



The meeting of Marina Abramović and Ulay on the Great Wall, June 27, 1988. Photo: Da Hai Han and He Xinmao.

## Exhibitions

THE METEORIC JOURNEY OF  
MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ AND ULAY

J O S É E B É L I S L E

**M**ARINA ABRAMOVIĆ AND ULAY met in Amsterdam in 1975, by chance, on the day of their shared birthday. For over twelve years, they created a joint *œuvre* in the medium of performance, but also in video and photography. More than a collaborative endeavour, their work grew out of their relation as a couple. Expressing an absolute congruity of life and art, they explored and transcended notions of time, space and culture. From Amsterdam to the Wall of China, they fused past and present, East and West, with the age-old knowledge of other cultures, in an existential quest unique in its degree of complementarity and identity. Even after the fact, the recollection of their numerous performances evokes a silent amazement inspired as much by the sparseness and poignancy of their concepts as by the simplicity and boldness of their actions. ■ Marina Abramović was born in Belgrade in 1946. In the early seventies, she began to create sound environments and performances that were to provide the foundations of her artistic practice. In her actions entitled "Rythme", she was already making subtle use of accessories to symbolically represent the elements of the universe (earth, water, air and fire) and the ritualistic objects of civilization. In these works, she pushed her endurance to its limits and defied danger, seeing her own body as an object for research and experimentation, and making public participation part of her exploratory process. In *Rythme 5*, for example (Centre culturel étudiant, Belgrade, 1974), Abramović lay down in the middle of a flaming star at whose five points she had previously deposited fragments

of her own hair and nails. The oxygen within the star was consumed by the fire and she became unconscious. Her life was saved by an artist who was in the audience. ■ "Ulay" is the pseudonym of Uwe F. Laysiepen, who was born in Solingen, Germany, in 1943. According to Thomas McEvelley, Ulay — a child of the war — has found in "the ahistoricity of performance art" a means of throwing off the yoke of tradition and history, and of finding a pathway to freedom.<sup>1</sup> Through his deliberately perilous and provocative actions, Ulay pushes this art to its very limits. In 1975, he succeeded in removing from a Berlin museum a canvas that is famous throughout Germany — Spitzweg's *Die Arme Poete* (The Poor Poet), said to be Hitler's favourite painting. Afraid of neither scandal nor pain, Ulay rejects both established values and aesthetic conformity. ■ When, in 1976, Marina Abramović and Ulay embarked on their performance cycles, they adopted the following three-part principle: "no rehearsal, no predicted end, no repetition".<sup>2</sup> In their first joint performance, *Relation in Space*, which was presented at the 1976 Venice Biennale, they walked naked towards one another, meeting and colliding in the middle of space. This action was repeated steadily and with increasing speed for nearly an hour, until they were both utterly exhausted. Their

concentration was intense during this piece, and their endurance extreme; both these features were to recur in later works, in which they dissected their relation as man and woman and strove to vanquish their fear of suffering and death. ■ The following are just a few of their performances: *Talking about Similarity*, Singel 64, Amsterdam, 1976. Marina Abramović answers questions addressed to Ulay by the public while Ulay sews his lips together. ■ *Breathing In — Breathing Out*, 1st part, Centre culturel étudiant, Belgrade; 2nd part, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1977. The artists breathe in and out with their mouths pressed together, until they run out of oxygen. Duration: 19 minutes. ■ *Relation in Time*, Galleria comunale d'arte, Bologna, 1977. Back to back, their hair intertwined, the artists remain standing up for 17 hours. ■ *Relation in Space*, Paris Biennial, 1977. In front of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the couple execute over 2,000 circles in their small van. Duration: 16 hours. ■ *Communist Body, Capitalist Body*, Zontkeetsgracht 116, Amsterdam, 1979. An examination of the two artists' different ideological and cultural roots. ■ *Rest Energy*, ROSC, Dublin, 1980. Face to face, staring at one another, the artists are linked by a drawn bow; Ulay points the arrow at Marina. Duration: 4 minutes 6 seconds.

■ *Nightsea Crossing*, 1981-1986, from Sydney to Düsseldorf, from Chicago to Kassel, from São Paulo to Lyons. A performance executed in various parts of the world on 90 non-consecutive days, during which the artists sit at a table staring at one another, unmoving and silent, for periods varying from one to several days. Marina Abramović and Ulay developed the idea for this performance during a trip to the Australian desert. It was different from their earlier performances, in which the action and movement demanded a dynamic and highly physical concentration. ■ From this period on, their work dealt increasingly with inner concentration and psychic energy. The depth and intimacy of their relation, both private and public, began to define their relation to the world. It was also during this period that the Chinese tour was conceived. Marina Abramović and Ulay sought the authenticity and the wisdom of ancestral cultures. They visited Thailand and India, they lived with Tibetan monks and became friendly with Australian aborigines; and, by inviting these people to take part in their performances, they opened up Western intellectual structures. ■ Frank Lubbers of the Amphis Foundation, an organization set up in Amsterdam in 1983 to ensure the execution of the ambitious Wall of China venture, describes thus the reasoning and the impulse behind the project: "In point of fact, the concept underlying the plan was practically a self-evident consequence of the development of their work in recent years. After concentrating on *lying down* (for half a year in the Australian desert) and *sitting* (*Nightsea Crossing*), now they wanted to make *walking* the sub-





YVES  
BOULIANE

## THE METEORIC JOURNEY

(Continued)

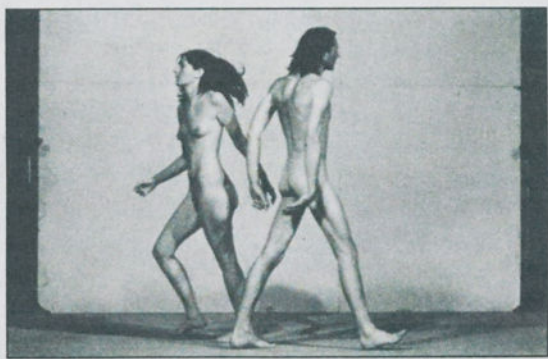
ject of their meditations. Accordingly they sought someplace on earth where walking would acquire a special significance.”<sup>3</sup> ■ The director of the Stedelijk Museum, Wim Beeren, sees the choice of the Great Wall as being virtually inevitable: “Among the creations of man was there anything finally more continuous, immortal, immutable and yet more full of motion than the Great Wall of China?”<sup>4</sup> ■ The construction of the Great Wall, that gigantic monument stretching across China from east to west, was begun seven hundred years before Christ. It is said to be built along a line of magnetic force that encircles the earth, and to mirror the path of the Milky Way. Legend has it that the Wall represents a dragon whose head lies to the east, in the Yellow Sea, and tail to the west, buried in the Gobi desert. This magnificent but forbidding fortified road comprehends a complex mixture of myth, history and reality. According to the beliefs of ancient China, the dragon is a beneficent divinity who also symbolizes the union between air and earth. It embodies a vital spiritual force that is predominantly male, while the wall itself symbolizes the feminine principle of concrete reality. The Great Wall appeared to Marina Abramović and Ulay as the point at which the material and the spiritual fuse. They decided to walk its length, Marina from the ocean in the east – the male part of the dragon – and Ulay from the desert in the west – the female part of the dragon. Their ultimate goal was to combine at their meeting point the complementary principles governing the internal and external forces of nature. However, what was initially intended to be the ritual celebration of their union became, several years later, the consecration of their personal and artistic separation. After having repeatedly and even painfully shown, in a suspended and complex time-span, the impossibility of avoiding one another, they agreed to part. Marina Abramović and Ulay walked along the Great Wall from March 30 to June 27, 1988. Silence, meditation, and the

nature and culture of China all contributed towards the conception and evolution of their work. ■ The Great Wall project was divided into three parts: the 90-day walk, the film documenting it, and the exhibition that grew out of it, organized by the Stedelijk Museum: *The Lovers, the Great Wall Walk*.

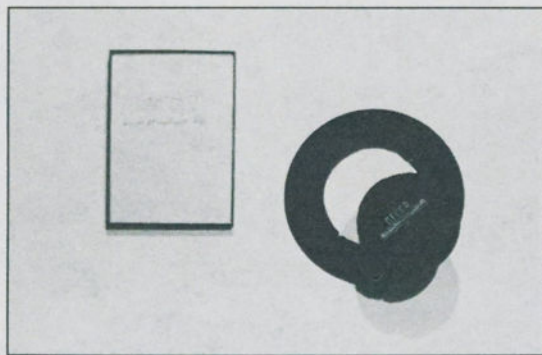
1. Thomas McEvelley, “Great Wall Talk”, in *The Lovers* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1989), p. 76. “For both Ulay and Marina, in fact, I think it was the ahistoricity of performance art, its abrogation of traditional modes and rules, its pretensions of rising above history into zones of freedom where one could recreate oneself, that inspired their unusual dedication and gave their work its special intensity.”
2. Marina Abramović, *Sur la Voie* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1990), p. 59.
3. McEvelley, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
4. McEvelley, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

*The exhibition, which is on view at the Musée from February 24 to April 21, 1991, presents works by Marina Abramović and Ulay created following the Great Wall Walk.*

Josée Bélisle has been a curator at the Musée since 1982. Among other projects, she has been responsible for the coordination of the Montreal showing of The 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillon and for the exhibitions Raymonde April, Voyage dans le monde des choses, Graff 1966-1986 and L'Histoire et la Mémoire.



Marina Abramović/Ulay, *Relation in Space*, Venice Biennial, 1976. Photo: Jaap de Graaf.



ABOVE: Claus Böhmler, *Un 45 tours tiré d'un microsillon*, 1987. Photo: Denis Farley. BELOW: Martin Tétreault, *Un trois dans un no 2*, 1990. Photo: Denis Farley.



lot. Not that I know the man, but the piece has guts, so to speak. All twisted and charred. It set me thinking, which is usually significant. Because, you see, I am always looking for more or less the same thing in art: a bit of eternity in transit or, maybe, a good transitional object like a towel, a hat, a doll... that a child would adopt. ■ This is a very interesting direction artistically speaking, for it affirms the primacy of the spiritual “in” the material, but only in relation to an appropriation characterized by the immanence of the object. One might say that the poetic layering of the object, and this in a deeply “matterist” context, resides in the transfer of energies involved in the mediation with the object itself. ■ As we move through the whole exhibition, we realize just how important the transitional object becomes as soon as there is any question of manipulating history. I mean that the reinvention of history seems to assert itself partly through an overturning of the values that are part of and that are conveyed by the conjuncture of the record. ■ Here, moreover, everything is a function of the spiral and what makes it operate. A sort of “vorticism”. As I see it, the theory of the musical object, as understood by Pierre Schaeffer,<sup>1</sup> is in some way reaffirmed *in potens* simply by the image of the meeting between record and record player. And the fascination exercised by this basic geometry only serves to reveal the extent of the theoretical and poetic possibilities of these objects. ■ The art record, generally speaking, establishes the quantitative limits of comprehension, not through musical time and all it implies, but through factual time – the minutes and seconds offered by the grooves. ■ This is the spirit adopted by a number of artists since the emergence of this approach; they have established all sorts of rules based on the notion of available quantity defined by the object. And it is through the exploitation of the record's essentially dualist character (side A/side B) that they have attempted a psycho-emotional exploration of doubleness. ■ In other words, that part of a visual practice that deals with recto-verso, centre-edge, predetermined quantity, is echoed by the object itself. ■ This, then, is what the exhibition *Broken Music* means to me. Another chance for visual sound artists to play with time, or with the object of time. ■ Finally, I recall the photo of Schwitters proclaiming something, probably at the top of his voice. Schwitters – what an artist! All those in the exhibition (and all the others) who have glued, folded, sawn, cut, or set fire to records are closely related to him. ■ His work lends authority to a large part of what appears in the exhibition, even though none of it requires sanction. ■ Schwitters fully understood the structure of the spiral: we see it in his collages, which usually develop from a central pivot with a number of angular facets arranged in a fan-shape, like the shutter of a camera. ■ As far as my aforementioned poetic conclusion is concerned, I would now say that the spiral can only confess backwards. Its true lesson is probably there, etched, in reverse. It's just a question of seeing with the ear and hearing with the eye. ■ I must mention the catalogue; a very articulate, well-researched catalogue. It contains many titles, some of which are already affixed to the walls. Its exhaustive discography illustrates the fact that different artists have arrived at a number of similar solutions. The catalogue is a veritable summary of high fidelity engineering.

1. Pierre Schaeffer, *Le traité des objets musicaux* (Éditions du Seuil, 1966).

*Yves Bouliane is an experimental musician and a painter.*



referring in its own way to history, entrenching contemporary art in the continuum of Western civilization and setting itself above the many trends in art today.

The interior space will provide a whole new discovery. The vertical lines of the building, the emergence of light, the silence of

Catherine Street, where a series of receding planes lead to the main entrance.

The linearity of the building is also emphasized by two imposing skylights, merging with a superposition of rectangular volumes recalling Théâtre Maisonneuve. Materials consist of light grey precast panels, copper roof panels

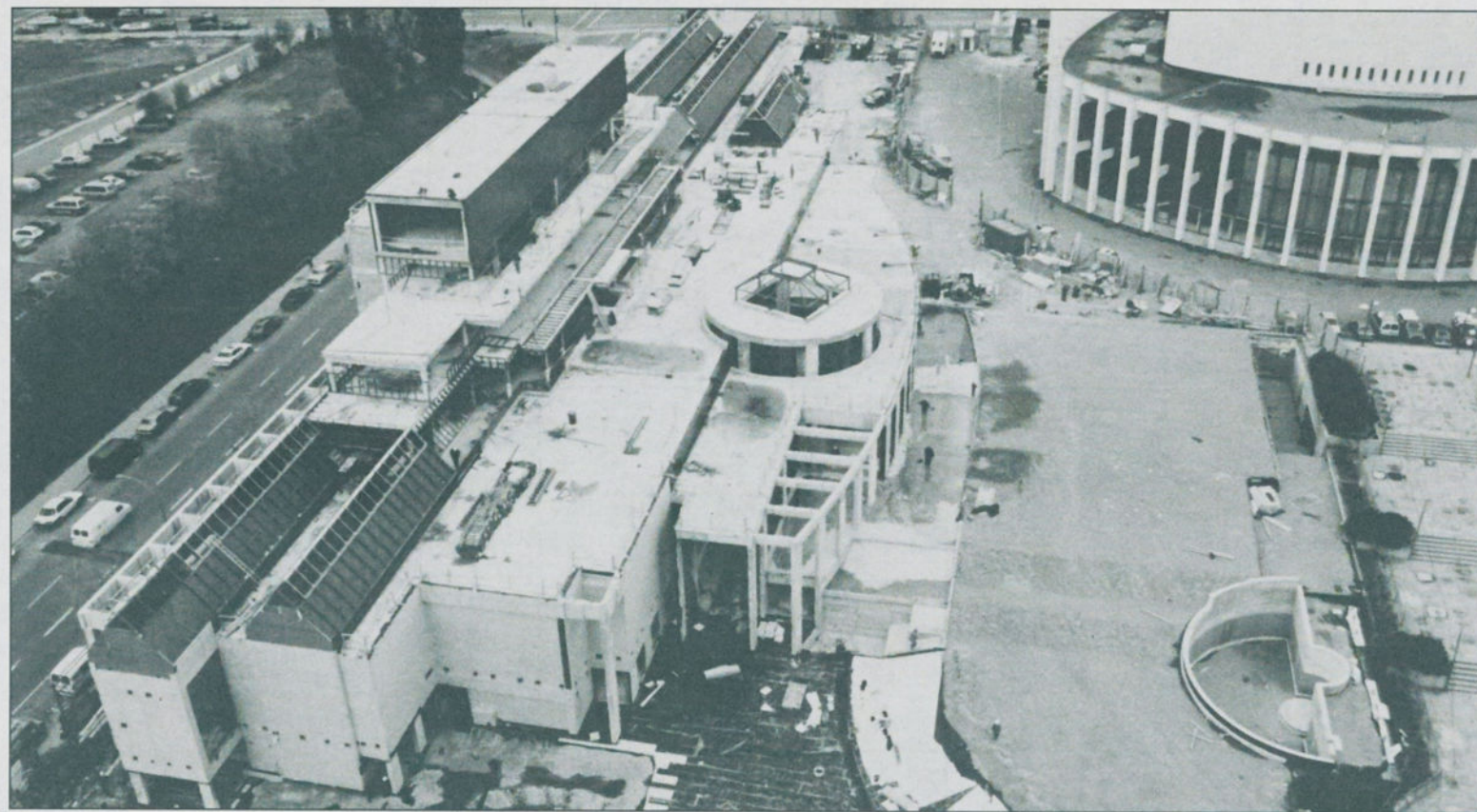
Musée favours a clear and functional organization of the eight main exhibition rooms on the esplanade level, with an "enfilade"-type circulation pattern.

The temporary exhibition rooms will be able to accommodate international-calibre travelling exhibitions and the permanent exhibition galleries will be

## The Musée Downtown

# ARCHITECTURE OF THE MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

Construction site, December 1990.  
Photo: Denis Farley.



J O D O I N , L A M A R R E , P R A T T E E T A S S O C I É S

## PROJECT DESIGN

**D**ESIGNING the new Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal: a formidable challenge to reconcile the irreconcilable, to have two opposing views of the world coexist. One world view that regards the individuality and forward-looking freedom of the visual artist as sacred; the other, the building itself, which must not only be in tune with the city, but most importantly, harmonize with its immediate neighbour, Place des Arts. The site on which the museum stands is already home to two major halls, one of which (Wilfrid Pelletier) is an important cultural landmark, dominating the site with its neo-classical architecture.

To ensure that these two worlds coexist, the new Musée will adopt refined, pure lines, stripped of detail, reducing reference to either to a minimum.

The exterior will be contemporary and will maintain an overall continuity with the two preexisting forms of architecture in the Place des Arts complex, particularly that of Salle Wilfrid Pelletier.

It will primarily reflect the image of society's enduring cultural values and pay tribute to artistic creation. The architecture, through the cadence of its colonnades, incorporates time,

the detail will inspire imagination, bringing the visitor in touch with the world... and in communion with the works.

## FEATURES OF THE PROJECT

The strong and dynamic composition of the museum building affirms its presence in the heart of the city and expresses the vitality of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. This structure will provide the much needed functional and flexible spaces required by a cultural institution of such importance, benefiting both the art and the public it addresses.

The narrowness of the site and its location on the western edge of Place des Arts were exploited to produce a strong linear building establishing a clear relationship to Jeanne Mance Street and defining, together with Salle Wilfrid Pelletier and Théâtre Maisonneuve, an important urban room. Setbacks in the volume have been used to accentuate this linearity as well as to open perspectives on Salle Wilfrid Pelletier.

The east colonnade establishes a dynamic dialogue with that of Salle Wilfrid Pelletier, while the colonnade on Jeanne Mance Street asserts the civic nature of the Musée, palliating the lack of transparency of its facades. This colonnade also creates a rhythm accompanying pedestrians from the metro entrance to Saint

and window framing elements which assure continuity with the existing buildings in the complex.

With a total area of 15,100 m<sup>2</sup> over six storeys and a basement, the museum will include the following features:

A three-level main hall, situated in a rotunda where access to the museum from the metro, the lobby and the street converge.

This hall gives access to an auditorium that will be shared with Place des Arts. The auditorium has fixed and foldaway seats and can accommodate, depending on how the seats are arranged, an average of 400 people. The adjustable stage is suited to a whole range of activities: concerts, plays, lectures and films.

On the same floor as the hall there is also a multipurpose room that will be used mainly for exhibitions, dance recitals, theatre and artists at work.

Also on this floor will be educational workshops, a daycare centre, a meeting room for les Amis du Musée and other services.

From the main lobby, a staircase leads to the upper floor, where there are four temporary exhibition galleries, totalling 1,450 m<sup>2</sup>, four permanent exhibition galleries totalling 980 m<sup>2</sup> and a restaurant able to accommodate fifty people.

The linear arrangement of the

used to display the Musée's collection.

The galleries have been designed to ensure proper exhibition and conservation conditions for the art works.

Natural light in the galleries has been carefully studied and used to great advantage. Special attention was required to reconcile the use of natural light with precise temperature constraints and high levels of humidity which must be maintained at a constant level throughout the year. This is ensured by computer-controlled automatic regulators.

The three upper levels house the reference library and archives, curatorial department offices, the museum's administrative offices and the mechanical rooms.

In the basement are the assembly and preparation workshops, conservation workshops and 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> of floor space for art storage.

The north section of the building is located over the infrastructure for the Place des Arts parking garage. The garage's supporting columns for the new building first had to be reinforced.

The structural grid of the columns for the infrastructure of the museum was originally designed for existing parking facilities. The arrangement of the columns for the superstructure of the

museum called for the integration of a number of shallow transfer beams to maximize the height of the basement.

The south section of the Musée has been built on a 10,900 m<sup>2</sup> two-floor expansion of the Place des Arts parking garage, adding another 335 parking spaces.

Because these new foundations were built below the footings of the original garage and to keep public access safe, retaining walls with tie-backs were required, anchored to solid bedrock.

The expansion of the parking garage extends far beyond the museum's ground floor area and will eventually be used as the foundation for the exterior landscaping of the Place des Arts complex.

The metro entrance is right next to the north section of the Musée and it will be renovated to fit in harmoniously with the new structure.

## PROJECT TEAM

Following a public competition in 1984, the design for the new museum was awarded to architects Jodoin, Lamarre, Pratte et Associés. The main project consultants are Les Consultants GENIPLUS Inc. for structural work, Les Consultants CRS Inc. for mechanical and electrical work, and SCENO-PLUS Inc. for stage and audiovisual work.

The work of art to be integrated into the project will be a sculpture by Pierre Granche.

The project was commissioned by la Société immobilière du Québec, represented by Vincent Gentile, architect.

## PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

The construction of the project is being carried out in three separate stages, following a public invitation to tender.

Excavation work and the retaining walls were awarded to Dubé Cormier Construction Inc. at a cost of \$1,390,020; the work has been completed.

Work on the parking facilities was awarded to Hervé Pomerleau Inc. at a cost of \$3,181,499; this work has been completed.

Work on the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal as such has been awarded to Les Constructions D. Tardif, Inc. at a cost of \$29,673,608 and is in progress.

Translated by Helena Scheffer

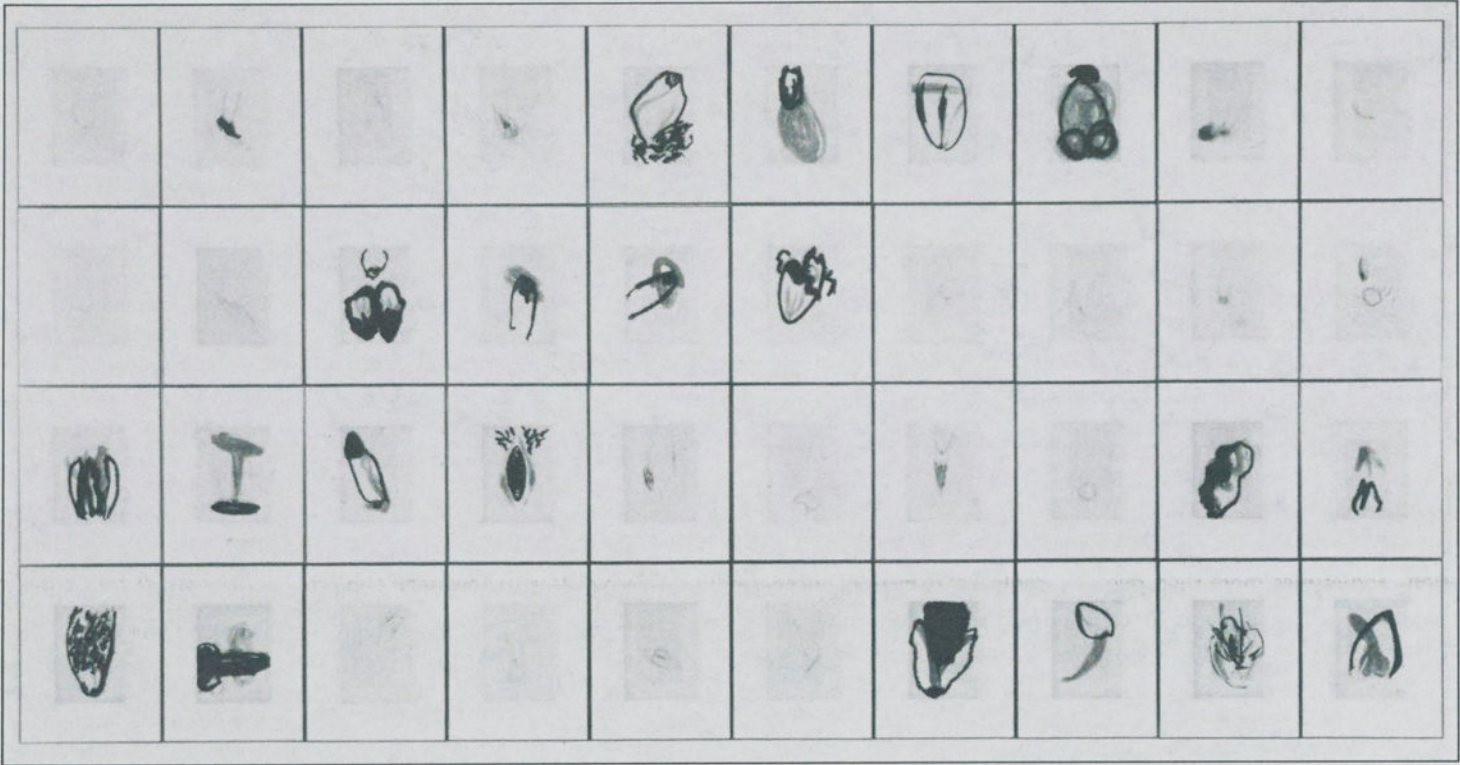
*The administration and staff of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal offer you their very best wishes for 1991!*



A WORK BY  
IRENE F. WHITTOME

PAULETTE GAGNON

**IRENE F. WHITTOME**, who was trained in the demanding and rigorous media of drawing and printmaking and whose creative approach involves the use of a wide range of techniques and materials, distinguished herself very early in her career as one of the most gifted artists of her generation. Drawing continues to be an ever-present feature of her artistic practice, just as paper endures as one of her many fields of



Irene F. Whittome, *Creativity; Fertility*, 1985. Oil and graphite on paper. 40 elements, 206 x 410 cm (ensemble). Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Gift of Steinberg Inc., Westmount. Photo: Denis Farley.

experimentation. Her important body of drawn work has been executed over a period of more than twenty-five years. ■ In *Creativity; Fertility*, a piece consisting of forty drawings, she imposes a repeated sexually-connotative image on a pre-existing support: the verso side of the detached pages of a Latin dictionary. These pages, made immediately evident by their sequential presentation within a grid, do not prescribe any one particular viewpoint, but contribute towards the gesturalism that forms the dynamic structure of the work. The artist also makes use of universal symbolic elements whose meaning, without being governed by specific rules or limits, is directly linked to the female experience. This series of drawings actually functions as a powerful creative strategy in which the tones of blood-red and deepest black charge with significance each of the artist's visual gestures. Suffused with the potential of signs that resist its urge towards self-revelation, the work expresses several layers of meaning. The same feeling of intensity underlies each individual drawing, and the work as a whole is pervaded with a harmony that encourages contemplation. ■ *Creativity; Fertility* has been selected as an essential addition to the other works in the Musée's collection.



A Quebec Artist

# Martha Townsend

*The Gravity of Things*

A N D R É L A M A R R E



Martha Townsend. Photo: Angela Grauerholz, courtesy of Art 45 inc.

**T**HE OBJECTS created by Martha Townsend appear to be locked tightly shut. While they might strike us in some ways like boxes or caskets, in which the artist has painstakingly accumulated a treasure of ideas, emotions, narratives, myths, symbols and forms,<sup>1</sup> none of the objects provides any obvious key that might be used to open it. The only accompanying text is a simple descriptive title, which is the source of only the smallest and vaguest impulse towards interpretation. What is it? What is it saying? What does it mean? What does it symbolize? So many questions, all of which Townsend deliberately refuses to answer.

The artist has been exhibiting these spheres of varying sizes, made of different materials and presented in different ways, since 1988. They are the perfect expression of her general attitude. "It [the sphere] doesn't exist in nature, as a perfect thing. Instead, it's a human concept, and the embodiment of a concept; it's not a representation of something. And though it's hermetic, it's still easy to relate to..."<sup>2</sup> But this ease is by no means guaranteed. Because of its semantic, narrative and symbolic closedness, the Townsendian object represents an enigma, a challenge to interpretation. And this closedness is underscored by a number of different "wrapping" techniques. *Grande sphère*, for example (exhibited at the Musée d'art contemporain in *Les temps chauds*, 1988), is encircled by a tight band of brown leather. This enveloping has the immediate effect of accentuating the interiority of the object, its refusal to signify or to recount, as if it were self-sufficient, as if it were turning in upon itself.

The compactness of the object, its economy of means, the auster-

ity of its presentation, reflect the artist's radical stance: "The world is already full of stuff... For me as an artist, I feel I have to be very judicious about what more stuff I put into it."<sup>3</sup> Judicious, she is. She produces little, and each piece is the result of a lengthy process of elaboration. This gives rise to a restraint and a starkness that considerably increase the intensity of the work. And this exactly because of the fact that the basic conception does not exclude metaphor. On the contrary, Townsend frequently poses the chance meeting between two materials, two shapes, two associational tracks, two fields of interpretation. Sometimes more than two. The pale oak and brown leather of *Grande sphère*, the roundness of its encircling band, are almost bound to create that tension inherent to all poetic images, but it appears in a distilled, concentrated form. There is no key – the metaphor is shrouded.

The impression of evasion and refusal is swiftly joined by an urgent plea for meaning. Do the two poles of the *Grande sphère* recall the exposed flesh of a piece of fruit, whose dark skin has been carefully peeled back? or the tenderness of the kernel of a nut, the inside of a chestnut, an acorn? or the turnings around the floor of a brown-belted martial artist? or what, exactly? If the object seems to evade us, so does its interpretation. And Townsend is delighted. Her work deals with structure, which is why her hermetic approach is paradoxically transformed into a work that is totally open.

This generosity is characteristic of the Townsendian object: through its "magnetic material presence",<sup>4</sup> through the precision of its metaphorical execution, it asserts itself and exposes itself to the perils of meaning. Townsend just recently exhibited a series of rocks of varying sizes, all sheathed in very dark green leather.<sup>5</sup> These pieces echo a number of earlier cycles, especially in their use of found objects, natural and otherwise. They also employ similar techniques involving the juxtaposition of materials (leather, stone) and forms (container, content), and of tight wrapping. However, the object is no longer – if it ever was – restricted within a mythical purity. On one level, certainly, it might be a rock taken

from a Zen garden, and wrapped. But it is impossible to avoid the sexual reference, the phallic image. *Pocket*: it sits before us, an immodest little object.

Townsend's art is not cold, despite its formalism; nor can it be reduced to an interplay of surfaces, despite its poetry; nor is it strictly musical, despite its preoccupation with echoes, variations and reverberations between one work and another (wood becomes rock, roundness becomes oval, brown becomes dark green, a belt becomes a sheath). It is an art of bold affirmation, of lucid subversiveness at every level, of subtle humour glimpsed and then suddenly lost to view, of unexpectedly revealed shamelessness.

If the world is already full, too full, it is paradoxically essential that the objects we add not be fragile, but fully complete ("I

really like the sphere for its self-ness"),<sup>6</sup> the products of concentration and condensation. And if the object, composed of so many tensions, implodes, falls into itself like matter into a black hole, it will, in the process, be reversed, will turn itself inside out like a glove and, by the force of gravity – and of its own gravity – exercise over us the most irresistible attraction. The poetry of this sculpture is closely linked to that form of contemporary literature in which metaphorical condensation constitutes a genuine act. In the words of Normand de Bellefeuille: "Every image disen-cumbers the world just a little."<sup>7</sup> Each of Martha Townsend's objects lightens space.

1. This reading is a continuation of one outlined in an exhibition review that appeared in *Parachute*, no. 59, July-August-September 1990, pp. 32-33.

2. Extract from an interview with Carol Laing, published by the Mercer Union Gallery, Toronto, 1989, p. 3.

3. Statement by Martha Townsend quoted in an article by Ann Duncan, *The Gazette*, October 8, 1987, p. B-5; also quoted in *Striving for Ideal Resolution/Tendre vers une solution idéale* (Calgary: Nickle Arts Museum, 1988), p. 13.

4. An expression employed by Dale Barrett in his introduction to an interview with the artist, Oakville Galleries, 1990.

5. Artspeak Gallery, Vancouver, October 20-November 17, 1990.

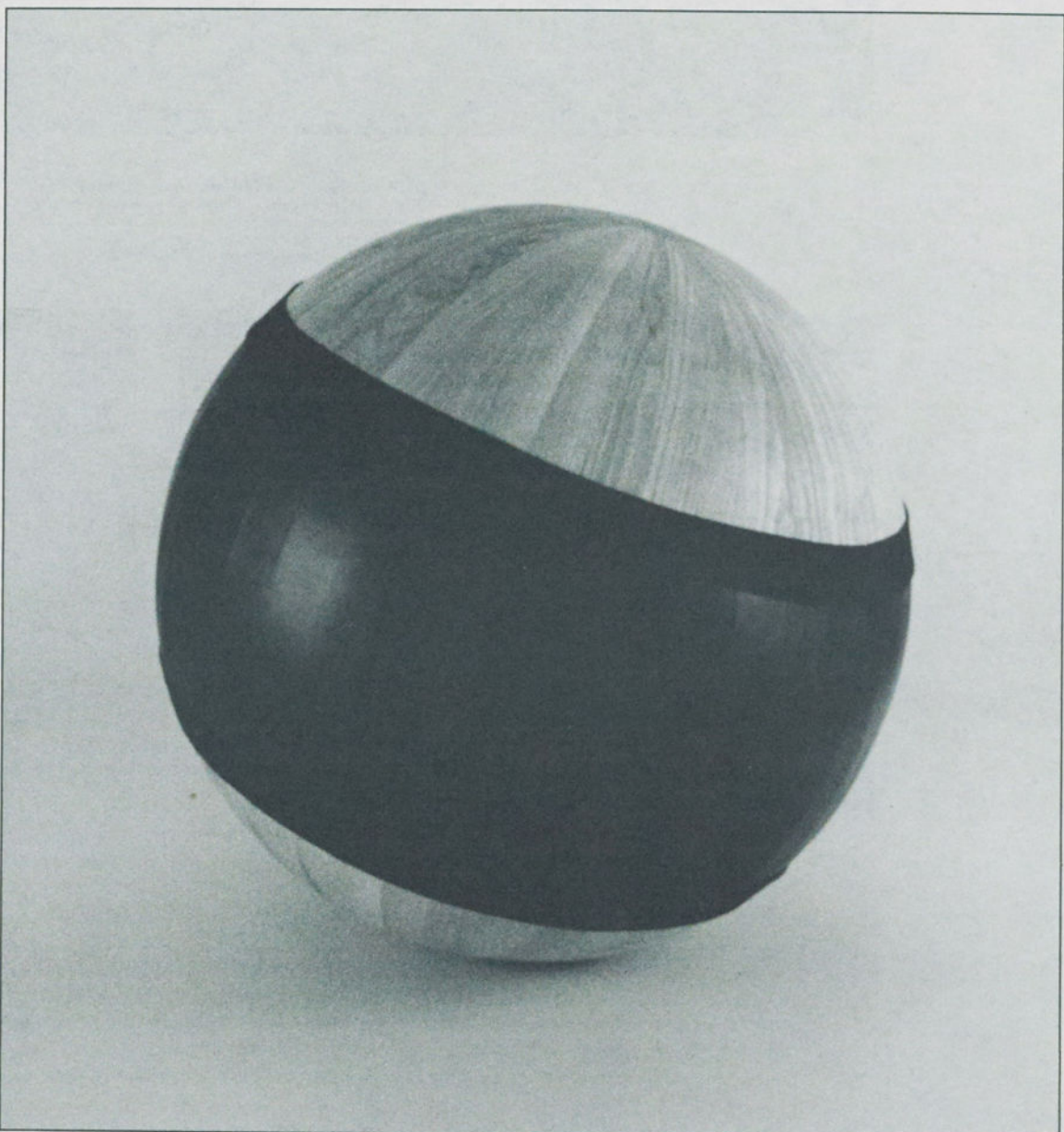
6. Interview with Carol Laing, p. 3.

7. Normand de Bellefeuille, *Catégoriques un deux et trois* (Écrits des Forges, 1986), p. 57.

André Lamarre teaches language and literature at the Collège de Maisonneuve. He has published a number of exhibition reviews in *Parachute* and is completing a doctoral thesis on the writings of certain French authors on Giacometti.



ABOVE: Martha Townsend, *Pocket*, 1990. Stone and leather. 17 x 8 x 4.5 cm. Private collection. Photo: Richard-Max Tremblay. BELOW: Martha Townsend, *Grande sphère*, 1988. Wood and leather. 87 cm (diameter). Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photo: Richard-Max Tremblay.



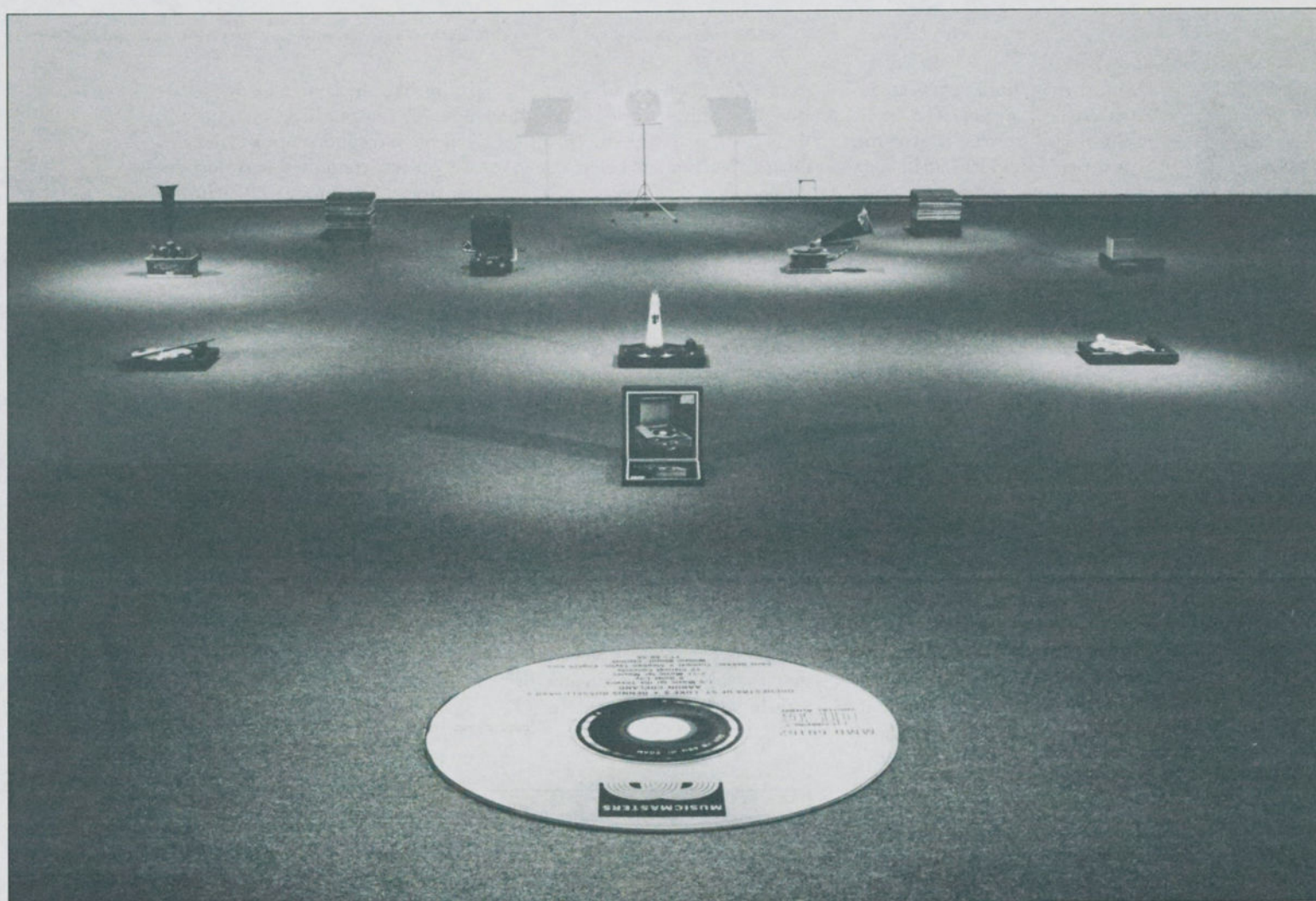


## RAYMOND GERVAIS

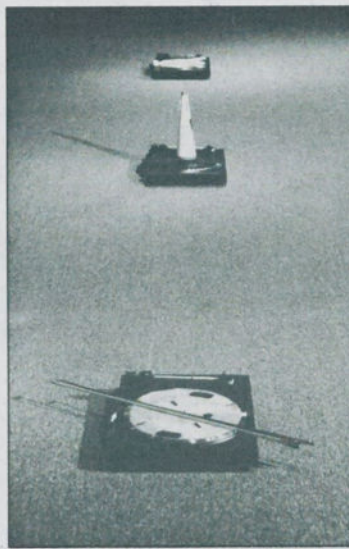
*Disques et tourne-disques*

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

Echoing the exhibition *Broken Music*, which takes us into the fascinating world of records, artist Raymond Gervais is presenting a solo exhibition at the Musée entitled *Disques et tourne-disques*, which consists of about fifteen previously unshown works. ■ The exhibition is contained in a single gallery and can be taken in at a single glance. The “decor” created by the different elements arranged within an open space strikes the spectator almost like one large-scale installation work. As in a garden,



1. Raymond Gervais, general view of the installation-exhibition *Disques et tourne-disques*. 2. *L'Oiseau en cage*, 1990. Two boxed record editions produced by the American record company Mosaic and entitled "The Complete Dean Benedetti Recordings of Charlie Parker". 5. *Nature morte au silence*, 1990. Portable hand-wound gramophone with inside horn. 4. *Archet, sourdine, gong*, 1990. Bow, mute and gong resting on a turntable. 3. *Nature morte au cylindre*, 1990. Edison phonograph with vertical horn.



each piece rests on the ground and there are pathways that allow visitors to circulate within the room. This series of photographs by Denis Farley shows several of these recent works by Raymond Gervais, which will be on view at the Musée until February 10, 1991. ■ To mark the exhibition, the artist has created a record cover that is a tribute to musician Pierre Mercure and poet Claude Gauvreau. This record cover is available at the Boutique du Musée.



# The Establishment of Values in Contemporary Art

G I L B E R T B O Y E R

**ART SOCIOLOGIST** Raymonde Moulin, author of the book *Le marché de la peinture en France*, is presently completing another work, entitled *La valeur de l'art; les artistes, le marché et l'État*, which is based on a series of studies of individual artists. During a lecture given at the Musée on September 30, 1990, Ms. Moulin discussed in detail the mechanisms behind the establishment of values in the field of international contemporary art.

As the result of major changes that have occurred over the past twenty-five years in both the world of culture (increased public intervention related to the cultural welfare state) and of economics (a new conception of the market as "a perpetual whirl of innovation"), the two areas are now extremely closely linked. Today and henceforth, according to Ms. Moulin, the "hierarchy of aesthetic values will be established to a very large degree by interaction between representatives of these two institutional worlds."

## THE CONTEMPORARY ART MARKET

Raymonde Moulin characterized the contemporary art market by comparing it briefly to that of historical art. In the contemporary market, she maintains, unlike the historical one, "supply is potentially undefined and the assignment of artistic value is never a sure thing". In addition, strategies exploiting positions of monopoly or oligopoly are invariably employed. We therefore have a situation in which the dealer, a key figure within the system, can "control the supply (create scarcity) and influence the way in

which works of art are valued".

Moreover, the new breed of dealer-agent tends to opt for "the short-term strategy and a constant renewal of the supply". Unlike the French dealers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who looked for success over an extended period, present-day art dealers leave nothing to chance.

Ms. Moulin also drew attention to the emergence of a small group of "leader" galleries, around which the contemporary scene revolves. "They set trends, they search out new talent and they have a crucial influence on the mapping out and organization of artistic territory. Since the mid-twentieth century, Leo Castelli has been the archetypical leader gallery." While money and cultural reputation are partially responsible for a dealer's success, the effective promotion of a particular new trend depends largely on the international network of important collectors, major museums and other galleries associated with the leader. Of course, this regulation of the market does not occur without a certain amount of friction between the major players on the cultural and economic scenes.

Once its monopoly over a given trend is assured, the leader gallery implements its promotional strategy, which involves marketing and advertising on the one hand, and cultural diffusion on the other. "All the economic and cultural players react swiftly and in concert to ensure that the artists get exposure everywhere that they should — in important magazines, in museums, in collections, at major international art events."

Since the beginning of the eighties, megacollectors have had enormous influence on the social and economic classification of artists and of works. They buy large quantities at relatively low prices, thus gaining control of the market and then, through their presence on various administrative boards, ensure the visibility of the artists they support at the cultural institution level. In fact,



Raymonde Moulin. Photo: Michel Pétrin.



the megacollector fights on both the economic and cultural fronts.

## THE INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL NETWORK

Caught up in the passion for the new, museums, major international art events (the Venice Biennale, Kassel's Documenta, etc.) and large-scale exhibitions also actively influence the market. Curators, key figures within these institutions, combine the func-

tions of prospecting, "labelling", promotion and acquisition.

"On the one hand, they help to define aesthetic values and establish the list of artists that are 'in'; on the other, they represent a segment of the demand and thus contribute through their acquisitions to the consolidation of market prices." They too, then, have a foot in both worlds. A curator's power and expertise depends ultimately on information. Discussing this question, Raymonde Moulin began by quoting an American curator: "You have to know what's going on all over the world, know what happened five minutes ago, know how to take short cuts to find out what's happening now." And then a well-known French artist: "Today, contemporary art is like a game of chess. You have to know who's playing, you have to know the rules, and you have to know the chess-board inside out if you want to make the winning move."

On this chess-board, major international art events play a decisive role. For they bring all the actors onstage at the same time: curators, dealers, exhibition organizers, critics, artists and collectors come together to thrash out the hierarchy of art values. Ms. Moulin sees these events as "necessary steps in the highly codified course of an artistic career", and, further, as "places where segments of the market and sectors of the cultural realm overlap with almost perfect precision."

In closing, Raymonde Moulin emphasized "the significance of the different signals sent out by the various economic and cultural players — who, given the complica-

ity between them, aim to increase the value of works — in a market in which the imbalance of information and its potential for manipulation are central to the problem of the establishment of prices".

Despite the breadth of Ms. Moulin's study, its parameters remain socio-economic, and a number of questions related to the place of the art object itself within the contemporary art market were suggested to the speaker by members of the audience.

It must be recognized, in my view, that the picture drawn by Raymonde Moulin, accurate as it once was, has since changed considerably; the growing understanding of the various forces that guide the economic and cultural aspects of the market mean that it is increasingly possible to make artistic and strategic choices based on a full possession of the facts. "In the cultural as in the economic realm, the action of the players is linked to the amount of information at their disposal."

*Le marché de la peinture en France*, Éditions de minuit, Paris, 1967

*La valeur de l'art (les artistes, le marché et l'État)* Éditions Flammarion, collection art, histoire et société. 1991.

*Gilbert Boyer, who was responsible for inviting Raymonde Moulin to Canada, is an installation artist. Active for over ten years, Gilbert Boyer is interested primarily in the contexts within which art is presented and diffused. Notable among his works are 350 degrés autour de l'objet (1986), Comme un poisson dans la ville (1988) and L'art de la parade — Amérique poste restante (1990).*

**JUST RECENTLY**, there has been an important addition to the curatorial department of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal: a Conservation sector.

Conservation work is divided into two main areas: *preventive conservation*, which includes the establishment of and adherence to specific standards related to the display (lighting, temperature, humidity, etc.), transport, handling and storage of art works; and *restoration*, which involves the treatment of the objects themselves. It should not be imagined that the conservator's skills are required only in cases of damage; in fact, their technical and scientific knowledge serves principally in the prevention of damage, and preventive conservation must be considered prior to other forms of intervention.

When restoration is obviously necessary, the conservator undertakes a careful examination and produces a report that covers all the information relevant to the work's condition. As far as possi-

ble, the work's creator is consulted on the planned action, and it is especially important in the field of contemporary art that the conservator not lose sight of the artist's original intentions concerning the conception and use of the work.

For example, a work of art that was designed to be ephemeral should never be "stabilized" by a conservator unless the artist expresses concern that the work is deteriorating more quickly than planned. In this case, measures aimed at slowing the disintegration process without altering the original concept can be suggested to the creator.

The nature, diversity and complexity of the materials used in contemporary art considerably complicate the conservator's job. The treatments required often raise ethical questions, especially in cases that call for a degree of aesthetic or conceptual interpretation. Close collaboration between the artist and the conservator can simplify enormously

## A Sector of the Musée

# Conservation

D A N I E L L E

A L L A R D

the sometimes delicate decisions regarding which restoration techniques are both appropriate and acceptable to all parties concerned — the creator, the conservator and the owner. All treatment of a work must be documented, and the completed report is henceforth considered to be an essential part of the work's history.

During the coming year, the Conservation sector will be concentrating on the examination and preparation of the works in our collection with a view to their move to the new downtown building, scheduled for the fall of 1991. Even though the new Musée site is not that far away from our present building, it is essential that each work be absolutely stable and adequately packed during transport. And, since the permanent collection includes over three thousand objects, this will be no mean task! It is one that the Conservation sector will share, however, with Collections Management, Technical Services and the curatorial department,

all of whom have already devoted a good deal of time and energy to the planning of the move.

The new downtown building is to have a well-equipped laboratory, which will enable the new sector to respond effectively to all conservation demands. Once installed in its premises, Conservation will begin to take on associated tasks, such as research and the instruction of trainees. And the conservation staff will always be happy to reply as far as they are able to requests from members of the public.

*Danielle Allard has occupied the post of Conservator at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal since August, 1990. The creation of this new post was made possible by a grant from Communications Canada under their Museum Assistance Program. Prior to her nomination, Ms. Allard worked as a conservator at a number of other institutions, including the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the National Gallery of Canada and the Canadian Conservation Institute.*



# CALENDAR

January - February - March 1991

## EXHIBITIONS



Suzanne Giroux,  
*Nymphéas no 3*, 1989.  
Video projection.  
Photo: Denis Farley.

### GIVERNY, LE TEMPS MAUVE

Until January 27

Recent works by Suzanne Giroux  
A catalogue accompanies the exhibition.

### BROKEN MUSIC

Until February 10

An exhibition organized by gelbe MUSIK and Berlin's daadgalerie. The Montreal presentation has benefited from the assistance of Distribution Trans-Canada, a division of Groupe Quebecor Inc., L'Échange, Esso Petroleum Canada and CKUT. A catalogue accompanies the exhibition.

### RAYMOND GERVAIS, TRAVAUX RÉCENTS

DISQUES ET TOURNE-DISQUES

Until February 10

### THE LOVERS: THE GREAT WALL WALK

February 24 – April 21

Organized by Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum, this exhibition features recent works by Marina Abramovic and Ulay (Uwe F. Laysiepen) executed following their walk on the Great Wall of China in the spring of 1988. The works are in a variety of media, including sculpture, photography, video and installation.

The opening of the exhibition will take place on  
**February 24 at 3 p.m.**  
A catalogue accompanies the exhibition.

## TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS

### LES TEMPS CHAUDS

Until January 3

Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan

## EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

### Workshop

### CORRIDOR D'EXPLORATION SUR L'UNIVERS DU SON

Until February 10

The corridor is a production of the Musée de la civilisation, Quebec City. Presentation of the corridor at the Musée has benefited from the assistance of Esso Petroleum Canada.

### Visits

Reservations: (514) 873-5267

## PERFORMING ARTS

### Performance

### AUTOUR DU REFUS GLOBAL

(MUSIQUE ET MODERNITÉ AU QUÉBEC)

February 10 at 2 p.m.

Performance-compositions by Raymond Gervais related to Paul-Émile Borduas, Claude Gauvreau and Pierre Mercure.

Free admission



Photo: Direction des communications, Ville de Gatineau.

**F**ROM OCTOBER 17 to November 11, 1990, the Centre d'exposition Gatineau presented the exhibition *Propos d'art contemporain – FIGURES D'ACCUMULATION*, organized and circulated by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. ■ The photo shows Activities Coordinator Marie-France Bessette with a 5th grade class from the Robinson school. ■ So far, over 4,300 visitors have seen this travelling exhibition in a number of different centres across Quebec. ■ The exhibition will remain available for circulation until 1992.

### 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 Musée

**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.

#### Musée 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.

The Musée will be closed on Tuesday January 1, 1991.

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

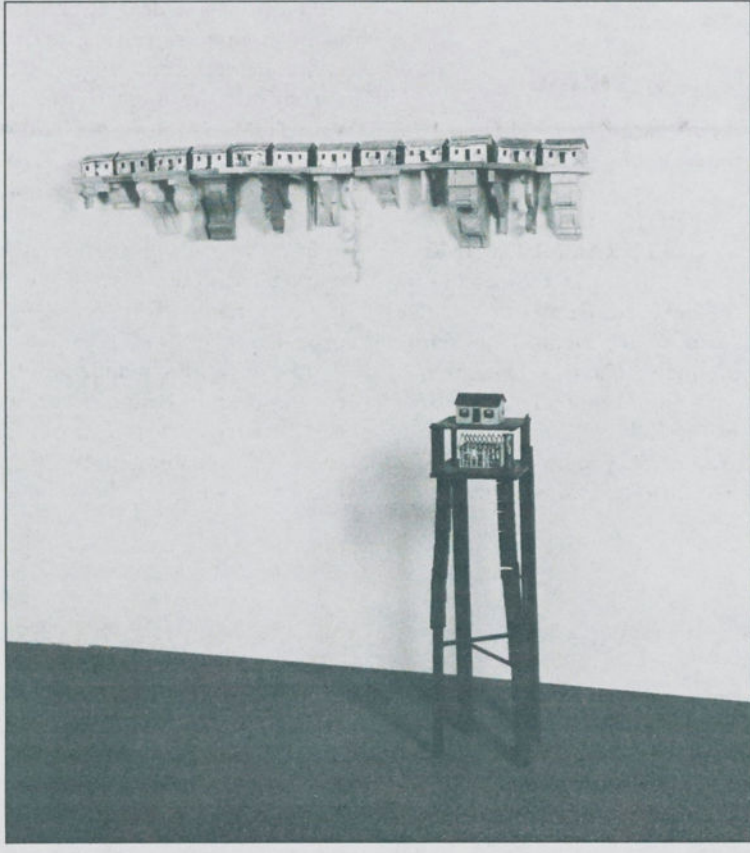


#### New publication

SUZANNE GIROUX  
GIVERNY,  
LE TEMPS MAUVE

RÉAL LUSSIER  
MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN  
DE MONTRÉAL

20 pages, 16 colour reproductions  
ISBN 2-951-12485-9, 1990



Michel Goulet, *Modèles*, 1985. Mixed media, steel, wood, tin cans, a variety of comices, shelf supports, toy 193 cm (width). Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photo: Denis Farley.

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal congratulates Michel Goulet, winner of the Prix Paul-Émile-Borduas 1990.

### MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

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