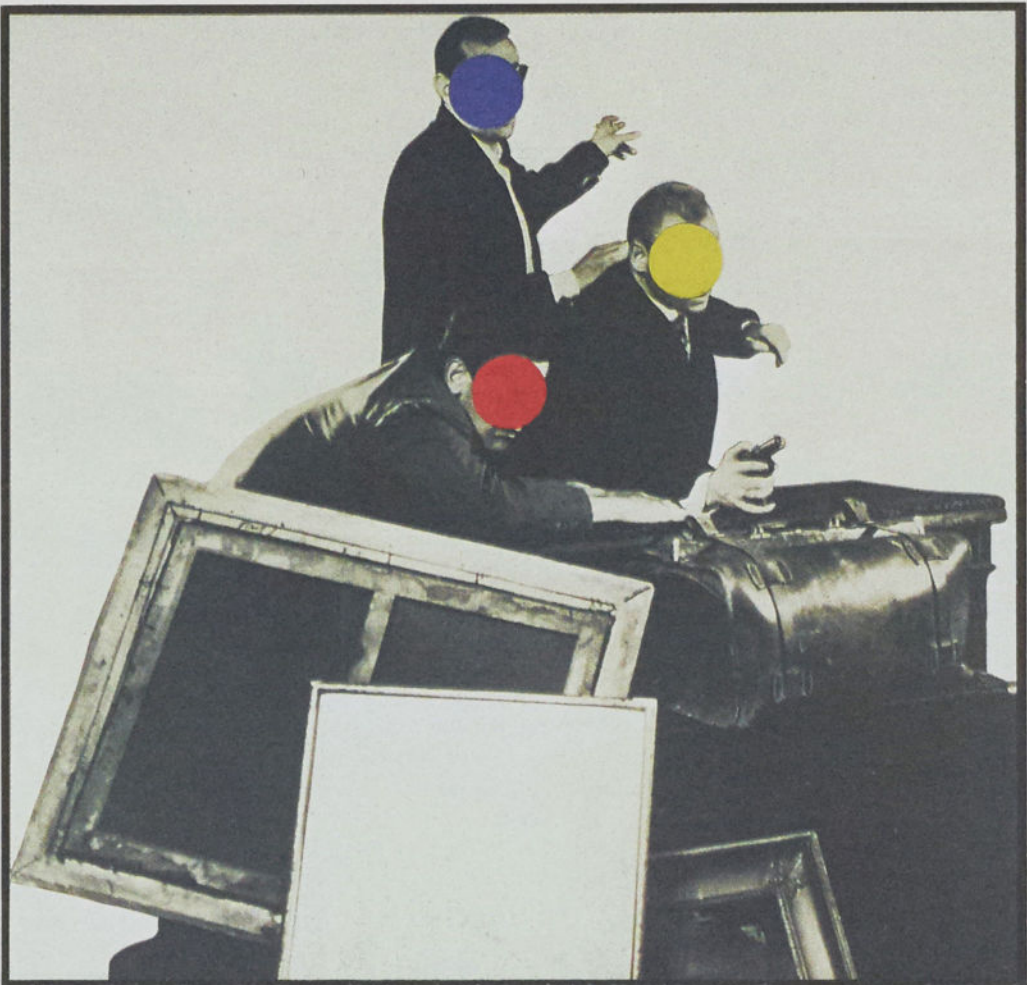


Exhibition **JOHN
BALDESSARI**
PIERRE LANDRY



John Baldessari,

Bloody Sundae, 1987.

Black and white

photographs with

vinyl paint,

mounted on board.

236.2 × 166.4 cm.

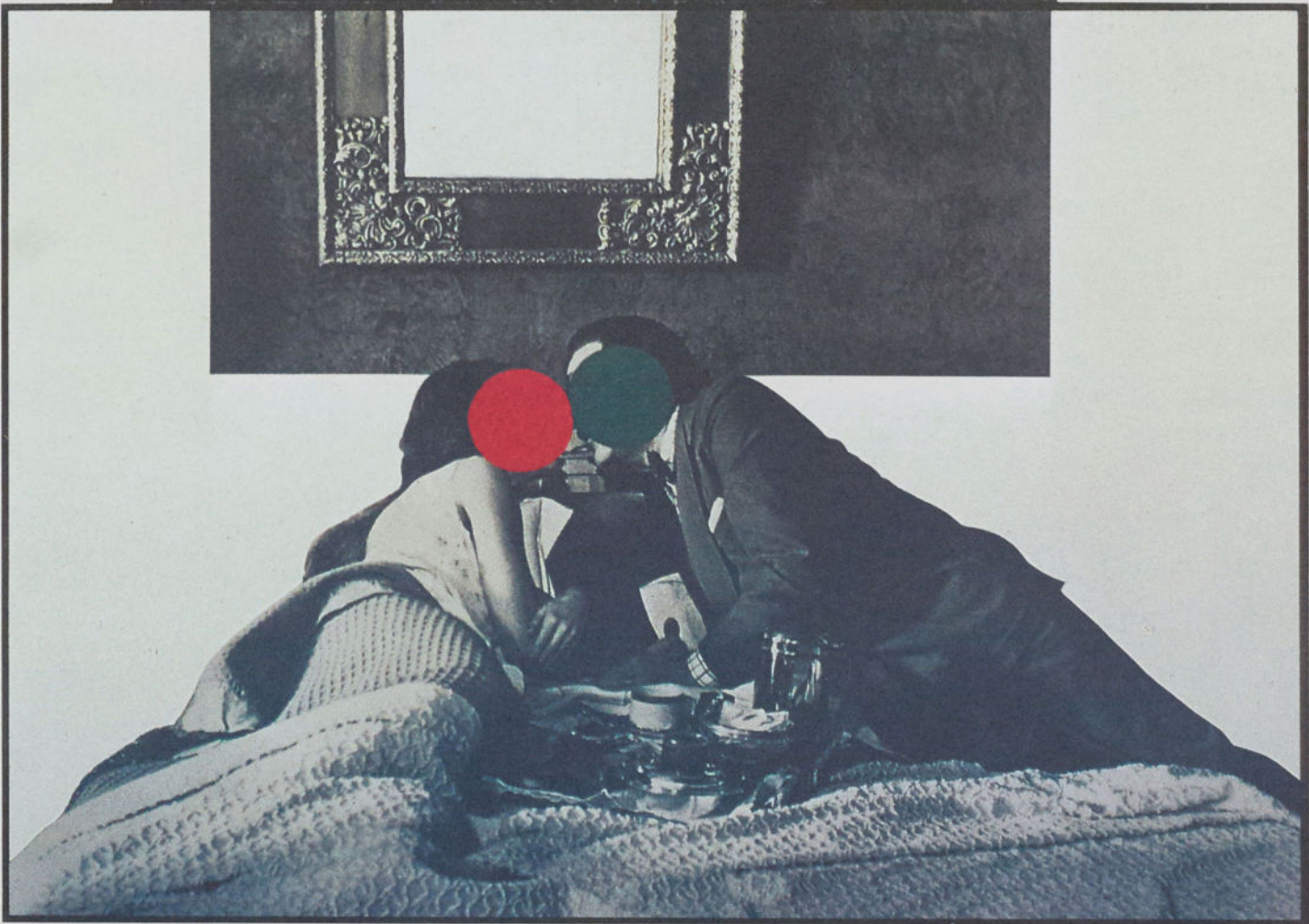
Collection: Joseph Rank.

Photo: Fredrik Nilsen

(The Museum of

Contemporary Art,

Los Angeles)



A NATIVE OF CALIFORNIA, where he continues to live and work, John Baldessari has, since the mid-sixties, practised an art that has come to exemplify a particularly rich period in art history. The exhibition organized and circulated by The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, which includes more than 80 works from 1967 to the late 1980s in its Montréal presentation, is the most important retrospective to date of Baldessari's work.

Beginning with canvases from the years 1967-1968,¹ which consist mainly of painted texts, this exhibition traces the different stages of an artistic practice that, very early on, challenged many of the standards and values inherited from the modernist tradition. A sensibility linked to his experience as a teacher (at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, among other institutions) as well as a strong interest in relationships between text and image and in anecdotal situations

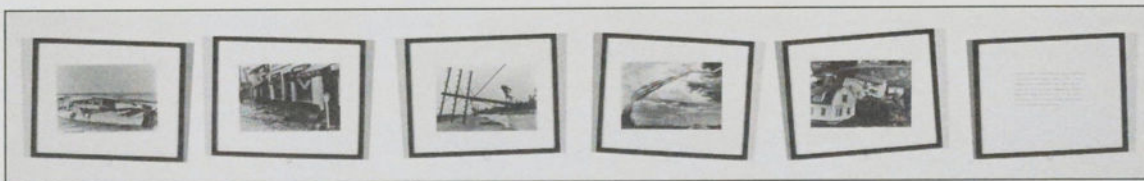
give Baldessari's work a very distinctive spirit marked, in particular, by his use of ambiguity as a source of questioning. This aspect of his approach, present in all of his work, took on a new dimension in the latter half of the seventies and throughout the eighties, when his application of images from the mass media utilized the doubt created by changing their context and drawing unusual connections — a work method since taken up by many other artists.

In 1967 and 1968, Baldessari produced a number of canvases made up of texts and, in some cases, a photographic image reproduced using an emulsion process. Although the support chosen (canvas) constitutes a link with pictorial tradition, the anonymous style of these works indicates a desire to go beyond the usual standards and disciplines of art. The evaluative criteria generally associated with painting (colour and texture, for example)

are replaced here by a broader questioning on the very nature of a work of art and the conditions under which it is produced.

These conditions are naturally determined by the environment in which Baldessari lives and works, including his readings and queries about art. Several of his text and phototext canvases, such as *An Artist Is Not Merely the Slavish Announcer...* (1967-1968), refer to the practice of art itself. In this work, Baldessari quotes

Continued on page 2

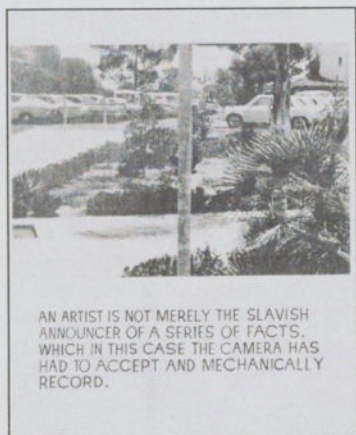


John Baldessari, *A Different Kind of Order (The Thelonious Monk Story)*, 1972-1973. Five black and white photographs and one typewritten sheet mounted on board; arrangement variable. 29.5 x 29.7 cm each. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Museum Purchase with partial funding provided by the National Endowment for the Arts. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen (The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles)

(Cont'd from page 1) JOHN BALDESSARI

an excerpt from a photography manual, which reads: "An artist is not merely the slavish announcer of a series of facts, which in this case the camera had to accept and mechanically record." As in all of Baldessari's works from this period, the quotation was reproduced on canvas by a sign painter following the artist's instructions. Above the text, a photographic image shows an innocuous scene readily identified with the urban environment of southern California. By doing his best to eliminate any trace of subjectivity, the artist draws attention to the "truth" stated in the text and to the meaning arising out of its juxtaposition to a commonplace image.

The 1969 *Commissioned Paintings* continues this analysis of the conditions surrounding the production and perception of the work of art. Starting from slides that all show a finger pointing at



AN ARTIST IS NOT MERELY THE SLAVISH ANNOUNCER OF A SERIES OF FACTS, WHICH IN THIS CASE THE CAMERA HAS HAD TO ACCEPT AND MECHANICALLY RECORD.

John Baldessari, *An Artist Is Not Merely the Slavish Announcer...*, 1967-1968. Acrylic and photoemulsion on canvas. 149.9 x 114.3 cm. Private Collection. Courtesy of Sonnabend Gallery, New York. Photo: Fred Scruton

different objects, Baldessari commissioned amateur painters to execute works reproducing the slide they had each selected. Fourteen canvases of the same size were thus produced, using acrylic or oil, by as many different painters. Under each painting, the name of the artist involved was indicated, a task once again entrusted to a sign painter. Exhibited as a group, according to the artist's wishes, these canvases hinting of irony raise various questions concerning style and originality in art, with respect to choice, subjectivity, and so on.

With *California Map Project Part 1: California*, also from 1969, Baldessari moves away from painting while proposing a work in which the notion of representation is of central importance. Using a map of California, the artist executed each of the 10 letters forming the name of the state, on the spot corresponding approximately to each letter's position on the map. In so doing, he transposed and represented, on California soil, a part of the map that was used as reference and that is itself a representation of that soil. Exhibited as a series of photographs documenting the results of the project — a presentation method common to many works from the concep-

tual period — this work also underscores the impact of the notions of time and space on the representational process: it was a project on a monumental scale (in terms of duration and territory covered), but only its principal moments are provided for us to see.

During the 1970s, Baldessari continued his analysis of questions connected with artistic creation (its relationship with pop culture, with art education, with our perceptual habits, with art history, etc.) through works dealing, for example, with the notions of order and disorder: *A Different Kind of Order (The Thelonious Monk Story)* (1972-1973), *Alignment Series: Things In My Studio (By Height)* (1975); with choice and criteria: *Choosing (A Game for Two Players): Rhubarb* (1972); and with narration and sequential arrangement: *A Movie: Directional Piece Where People Are Looking* (1972-1973), *Blasted Allegories* (1978). His inspiration sometimes comes from the most anonymous, everyday occurrences: *If It Is A.M.; If It Is P.M.* (1972-1973), and sometimes from a specific moment in art history: *The Mondrian Story* (1972-1973). Text and photographic image are a feature of much of his work from this period, and are often used in a way that emphasizes the ambiguity resulting from their free juxtaposition: *Movie Storyboard: Norma's Story* (1974). A number of films and videos were also produced around this time, including *Teaching a Plant the Alphabet* (1972), a video whose theme constitutes a reference to the well-known performance by Joseph Beuys entitled *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965).

A Different Kind of Order (The Thelonious Monk Story), 1972-1973, refers to an anecdote recounted in a biography of the famous jazz musician. Apparently, Monk's wife could not stand to see an object hanging crookedly on a wall. To "cure" her of this obsession, Monk is supposed to have deliberately put a clock slightly askew, which he returned to that angle every time his wife straightened it. Baldessari takes up this story and modifies it somewhat by seeing it as a deliberate attempt, on Monk's part, to teach his wife a new sense of order. The photographs that form the work all represent a situation of extreme disorder (flood, landslide, tornado, etc.). These images, along with the framed text accompanying them, are mounted lopsidedly within their frames; only a non-linear hanging of the set of frames can straighten them. By adapting the anecdote this way, Baldessari underscores the ability of the artist (and the teacher) to alter our perceptual habits in a relationship, sometimes to the extent of imposing new standards.

Another anecdote, this one relating to the painter Mondrian, is behind *The Mondrian Story* (1972-1973). This work, made up of two colour photos showing the shoes and the bottom of the

trousers of someone walking on a lawn, refers to Mondrian's joking observation that, when he walked in a park, his trousers would be stained green by the reflection of the grass. Through this anecdote, Baldessari presents a little-known side of Mondrian's personality and, at the same time, relativizes our perception of him, a perception that stems largely from the extreme rigour with which the painter's work explores geometric form and primary colours.

The use of images drawn from the mass media gives several works from the latter half of the seventies an enigmatic character, produced by the way Baldessari transforms the images by placing them in a new context. One example is *Violent Space Series: Two Stares Making a Point but Blocked by a Plane (For Malevich)* (1976). In this work, a white square (an allusion to the Russian artist Kazimir Malevich) is superimposed on a photograph showing two men staring at the part of the picture that is hidden by the square. By blocking out the left half of the image, which we assume to be essential to an understanding of it, Baldessari creates a situation of tension in which form and content are in opposition. Malevich's white square, one of the forms most characteristic of the modernist desire to eliminate any anecdotal dimension from the work of art, comes up against the gaze of two figures belonging to the mass-media and pop-culture world.

Baldessari's interest in challenging the usual criteria of composition (order, symmetry, balance...), already evident in certain phototext canvases from the late sixties, remains an important aspect of his work of the eighties. In pieces from this period, which are often rather large and consist of several elements, the arrangement of the images used, which are once again taken mainly from films and magazines, plays a key role in the transformation effected in their meaning.

Baldessari also alters the meaning of these images by working directly on the image itself. Since 1986, for example, he has frequently used white or coloured discs to obscure certain parts of them (often the faces of the figures, which then lose any specific identity), at the same time calling attention to the surrounding details or the overall composition.

The viewer's search for some kind of narrative link occasionally conflicts with the repetition, in these works, of the same photograph which has been simply reversed or modified slightly. Elsewhere, the use of compatible situations or similar themes, which various compositional strategies help to bring together, seems to allow such a link to be established without, however, enabling us to draw any precise interpretation.

In fact, the many associations which are always possible between the different parts of these works

give them a remarkable dynamic that prompts many questions. The themes referred to (love, danger, power, social life, and so on) are presented through their interpretation by the mass media, which Baldessari, in turn, modifies (or interprets). The impact of these sometimes spectacular works is thus based on the combination of different levels of reading and demands considerable attention of the viewer a demand that may be found, in fact, in the whole of Baldessari's work.

1. The works produced by Baldessari between May 1953 and March 1966, and still in his possession on July 24, 1970, were destroyed on that day by the artist. The work *Cremation Project* (1970), which is included in the exhibition, documents this event.

...images

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The exhibition John Baldessari is being presented at the Musée from November 10, 1991 to January 19, 1992.

It was organized by The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and is made possible by generous funding provided by the Murray and Isabella Rayburn Foundation; the Lannan Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal American agency; the Pasadena Art Alliance; Stuart T. and Judith E. Spence; and the MOCA Projects Council.

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal received financial support from the Exhibition Assistance Program of the Canada Council for the presentation of this exhibition.

The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive catalogue, copublished by The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and Rizzoli, New York. This richly illustrated publication features a text by Coosje van Bruggen on Baldessari's work as a whole.



John Baldessari, *Violent Space Series: Two Stares Making a Point but Blocked by a Plane (For Malevich)*, 1976. Black and white photograph with collage; mounted on board. 61.3 x 91.4 cm. Collection: James Corcoran, Los Angeles. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen (The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles)

THE EXHIBITION *Le corps vacant*, currently on at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal until October 27, allows visitors a deeper appreciation of the self-portrait in contemporary art. Using the works exhibited as a starting point, we are invited to consider the question of the self-portrait in the context of photography, as well as the more general framework of painting, and to place the problems presented by the "portrait of the artist by himself" in a historical perspective. The exhibition enables us to see how self-representation involves the notions of identity, proper name and signature, and why self-portraits put the viewer in the singular relationship with the work which was described by Denis Roche as follows:

*"How, then, can we not be conscious — perhaps even to the point of repulsion? — that visiting an exhibition of photographic self-portraits means feeling the desire which we all have experienced for ourselves, surrounding ourselves with the glow and loving encirclement of another, being in tune with that other: each photograph is thus a mirror..."*¹

This passage is quoted from the catalogue of the exhibition *Auto-portraits photographiques 1898-1981* staged by the Musée national d'Art moderne, Paris, in 1981. Since then, there have been few major events devoted exclusively to photographic self-portraits, until the current *Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal* which is focusing on autobiography and the

up to the 20th century — Michel Beaujour describes the genre as "trans-historical," in fact. In painting, the prototype of the self-portrait was first determined by the mirror: the artist is seen in three-quarter view, looking sidelong, because that position allows the head to be held still while the eyes move between the mirror and the canvas. The vast body of self-portraits painted from the time the genre first appeared in the 16th century to the present puts the question of identity via the problems involved in the process of producing the work: the painted subject which is at the same time the painting subject, and the artist's look which, in its relationship to the mirror, allows us to recognize a self-portrait and leads to what Philippe Lejeune calls "the self-portrait effect." Nevertheless, the artist was traditionally supposed to paint himself in a way that "brought together the look of the viewer and the look one casts on oneself" (M. Foucault), while working according to the artist's own technique or "style."

The use of the camera made it possible for artists to show themselves from behind or in profile, creating types of self-portraits that were practically non-existent until then. Furthermore, the specific nature of the photographic image poses the question of identity in a different way; because it is a light-generated imprint, a direct trace of the model on paper, the "resemblance" is obvious. In the seventies, the practice of

Exhibition

In Connection with *Le corps vacant*

Self-portrait on the Québec art scene

CHRISTINE BERNIER



Serge Lemoyne, *Autoportrait*, 1978. Serigraph on paper, 35/45. 57.3 x 72.5 cm. René Payant bequest. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

self-portrait as its principal themes.

Over the past 10 years, however, Montréal has seen a good many exhibitions of self-portraits in which photography was one of the techniques featured.

Most Québec exhibitions of self-portraits have been the product of artists' initiatives, with the exception of a 1984 presentation, at the McCord Museum, of the London Regional Art Gallery's *The Hand Holding the Brush*, self-portraits by Canadian artists. That same year, Powerhouse Gallery organized *Face à face. Auto-portraits*, with 80 participants, and the Maison de la culture Côte-des-Neiges presented *Je: 18 autoportraits*. Over half of the artists taking part in the latter show had also been included in the previous *Art et féminisme* exhibition at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. A special relationship was emerging between the self-portrait and women's art, particularly when those women artists employed the technique of photography.

In 1988 and 1989, the Conseil québécois de l'estampe set up a travelling exhibition of self-portraits by printmakers. The Bishop's University Art Gallery and the Espace Global gallery provide more recent examples of artists who have joined together to present works under the heading of self-portrait. In short, the theme of the self-portrait seems to have been richly mined during the eighties. And now, *Le corps vacant* shows us the work of artists in Britain, the United States and Austria, as well as Ontario and British Columbia, along with numerous self-portraits by Québec artists produced in recent years.

In the specific context of the photographic self-portrait, the problem of self-representation is posed in a very particular fashion. As is correctly pointed out by Barbara Rose, photography has played an important part in altering the stereotype of the self-portrait, which changed very little

self-portrait was often linked with performance, body art or even land art. Some photographic self-portraits termed "conceptual" ensued from the artist's gesture, forming a kind of visual documentation. This is clearly illustrated by the photographs of John Heward, presented at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal in the *John Heward* exhibition in 1977, as well as by Serge Tousignant's *Extension géométrique* series (1979) and some photographs by Suzy Lake and by Bill Vazan. We have since seen a resurgence of self-portrait in the early nineties. Examples we could mention, although in no particular order, are the photographic self-portraits of Roland Weber and Michel Campeau; the work of Sorel Cohen (who does not consider her works self-portraits, but who has nonetheless systematically represented herself in recent years); and certain photographs by Holly King, as well those of Raymonde April, in which "autobiographical coloration is a given from the start," as she puts it.

Some works by Philippe Boissonnet, Ariane Thézé and Pierre Ayot demonstrate that the photographic self-portrait may also be practised through photocopy techniques or slide shows. Finally, we should add to this list the recent works of Evergon (and mention that the connection between the photographic self-portrait and nudity represents, in itself, a broad field for investigation), along with *Autoportrait avec cadre et emprunt* by Marc Larochelle, to whom the Musée recently awarded the *Prix René Payant aux jeunes artistes en arts visuels du Québec*.

1. "Ainsi, comment ne pas être conscient — peut-être jusqu'à la répulsion — que visiter une exposition d'autoportraits photographiques, c'est éprouver le désir que chacun a eu pour soi, c'est s'entourer de l'embrassement et l'enveloppement amoureux d'autrui, c'est s'accorder avec lui, avec elle: chaque photo est alors un miroir (...)."

SINCE THE LATE SIXTIES, Joan Jonas has been active as a multi-media artist, working mainly in performance and video. She has performed all over Europe and the United States, in pieces that are inspired by the Noh and Kabuki traditions of Japanese theatre and

in a symbolist atmosphere in which cutout figures float in space. The saga is set in the Icelandic landscape, the symbolic appropriation of which is reflected in such gestures as the repeated measurement of maps with a wooden ruler. In a veiled, mysterious, disconcerting atmosphere,



associated with the vocabulary of contemporary theatre, dance, video and the visual arts, and that create new, open kinds of work. Jonas makes a highly personal synthesis of the different object-elements which she handles in her works. She first used video in 1972, in a performance called *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*. In addition to live camera work, she used prerecorded tapes to break up the performance. Her 1976 *The Jupiter Tree*, a performance inspired by a Grimm's fairy tale, explored narrative forms. The artist next interpreted contemporary events and science fiction stories such as fairy tales or myths, using the oral tradition to carry on the history of humankind. She continued this narrative tendency in her work entitled *Volcano Saga*, adapting a 13th-century Icelandic tale as a theatre piece and video. ■ The theatre piece was premiered at "De Appel" in the Netherlands, in 1985. While keeping to the legend, the video interprets a woman's dream

created by this return to the Middle Ages, the richness of the video images depicts the legend of a woman who resists the alienation of man and pursues her quest for the absolute. Through a series of questions and answers, the narration conjures up the life of this woman threatened by the relations she maintains with her four husbands. Drawing is an integral part, as it is in most of Jonas's works. This video presents a kind of fresco of surreal images, in which the artist creates complex inter-connections between the idea in her consciousness and the landscape, while manipulating our perception and space by means of multiple superimposed images that play continually on the notion of myth and reality. She wins over the viewers, who watch the saga as if it were a current theatrical performance. In this, her art links up with various aesthetics like land art, minimalism, conceptual art and symbolism.

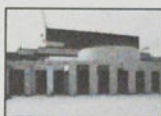
A New Acquisition

JOAN JONAS



ABOVE AND BELOW. Joan Jonas, *Volcano Saga* (excerpts), 1989. Colour video, 28 min 30 s with stereo sound on ¾" cassette. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photos: Michel Pétrin

P A U L E T T E
G A G N O N



Let There Be Magic... and Art

MANON BLANCHETTE

FROM SPRING 1987 to fall 1988, we at the Musée deliberated at considerable length on current museum practices and on the nature of the contemporary art object. Out of this exercise, which also had to take into account contextual factors, including certain government policies, arose the architectural shell of the Musée's new home. Beyond that architecture, however, beyond the sophisticated equipment that is desired, there is the art and there are the artists.

At no time, in fact, did we lose sight of the idea that at the origin of all museological functions lie the artists who produce something that is essential to society. The Musée is expanding, and risks finding its organizational operation more cumbersome. We have therefore already thought of how to circumvent this problem through more dynamic programming.

Following the model of New York's Museum of Modern Art, one of the four galleries intended for temporary exhibitions has been set aside for events that are different — different less in their nature than in their format, novelty and relationship to the curator. This will consequently be a space for short-run exhibitions, with less elaborate theoretical support and, above all, a space which can be taken over to a greater extent by the artist. Through close cooperation between artist and curator, new discursive formulas may be tried out. If the artist so desires, the curator will gladly trade his or her role as theoretician for one of stage manager, colleague, partner or producer.

The gallery in itself is quite unusual. Its configuration does not follow the golden rule of anonymity. An architectural design problem that could not be avoided is here proposed to the artists as an integral part of their works. A few steps, a change in level, a distinctive space — that's all it takes to stimulate the imagination of artists who, as we know, have for some years now set out to create installations in sites with strong connotations. Such artists as Michèle Waquant have already accepted the challenge; the fact is that this singular space is appealing, and we are rather pleased with it. Furthermore, as with all the temporary exhibition spaces in the Musée, this space devoted to "projects" is equipped with a variety of amenities. Our

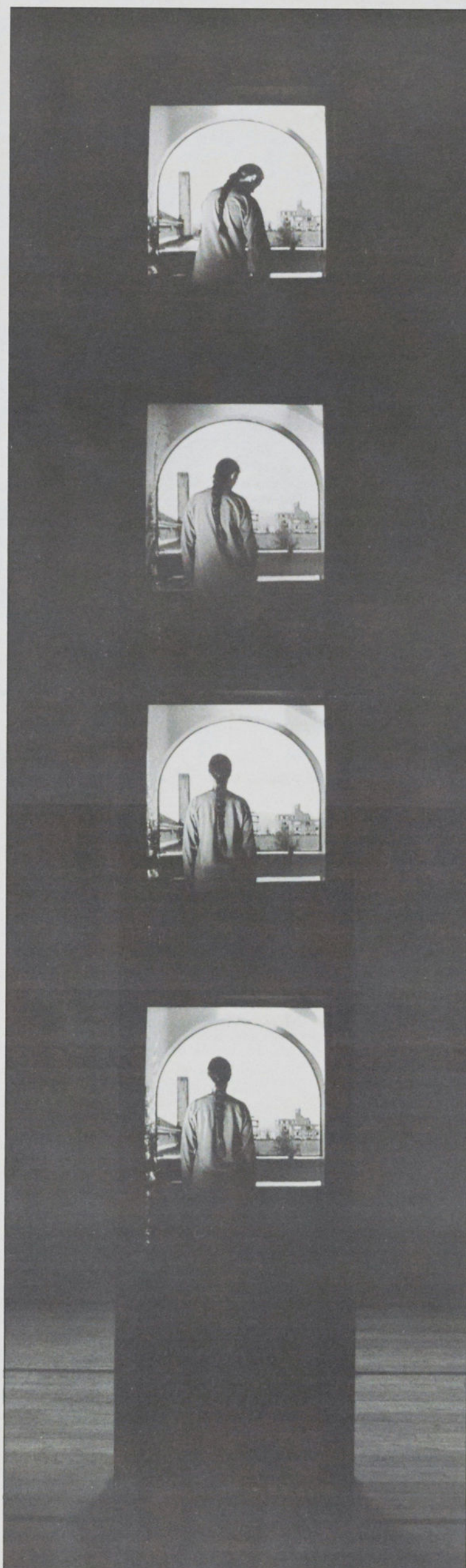
years of experience have prompted us to plan for the unforeseeable. Water, natural gas and air supplies are all available, in addition to the facilities common to all buildings.

Beyond these technical considerations, a whole new spirit guided us in this space-planning decision. The Musée will continue to produce exhibitions backed by a scientific approach. In addition, however, it will be an active participant in the rapid developments seen in the art world, in specific, unexpected events that may arise in the midst of the creative process, and take part in the creative process itself.

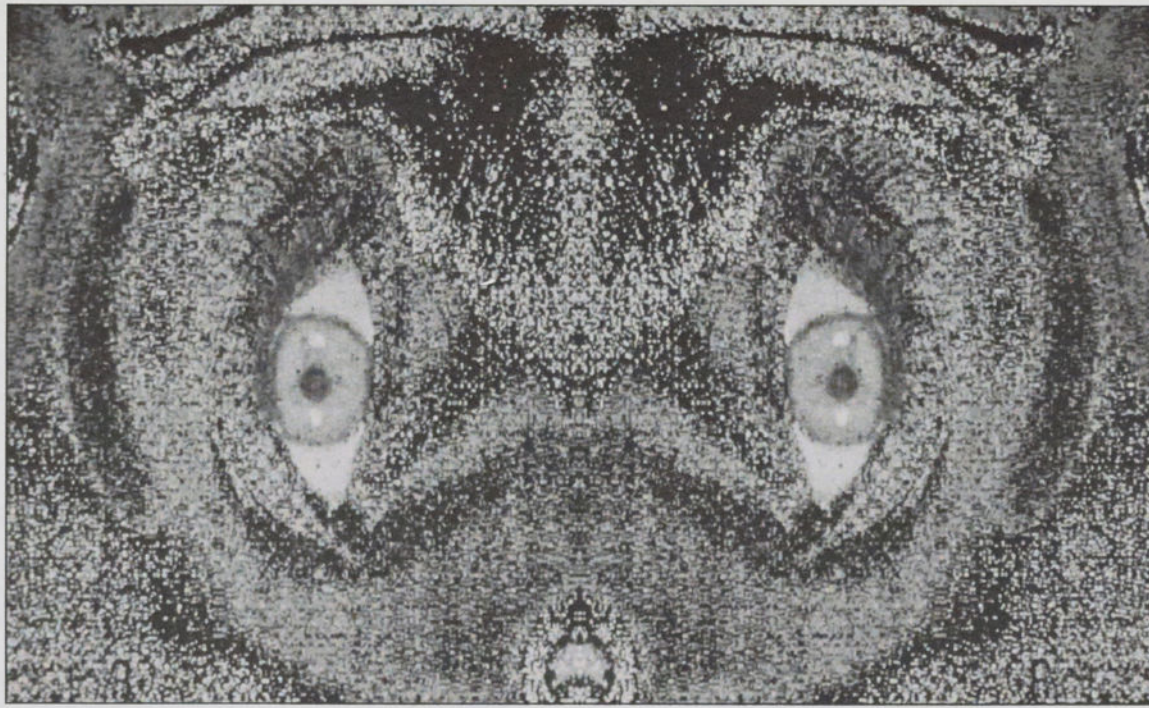
More than a mere site for displaying the present, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal wishes to be involved in the earliest stages of creative activity. It wants to be one of the instigators of this activity. Along with the multipurpose room, where events in all artistic disciplines will be produced, the "project" space is a special place for experimentation accessible to artists starting out on their careers.

In taking on part of the risk that is inherent in any developing art, moreover, the Musée is responding to the artists' desire to have a forum at their disposal. It is supporting them in their creative activity, providing them with a space where, within a certain budget, no hard-and-fast rules apply. While not loosening the quality criteria that will guide the selection of artists and projects, we hope that the vocation of this space will foster magic, surprise, provocation, questioning, criticism and poetry.

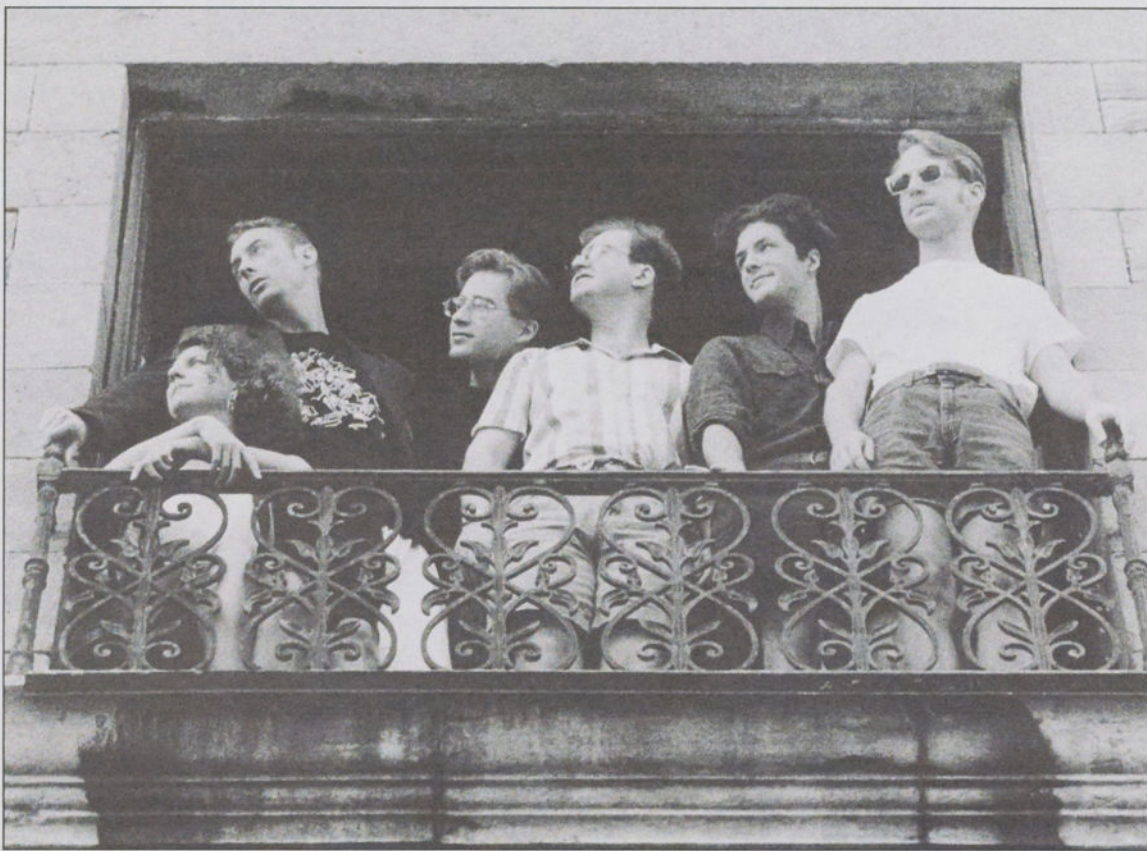
For viewers, we believe that this will be a place where they will constantly have a chance to get a current reading of creative art, both in Québec and beyond. They must expect to be occasionally surprised or even dumbfounded, but this will involve them more closely in issues of all kinds. They will be enriched by new learning and experience for, while the Musée serves artists, it also has an exclusive role to play with respect to its public. With its mandate to educate and enlighten, it will become a special medium in the case of this experimental space. To recall the words, in 1947, of the Automatistes, led by Borduas: "Place à la magie... place à l'art..." and we would add: let there finally be a real museum of contemporary art in Montréal.



Michèle Waquant, *En attendant la pluie/Waiting for the rain*, 1987. Video sculpture. 307 x 51 x 49.5 cm. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photo: Richard-Max Tremblay



ABOVE: Rafaël Lozano, *Portable Roots*. BELOW: POMO COMO



IMmediaCY, the brand-new creation of the Montréal artists' collective POMO COMO, will premiere at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal on October 18, 19 and 20, before going on to a Canadian and American tour.

IMmediaCY may be defined as "technological theatre," with an enormous, imaginary computer as stage and the spectators as users.

Multimedia Events

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

IMmediaCY blurs the boundaries between art and technology, creating a space in which music, dance, theatre and computer technology combine their powers of action and attraction. This multimedia performance applies computer age concepts: virtual reality, interaction and simultaneity. Computers take the spotlight in a theatrical narrative in which they are both idealized and faulted, personified and condemned to break down or disappear.

To begin with, *IMmediaCY* heaps praise on the benefits of computer technology in its rela-

IMmediaCY A Musée Premiere

tions with society, art, communications and life. The tone then becomes less laudatory and brings out the omnipresence of computers in our lives: surveillance, the distancing that comes with media-conveyed information, the standardization of language and, lastly, the automaton, a computer able to entertain itself without human participation.

IMmediaCY avoids the clichés that often characterize comparisons between computers and human beings. There will be no morality lessons, nor any easy solutions, but, instead, questions and challenges about this fascinating, topical subject of the ever growing presence of computer technology in our lives. Humour, allegory, ritual and

cynicism are all included, and viewers will readily recognize aspects of their day-to-day lives in the topics broached. The performance is designed to be perceived and enjoyed by a wide audience.

The POMO COMO team deploys an impressive battery of technical and technological devices, and the sets designed by Rafaël Lozano call for slide shows of two- and three-dimensional computer-animated images, video inserts and live shots of the audience and the artists. Nevertheless, the creators of this show are not trying to produce a work that has to be futuristic, but rather want to reach an audience in the hope of leading it, through an artistic event, to adopt a critical distance with respect to the

gradual invasion of computers.

POMO COMO is a collective of artists and professionals with backgrounds in engineering, chemistry, literature, dance, music and visual arts. Its members have set out to break through the limits imposed by their respective specialties and create a new path able to reflect their openness to the whole question of culture.

Formed in 1987, POMO COMO is made up of Will Bauer, an electronics engineer; Andreas Kitzmann, writer and actor; Steve Gibson, musician-composer; Kelly Hargraves, choreographer; Kathy Kennedy, singer-composer; Mark Bell, musician; and Rafaël Lozano, chemist and visual artist.

THE SITE SPECIFIC installations produced by Montréal artists Lyne Lapointe and Martha Fleming address a complex range of issues including abandonment and marginalization, public and private space, the museum as social and historical representation, the social symbolic role of architecture and the experience of the city, as well as feminism, gender and sexuality.

Québec Artists



Each of the projects involves the temporary habitation of a building of merit; the notion of transgression is fundamental to both their conception and their perception. In *Project Building/ Caserne # 14*, 1982, an abandoned firehall became the site of exploration of the military hierarchy and cloistered existence imposed by the nature of the firemen's work. In an abandoned beaux-arts post office, *Le Musée des Sciences* proposed a discursive parody of the history of science; the contended objectivity of science and medicine, and the analogous experimentations of Jean-Martin Charcot, Dr. Barnardo and Eadweard Muybridge in the name of artistic, scientific, social or military advancement were exposed. *La Donna Delinquenta*, which in many ways grew out of *Le Musée des Sciences*, focused on the rapport between the spectacle as a form of social discourse and marginalization, criminality, and social and economic abandonment, within the architectural framework of the long neglected, and still majestic, turn-of-the-century Corona Theatre. *The Wilds and the Deep* took place in the Battery Maritime Building on the southernmost tip

of Manhattan. Rendering visible the millennial history of the site, the artists exposed the connections between the mercantile structures of colonialism and natural history, and the museum's role as repository of destroyed and exploited cultures. *Eat Me/Drink Me/Love Me*, which was held at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, posited

a means of involving a whole community of non-art individuals. The subjects addressed — marginalization, abandonment, disenfranchisement and the overwhelming power of institutionalized structures — are central not only to the artists' lives, but also to the histories of the buildings, their neighbourhoods, and to the lives of their audience.

tus; the projects have come to embody the critical significance, as well as the allegorical implications, of these two devices. The camera obscura points to the artists' dismantling of the conventional boundaries between public and private space operated by architecture, in addition to referencing notions of objectivity and the impossibility of accurate

ACTS OF EMPOWERMENT : THE PROJECTS OF LYNE LAPOINTE AND MARTHA FLEMING

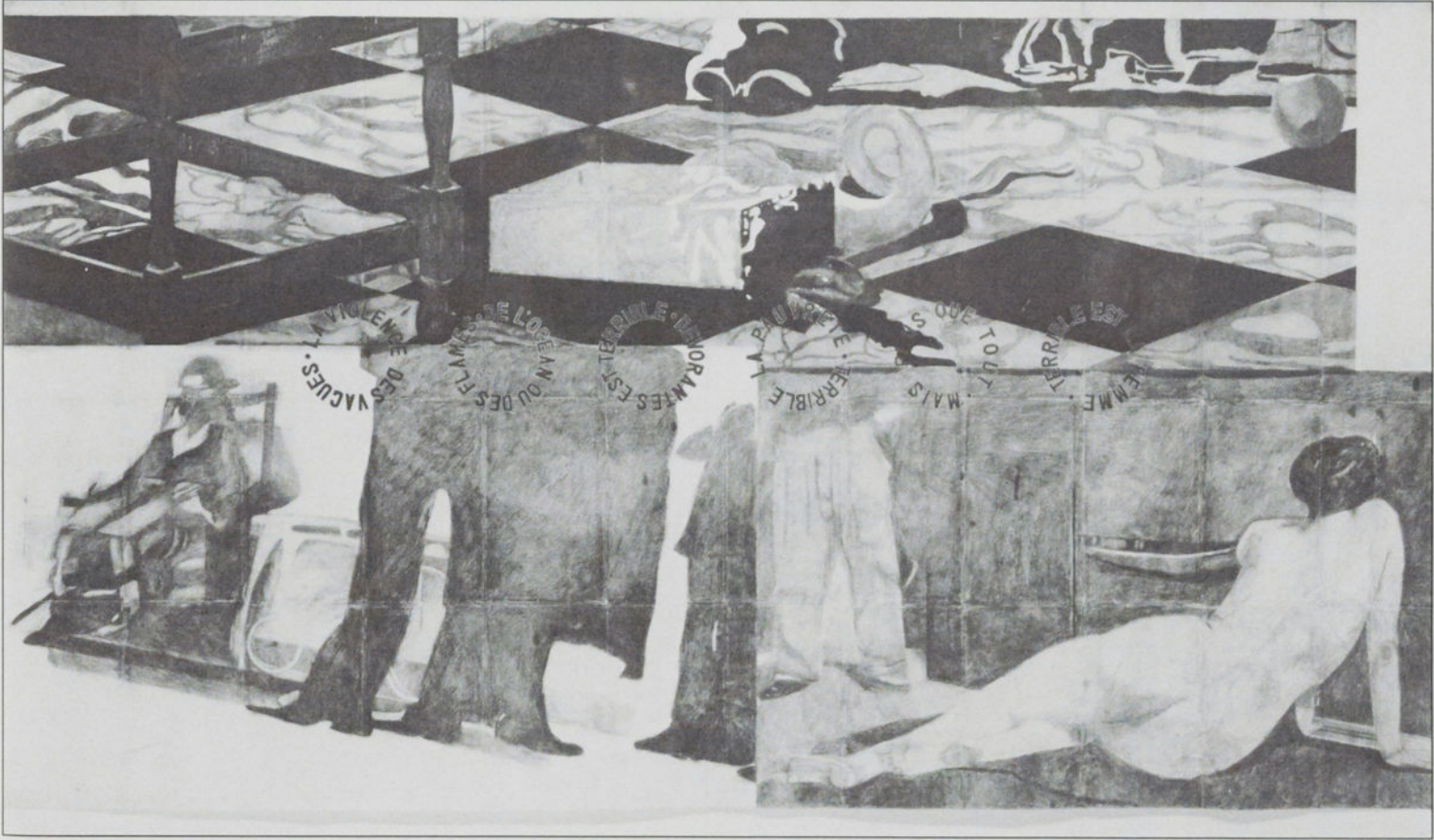
LESLEY JOHNSTONE

a fictitious love affair between Christina Rossetti and Emily Dickinson, as a means of expressing the artists' own quest for sites of pleasure, for expressions of pleasure, within rigid, institutionalized, artistic and social structures. Thus, even when working within the art system, Lapointe and Fleming integrate a critical response to the significance and history of their site. Lapointe and Fleming have worked collaboratively since 1981, when they first met. Together they have developed a working method which reflects their identities as women, artists and lesbians, and their belief that the work of art is more directly socially effective outside, rather than within, the institutionalized art system. Initially, Lapointe and Fleming's decision to work outside existing art structures stemmed from a desire to establish stronger ties with their audience — to find an audience to whom they could speak directly, an audience they felt could respond to their work in a real way. Locating their projects in buildings that are an important part of the social fabric of their neighbourhoods — post office, firehall, theatre — was

Thus a series of empathic relationships develop that become fundamental to the project's significance. The methodology of fragmentation and the juxtaposition of often contradictory images and texts, culled from extremely divergent contemporary and historical sources, asks viewers to participate in the construction of meaning, to resolve these contradictions in a way that is meaningful to their own lives. The desire to provoke an active participation on the part of the viewer is not limited to the project but is intended as an act of social, political and personal empowerment; the artists incite their audience to take control of their lives, they declare that this empowerment is possible. Thus, the seeking of sites of pleasure and desire manifested in *Eat Me/Drink Me/Love Me* must also be viewed as an act of empowerment. The image of the amphitheatre and the optical devices of the camera obscura and anamorphosis have become leitmotifs in Lapointe and Fleming's projects. The camera obscura and anamorphosis, which initially served as optical devices with specific historical and ideological significations, have become operational appara-

representation. Anamorphosis, as a formal negation of the possibility of a unified totality and a declaration that only incomplete and fragmentary visions are possible, perhaps represents the most accurate description of Lapointe and Fleming's projects as a whole. The amphitheatre, which in the earlier projects was a highly charged space — the display of the firemen's uniforms in *Caserne # 14*, and the gynecological examination room in *Le Musée des Sciences* — has become a *mise en scène* of the act of perception in the recent works. The mezzanine emptied of its seats in the Corona, and the central ferry slip where water entered the Battery Maritime Building, are voids waiting to be filled by the gaze of the spectator, the spaces where we are asked to invest the projects with our own memories, with our own lives. And we have come to expect this generous empty space in the projects of Lyne Lapointe and Martha Fleming.

Lesley Johnstone is a freelance critic and curator, and is Publications coordinator at Artexte information centre.



ABOVE: Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe, *La Donna Delinquenta* (Inner Lobby Area), 1984-1987. Photo: Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe. BELOW: Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe, *La violence des vagues* (La Donna Delinquenta series), 1984-1987. Gouache, pencil, linseed oil and enamel paint on rag paper. 281.9 x 508 cm. Collection: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.



Guido Molinari, *Sans-titre*, 1954. Drawing, India ink. 77 x 91 cm. Collection: Guido Molinari. Photo: Michel Pétrin

MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

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

ADMISSION
Tuesday: Free admission for all
Wednesday through Sunday: \$2 for students, senior citizens and members of the Fondation des Amis du Musée,
\$3 for adults,
\$5 for families.
Special rates for groups
Reservations: 873-5267
Free at all times for children under 16.
The proceeds will go to the Musée's art acquisition fund.

ACCESS TO THE MUSÉE
By car: Bonaventure autoroute 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. For further information, dial: A-U-T-O-B-U-S.

MUSÉE HOURS
Exhibitions: daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., closed Mondays.
Documentation Centre: In preparation for the Musée's move downtown, the Centre has been closed since June 24.
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 *Le Journal du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal*: \$30 (students and senior citizens: \$15; family membership: \$45). Information: (514) 873-4743.

MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

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The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is a provincially owned corporation funded by the ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec. The Musée receives additional financial support from Communications Canada and the Canada Council • Director: **Marcel Brisebois** • Members of the Board of Directors: **Mariette Clermont**, Chairman, **Sam Abramovitch, Luc Beauregard, Vasco Ceccon, Léon Courville, Claude Hinton, Claudette Hould, Paul Noiseux, Marissa Nuss, Monique Parent, Robert Turgeon**. The functions of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal are to make known, promote and preserve contemporary Québec art and to ensure a place for international contemporary art through acquisitions, exhibitions and other cultural activities. *National Museums Act, Section 24*

EXHIBITIONS

LE CORPS VACANT
Until October 27

As part of the events surrounding Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal, this exhibition presents the work of nine Canadian and international artists that focus on self-representation. It offers different views of the human body as an ideal screen for revealing the erosion of time, identity and the influence of sexuality.

The artists included in the exhibition are: Helen Chadwick, Dorit Cypis, Johnide, Edvard Munch, Anne Noggle, Brian Piitz, Rudolf Schwarzkogler, Sandra Semchuk and Jo Spence. This exhibition is produced by Vox Populi in collaboration with the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

JOHN BALDESSARI

November 10, 1991 – January 19, 1992
This exhibition organized and circulated by The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles, is the most important retrospective to date of John Baldessari's work. The Montréal presentation includes more than 80 works (paintings, photographs, photomontages, videos, artists' books) from 1967 to the late eighties.

A native of California, where he continues to live and work, John Baldessari played a key role in the development of conceptual art. His work, which frequently borrows from the mass media, offers a highly incisive analysis of the visual codes arising out of both art history and North American culture. It is therefore essential to an understanding today of the many artistic approaches which, since the early eighties, have focused on the meaning and functions of the image within contemporary society.

The retrospective was produced by The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, with financial assistance from the Murray and Isabella Rayburn Foundation; the Lannan Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal American agency; the Pasadena Art Alliance; Stuart T. and Judith E. Spence; and the MOCA Projects Council.

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal received financial support from the Exhibition Assistance Program of the Canada Council for the presentation of this exhibition.

MULTIMEDIA EVENTS

IMmediaCY

"Technological theatre," with an imaginary computer as stage and the spectator as user. Presented by the POMO COMO artists' collective. Reservations: 873-2878
Tickets: \$10 adults, \$8 students and senior citizens
October 18, 19 and 20 at 2 p.m.

ACTIVITIES

Une femme, un homme ou une personne?

Following the example of the artists in the exhibition *Le corps vacant*, visitors are invited to join in an activity in which they will be, in turn, photographers, models and critics. The goal of the workshop is to spark questioning comparing the way men and women are represented in our society with what we are or would like to be.
October 20, from 1 to 5 p.m.

LECTURES

L'AUTO PORTRAIT
by Christine Bernier

In this lecture, Christine Bernier will discuss the self-portrait in Québec art over the past 20 years. Using reproductions of recent works, she will present the self-portrait in the context of photography, as well as in painting in general, and give a historical perspective to the problems posed by the "portrait of the artist by himself."
October 6 at 2 p.m.

MEETINGS

PROCHAIN ÉPISODE...

Series of lectures held in connection with the exhibition *Pour la suite du monde*.

October
Alfredo Jaar
(in collaboration with the Université de Montréal)
November
Muntadas
(in collaboration with Concordia University)

JOHN BALDESSARI

Meet the artist at the exhibition.
November 10 at 2 p.m.

OPENINGS

JOHN BALDESSARI
November 10 at 3 p.m.

TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS

PROPOS D'ART CONTEMPORAIN – FIGURES D'ACCUMULATION

Septembre 11 – October 6
Galerie du Centre culturel de l'Université de Sherbrooke
October 21 – December 1
Galerie Restigouche, Campbellton, New Brunswick

VISITS

RESERVATIONS: (514) 873-5267

T 1
W 2
T 3
F 4
S 5
S 6 *Lecture*
M 7
T 8
W 9
T 10
F 11
S 12
S 13
M 14
T 15
W 16
T 17
F 18
S 19 *Multimedia Events*
S 20 *Activity*
M 21
T 22
W 23
T 24
F 25
S 26
S 27
M 28
T 29
W 30
T 31

Le corps vacant

F 1
S 2
S 3
M 4
T 5
W 6
T 7
F 8
S 9
S 10 *Meeting and Opening*
M 11
T 12
W 13
T 14
F 15
S 16
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M 18
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W 20
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S 24
M 25
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S 30

John Baldessari