabot, Christiane Chassay, Gilles Daigneault, Pierre Dansereau, Charles Daudelin, René Derouin, Iégor de Saint-Hippolyte, Denise Désautels, Martine Deslauriers, Michèle Drouin, Alain Dubuc, Madeleine Forcier, Michel Goulet, Gilles Hénault, Michal Hornstein, Claudette Hould, Jean-François Houle, Paul Hunter, Serge Joyal, Michel Lagacé, Andrée Laliberté-Bourque, Bernard Lamarre, Pierre Leblanc, David Mach, Michel Martin, Louise Masson, Denys Morisset, Catherine Pehudoff, Violaine Poirier, Louise Prescott, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Richard Riverin, Yves Robillard, Marcel St-Pierre, Takanori, Pierre Théberge, Normand Thériault, Shirley Thomson, Harold Town, Armand Vaillancourt and Henk Visch.

Jacques Giraldeau, how did you make your choice of participants?

My great tragedy is not being able to include as many people as I would like! You go with intuitions, and sometimes you're wrong, sometimes you correct yourself. I could have given the same demonstration with other participants. You know when you put together a film like this, there are people that you know — I'm thinking of Yves Robillard, who was in *We Are All... Picasso!*. He gave me a kind of continuity and a kind of evolution, because he has witnessed Québec society for the past 20 years. There are needs, events related to the current reality, and there is also the availability of the artists. I would have liked to film with Raymond Lavoie, who was in *Collage 2*. That would also have given a kind of continuity, but Raymond did not want to be in the public eye just then, because he was in a period when he preferred to remain silent. I chose from among the artists that had exhibitions going on (1988), so that I could show their works. To me, it's important to always connect the system to the act of creation. Because that's the only justification in the end: the works and creation.

I was sorry, perhaps, to see no mention of the media...

That's the choice I made. It would have meant tackling another aspect: how does the creation reach the general public, outside the work itself. There's a film to be made on that subject alone.

But in the discussions, no one mentioned this aspect, and yet we know how important the media or the curators can be in mounting a career.

Absolutely. I was aware of it, but I had no room. I left out group studios. I also left out anything to do with forgers, an important aspect that could have come into a film like this one, but I deliberately left it out because I had no room.

And your choice of artists?

About the artists I chose, now that was very deliberate. For example, for *Le tableau noir* I chose Paul Hunter, an artist originally from Québec City, who came to Mont-

réal, and who is pursuing an international career in New York, Denys Morisset, a local artist who has spent his whole life in Québec City, and finally, Takanori, a Japanese painter who aspires to an international career. To my mind, these were three good, representative examples. For *La toile blanche*, I chose some young artists taking part in the symposium on new painting held in Baie St-Paul, some artists on the rise and some artists with long-standing reputations.

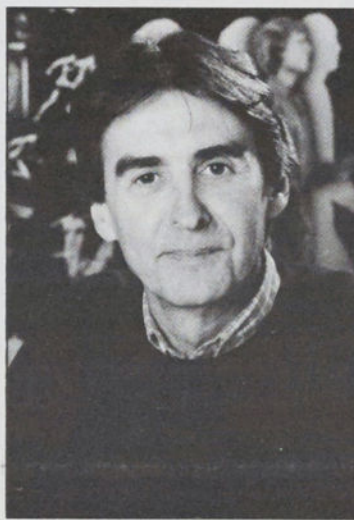
The conversation with Charles Daudelin is one of the best parts. I would have liked to take off from this interview and find out what the other artists think of it...

That's the problem with a film, basically you could never be finished. Usually, you do your shooting all at the same time. When you get to the editing, the film is already shot. And it's not possible, for strictly financial reasons, to start off again and go shoot something else. That's already another film. In television, on the other hand, it is possible.

As far as the question you asked the artists about their relationship with money, most answered much the same thing: money to eat, to pay for the studio, but Daudelin goes further, and raises the issues of recognition, of commissions.

Well, in a film like this it may be important to ask questions, but it may not be important to answer them all the time because there is another follow-up, and there was one in this case. Daudelin was hesitant to attend the premiere; he came the next day. Already at the first screening, there were sculptors, in particular, who came to tell me "Good for Daudelin! We're with him. I'm going to write him," and the next day there were lots of people who went over to shake his hand, saying "I agree with you." The question posed found a response in the community. **In other ways. Like Normand Thériault who brought up the question of investment in museum construction, and what's left for the artists to produce the works that go into those shells.**

I am not interested in answering the question myself, because that would be one answer, and there



Jacques Giraldeau, filmmaker.
Photo: Courtesy of the National Film Board of Canada.

Alain Dubuc and Bernard Lamarre. Still shot from the film *Le tableau noir*. A National Film Board of Canada production. Photo: Jean-François Leblanc.

are many, and who would give the answer? I would rather ask the question, and once the film is made, answers come: in meetings, screenings, discussions. A film is there to stimulate, to point to things. It's like the museum. You mentioned the curator's responsibility. I wondered whether I would talk about museums. Obviously, I broached the question because it directly affects the public. For most of the general public, it is through museums that they come into contact with works of art. Not in galleries. But in the major exhibitions, in particular. It suddenly becomes like a show...

You covered museums well.

Up to a certain point. Some reproaches could be made. I could have gone further and included the museum's responsibility in regard to the high price of works. I am thinking of the Getty, which just bought *Iris*.

Your shooting took place a year before the Barnett Newman purchase. There's the whole political aspect. When you make a film like this one you have to use what is current. But the demonstration remains the same.

Another troubling demonstration in your film: for works of art or objects that have belonged to an artist, collectors are prepared to pay exorbitant prices. Is this fetishism in both cases?

I presented three types of collectors: first of all, a collector of classic pieces, then collectors of



contemporary art, and an artist (Warhol) who collected objects, which took on value because they belonged to him. If I were the one collecting and selling, they would be worthless!. So basically that's it, there is a kind of sacredness in art, a kind of religion, of magical power that a well known artist confers on objects and that constitutes part of the market.

Whether we are talking about a work or an object that belonged to the artist, people will want that thing at almost the same price.

Exactly. It's the votive offering. The Holy Shroud covered Christ, so if you can buy part of the Holy Shroud, but all of the myth — basically that's the myth of the artist.

And the importance you give Borduas. What did you want to tell us about the art market?

The way I see it, it's the end of a cycle. It fits in with a historical perspective. Maybe people who lived through the time of the Quiet Revolution, of before the Quiet Revolution, the whole evolution of Québec society, maybe they can understand this aspect of a cycle, but for the people of my generation, it's the end of an era. I think we will never talk about money the same way again, or about everything to do with the art market. Between the *Refus Global* and the burial of Borduas' ashes, it's a symbol, the end of an era. It has nothing to do, perhaps, with the major phases in

the history of Québec art, but from the sociological point of view it's important.

Artists' demand to be able to live on their art.

Which is something perfectly natural. Borduas did not put the debate at that level, but it's clear that everything he did was aimed at the status of the artist, an independence of thinking, and that normally in any well organized society, it goes without saying that anyone who produces something can live on it.

Filmography of works by Jacques Giraldeau on art, artists and Québec society:

The Shape of Things, 1965, 16 mm, 9 min, 56 s
Les fleurs c'est pour Rosemont, 1969, 16 mm, 51 min
We Are All... Picasso! (Collage 1), 1969, 16 mm, 58 min, 5 s
Faut-il se couper l'oreille?, 1970, 16 mm, 27 min, 50 s
La fougère et la mouille (Collage 2), 1974, 16 mm, 57 min, 50 s
La toile d'araignée (Collage 3), 1979, 16 mm, 117 min, 15 s
Le tableau noir (Collage 4), 1989, 16 mm, 72 min, 56 s
La toile blanche (Collage 5), 1989, 16 mm, 69 min, 52 s

Productions of the National Film Board of Canada.

We should note that the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal presented the film works of Jacques Giraldeau in January 1987 on the occasion of the exhibition *Graff 1966-1986*.

Selected Reading

Couture, Francine, Ninon Gauthier and Yves Robillard. Le marché de l'art et l'artiste au Québec. Québec City: Ministère des Affaires culturelles, Service gouvernemental de propriété intellectuelle et du statut de l'artiste, 1984, 179 p.

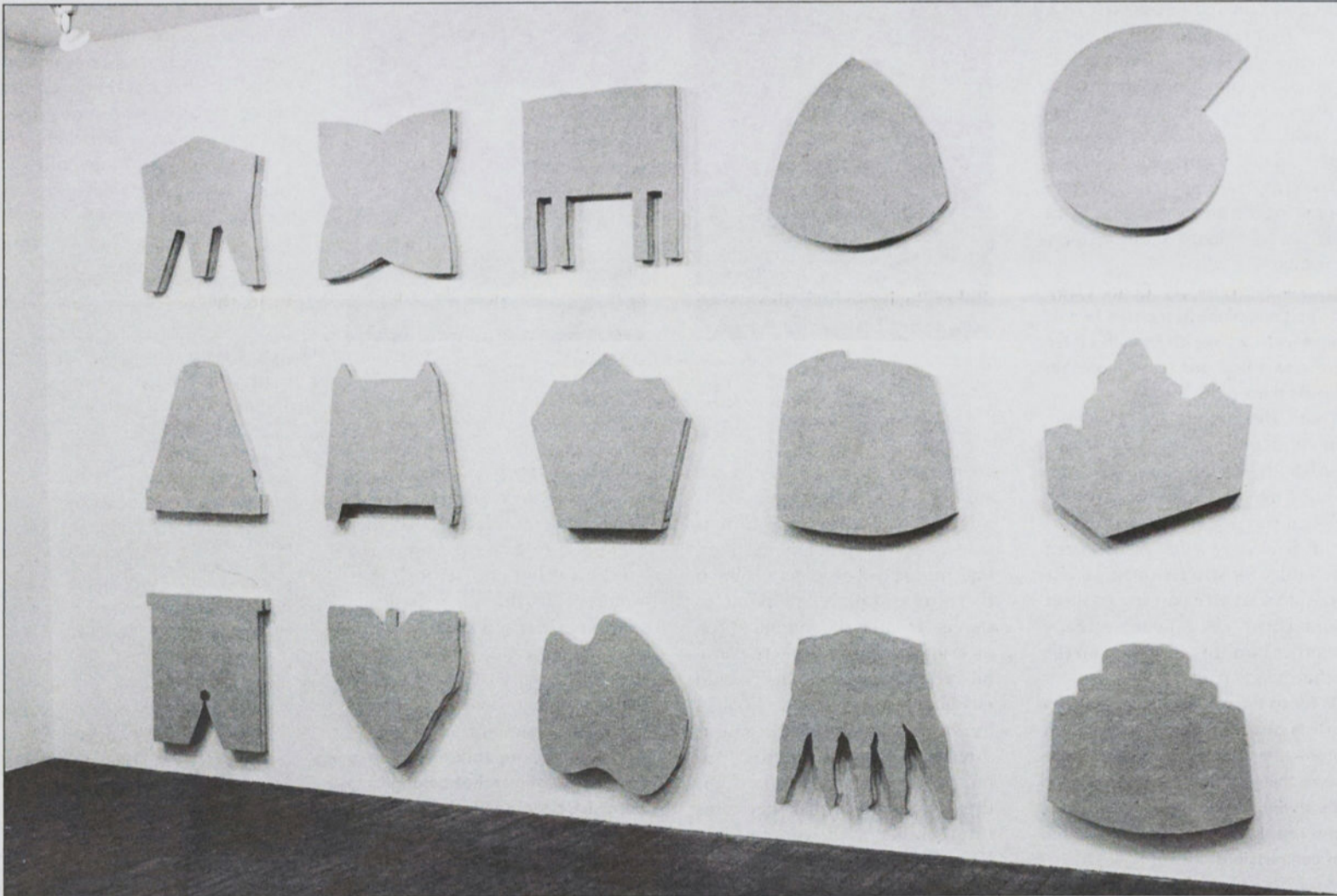
Gauthier, Ninon. Vivre des arts visuels: guide à l'intention des artistes en arts visuels. Québec City: Publications du Québec, 1989, 91 p.

Moulin, Raymonde, et al. Les artistes: essai de morphologie sociale. Paris: Documentation française, 1985, 120 p.

Moulin, Raymonde. "L'identification de l'artiste contemporain," La condition sociale de l'artiste: XVI^e-XX^e siècle. Proceedings of the symposium of the Groupe des chercheurs en histoire moderne et contemporaine du CNRS, October 12, 1985. Saint-Étienne: Université de Saint-Étienne: CIEREC, 1987, p. 121-131.

S U Z A N N E L E M I R E

FROM THE OUTSET, the work by Guy Pellerin entitled *Registre no 2, inscription de choses et de lieux*, which the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal has just acquired, appears as a large mosaic of the widest imaginable variety of shapes. Our difficulty in identifying these shapes, which are geometric, anthropomorphic and organic all at once, gives the overall work a mysterious, poetic side that challenges the viewer. For those already familiar with Pellerin's work, the 15 elements that make up *Registre no 2, inscription de choses et de lieux* seem to be a synthesis of the formal vocabulary developed by the artist over the past 10 years. Pointed arch, star, foliage, bed, tower, spiral, rhizome and shell shapes are revealed through the cutout wood that outlines the form and brings out the motif. These rather thick (6 cm) silhouette-motifs clearly stand out from the wall, which acts as a screen or backdrop. Meticulously simplified and worked, the "objects, things and places" that served as the starting point for



Guy Pellerin.
Registre no 2,
inscription de choses
et de lieux, 1989.
 Wood, acrylic on canvas.
 Fifteen elements numbered
 from 1 to 15.
 243 x 426 x 6 cm.
 Collection: Musée d'art
 contemporain de Montréal.
 Photo: Louis Lussier.

developing the pieces are transformed to the point of becoming pure visual metaphors. To appreciate the work, it is not necessary to trace the figurative or material reference that provided inspiration, but rather to let oneself soak up the formal and poetic incongruity of the elements. *Registre no 2, inscription de choses et de lieux* may be read like a musical score on a single theme; the monochromy of the work (all the pieces are painted in Turner's yellow) brings out the variation in motifs and the rhythmic, harmonious connections between them. The relationships of duality, alliance, contrast and complementarity found in the artist's series of diptychs, which punctuate all of his work, are seen here multiplied and increased many times over. In addition, the surface is slightly textured and demonstrates the artist's liking for the materiality of paint. Altogether, this recent acquisition by the Musée marks a turning point in Guy Pellerin's work and testifies to the creative, meaningful vitality of Québec painting today.

IT IS NOW MORE THAN 10 YEARS since Rober Racine, inspired by his passion for literature, dreamed of a dictionary literally planted in the landscape. His vast *Parc de la langue française* was to offer the possibility of moving freely among the proudly standing words of the Master Book, making one's way through a labyrinth of definitions, inventing one's own text in the act of wandering through it... The Parc has not yet been planted. Perhaps it will be one day. In the course of a decade, though, as the dream awaited its realization, it became a work itself and engendered a plastic production offering some of the richest meanings on the visual arts scene today.

This production is not, in any sense, the artist's ultimate goal. It simply *happened* as part of

A Québec Artist



an authentic trajectory. Rober Racine wants to become a writer, and he is faced with many questions. For instance, to what extent is the author a kind of "scribe"? how important is literality to literature? what is the status of discourse? and so on. Perhaps because he is self-taught, or because, at 32, he is saturated in the ideas of his time on the generation of meaning, Racine has a very practical, *experimental* way of approaching such problems, taking them physically at their word, exhausting them, even – or especially – when they have a theoretical aspect. His long detour through the visual arts proceeds from this technique.

The *Parc* project was not his first excursion in this field. A great admirer of Gustave Flaubert, from 1978 to 1980 he patiently produced a handwritten copy of the writer's entire output as a way of taking on the physical task involved in writing. Then, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Flaubert's death, he made a kind of mathematical translation of the novel *Salammbô* – not by making literature into equations, but by rendering into numbers the book's physical structures. Having counted the words, sentences and paragraphs of each of the 15 chapters, he used these figures as a basis for a gigantic staircase – one step per chapter – which he installed in the National Gallery of Canada. Finally, during a 14-hour performance held on August 9, 1980, he read *Salammbô* out loud from his own manuscript, a chapter per step, giving physical reality to the famous "gueuloir" where Flaubert declaimed his works (the slangy

Rober Racine

For a nomadic reading

JEAN DUMONT

Rober Racine. Photo: Richard-Max Tremblay.

term "gueuloir" might be translated as "hollering room").

It should be noted, however, that the physical reality of reading out loud is not quite the same in Racine's performance as in the "gueuloir." The "gueuloir," which for Flaubert was part of the *process of writing*, becomes for Racine, willy-nilly, an *exposition* of Flaubert's work while constituting a *process* of his own work. These slight shifts in reality, as well as what might be termed the "excessiveness" of Racine's projects, are constant elements in his production, identifying it as art.

Excessiveness is a characteristic shared by many other artists – one that often contributes to their estrangement from the society in which they work by giving rise to fear of the unknown, since, in their excesses, the unknown element is constantly expanding.

Rober Racine's excessiveness is of a different order. Gigantic, but repetitious and obsessive, it does not tend towards the unknown, nor does it contain anything that is utterly foreign: it is rooted, simply, in a *strangeness* which is fully proclaimed from the project's inception. The project is then nothing but the realization, one identical gesture after another, of the artist's infinite patience. Adventure is to be sought in the acceptance of what is known and the constraints it imposes.

Society may be surprised by this apparently endless repetition of the same gesture, which may be properly said to put the artist "outside" himself, but it can nonetheless recognize itself in constraints, concerns and behaviour which, on a different scale, are those not of a specialist in a

discipline unknown to the majority, but truly of an ordinary human being. In this case, art is born not from the exposure of an unknown aspect of reality, but from the artist's becoming aware of the unknown that exists within him and that might well be the ground of a possible relation with the Other.

After all, what was the true ground of the encounter between Rober Racine (who is also a musician) and Erik Satie when in 1978, during a 14-hour performance, the former played on the piano 840 times, after having transcribed them on paper 840 times, the 152 notes of *Vexations*, a musical phrase by the latter? Was the phrase in Satie's score truly the only meeting point? Who was it, in fact, who desired its repetitive execution?

With *Le Terrain du dictionnaire A-Z* and *Pages-Mémoires*, Racine's most recent visual works, the artist adds to his obstinate inventory of writing's physical realities by uttering a much more radical questioning of the reality of its content, and of the "authority" of language that constitutes it as discourse.

Le Terrain du dictionnaire A-Z, first conceived as a kind of maquette for the *Parc de la langue française*, is made up of the 55,000 entries in a standard French reference work, the *Petit Robert*, which the artist has patiently cut out and pasted on an equal number of cardboard labels stuck on the ends of small sticks vertically planted in a vast horizontal base. The whole of the French language is contained, bracketed, so to speak, within a glance.

After this peculiar writing project, which took him a year, Racine was left with 2,130 dictionary pages mercilessly pierced by the extraction of words. In nine years of insane labour, working over these pages in a thousand different ways – according to evolving rhythms and specific formulas – and then mounting them on mirrors, Racine created the astonishing *Pages-Mémoires*. These are kinds of ritual *passageways*

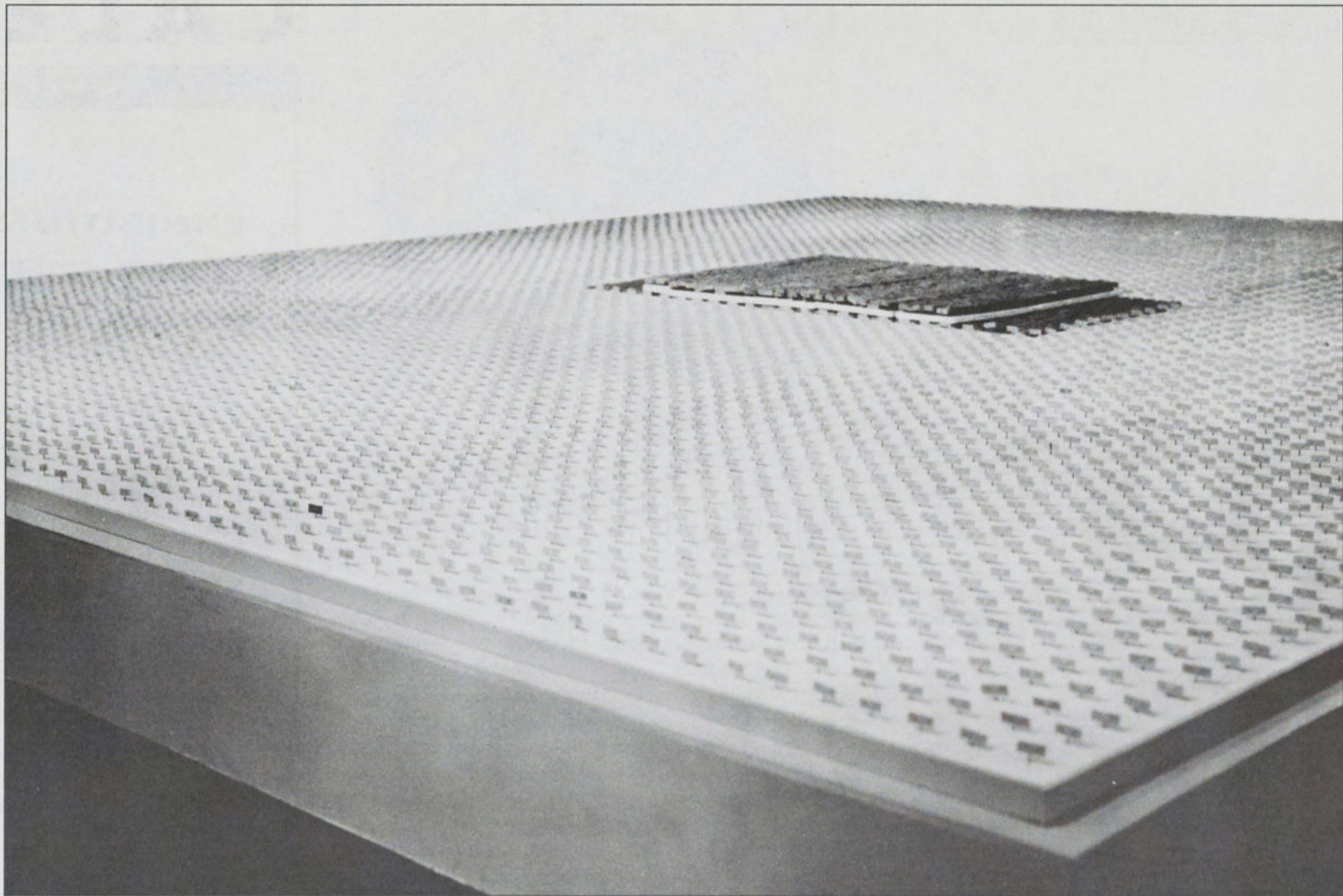
offering us definitive access to the very heart of the operation not only of the works of Rober Racine, but also of all stories, texts, and especially discourses which, until now, had constituted closed universes and meanings by virtue of the laws and systems of language.

Pages-Mémoires shows us that in confronting these systems, it is useless to destroy them in order to construct others. Rather,

... to what extent is the author a kind of "scribe"? how important is literality to literature? what is the status of discourse? ...

they must be opened up in the knowledge that their authority derives only from the law that closes them. It must be known that there is no *truth*, in discourse, but only *effects of truth* in the relations between discourses. Texts will then cease to be dangerous, and we will turn to them in search not of what others know, but of an ever deeper knowledge of ourselves... And so we will never be through reading Plato.

As an art critic, Jean Dumont has been a close observer of Québec's artistic development for over 15 years. He has followed this evolution through regular contributions to many publications, including the periodical Vie des Arts.



Rober Racine.
Le Terrain du dictionnaire A-Z, 1980.
Mixed media: styrofoam, wooden sticks, cardboard and paper.
16 x 853.4 x 731.5 cm.
Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

BROKEN MUSIC
NOVEMBER 4, 1990
TO FEBRUARY 10, 1991

Peter Lardong
Chocolate-Record,
1987. Chocolate
Photo: Michel Pétrin.



Museum Day 1990

ON MAY 27, 1990, on the occasion of *Museum Day*, the Musée's educational program and activities presented two activities: *De l'installation*, with art historian Normand Thériault, and *Côté carton-jardin*, with artist Marie-Anne Cuff.

The lecture on installation art introduced a large number of people to this artistic discipline. The audience greatly enjoyed this invitation to share the speaker's thoughts, in particular his highly relevant connections drawn between installation art today and certain works taken from the history of art at different periods. Mr. Thériault was curator of the exhibition *Aurora Borealis* organized by CIAC (Centre International d'Art Contemporain) in 1985. He is also the author of *De l'installation*, published in 1987.

A large group of visitors of all ages also joined Marie-Anne Cuff, a Québec artist practising installation art. Over the course of the day, cardboard and colours gradually took over the museum entrance, winding as far as the sculpture garden, or forming little islands. The public was delighted to be able to join in an experience in the company of an artist bursting with so much energy and imagination. The festive atmosphere that prevailed all day was due, in large part, to the spirit of cooperation of all participants.

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 auto-route south of University Street, "Cité du Havre - Port de Montréal" exit, then Pierre-Dupuy Avenue. Free parking.
By bus: Daily STCUM bus service via line 168 from McGill, Bonaventure and Square Victoria metro stations.

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 *Le Journal du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal*: \$25 (students and senior citizens: \$15). Information: (514) 873-4743.

Space Reserved for Artists

PAUL HUNTER

TIBOR DE NAGY GALLERY, NEW YORK

From September 29

LOUISE PANNETON

TAPISSERIES, DESSINS, PEINTURES
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September 12 - October 8

Le Journal du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is reserving this space for artists who wish to publicize their professional activities. Artists whose works are included in the Musée's collection, or who have exhibited at the Musée, are invited to inform us of the places and dates of any upcoming exhibitions. If, for reasons of space, the Musée is obliged to make a selection, our guiding principle will be "first come, first served" (with the postmark acting as final arbiter!).

The deadlines for inclusion in *Le Journal* are as follows:
For the November-December 1990 issue: September 10, 1990
For the January-February-March 1991 issue: November 1, 1990

The artist's name and the title, place and date of the exhibition or presentation will be mentioned. Please send all information to:

Le Journal du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal
Cité du Havre, Montréal, Québec H3C 3R4

MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

Le Journal du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is published every two months by the Direction

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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.

EXHIBITIONS

L'ART CONCEPTUEL, UNE PERSPECTIVE

Until 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. A catalogue accompanies the exhibition.

Travelling Exhibitions

EWEN, GAGNON, GAUCHER, HURTUBISE, McEWEN; À PROPOS D'UNE PEINTURE DES ANNÉES SOIXANTE

August 25 - September 23

MacDonald Stewart Art Centre, Guelph, Ontario

PROPOS D'ART CONTEMPORAIN FIGURES D'ACCUMULATION

September 6 - October 7

Maison de la culture Marie-Uguay, Montréal, Québec

October 17 - November 11

Centre d'exposition de Gatineau, Gatineau, Québec

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Activities for Families and Friends

DES CHOSES ET DES MOTS

September 16 from 1 to 5 p.m.

!XUEIGATNOC

October 14 from 1 to 5 p.m.

Films

L'ART ET L'ARGENT

Screening of films in the company of director Jacques Giraldeau. In cooperation with the National Film Board of Canada

LE TABLEAU NOIR (COLLAGE 4)

(Jacques Giraldeau, 1989, colour, 72 min, 56 s, o.v.)

LA TOILE BLANCHE (COLLAGE 5)

(Jacques Giraldeau, 1989, colour, 69 min, 52 s, o.v.)

September 23 at 2 p.m.

Lectures

LA CONSTRUCTION DES VALEURS ARTISTIQUES CONTEMPORAINES

September 30 at 2 p.m.

French sociologist Raymonde Moulin will discuss the art market.

COMING EXHIBITIONS

GIVERNY, LE TEMPS MAUVE

November 4, 1990 - January 27, 1991

Recent works by Suzanne Giroux

BROKEN MUSIC

November 4, 1990 - February 10, 1991

A coproduction of Berlin's Daadgalerie, the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague and Grenoble's Magasin.

RAYMOND GERVAIS, TRAVAUX RÉCENTS

November 4, 1990 - February 10, 1991