

Space Invaders Contemporary Montreal Sculpture

John K. Grande

Number 56, Summer 2001

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/9431ac>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Le Centre de diffusion 3D

ISSN

0821-9222 (print)

1923-2551 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Grande, J. K. (2001). Review of [*Space Invaders: Contemporary Montreal Sculpture*]. *Espace Sculpture*, (56), 42–43.

de résurrection au cœur de tentatives de redoublement mises de l'avant par l'artiste. Des redoublements qui pourraient inclure le « faire » de L. Fontaine qui survit en tant qu'artiste par sa signature. Comme le Narcisse de son installation, elle « s'Autre », passant du corps physique de l'œuvre à son signe, « la fleur de tous les arts ». Non pas la peinture comme le proposait Alberti, en son temps, mais l'installation en tant que forme d'art pratiquée aujourd'hui.

EN FAIT...

Ô Narcisse, ma sœur... équivaut à une scène dans le sens « d'un lieu s'ouvrant à l'irréel, c'est-à-dire comme un faux monde donnant quelques satisfactions réelles à notre imaginaire⁶ ». Le sujet de la pièce est un mythe connu de tous qui est renouvelé par l'artiste. Ce qui explique l'importance accordée au miroir, multiplicateur de formes par excellence qui permet également d'objectiver ce qui est enfoui dans l'intériorité de l'âme. Les bricolages sculpturaux et les collages picturaux deviennent les signes qui font état de passages d'une époque à l'autre, d'une forme d'art à d'autres et du masculin au féminin.

Mais voici que le retour à la mythologie oblige l'artiste à être dans la différence. Une différence qui suppose la répétition, l'adaptation et la transgression. Il est possible de parler d'une *répétition avant* dans laquelle s'enchevêtrent, d'après René Passeron, deux modèles poétiques : « celui de la répétition préparatoire qui parvient non sans difficulté à la perfection (relative) de l'événement préparé » et celui de « la reprise interminable, à travers une longue suite d'œuvres, d'un modèle premier, d'un "schéma dynamique" (Bergson) entrevu lors d'une émotion initiale⁷ ». Ces modèles s'adaptent on ne peut mieux à l'installation de L. Fontaine et ils peuvent s'étendre à l'ensemble de sa production.

Enfin, il est aussi possible de proposer une répétition dans la « reliance » à propos de *Ô Narcisse, ma sœur...* Relier : « lier de nouveau [...], unir par des voies de communication [...], être attaché, appartenir » (Petit Littré). Selon Michel Maffesoli, la

« reliance » se fait autour d'images que l'on partage avec d'autres. Il peut s'agir d'images réelles, immatérielles ou même d'une idée autour de laquelle on communique. Peu importe⁸. » C'est vraiment un mythe autour duquel on communique que met en évidence l'installation de L. Fontaine, dont le questionnement sur la répétition confirme les propos de Gilles Deleuze qui constate que « chaque art a ses techniques de répétitions imbriquées » et que l'un des objets de l'art, « le plus haut » dit-il, « serait de mêler, de composer, de compenser les unes par les autres, "d'imbriquer" les différentes sortes de répétitions⁹ ». C'est ainsi que *Ô Narcisse, ma sœur...* résonne d'échos qui se répètent et s'éteignent on ne sait à quelle profondeur, soulignant que la « répétition dans la différence » devient la dynamique d'installation de L. Fontaine. ■

Lorraine Fontaine
Ô Narcisse, ma sœur...
 Musée du Québec, Québec
 5 octobre 2000-21 janvier 2001

NOTES

1. Le conservateur de l'exposition est Michel Martin. Un catalogue accompagne l'exposition.
2. Jean Baudrillard, *De la séduction*, Paris, Denoël Gonther, « Bibliothèque Médiations », 1981, p. 96.
3. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, Paris, Seuil, « Écrivains de toujours », 1979, p. 97.
4. Philippe Hadot, « Le mythe de Narcisse et son interprétation par Plotin », dans *Narcisse, Nouvelle revue psychanalyse*, n° 13, Gallimard, 1976, p. 85.
5. André Rouille, « La peinture, l'autre de la photographie », *PHOTO/PEINTURE, CRITIQUE*, n° 459-460, août-septembre 1985, p. 835.
6. Octave Mannoni, *Clefs pour l'imaginaire ou l'Autre scène*, Paris, Seuil, 1969, p. 75.
7. René Passeron, « Poétique et répétition », dans *Création et Répétition*, Paris, Clancier-Guénéaud, Paris, 1982, p. 13.
8. Michel Maffesoli, *La contemplation du monde*, Paris, Grasset, 1993, p. 147.
9. René Passeron, *op. cit.*, p. 17. L'auteur résume des propos de Gilles Deleuze dans *Différence et répétition*, (1981).

Space Invaders: Contemporary Montreal Sculpture

JOHN K. GRANDE

Billed by its organizer and curator Joyce Millar as a show that presents the work of sculptors who not only are involved in producing public sculpture commissions in Quebec, but equally have a more private output and production destined for collectors and patrons, *Space Invaders* provides Montreal audiences with a look at five Quebec sculptors active in the field: Liliana Berezowsky, Linda Covit, Andrew Dutkewych, Gilles Mihalcean and Claude Millette. While sculpture has always maintained a public profile, whether it be in the form of public commemorative monuments or in that of the more contemporary 1% sculpture commissions in our era, we seldom get to see such a collection of sculptures and maquettes produced by a range of Montreal artists like those presented in this show.

Joyce Millar proclaims that sculptors seem to work in two parallel universes — the public, in which they provide site-specific commissioned work that will be seen daily by those who work, study or generally pass through the spaces they are destined for, and the private studio, where they initiate works independently. Originated in 1961, when the Quebec government enacted a policy that one percent of the cost of each new municipal or provincial building should be used for art to enhance the architecture, the "1% program" has been much maligned, and sometimes for good reason. For example, some sculptors produce superior public sculpture without any government support, and with a stronger vision. Public or community input into the 1% program is minimal. Juries tend towards a cloistered, club-like atmosphere, encouraging the same artists in projects

that do little to further spontaneous art creation. By its very nature, the process of jurying, selection and subsequent production mitigates against spontaneity. That said, the 1% does give mature sculptors the opportunity to enact their ideas on a large scale, in spaces frequented by a broad range of people. Perhaps more importantly, a much neglected area of the contemporary arts scene — sculpture — gets much needed and permanent air and space play. The sculptors learn a lot through this process, which can contribute to their more private production. In the best-case scenario, their private production can feed their public art. Some contemporary sculptors find themselves working to create permanent works while adhering to notions of ephemeral and impermanent artworks, which can create a conflict in the final result. In a way, official public sculpture has been left behind by a broadly based movement towards vernacular, popular, and temporary artwork that shows no signs of receding. The 1% also tends to fulfil the requirements of the architect and planner, while the sculptor plays a secondary role in the process.

Gilles Mihalcean's 1998 *Autoportrait de Dieu (pour mon Père)* is a fascinating, compressed-looking assemblage of castaway wood elements from chairs, with a selection of assorted wooden details. Densely contained and vertically arranged, the piece has three distinct sections that build a harmony and rhythm out of the burnished, coloured or natural wood fragments inside. Designed after a snowman, the kind kids build in winter out of that Zen-like material that freezes and falls out of the sky, it resonates with an emotive density, ripples with imagination. As Mihalcean comments: "The representation of the divine has preoccupied sculptors for centuries. (...) GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE. My statue is a self portrait of God that could have been made by him." This

cosmological figure has three heads. Are these rounded forms a container, a structure, or a cage for all the intricate recombinations of wood within? Even the pedestal it stands on is an assemblage, as if everything is tentative, abstract, could fall apart or recombine in an instant. There is beauty in this work!

Andrew Dutkewych's blind-folded figure stands on a real

darkness that gathers behind the crossbeam around the flower vase, beneath the shelves, we are overcome with the feeling that in this small corner of the atmosphere there reigns complete and utter silence; that here in the darkness immutable tranquillity holds sway." This passage could effectively describe the wooden bell. Photos of trees, ropes, a tipi-like structure, and

staves project. Is this a military-industrial production metaphor? It defies its own look because it is has no ultimate function or purpose. This ingenious device is designed as if it were a cog in a larger machine; put together as it is, however, it becomes a curious aesthetic riddle. An earlier Berezowsky, from 1994, *When I say I love you, I am looking at my reflection in your eyes*, is a

volute, and *La tour lumière*. Some of these forms involve grills that are folded, or triptych shaped. Mihalcean's series of columnar pieces created for the Pavillon Adrien-Pouliot at the Université de Laval comprises a conglomerate of forms and materials. These evoke a strong sense of history and civilization building upon itself, as if in multiple geohumanistic layers. The industrial and natural are juxtaposed to create a balance between human culture and the culture of nature. Claude Millette's *L'envoileure d'Éole* (2000) created for CHSLD Vaudreuil and his *Fébrilité* (1999) for the Symposium International de l'Estriade in Granby are, like the larger piece in this show, comprised of sections of modular sculpted Corten steel, a jumble of allegorical cubes, again blasted apart with TNT after casting.

The most effective of all the 1% pieces is, to my mind, the 1992 bronze Andrew Dutkewych created for the archaeology museum in Pointe-à-Callière, in Old Montreal. A vessel-like, hybrid shape reminiscent of an ancient amphora or vessel beautifully synthesizes and integrates form with a superb Cragg-like sense of sculptural fusion. An elongated stone section and pot near the main piece carry an echo of the central piece further into the surrounding steps and environment of the museum entrance.

Dutkewych's composition builds a tension of mystery, or rediscovery, as the form(s) and function(s) reinterpret their meaning by establishing an overall continuity, just as an archaeologist might do with elements found from the past, layered under the ground. Here is one of the most successful 1% public art projects I have ever seen in Montreal, for it integrates an aesthetic and theme that directly relate to the purpose and function of the archaeology museum it stands in front of, but does it with style and a clear vision of the Pointe-à-Callière archaeology museum's theme. The spaces invaded by the works of these Montreal sculptors — the private studio and public domain — are so distinctly different; they are like two separate worlds. Though each sculptor's style persists in either realm, the sculptures they make for their own edification are more revealing! ■

Space Invaders: Contemporary Montreal Sculpture
Stewart Hall Art Gallery
Pointe-Claire
Dec. 9, 2000-Jan. 14, 2001



Envahisseurs d'espace : sculpture contemporaine de Montréal /Space Invaders: Contemporary Montreal Sculpture, 2000-2001. Vue partielle de l'exposition. À l'avant-plan, les œuvres de Gilles Mihalcean et de Claude Millette. Galerie d'art Stewart Hall Art Gallery, Pointe-Claire. Photo : J. Grande.

carpet. A smaller figure stands in his hand. Like an allegorical story within a story, the piece engages us to recreate some posited meaning out of a mysterious figural and sculptural presence that is vulnerable, yet moves forward nonetheless, as if in a state of temporal and spatial suspension or dislocation.

Linda Covit's Buddhist-looking *La cloche aphone* (1997) is a curious bell form made at Est-Nord-Est in St.-Jean-Port-Joli, out of linden wood, wrought iron, and preserved with oil and pigments. Created in response to travels in Japan, where she visited various Buddhist sites and read broadly on the subject, this large, pure elongated bell extends from ceiling to floor, exuding a sublime spiritual air. The serenity, passivity and wholesome beauty of this work seem at odds with its impressive size. *Plum Blossom and Bell*, an accompanying open book that we can leaf through with white gloves, a "book" presented in a neatly fabricated wooden box, was produced in collaboration with Arturo Silva in 1997. A text reads: "When we gaze into the

close-ups of praying hands, of monks, and a sculpture studio in Japan, all add to the mystical quality of foreignness Covit is mining with this project.

Claude Millette's *La déchirure* (2000) is a human-scaled Corten steel sculpture burnished brown on its surface. The form literally breaks open as if ripped apart by some force. Millette, who actually uses dynamite with his casts to create this effect, has a unique style involving chunky forms that fuse and segment from one to the next. The implicit movement in *La déchirure* and *La garde* (2000) are analogous to plate tectonics, where seemingly immovable angular forms do in fact move, but reluctantly, like a struggle between force and counter-force. Enigmatic and paradoxical, the tension between the integrity of these forms and their explosive breaking apart create a strong sculptural effect. The forms challenge the very formalism they mimic by breaking it apart, opening it up.

Liliana Berezowsky's *Karena* (1992) is a wheel of steel with a cube form in its centre, out of which a pile of menacing pointed

pedestal/column composed of steel and glass with a teardrop shaped bevelled mirror in the centre. Sensitive and whimsical, it expresses all the unexpressed ambiguities inherent to our innermost dreams, desires and reflections. *Tell me you still believe in beauty* (1995) has a stuffed crow that sits perched on a glass chair. Its pure enigmatic magic strongly contrasts with the seeming impregnability of the formidable *Karena*.

A series of 1% maquettes accompanies the more penetrating works from these artists' personal collections. One immediately recognizes the range of contrasting approaches to public projects, and equally how compromises render so many public projects as generic as dish-washing liquid. A Berezowsky maquette titled *The abundance of the seasons* has object elements rendered into sculptural form: a jack, a golden leaf, silver balls, a sundial, and a horn of plenty — next to an architectural scale model. Linda Covit's maquette includes a shelf comprising five towers; *Tower for Butterflies*, *Hearing the Forest*, *L'éventail*, *La*