



# SYMPOSIUM

MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS :  
IMPACT OF MASSIVE  
ACQUISITIONS

OCTOBER 21, 1994



MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

In June 1992, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal acquired the Lavalin Collection, a body of about 1,300 works; today, this massive acquisition accounts for more than one quarter of the institution's permanent collection. Such an acquisition is sure to have an impact on the Musée's mission. This is certainly not an isolated case: such major acquisitions have occurred in a number of Canadian museums. To shed new light on this reality, the **Museums and Collections: Impact of Massive Acquisitions** symposium has invited curators, museologists and historians from across Canada to look at case studies and to analyse and question the impact of this phenomenon on the organization and mission of the museums involved.

The rapid growth of certain collections and the desire of institutions to open up to their community raises a number of important questions. How can we define this need or even this compulsion to collect? What should be preserved and saved? How can the value of a heritage be estimated or defined? Who benefits from these major acquisitions? How should these works be presented to the community? What is the impact of these acquisitions on the internal policies of these institutions?

This symposium is designed to offer all those who are interested in museology a forum for discussion of examples of this type of collecting. How do they relate to the museological functions of conservation, research, promotion and education, as defined by modern museology? How can the duality of a museum's mission be resolved: on the one hand, to act as a repository, data bank and research institute, and on the other, to be a cultural haven and educational facility? Participants will be encouraged to comment and to ask questions at the two plenary sessions.

#### THE SYMPOSIUM TEAM :

MICHEL HUARD  
CLAUDE GUÉRIN AND LOUISE FAURE  
DANIELLE LEGENTIL

SYLVAIN PARENT  
GABRIELLE TREMBLAY  
MEDIA CENTRE STAFF

COVER  
DESIGN

Concept and organization  
Press relations  
Registration and  
guest reception  
Technical direction  
Secretarial services  
Documentation

Cöpilia  
Lumbago

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1994

#### MORNING SESSION

8 — 8:30 A.M. REGISTRATION

8:30 — 9:30 A.M. COFFEE AND CROISSANTS



OPENING SESSION

MARCEL BRISEBOIS Director  
of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal  
Opening remarks



MICHEL V. CHEFF President  
of the Canadian Museums Association and  
Director of the Winnipeg Art Gallery  
Opening lecture: *Massive acquisitions and  
museums: elements of a Canada-wide topography*

"This lecture offers thoughts on the impact of acquisitions on the mission and the professional practices of Canadian museums. I will present the global context in which Canadian museums find themselves when faced with major acquisitions, i.e. either purchases or gifts. The examples used here will attempt to provide an overview, complementing the examples given by the people speaking after me at this symposium."

10 — 11:30 A.M. ROUND TABLE



CHARLES C. HILL Curator  
of Canadian Art, National Gallery of Canada  
*Warehouses or Museums?*

"Does the acquisition of a large number of art works and of one single work differ in any way other than scale? I would maintain that in most instances, massive gifts or purchases pose the same questions for art institutions as does every single acquisition. The real questions are why do museums collect at all, what part of our present and past are we preserving for the future and are we merely warehouses for unseen objects? For numerous reasons, museums are going to have to confront the real problems of maintenance and finally the issue of deaccessioning."



DENNIS REID Curator  
of Canadian Art, Art Gallery of Ontario  
"This lecture will treat the role of the acquisition of major collections in the development of the Canadian historical collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the impact of

such acquisitions historically on the structure and direction of the institution."



LAURIER LACROIX Professor  
Department of Art History  
Université du Québec à Montréal  
Commentator



MICHEL HUARD Educator  
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal  
Moderator of the round tables

11:30 A.M. TO 12:30 P.M. PLENARY SESSION

12:30 — 2:30 P.M. LUNCH PERIOD Optional activities

AFTERNOON SESSION  
2:30 — 4:00 P.M. ROUND TABLE



CAROL MAYER Curator  
of Ethnology, University of British Columbia  
Museum of Anthropology  
*"The world is full of wondrous things" -  
where should they all go?* "In 1988, a new wing  
was added to the UBC Museum of

Anthropology to house a donation of a large collection of fifteenth to nineteenth century European ceramics. This collection does not fit easily into the public or academic perception of what is appropriate to be exhibited in a museum of anthropology — particularly one that has a well-defined public image dominated by its architecture and its Northwest Coast collection. This presentation will explore some of the many questions and challenges affected by the museum's decision to accept this, and other, "wondrous" collections."



JOSÉE BÉLISLE Curator  
of the permanent collection, Musée d'art  
contemporain de Montréal  
*The Lavalin Collection of the Musée d'art  
contemporain de Montréal: from the present to  
the future* "Since its acquisition by the Musée

in June 1992, how has the Lavalin Collection fit into the everyday fabric of the institution's activities related to conservation, research, promotion and education? What is the next step for this "exceptional" development of the Musée's collection?"



GÉRALD GRANDMONT Director  
of the Research and Evaluation Service  
Musée de la civilisation, Quebec City  
Commentator

4:00 — 5:00 P.M. PLENARY SESSION Simultaneous  
translation (French and English)  
will be available.

# LE DEVOIR

## REGISTRATION FORM FOR THE MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS:

### *Impact of Massive Acquisitions symposium.*

Registration forms must reach us before October 14, 1994.

Registration fees: \$15; Students: \$5. Registration fees include all lectures, simultaneous translation, coffee, croissants, a tour of the Musée's storage area, and a tour of the exhibition.

Please write your cheque to the order of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, and send it, together with the registration form, to:  
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal  
Museums and Collections: Impact of Massive Acquisitions symposium  
185 St. Catherine Street West, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2X 1Z8

INFORMATION: GABRIELLE TREMBLAY

Tel: (514) 847-6253 Fax: (514) 847-6916

PLEASE PRINT.

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OFFICE: \_\_\_\_\_

FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

REGISTRATION FEES: \$15 STUDENTS: \$5 (tax included).

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Please indicate your choice in order of preference. The Musée reserves the right to limit registration depending on space availability.

Tour of the Musée's storage area: Duration 20 minutes

9:30 a.m. \_\_\_\_\_ 12:30 p.m. \_\_\_\_\_ 1:00 p.m. \_\_\_\_\_ 1:30 p.m. \_\_\_\_\_ 2:00 p.m. \_\_\_\_\_

Guided tour of the exhibition, The Lavalin Collection of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal - Shared Vision. Duration one hour

12:30 p.m. \_\_\_\_\_ 1:30 p.m. \_\_\_\_\_