

Nils-Udo's *Entrée*

John K. Grande

Number 63, Spring 2003

Art & publicité
Art & Publicity

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/9203ac>

[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. (2003). Review of [Nils-Udo's *Entrée*]. *Espace Sculpture*, (63), 41–42.

JOHN K. GRANDE

Nils-Udo's *Entrée*

decides a piece needs further work, he has to rough up the polished parts, recut the stone, then polish it again with an emery cloth). Heightening the formal allure are ribbons of green, white, red and black minerals that swirl through the granite (on *Morning Star* (1990), ribbons of a red mineral run like a stream of tears down the cheeks of a woman's face). Among his sculptures, the most thematically complex is *Waking Angel*. Inspired by the death of a close friend, and executed in black granite, it depicts a nude winged angel curled on her side, her finger dipping into a ridged spiral meant to symbolize the universe's eternal nature. Representing stars and planets, half-spheres float beside her. When McLeod was working on the sculpture, he experienced a minor crisis when he discovered a fissure in the boulder. Had it extended a few centimetres further, it would have infringed on the figure's feet. Fortunately, it didn't. Despite the sculpture's incredible mass, it has a precise balance point, so that it rocks gently when you sit on the edge, lending a sublime delicacy to the work.

Severson is used to tilting at windmills: for over a decade now, he has championed with little success the imaginative, collage-like paintings of enigmatic (and prolific) Regina artist Roger Ing. "Scott creates from the gut," Severson said. "I think people who are bureaucratic, or are into the academic art scene are afraid of his work because it's so powerful. They don't know what to do with it. It doesn't fit into their academic scheme. He doesn't have an artist statement filled with jargon and rhetoric."

While McLeod recently sold the piece *Gabriel, Knight of the Sun* (1990) to a Montreal collector for \$40,000, and has had other modest commercial triumphs, he is philosophical about the lack of attention he's received from curators and more established artists in Saskatchewan. "Working with granite makes you rethink your concept of time," he says. "With *Waking Angel*, it's who she's going to see in her lifetime that I wonder about more than who's going to see her in my lifetime." ←

As part of an effort to regenerate university lands bordering on the highway, and with wetlands, miniature lake and grassy hillside already restored, the University of Moncton has invited artist Nils-Udo to make the first permanent site-specific installation on their grounds. Nils-Udo visited the site initially in December 2001, when it was miraculously still clear of snow, and came up with the idea of making a cut in the hillside to create an entrance into the natural lands of the area. While most entrances will lead you into a building, this one leads directly into nature. Titled *Entrée*, Nils-Udo's new work, one of his first permanent installations in North America, signals a whole new paradigm shift in the perception of our relation to nature in art. Realizations such as these seem wholly necessary for regenerating a 21st-century definition of art-making, one that would place less emphasis on the art object, or concept, and seek instead to sensitize the public to our mutual dependence upon and need to maintain the cycles of life that surround us on this planet.

With a gazebo already situated on the grounds, now referred to as the *Parc Écologique du Millénaire*, plans at the University of Moncton are underway to maintain and develop this Moncton reserve to provide a green belt between the university and developing city area. With a new book titled *Nils-Udo: art in nature*, recently published by Flammarion, already sold out and a book forthcoming in 2003 on his Nests, with Editions Cercle d'art, Nils-Udo is an artist whose career continues to evolve in remarkable ways. His permanent land art installations and ephemeral artworks, like those by other artists of his generation—Andy Goldsworthy, Richard Long, among others—, have attracted ever more and increasingly enthusiastic audiences



over the past decade, particularly since the onset of the new millennium. Ironically many of the people who love Nils-Udo's art the most are city-dwelling urbanites who long to reconnect to nature and develop a tactile and physical relation to the world that surrounds them. For many, this once normal facet of life is being lost due to high-tech and concept-based digital image art. The deprivation has contributed to a sense of disregard and neglect for all things natural.

The actual installation of *Entrée* was achieved with the help of MacArthur's Nurseries and Price Contractors from Moncton. A dedicated team of stone cutters and landscapers played a major role in getting the work done. As the initial 16-metre-long, 3.5-metre-wide pie

NILS-UDO, *Entrée*, 2002.
Photo: J.-K. Grande

slice was cut into the hill, some substantial boulders turned up in the residue and were then integrated into the work. Just as the flat stones eventually set in the ground to form the walkway into the hill were made of sandstone, so too were these boulders. To create a living border to the piece, and after much study of indigenous east coast species, Nils-Udo asked to have 250 *Virginia Creepers* planted around the cut and 65 *Viburnum Trilobum* bushes (American Highbush Cranberry, known for its bright red berries) integrated into the border lines separating the natural hillside from this land art installation. Plans are underway to have Irish Moss fill the cracks

between the slabs of sandstone in the spring of 2003.

Entrée is, in a sense, a living artwork that involves a game of perspective and perception. From afar, distance within the piece seems even greater than it is, and in this sense recalls some of the perspectival *trompe-l'œil* effects Bernini achieved in the passages or walkways bordering St. Peter's in Rome. To achieve this, Nils-Udo set the largest of the found boulders in the foreground, at the entrance to the piece, followed by subsequent ones in decreasing scale and size. Likewise, the narrowing effect of the cut is further accentuated by the angle at which it was made on the hillside. Visitors' point of view on *Entrée* will usually be from below, either while driving by or in the parking lot, or on approaching the piece. *Entrée* recalls an earlier

design in which Nils-Udo had created a house structure one could enter into, only to find nature, trees, plants and florid chaotic growth within. The idea behind this piece, originally conceived for an autoroute roadside stop in France, was to introduce the theme of ecology into our vision of contemporary life and civilization.

Scientists and artists now agree that our survival on this planet will inevitably rest on the extent to which we can integrate our needs into a natural and cyclical system that takes care of available renewable and non-renewable resources. Ronald Babin, a University of Moncton professor with a background in sociology, is fully implicated in developing the *Parc Écologique du Millénaire*. Babin has discovered parallel developments in the arts

and social sciences that have a lot to do with an ecological model of sustainability. Likewise, the Moncton-based sculptor and professor André Lapointe will play a role in further developing this permanent park area into a site for earth-based integration projects of both the ephemeral and permanent kind. The hope is to strike a balance between international and regional artists' contributions to the site. As well, a modest integrative approach to land-based sculptural integrations is the preferred emphasis in what will become an eco-sculpture zone/park. Nils-Udo's initiative is welcomed as a fine first commission. It shows how sculptors and artists can join in the process of developing a previously fallow section of land. Not just about re-conceiving the economic system to encourage an

ecological model of sustainability, this initiative is also about spiritual growth and about re-actualizing and revivifying aesthetic traditions. Indeed, with all the talk of interactive art in video and web-based art, a walk in Moncton's *Parc Écologique du Millénaire* and into Nils-Udo's *Entrée*, to contemplate, relax, read or imagine, could be as instantaneous and interactive in the real perceptual sense that one can ever be. Let us remember Goethe's comment: "Through studying Nature's process of creation, man can become worthy of participating spiritually in her production."¹ ←

NOTE

1. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe's Worldview, presented in his Reflections and Maxims*. Ed., Frederick Unger, (New York: Unger, 1963) p. 103.

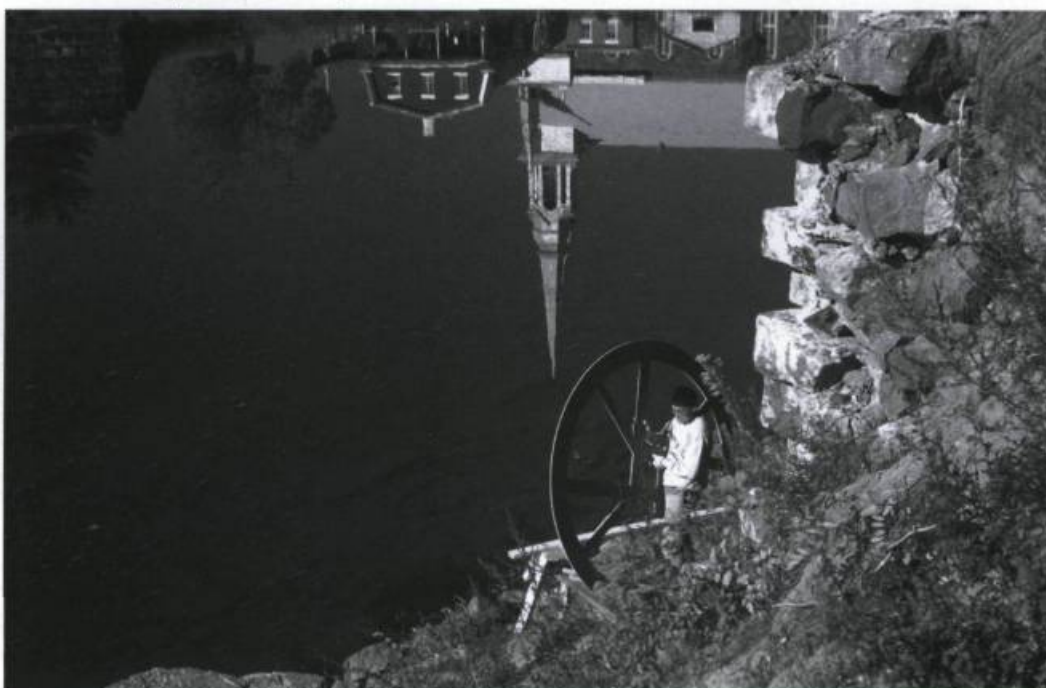
Dominique LAQUERRE

Repères pour une mémoire collective

La rivière Nicolet traverse les Bois-Francs dans la région Centre-du-Québec. Cette ressource collective est le sujet de l'installation *Repères* de l'artiste Dominique Laquerre, reconnue pour son travail d'intervention d'art-nature.

Loin des lieux institutionnels de l'art, l'artiste s'est intégrée au sein des communautés de Nicolet, Notre-Dame-de-Ham, Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens et Sainte-Clotilde, toutes bercées par la Nicolet et, en étroite collaboration avec des membres de ces ville et villages, a réalisé une intervention artistique interdisciplinaire insérée dans l'environnement immédiat. *Repères* est composée de quatre cailloux granitiques que l'artiste a extraits de la rivière et qu'elle a retournés dans leur lieu naturel suite à une transformation artistique. L'œuvre explore les potentialités du paysage comme matériau et lieu d'art, en plus d'évoquer le vécu de l'être humain. Cette pratique participative agit comme un moyen d'élaboration artistique d'une histoire collective.

Une des fonctions de l'œuvre, nous confie l'artiste, « est de transmettre à travers le temps un témoignage de ce que nous sommes et de nos préoccupations¹. » Son intérêt pour les relations que l'être humain entretient avec son environnement territorial l'a conduite à un projet qui vise l'appropriation



de l'histoire et des lieux avec et pour les communautés qui les habitent. Ici, nous sommes loin de l'idée d'un art contemporain élitiste et inaccessible aux profanes. Cette pratique d'un art *in situ* s'adresse directement aux gens de la région et concerne la vie quotidienne, voire en dépend pour son existence même.

La cueillette de données sur la rivière a débuté en 2001. L'artiste, telle une anthropologue, a lancé un appel de coopération au projet *Repères* sur son site Internet, dans

les journaux locaux et aussi dans les lieux publics tels les dépanneurs. Plusieurs personnes ont rencontré Laquerre et lui ont fourni des témoignages, des photos (Ambroise Houle, Isabelle Massey, Paul-Émile Pellerin), des poèmes (Rosario Bégin, Monique Duguay), et des compositions musicales (Jean Chatillon, Marthe Dubé, Jean-Luc Lavigne)². Ces participations, d'une extrême importance, accordent un statut de co-auteurs aux membres des communautés qui ont donné à l'artiste la matière pre-

mière pour son projet. Les histoires racontées, en fait un matériau d'art qui n'est nul autre que la vie elle-même, démontrent l'attachement socio-économique et émotif des êtres envers les cours d'eau et renseignent sur l'histoire des collectivités qui dépendent toujours de la Nicolet.

Quatre œuvres symboliques traduisent et cristallisent le vécu humain en objet artistique. L'un des cailloux, une fois scindé, a donné forme à deux repères qui renferment les extrémités de la rivière ;

DOMINIQUE LAQUERRE, *Repère de Sainte-Clotilde-de-Horton*, en cours de réalisation sur les deux emprises du pont démolé en 1958, octobre 2002. En collaboration avec l'Atelier Silex. Photo: Dominique Laquerre.