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MUSEE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN MONTRÉAL

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le journal

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February 11 to April 24, 2005

South African artist William Kentridge has gained an international reputation for the extraordinary animated short films he makes from his charcoal drawings. Born in Johannesburg in 1955, Kentridge produces an interdisciplinary art that examines the nature of memory and human emotions, as well as the relationship between desire, ethics and social responsibility. His works prompt reflection on the changing notions of history and the sense of belonging to a place; they challenge the way our identities are forged through these successive alterations. His films are inhabited by archetypal figures, from the businessman struggling with an existential crisis to the anonymous being confronted with the recent cultural and political transformations that have occurred in South Africa. Kentridge's preferred medium is a kind of manual animation in which he produces drawings intended for projection. Charcoal compositions are progressively modified, erased, redrawn then photographed at each creative stage, in this way constructing an animated narration in which dreamlike images intertwine and follow one another.

Kentridge has also worked in the theatre for a number of years, as a set designer, actor and, more recently, director. Since 1992, he has collaborated with the Handspring Puppet Company and created multimedia pieces that use puppets, live actors and animation. While he has moved between film, drawing and theatre throughout his career, his main focus remains drawing, and he sometimes views his stage and film work as another form of drawing.

This exhibition offers a retrospective of Kentridge's entire body of work, with particular emphasis on his most recent pieces. Noteworthy among the major works on view are *Felix in Exile* (1994); the video/dresser installation *Sleeping on Glass* (1999); *Shadow Procession* (2000), made from cut-outs of black paper; *Procession* (2002), a series of 26 bronze sculptures; *Medicine*

Chest (2001); *Zeno Writing* (2002); *Fragments for Georges Méliès* (2003) and *Tide Table* (2003). Kentridge's earlier films produced since 1989 will also be screened in the Guy Angers et Rougier Inc. Video Gallery. A new installation, conceived by Kentridge as a sort of archive room, presents old and new drawings related to various films, such as *Mine* (1991) and *History of the Main Complaint* (1996), along with prints and other objects created by the artist.

Kentridge's *œuvre* has enriched animated cinema with its distinctive merging of film and drawing. From this same perspective, the expressive force of his works has also made a unique contribution to contemporary art. His narratives tinged with pathos and his recurring use of techniques of "erasure" have captured the attention of international critics and audiences alike.

In an eloquent, personal way, Kentridge's work combines an expression of his concerns—related to the question of identity in the post-apartheid socio-political context—and the search for a new definition of animated film. While his art remains rooted in Johannesburg, it nevertheless transcends the references to the realities of South Africa to encompass allegories that speak more broadly of human nature.

This exhibition is the first major presentation in Canada of Kentridge's work. Montréal is the only North American stop for this exhibition circulated by the Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin, Italy, and organized by chief curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev.

Sandra Grant Marchand

William Kentridge



Cover:
Projection for Drawing. Studio Portrait No. 1, 2003
Charcoal on paper
213 x 150 cm
Collection of Brenda Potter-Michael Sandler,
Los Angeles

Drawing for *Felix in Exile*, 1994
(Malevic room)
Charcoal and pastel on paper
120 x 160 cm
Collection of BHP Billiton, South Africa Ltd.
Courtesy The Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg

7 *Fragments for Georges Méliès*
Balancing Act
(Fragment for Georges Méliès), 2003
16-mm and 35-mm film based on live-action
film, video and animated drawing, video and
DVD transfer
1 min 20 s
Courtesy the artist

Known equally for his highly original work as a stage director or set designer and for his collaboration with the Handspring Puppet Company in Johannesburg, William Kentridge creates marvellous animated films using his own unique technique based on erasure of his charcoal drawings.

The artist recently explained some aspects of his approach in the following way: “Mainly I draw, and sometimes I film the drawings or make a theatre production. But the process is still like drawing. It’s like working from the centre outward. If somebody asks me, ‘How would you do a X?’ I haven’t got a clue. The answer comes from the physical activity of hand on paper. You keep at it, and some new thought emerges.”¹ The highly personal content of Kentridge’s thoroughly original films and drawings stems as much from the socio-political context of apartheid and its aftermath in South Africa as from humanistic considerations with universal ramifications.

Recent Acquisition

William Kentridge

Acquired last March through the generosity of the Musée Foundation, *Learning the Flute* (2003) is an exceptional work. This installation on an intimate scale, occupying a space the size of a small classroom, consists of a projection of moving images on a blackboard to the sounds of the overture to Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, as performed in 1937 by the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham.

The work is produced through the filming of a sequence of black and white drawings in which, through a tonal inversion revealing forms on the blackboard—with the charcoal here becoming the white chalk—the representation contains a clear reference to the negative and to late nineteenth-century photography as well as to the intersecting notion of negative and the reverse side of appearances. Following the story line of Mozart’s opera, Kentridge makes allusions to the Queen of the Night (darkness and the moon) and Sarastro (associated with light and the sun). Sketched out in rapid succession are phenomena such as the triumph of light over darkness, the passage of time, the cosmic rhythms, the course of the planets and the four elements. The piece abounds with images of Egyptian gods, sculptures and temples, imposing opera sets inspired by Schinkel’s designs, measuring instruments, metronomes and other Masonic signs or emblems, and so on. Mozart himself adopted the philosophic ideal of Freemasonry in 1784. In an even more autobiographical note, we may also observe the presence of the artist in silhouette, variously shown as the work’s creator, puppet-master and conductor.

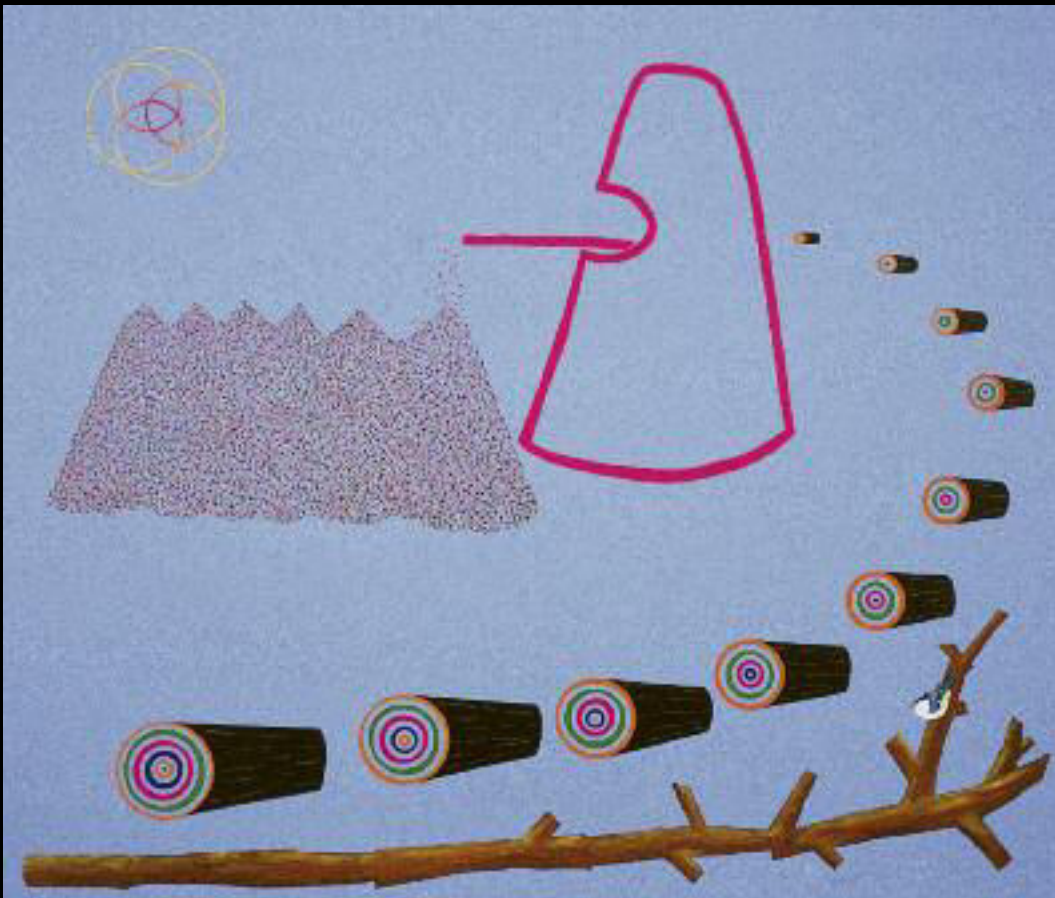
A poetic ode to the great archetypes of knowledge, art and culture, *Learning the Flute* brims with freshness and whimsy, metaphorical impressions and didactic possibilities. This complex work could also remind us of the blackboard drawings and inscriptions of Joseph Beuys, a central figure in contemporary art. Finally, William Kentridge designed the sets and staging for the opera *Die Zauberflöte*, scheduled to be performed at the Théâtre royal de la Monnaie in Brussels in 2005.

Josée Bélisle

¹ Quoted in Matthew Gurewitsch, “Into the Heart of Darkness, with Puppets,” *The New York Times*, February 29, 2004.



Learning the Flute, 2003
35-mm film transferred to video,
projected on a blackboard
set on an easel, running time: 8 min
Edition of 5, A.P. 1/2
160 x 130 cm (blackboard)
190 x 69.8 cm (easel)
Collection of the Musée d'art
contemporain de Montréal
Photo: Courtesy Marian Goodman
Gallery, New York
Acquired through the generosity
of the Musée Foundation



January 26 to April 24, 2005

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In a short space of time, Cynthia Girard has managed to carve out a place in the new Québec painting, through both her style and her subject matter. Her first solo exhibition at the Musée presents a brand-new series of paintings produced specially for this occasion. Revolving around the theme of forestry or, more generally, wood in all its various aspects, these recent, spare-looking works are initially notable for their boldness, in that they bring together different pictorial languages, ranging from geometric and chromatic abstraction to pointillism and realistic figuration, in the same two-dimensional space of the canvas.

While one of the artist's primary intentions is to exploit optical effects in colour as well as drawing, another concern addressed by her works appears to be the question of falsity and simulation. Everything in these paintings points up the effects of the fake and works to mislead viewers' perception, through false perspectives, inexact proportions of scale, different wood simulations or optical illusions. The various tensions created by the processes used cannot help drawing viewers in and encouraging them to become aware of the illusions on which her painting is based.

Sylvan Fictions

Cynthia Girard

In addition, as was already observable in the artist's previous works, the new paintings are not without humour—or whimsy. While this sometimes means black humour, manifested in certain morbid motifs, we also find the artist's amused and ironic gaze in the "cartoon" spirit that emanates from most of the pieces.

In recent years, Girard's work has focused particularly on the representation of national identities. This examination led to the development of a large-scale project titled *Le Pavillon du Québec*, which was presented in three parts and concentrated specifically on Québec collective identity, viewed from the perspective of both the official stories and the footnotes of history.

This new exhibition picks up, in a way, from these concerns. Ever fascinated by events and figures that have been more or less forgotten or overlooked by history, the artist directs her attention to one of the major aspects of Québec's development, namely logging, understood here as both an industry and an abuse of a natural resource. Generally inspired by wide range of pictorial expressions, including popular illustration and animal painting, her work examines, with humour and insight, what might be described as dark corners of our history and culture.

Cynthia Girard has had numerous exhibitions over the last several years, in Québec and beyond. At the same time, she has pursued literary endeavours that have led to the publication of several collections of poetry.

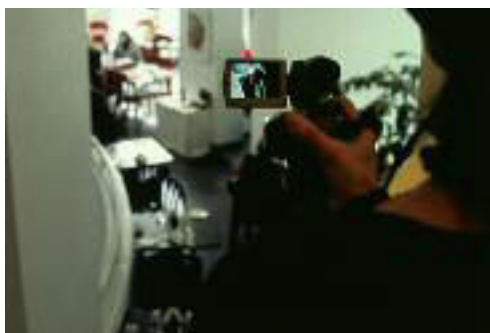
Réal Lussier

La Scierie, 2004
Acrylic on canvas

Le Bûcheron, 2004
Acrylic on canvas
Photos: Richard-Max Tremblay

The work is available any time during museum hours. Just ask at the ticket counter.

Conspiracy Theory by Janet Cardiff



Théorie du complot/Conspiracy Theory, 2002, is an audio and video Walk commissioned by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal and produced in conjunction with the museum's presentation of the exhibition *Janet Cardiff. A Survey of Works Including Collaborations with George Bures Miller*, which was organized by P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in New York.

In the past few years, Janet Cardiff has undeniably become a key figure on the Canadian and international art scene. Her work stands out with its originality and conceptual richness, as well as its evident ability to insinuate itself into the public's imagination by upsetting our usual perceptions of the world or our environment.

The Walk was planned and executed over a six-month period in the course of various visits Cardiff made to Montréal. It is based on actual spaces at the museum, as well as its external surroundings, namely the architectural complex formed by Place des Arts, to which the museum is connected by an underground shopping concourse. The route of the Walk begins on the second floor of the museum and proceeds down to the first floor and ground level, but then continues through a corridor usually reserved for employees and moves on outside the building, where it emerges in the shopping concourse, goes as far as an adjacent indoor parking garage and ends up in another passageway of the concourse, leading to one of the museum's entrances.

In trying out the work, as walkers equipped with a binaural headset and a camcorder, we are immediately drawn in by the reminiscence of a dream whispered in our ear by a woman's voice: "Last night I dreamt that I killed a man. It was in a hotel room, a single swift act that disappeared as quickly as it had come." Then, on the camcorder's miniature screen, we see a girl approach, holding a photograph of a man lying on the ground. These initial elements set the tone of the piece, which plunges us into suspense and mystery. Guided by the warm, intimate voice of the woman, we set off on a journey in which our perceptions are continually both stimulated and disconcerted.

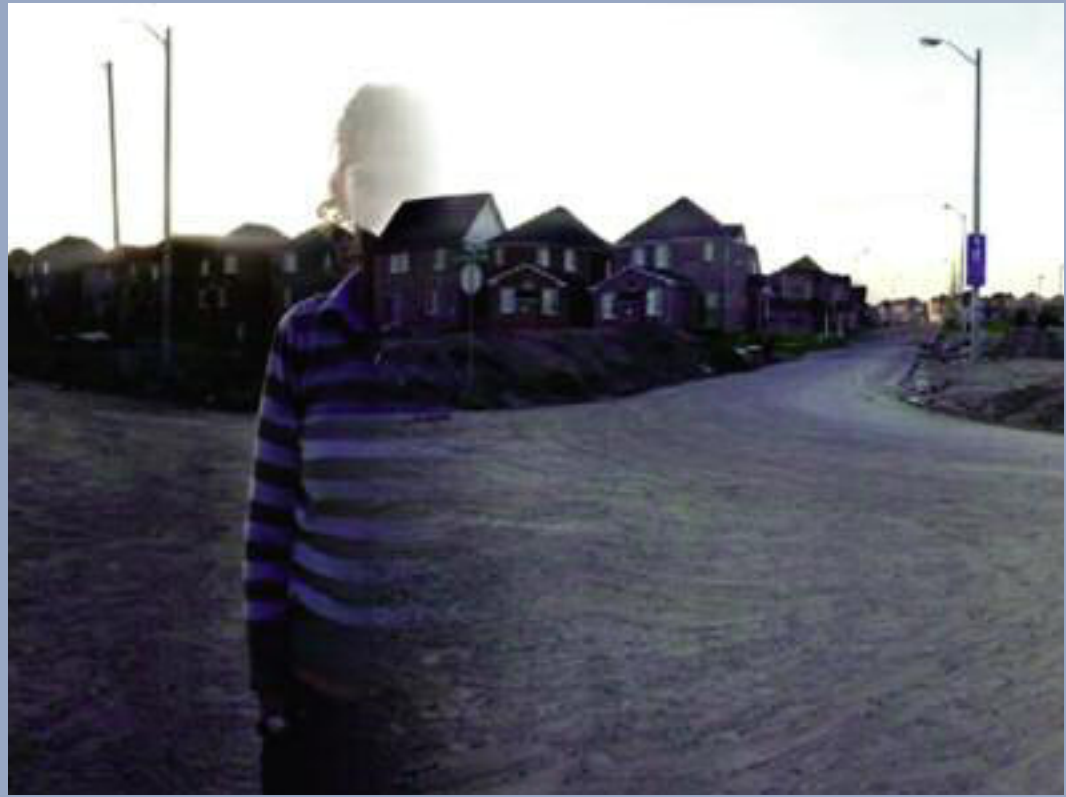
Through the headsets and video picture, we are immersed in a kind of fiction, as we become participants in a story of which we know neither the context nor the characters. The recorded voices and sounds merge with those actually around us, and the images on the screen unfold in the same spaces we are walking through. In this confusion between truth and fiction, the words uttered by the voice, along with the images shown, at times transport us into a realm of memory or dream, only to pull us back into reality. Adding to the evocative power of these surroundings that is conveyed by the words, we sense a certain tension fuelled by the anxiety of being watched and by the dramatic events taking place on the screen, such as the scene where a man in the darkness is trying to drown another man, and a second sequence where a man is being shot at by people who are chasing him in a car.

All along the Walk, we glean snippets of a story, fragments in which past, present and imagination intermingle—events whose thread we try to reconstruct, whose meaning we try to grasp. When we find ourselves alone after a certain amount of time, abandoned, as it were, by our guide, we have the impression that we are emerging from a dream ourselves, haunted still by the experience we have just had.

Réal Lussier



Théorie du complot/Conspiracy Theory, 2002
Audio and video walk, digital video camera, digital videocassette and binaural recording, 16 min 40 s, sound
Collection of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal
Photos: Richard-Max Tremblay



Still Life: Urban Sprawl, 2003
Photo: Gareth Long

The Image in Motion

The history of art is punctuated with pivotal dates in ways of seeing and doing. The respective inventions of printing around 1450, of photography with the first daguerreotypes in 1839, and of cinema just before the turn of the last century¹ have had major consequences on developments in art. More recently, video, which was introduced in the contemporary art context in the late 1960s,² opened up a brand-new field of experimentation.

Through its ability to capture and convey an event in real time, video was initially employed as a witness to artistic acts such as performances, then rapidly became a medium of choice. To begin with, video art was usually shown on television monitors, but came to hold an increasingly large place in galleries and museums in the now-common form of large-scale exhibitions of video installations. Artists in every field—playwrights, stage directors,³ musicians, choreographers—are concerned with the expressive capacities of the video image; each in their own way, they are exploring it and incorporating it into their works. Filmmakers are interested in video installation, and visual artists, in film. In addition, during the 1990s, digital technology breathed new life into the contemporary creative endeavour, and considerably stimulated and altered the processes of producing works in all artistic fields. Today, digital art is both prolific and multiform, while pieces combining video and new media are expanding the possibilities of the image in motion.

Starting in January 2005, we will present, on a regular, ongoing basis, the work of a new generation of artists. Recent artistic output is dense and diverse. For our first program, we have brought together five different looks at the way we relate to the world. Each suggests an examination of our presence and our hold on these places and spaces that are ours, familiar yet unreal landscapes, in which we dwell and which dwell in us. Five short films, five artists: Khrystell Burlin, Thomas Köner, Gareth Long, Leighton Pierce and Floria Sigismondi.

Louise Ismert

¹ It was on December 28, 1895, that the Lumière brothers screened their first films, at the Grand Café on Boulevard des Capucines in Paris.

² Sony introduced its portable video camera, the *Portapak*, in 1965, allowing video art to take off.

³ Here we are thinking of the work carried out by director Denis Marleau as artist in residence at the Musée. In 2002, he presented *Les Aveugles: fantasmagorie technologique*, adapted from Maurice Maeterlinck's play, without a single actor on stage.

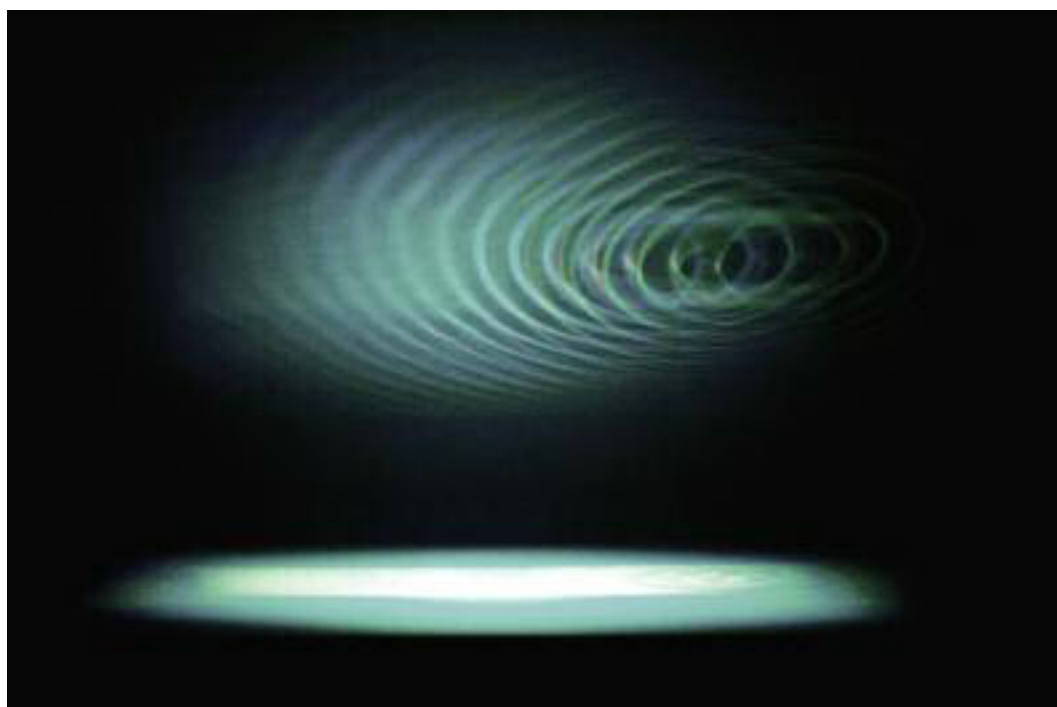
Ondulation

Thomas McIntosh with
Mikko Hynninen and Emmanuel Madan

Creation today takes many different paths. A work may arise out of a word, an idea, a certain look, a line drawn on a scrap of paper. It may also emerge—particularly when it comes to new media—from an exploratory approach. The *Ondulation* project emanates from this desire to experiment, to seek and to find.

Ondulation is a composition for water, sound and light inspired by the phenomenon of sonic vibrations. As its name indicates, *Ondulation* is a piece in motion. In its simplest form, the work is presented as a large pool of opalescent water in which waves ripple across the surface, giving the illusion of perpetual motion. Echoing the sound waves that induce them, these sinuous forms rise and fall in harmony with the energy that runs through the water, and with the intensity of the vibrations. Paradoxically, it is through light that the evocative power of *Ondulation* is fully revealed. Beams of light skim the surface of the water with great efficiency and accentuate the oscillatory movements that form there. Lit this way, the pool of water becomes a mirror that projects the lively, concentric waves onto the walls.

Photo: Diana Shearwood



¹ Thomas McIntosh is co-founder, together with Emmanuel Madan, of the Montréal collective [The User]. In 1998, [The User] created a project entitled *Symphony for Dot Matrix Printers*, for which the two artists transformed equipment from an outdated technology to create a sonic work. The *Symphony for Dot Matrix Printers* has been featured at many European festivals since 1999. This first project earned them honourable mention for the Prix Ars Electronica, a Telefilm Canada award at the Montreal International Festival of New Cinema and New Media, and a nomination for the Nam June Paik Award 2004. Mikko Hynninen is an audio, lighting and set designer and composer based in Helsinki, Finland.

There is a timeless aspect to *Ondulation*. Looking at the waves moving on the water's surface and their reflections unfolding visually, we can easily lose all notion of time. This may stem from the extreme simplicity with which *Ondulation* allows itself to be approached and apprehended, and the time that elapses and slips along the surface of the water, as well as the time the work itself takes to unfold in its endless rolling between two hypnotic spaces. The poetry of *Ondulation* lies in this tangible balance between the two spaces, enlivened by the vibrating yet invisible movements of sound and distinctly revealed by the light.

From February 11 to March 6, 2005, the public will be able to view the work in installation form during regular museum hours; on four occasions, the artists Thomas McIntosh,¹ Mikko Hynninen and Emmanuel Madan will offer a performance during which they will bring *Ondulation* to life and compose new and fascinating movements using light, water and sound.

Louise Ismert



Photographs: Philippe Casgrain

The Musée Foundation

Last Tuesday, September 14, the Foundation held its eighteenth Annual Ball under the leadership of honorary chair Jean Claude Baudinet, President of Lumigem Canada Inc. More than 370 guests from the business world and the arts scene were in attendance, along with Québec's Minister of Culture and Communications, Line Beauchamp, and Minister of Finance, Yves Séguin. The organizing committee was co-chaired by Anik Trudel and Denis D'Etcheverry. The design of the splendid reception rooms was the handiwork of Gilles Lord, the dinner menu was the creation of Yves Lévesque of Dansereau Traiteur, and the evening's entertainment was the responsibility of Paul Chacra. To mark the museum's fortieth anniversary, each pair of guests received a print by Marc Séguin. We can confidently state that the event was an outright success. It raised nearly \$140,000 in ticket sales and donations.

November 11 was the date of the fifteenth edition of the Foundation's Art Auction. The organizing committee was chaired by Jean Langlais. A selection of eighty-three works was previewed on November 9, 10 and 11 in Beverley Webster Rolph Hall. The auction itself took place on the evening of Thursday, November 11, preceded by a cocktail reception enlivened by the A-Zaar Trio. Some 200 people attended the proceedings, under auctioneer Iégor de Saint Hippolyte. The models who showed off the works were dressed by Envers Yves Jean Lacasse. As in the past, guests could take part in a silent auction, and were also eligible to win door prizes. This highly successful event raised some \$70,000 in ticket and artwork sales.

Jean Philippe Bolduc



Monday, February 14, 2004, at 6 p.m.



Lecture by Lev Manovich

Info-Aesthetics

Lev Manovich is Associate Professor in the Visual Arts Department at the University of California, San Diego, where he teaches new media art and theory. He is the author of *The Language of New Media*, published by MIT Press in 2001, which the critics hailed as a rigorous, wide-ranging analysis of the new media, and as the most comprehensive history of the media since Marshall McLuhan. *The Language of New Media* has been translated into several languages, including Italian, Korean and Chinese. Manovich has taught new media art since 1992. He has also been a visiting professor at the California Institute of the Arts, University of California, Los Angeles, University of Amsterdam, University of Stockholm and University of Art and Design, Helsinki. Since 1999, he has given nearly 200 lectures in North and South America, Europe and Asia.

Lev Manovich was born and educated in Moscow, in fine arts, architecture and computer science. In 1981, he moved to New York, where he received an M.A. in Cognitive Science (New York University, 1988). He earned a Ph.D. in Visual and Cultural Studies in 1993 from the University of Rochester. His doctoral thesis, entitled *The Engineering of Vision from Constructivism to Computers*, traces the origins of computer media, which he relates to the avant-garde of the 1920s.

Manovich has been working with computer media as an artist, computer animator, designer and programmer since 1984. His art projects include *Little Movies* (1994), the first digital film created for the Web, *Freud-Lissitzky Navigator*, a conceptual software for navigating through twentieth-century history, and *Anna and Andy* (2000), inspired by Anna Karenina and Andy Warhol. In 2002, the ICA in London staged a mini-retrospective under the title *Lev Manovich: Adventures of Digital Cinema*. His latest art project, called *Soft Cinema*, was presented as part of the exhibition *Future Cinema* (Karlsruhe, Helsinki and Tokyo). He is currently working on a new book, titled *Info-Aesthetics*.

Christine Bernier

Montréal Museums Day

This coming Sunday, May 29, is the day chosen for the nineteenth *Montréal Museums Day*, revolving around the theme “Craquez pour nous!” Thirty-one museums in all will open their doors to the city’s art-lovers free of charge. The event is made possible by the generous sponsorship of the Quebecor Group and the support of L. M. Sauvé, a major player in real estate financing and development.

The Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal is actively involved in this annual day of festivities. Our guides will be on hand for you in our exhibition galleries to answer all your questions and explain the origin and production process of the works. Free art workshops will also be offered to enable you to discover the artist in you. It’s a perfect opportunity for an outing with family or friends. Special activities will be available.

As well, *Montréal Museums Day 2005* will coincide with the opening of a new exhibition at the museum. *The Hidden Side of Appearances* brings together works by ten or so young Québec and Canadian artists. Each piece is actually a *trompe l’œil*, a sort of visual trap, which visitors are induced to penetrate in order to tap the real meaning. Experience it for yourselves!

Take advantage of the free shuttle bus service offered all day, departing from the Journal de Montréal building, on Frontenac Street, and running between the city’s various museums.



QUEBECOR INC.

Romantic Getaway at the Musée

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As a prelude to a Valentine's evening, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal invites all who are romantic at heart to share their passion for art and, who knows ... perhaps meet a kindred spirit.

The museum will be open on Monday, February 14 from 5 to 7 p.m. specially to celebrate this magical evening in a most artistic and inspiring atmosphere. The \$10 admission includes a visit to the exhibitions, a glass of wine and a taste of fine chocolate.

What a lovely gift to offer your sweetheart, or share with someone new!

Take part in the draw held during the evening for a chance to win catalogues for the current exhibitions, dinner for two at the restaurant *La Rotonde* or a night at the Saint-Sulpice in an executive suite with VIP treatment.

We warmly invite you to join us in this festive celebration of love. To reserve, call (514) 847-6212 (then dial 0).



Montréal All-Nighter

As part of the Montréal All-Nighter held in connection with the 2005 Montréal High Lights Festival, the MACM will be open to the public, free of charge, from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. on the night of February 26-27. Follow a moonbeam to discover some of the leading lights of contemporary art here and abroad. Explore the works of Québec artist Michel Goulet, be transported into the world of emotion and memory by the exhibition of works by the South African William Kentridge, and enjoy a close, humorous look at some of the high points and lesser moments that have contributed to building our collective identity, by contemplating the works of Cynthia Girard. Hot drinks will be available at the museum, in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Free admission.

Message from the Director

Let's admit it, fashion certainly plays a role in contemporary art. The gold rush of each new idea, our endless fascination with new technologies, the "look" of today, are all distractions that prevent us sometimes from paying enough attention to lasting qualities, or the lack thereof, in works that speak loudly of the present. These weaknesses notwithstanding, in the contemporary art world we are in no way governed by what's in vogue, and the proof is the success of William Kentridge.

At first sight, Kentridge's films and the drawings they are based on may appear a bit old-fashioned and even artistically obsolete, but it isn't only nostalgia for earlier forms of expression that draws us so deep into the black and white world of this celebrated South African artist. It's the unexpected sensibility of a filmmaker who relies almost exclusively on drawing, or rather a paroxysm of drawing, to tell an amazing story. We are hypnotized by the relentless metamorphosis of a handmade picture that takes great pains to recount impossibly surreal tales, all dreamlike and troubling, yet paradoxically true to life.

There's nothing in the least old-fashioned about Cynthia Girard's work, though she practises good old painting. It's the appeal of wood that first gets our attention in these pictures. We've all seen a thousand paintings of forests and trees, but paintings about forestry are much less familiar. The innovative aspect of Girard's new work is the way it is characterized not only by a spare pictorial approach that marries figuration and abstraction, but also by the game of imitation, simulation and fakery that she articulates, less to trick us than to raise our consciousness about reality and its unlikely expressions.

Come more often to the museum. On any given day, we offer brilliant exhibitions, tours given by passionate and well informed guides, workshops for your children and even for you, and naturally a friendly welcome. And it isn't only our members who we are happy to see again and again. Tell yourself that you can also spend a pleasant hour browsing through the new art books at the Olivieri bookstore recently installed on our lower level. While you're down there, have a coffee and watch a couple of videos in Beverley Webster Rolph Hall. And bring your friends! Nothing is easier to share than a day of new art. All the best,

Marc Mayer

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