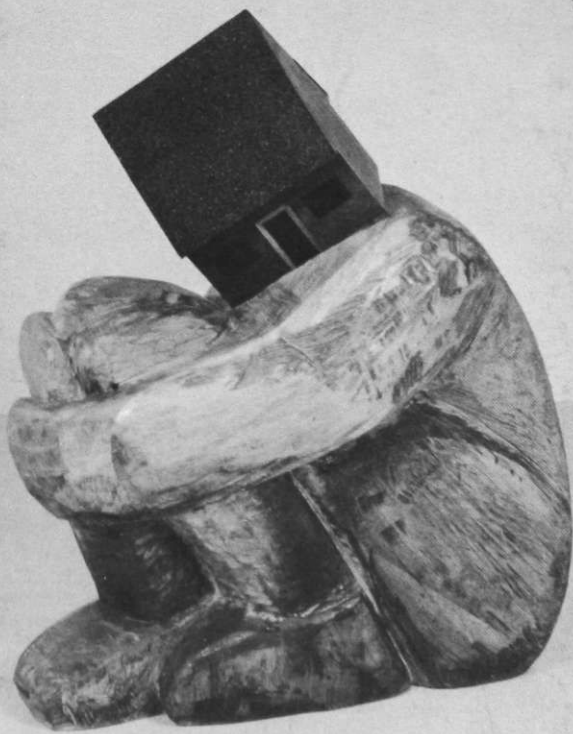


From May 15 to September 30, 1987

# LA RENCONTRE D'UN LIEU



MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

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The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal was founded in 1964. Devoted entirely to curating and collecting contemporary Quebec and international art, this institution was an integral part of the cultural blossoming Quebec went through during the sixties. "As an important landmark in Quebec art history, the Museum represented a concrete continuation and acknowledgment of a movement whose main initiators were Quebec artists Pellan and Borduas. Given the fact that aesthetics shape to a certain extent social reality, this was to foster essential transformations in society." (Paulette Gagnon, *Les vingt ans du Musée à travers sa collection*). The Museum started buying art soon after its founding, and today the collection numbers some 3000 works from a range of disciplines, reflecting national and foreign realities in art from the forties to the present.

From this collection, Paulette Gagnon, curator of the exhibition *La rencontre d'un lieu* (literally, "The meeting of a place"), has chosen to show six sculptures to match the Old Port site. The media used in these works reflect the physical environment that hosts them: rigid, almost raw materials. All of these sculptures, except one, are fairly recent works by Canadian artists. This is not unrelated to the fact that Canadian sculpture rapidly expanded when artists started to use inexpensive and readily available materials. Plywood, steel and recycled materials became worthy of art, and gave way to a profusion of sculptural expressions.

As it uses non-traditional materials and techniques, contemporary art can not readily be explained through art history, but rather through the relationship it creates with its environment and with the viewer.

The artworks in *La rencontre d'un lieu* were brought together in the Museum's collection because of their relevance to contemporary art history. In this exhibition, they are once more given a setting related to a place and a history: a reminder of port activities and of childhood, as to many Montrealers the Old Port is deeply rooted in their memories.

Different concerns manifest themselves through these works: they reflect the conditions in which they were created, as well as the ongoing debates at the time of their creation. Issues related to minimalism, such as purity of both form and media, are expressed in Rabinowitch's and Dutkewych's works. Goulet and Saulnier's narrations discuss the very foundations of sculpture as art and practice. At times, sculpture borrows from painting, or as in Saulnier's work, architecture and installation. As always, closely related to the workman's craft in a quest for expression through form, these works lend themselves to a number of different interpretations.

# MICHEL SAULNIER

Michel Saulnier is a Montreal artist, well known for his important contribution to a new form of Quebec painting. His pictorial works use representation to question the foundations of painting, and they disrupt conventional modes of perception, thus pointing to several possible interpretations. Saulnier's paintings already reach into the third dimension. Assemblages of used construction materials mingle with personal narratives and incursions into regional folklore.

The same media are to be found in the *Marine* sculpture. Although figurative, it draws us into a dream-like world, touching lightly upon theories of art history and psychoanalysis. The sculptural work is steeped in considerations directly imported from painting, i.e. the color of the roof on the house and the boat, the way in which the varnish protects the wood grain and the graphics participate in the house-figure. Almost a theatrical type of work, *Marine* is also closely related to installation art, with each element playing a distinctive role in a complex narration. The floor participates in this marine landscape, bringing together the different components.

Created in the summer of 1986 at St-Jean-Port-Joli, *Marine*, not without humor and simplicity, opens a dialogue between objects and Freudian symbols: here the house - a recurrent theme in Saulnier's work - poses as a human figure.

*Marine*, an assemblage of used materials - a work of *bricolage* - creates a new object, and, in a somewhat urgent and certainly lyrical manner, allows us to guess at several histories, both personal and universal.

**Michel Saulnier**  
Rimouski, Quebec, 1956

*Marine*, 1986

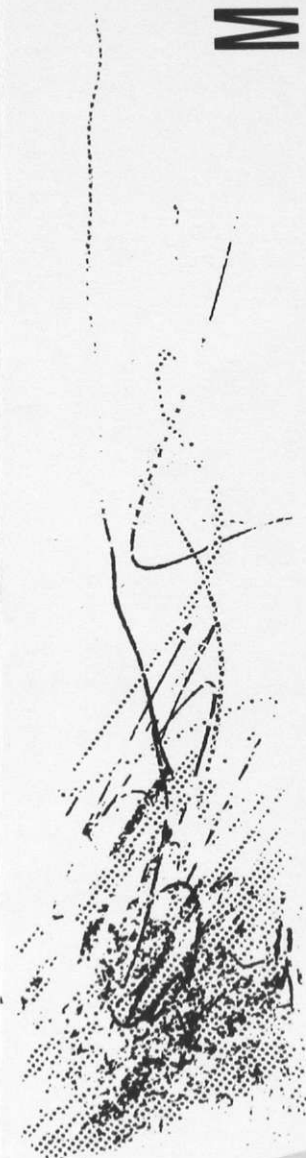
Four elements:

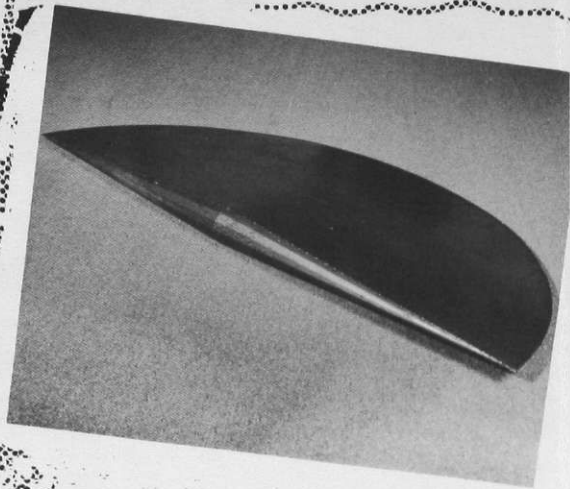
House-figure  
Mixed media  
110 x 90 x 35 cm

Boat-breast  
Oil and varnish on wood  
46 x 82 x 56 cm

Legs  
Varnish on wood (fish) and oil on wood  
110 x 75 x 85 cm

Boat on hill  
Found object and oil on wood  
28 x 40 x 30 cm





# HENRI SAXE<sup>(1)</sup> HENRI SAXE

Montreal sculptor Henry Saxe, first known for his paintings, drawings and collages, is interested in geometry and isometric planes in a system of interrelating forms which adapt to any space. Drawing inspiration from geometric shapes, the artist works with steel sheets and cast iron which he modifies and adapts, piercing them at will. Although his work in the early seventies focused on structural problems graphically created from photographs (binary elements), Saxe later evolved towards a ternary system, with three different support points. Therefore the formal qualities of his compositions, based on tension, structural and spatial balance of forms, create a harmony between weight, line, plane and volume.

Recurrent aspects of Saxe's work are the use of a horizontal plane, which lessens the visual impact, and a desire to highlight the character of the materials employed. *For Three Blocks* is one example of a rhythmic repetition of surfaces generated by the three point support system. This distance between the work and the ground implies a slight elevation, and allows the intermingling planes to interact in such a way that the whole surface comes alive.

Walking around the piece and observing it from different angles, the viewer becomes involved in its balance of forms and visual dynamics. Right angles and half-circles meet, while traces of the work's assembly (cutting, soldering and bolting) make its red, oxidated metal parts function as a whole.

**Henry Saxe**  
Montreal, Quebec, 1937

*For Three Blocks, 1976*  
Oxidated steel plates, stainless steel  
167,5 × 110,6 × 22,8 cm

(1) From: *Les vingt ans du Musée à travers sa collection*, Paulette Gagnon, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montréal, 1985. p. 266

# ROYDEN RABINOWITCH

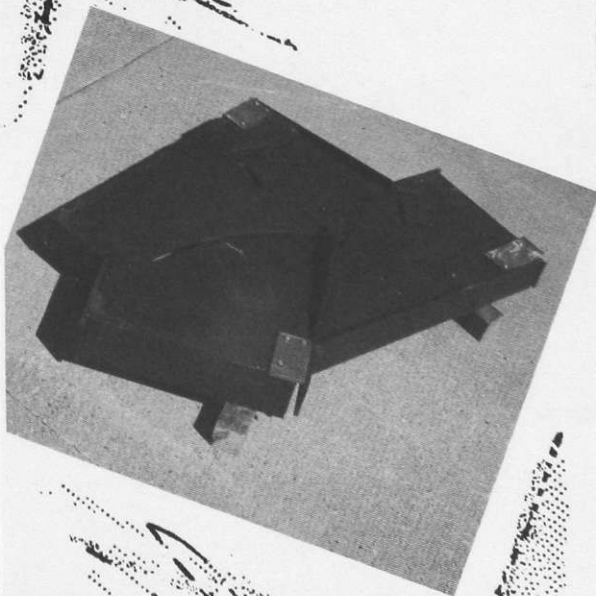
Toronto-born Royden Rabinowitch has been working in New York since 1975. He has always used rigid materials for his sculptures, first wood and then steel. Affiliated with American Minimalist art, Rabinowitch favours abstract constructions, with no reference to external objects. Beyond the immediate appearance of things, regular shapes borrowed from geometry and the strong presence of the materials induce an almost contemplative state.

*Faceted Turnover* is made of four half-cones, drawing a vertical and a horizontal axis. This work reflects a transitional period after which Rabinowitch began to explore the flat plane in space, once he had oriented his work towards verticality, using the elementary conic configuration.

The unity in the structures of the work stems from the use of one medium, in this case steel, which seems to be cut out and soldered. Different planes can be observed in the mass of the work, defining the depth of the sculpture where it touches the ground; Rabinowitch always keeps a constant distance between the work and the surface that receives it. This continuous/discontinuous ratio allows the sculpture to blend into its environment while opposing it to the work's distinctive physical realities.

**Royden Rabinowitch**  
London, Ontario, 1943

*Faceted Turnover, 1967*  
Welded steel  
244 × 128 × 14,5 cm



Musée d'art contemporain  
de Montréal / Médiathèque  
19 FEV. 1999

# ANDREW DUTKEWYCH

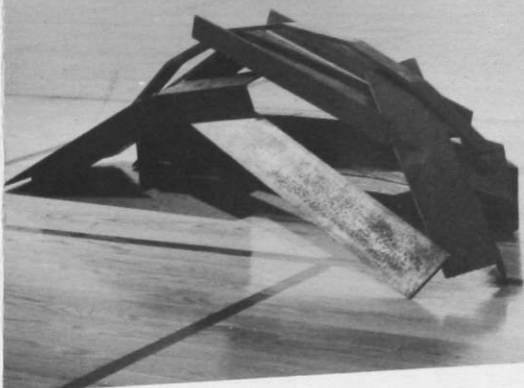
A sculptor born in Vienna, *Andrew Dutkewych* now lives in Quebec. Following the use of wood and plexiglass in his earlier days, the artist now works with raw iron, which he prefers mainly because of its precision and honesty. A precise scenic device allows Dutkewych to reveal this medium in its original form.

In a conceptual way, the artist reformulates the notion of sculpture, by making what can be described as a dematerialized object relate to its environment. Beyond any reference to morphology, the object interacts with the architecture in which it is contained. Criss-crossing lines, neither vertical nor horizontal, suggest organic developments between empty spaces and full surfaces. As flexible elements contrast with a rigid structure, the sculpture becomes a drawing in space. Volumes are rigorously composed and decomposed.

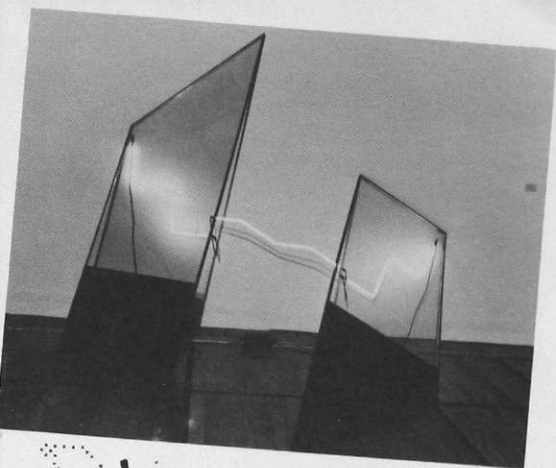
In a precise, clear and rational manner, Dutkewych's sculptural work asserts itself without resorting to expressive release.

**Andrew Dutkewych**  
Vienne, Austria, 1944

*Cobalt, 1978*  
Steel  
49 x 192 x 78 cm







## KEITH SONNIER

Keith Sonnier, a native of Louisiana, lives and works in New York. Concerned with identifying his sculptures with the time and place that generated them, the artist uses what he calls "twentieth-century materials". Metal, glass, electricity and neon, which made its appearance in Sonnier's work during the early eighties, are materials that can be touched or handled.

In *La salle*, a luminous zigzag gathers in its wake the other elements of the work, the physical properties of which are unmistakably transmitted: the lightness, transparency and reflectivity of glass, the opacity and density of steel. This allusion to calligraphic signs, and a first bidimensional reading, do not make *La salle* a work of illusion. Light modulations and interferences between medias result in a kinetic relationship between the work and the viewer.

Despite outstanding balance, the freely-assembled elements aim for what can be called anti-geometry, questioning the rigours of formalism and systemization. This light, almost aerial sculpture, concurs with the architecture; the work rests against the wall and the floor: the room becomes *La salle's* (the room's) support.

**Keith Sonnier**  
Mamou, Louisiane, U.S.A., 1941

*La Salle, 1980*  
Steel, glass, neon, tape  
235 × 295 × 216 cm

## MICHEL GOULET

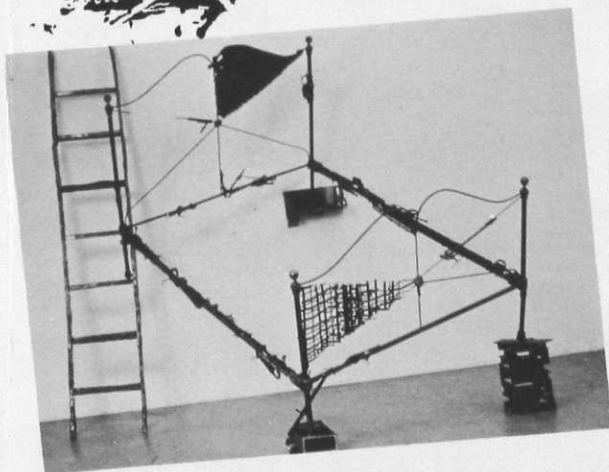
*Trophy* is a work by Montreal artist Michel Goulet. After exploring the elegance of plexiglass, Goulet has in the last ten years turned to the sturdy, versatile qualities of steel, and to the well-filled pasts of recycled objects. In an apparently precariously balanced staging, Goulet associates referential objects with his sculptural approach; the bed, the ladder, the toy truck are all records of a collective past.

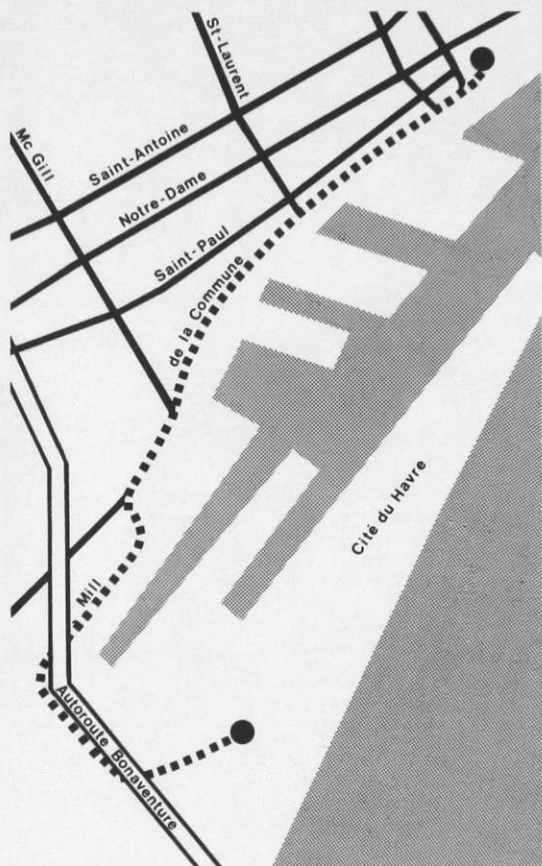
Goulet symbolically appropriates objects by transforming them, and even by interfering with their scale and of course with their function: the small size of the truck encourages a more intimate relation with the work. The artist's use of media explores the way in which art is created and acknowledged as art. The way in which these media are transformed and arranged refers to other artistic disciplines: installation, with its inventory of everyday objects, and drawing, with the lines of the bed and the use of the frontal plane.

Through this maze of allusions, *Trophy* invites the viewer to go to and fro between lines and volumes, between fragility and a perfect setting, between imagination and memory. "In Goulet's mind, this sculpture must not become a mere trace of the artist's work. Something else must remain: symbols, a formal composition, raw elements not entirely consumed by the work of the artist. As much as possible, the meaning is to be maintained in unstable balance, allowing for the coexistence of a number of interpretations vis-à-vis the same object" (France Gascon, *Cycles récents et autres indices*).

**Michel Goulet**  
Asbestos, Quebec, 1944

*Trophée, 1986*  
Steel and various objects  
230 × 250 × 250 cm





**Opening hours:**

**From Friday May 15 to Sunday June 14**  
 Tuesday to Sunday:  
 from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m.

**From Monday June 15 to Tuesday September 8**  
 Daily from 12 p.m. to 10 p.m.

**From Wednesday September 9 to Wednesday September 30**  
 Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday:  
 from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m.

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