

# **Raccord by Numa Amun**

## *Winner of the third MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award*

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**Québec City, Wednesday, June 19, 2019** ✕ The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ), in collaboration with RBC, its financial partner, is proud to present *Raccord*, the exhibition of artist Numa Amun, recipient of the third MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award. From **June 20, 2019 to February 16, 2020**, this new exhibition produced through an outstanding partnership between the MNBAQ and the Musée d'art contemporain des Laurentides (MAC LAU) will enable visitors to discover the artist's work of magnetic precision stemming from a skilful blending of abstraction, representation and optical illusions. The rendering of his works results from extraordinary meticulousness. It

inspires contemplative, sensitive meditation of the physical body or even of the recognition of the soul emanating from the beyond.

Curated by Jonathan Demers, Director General and Chief Conservator at the MAC LAU, this first major solo exhibition assembles works of amazing force that will be accompanied by an original publication available in mid-July.

Numa Amun's work is fascinating since his artistic quest encompasses the spiritual and expresses itself through such powerful themes are life, death, love, suffering and solitude. Visitors will be captivated by such refinement and meticulousness and will appreciate this unique, indeed, spiritual, artistic approach that focuses on the distinct spirit of experience. They can admire frescoes that reflect human life and engage in an unforgettable sensory experience.

*Since its inception, the MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award has been granted every two years to a Québec artist whose career spans more than 10 years. Previous award winners were Diane Morin in 2015 and Carl Trahan in 2017. The biennial award, granted with financial support from RBC, includes a \$ 2 000 cash award for the five finalists, an exhibition organized for Numa Amun, the third recipient, the acquisition by the MNBAQ for its collection of \$50 000 worth of the artist's works, and a publication highlighting his work.*

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## Text by Jonathan Demers

*Raccord* by Numa Amun invites contemplation (from the Latin *contemplor*, to gaze at). The eight works present eight bodies painted freehand on free canvases religiously integrated by the artist into the walls of the MNBAQ. They make up a symbolic fresco from which emanates the trajectory of a spiritual life. Numa Amun's painting is salutary. It proposes a succession of material and immaterial states and promises through its liturgy (the exhibition) a soothing outcome from the suffering inherent in existence.

Close scrutiny of the paintings reveals a geometric organization stemming from painstaking work that confines the gesture of painting to considerable self-restraint. Through quasi-abstinence, Numa Amun subjects himself to slow production that stretches time. It took nearly a year to produce each of the paintings exhibited. The complex mechanism

that allows the images to emerge forms an arrangement marked by the opposition of complementary colours. In this way, the painter refers by inversion to the photographic negative, making appear in near transparency subjects bathed in light.

Beyond time and space, the works that make up *Raccord* result from a singular approach that is at once pictorial and metaphysical, stemming from a lengthy tradition of representation. The network of images that Numa Amun creates is as familiar as it is unsettling: it evokes a visual reminiscence, indeed the recollection of a distant figurative story of which we seem to still bear the scar

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## The genesis of *Raccord*

A genuine ode to the life cycle, the exhibition assembles eight paintings created between 2009 and 2016. The works gravitate towards the incarnation of an invisible order that seemingly unfolds the cosmic states of a multifaceted life. The works form a whole since each painting draws inspiration from the others and each work echoes the others. The artist explains the genesis of the project.

“The starting point was the *ribbon woman* as an icon of the Virgin. After that, I wanted to produce a second painting. What is happening in front of the virgin? People are kneeling. I thus made a *kneeling man*. Since I was subsequently in a slightly blacker zone, I wanted to produce a painting that speaks of death. It was only when I had produced four or five paintings that I realized that I was in the process of speaking of life and death. The project shows that we live in a physical cathedral but it also shows that we vanish.”

All of the paintings are hand-made. They are produced by laying down a grid in which the pale or dark lines and the creation of colours lie within the scope of a stylistic relationship that displays absolute rigour. The paintings have been incorporated into the MNBAQ’s walls. This undoubtedly reflects the artist’s quest for refinement and his desire to achieve a 3D effect but also to integrate the works into the very history of the MNBAQ.

“It is like a tribute to walls and architecture. The paintings are embedded in the MNBAQ’s architecture. There is something poetic



that I found attractive. This is an exhibition of contemporary art but, at the same time, it is somewhat timeless. I hope that individuals who do not get off on contemporary art have as much pleasure as those who do. There is no mannerism and there are no boundaries. If visitors start on the third floor of the Gérard Morisset Pavilion to reach the exhibition, I believe that they will not feel disoriented as my work has a very liturgical side. For those who start here and go to the exhibition rooms of *350 Years of Artistic Practices in Québec*, there is no discrepancy.”

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## Numa Amun discusses his work

### *Raccord*, 2009

Acrylic on canvas, human scale



“This painting speaks of the end of life. In fact, the body is present but it is the entire archive of a life that takes shape, somewhat like the ribbon of a film that surrounds it. There is also some part of the DNA recorded on the ribbon. In point of fact, it is like a stretched Möbius strip that composes the entire body. It is wholly symbolic, but *Raccord* can also refer to a thread that you attach.”

### *Extase d'un déni hormonal*, 2010

Acrylic on canvas, human scale



“A lone, kneeling man appears to be holding his testicles in his hands but that could also just as well be his eyes. There is a something modest in the posture. In fact, the painting is about abstinence. It evokes individuals who take a vow of chastity but who find extasy in the absence of sexuality. It is a painting that, even though it is resolutely modern, reconnects with old paintings focusing on extasy.”

### *Le temps que nous vivons n'est pas celui qu'on pense*, 2011

Acrylic on canvas, human scale

abstract shape. Some people do not perceive a presence, it is rather Christlike in nature. I have read a great deal about the Holy Shroud and I wanted to talk about it but from a feminist perspective. Indeed,

the entire project displays gender parity. It is more interesting for me to represent a woman. It is as if women display resistance, denial, self-destruction and at the same time, strength. For me, they purify things in their lives, they pardon, they are more inclined to reconciliation and focus more on relief. This is my perception as a man, but I believe that men should draw inspiration from it.”

### *Quelqu'un de très loin veut nous parler, 2012*

Acrylic on canvas, human scale

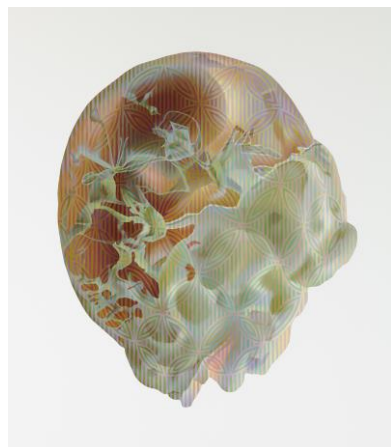
“I have experienced extended periods of solitude in my life. When I started this painting, I was alone and wondered whether I would finally meet the woman of my life. I therefore painted, in fact, what I did not have, that is, a woman that I knew but not from an erotic standpoint. The painting depicts an encounter but the scene is ambiguous since we do not know if they are together or are about to separate and are paying tribute to the time they have spent together. In actual fact, they are not greatly absorbed by the body but instead by something that is overlooking them. It is as if they are praying.”



### *L'une des nombreuses demeures, 2013*

Acrylic on canvas, human scale

“I produced *le fœtus* immediately after *le couple* since, in actual fact, it is our first home. It is one of our many dwellings. However, I changed the colours to make it a bit more like a star, like planet Earth, because for me the Earth is also one of our numerous dwellings in the universe. However, given how it was produced, it can also be perceived as an abstract shape. Once again, what is most fascinating is that the foetal position is a praying position.”



### *La personnalité présente n'est que le reflet d'une personnalité qui se développe depuis de très longues années, 2014*

Acrylic on canvas, human scale

“Since my project started to be serious, I needed something that was lighter and candid but also rigorous. What established itself in my mind was a sort of very cerebral and serious tribute to youth or childhood because, for me, childhood is part of the life cycle. What I

mean is that children are already very old. They carry their background and have a genetic personality but also bear a sort of inaccessible mysterious maturity.

I also needed to honour women, who have been little girls, and little girls who will become women and deal with the world. For me, Québec is a society that is, fortunately, matriarchal, which is exemplary and should inspire the world. I believe that little girls will remake the world. A little girl better represents hope for me. We also agree that the lives of girls are more difficult than the lives of boys. I simply wanted to show a child on her two feet in the moment who appears to say ‘Bring on life, I’m waiting for it.’”

### *Grossesse nerveuse pour une âme finalitaire, 2015*

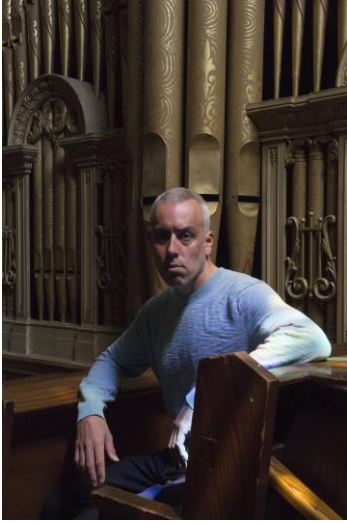
Acrylic on canvas, human scale

“Childbirth is also part of the life cycle. Here, it emerges in a slightly bizarre manner, because it is a man who is pregnant, who is afraid and who is frightened. His posture evokes the image of a shameful period. I believe that we are living in a shameful period. Painting thus echoes contemporary society. There is anxiety and fear at the moment. People are frightened because of impending upheavals but always with the expectation of something better. I also wanted to represent a sort of invisible presence with the hands emerging from the wall to touch the stomach. The painting also speaks of the soul that is both imminent and present during pregnancy.”

### *Corps sombre, 2016-2017*

Acrylic on canvas, human scale

“Death, the ascension, the moment when one loses the body, there is a bit of all of that in this painting. The diamond is an abstract shape, which also evokes the moment when we end our lives, our incarnations, where there is a sort of ascension but these are all abstract effects because we cannot see them. It therefore took an abstract shape to express it. We perceive a woman in the interior who, in fact, becomes a very mysterious object.”



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## Numa Amun, in a nutshell

Numa Amun was born in 1974 in Montréal, where he is now living and working. He graduated from the UQAM (bachelor's degree) in 1998 and from Concordia University (MFA) in 2004. He participated in the Biennale de Montréal (2007) and the Triennale québécoise (2011). He has presented solo shows throughout Québec, Canada and in Northern Ireland. In particular, in 2004 and 2018, he produced *in situ* works in churches in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve in Montréal. His works are present in the public collections of the MNBAQ (Art Loan Collection) and the Canadian Art Foundation. In 2018, Numa Amun received the third MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award, presented in collaboration with RBC. *Raccord* is the artist's first major exhibition in a museum. He will teach at Concordia University starting in the fall of 2019.

### *A video portrait of Numa Amun*

To reveal to the general public Numa Amun's profoundly spiritual approach, the MNBAQ is proposing a video brief based on an interview with the artist in the Église du Très-Saint-Nom-de-Jésus in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. This news report broadcast on the MNBAQ's social networks when his award was announced highlights his painting technique, sources of inspiration and works.

To watch: <https://youtu.be/xerRzDJYzLk>

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## A limited edition box

A special catalogue will present the work of Numa Amun, the third recipient of the MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award.

The box, a unique item produced by graphic designer Raphaël Daudelin of Le Studio Feed inc., will comprise an essay in French and in English, written by Jonathan Demers.

The art object will be available in mid-July in a limited, numbered, signed edition. The publication *Raccord* is the ideal way to enter Numa Amun's universe. Distributed by Dimedia, *Raccord* will be pre-sale at the opening

of the exhibition, on June 19, for \$39.95. During the summer, it will be available at the MNBAQ bookstore-boutique and in bookstores for \$49.95.

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## About the exhibition

**Guided visit by the artist Numa Amun**

Wednesday, August 28, at 7:30 p.m.

Room 1C of the Gérard Morisset Pavilion

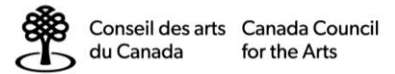
Included in the price of admission to the MNBAQ

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## Credits

This exhibition, presented until February 16, 2020, is organized by the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec and designed by guest curator Jonathan Demers, in collaboration with the Musée d'art contemporain des Laurentides. It highlights the granting in 2018 to Numa Amun of the MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award, with the financial participation of RBC.

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**Direction of the project**  
**Annie Gauthier**  
Director of Collections and Exhibitions

**Coordination of the project**  
**Kasia Basta**  
Project Manager, MNBAQ

**Curatorship**  
**Jonathan Demers,**  
Guest curator, director and chief curator, Musée d'art contemporain des Laurentides

**Exhibition Design**  
**Jean Hazel,**  
Lead Designer, MNBAQ

**Graphic Design**  
**Marie-France Grondin,**  
Designer, MNBAQ



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***Raccord* by Numa Amun**  
**Winner of the third MNBAQ Contemporary Art Award**  
**Gérard Morisset Pavilion at the MNBAQ**  
**From June 20, 2019 to February 16, 2020**

INFORMATION : 418 643-2150 or 1 866 220-2150 / [mnbaq.org](http://mnbaq.org)

Page 1 - Photo: Numa Amun, *Extase d'un déni hormonal*, 2010. Acrylic on canvas, human scale Photo: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie

Page 2 - Photo: Numa Amun, *Extase d'un déni hormonal* (detail), 2010. Acrylic on canvas, human scale Photo: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie

Page 3 - Photo: Numa Amun, *Raccord*, 2009. Acrylic on canvas, human scale Photo: Idra Labrie, MNBAQ

Page 4 - Photos: Top to bottom: View of the exhibition *Raccord* Photo: Idra Labrie, MNBAQ // Numa Amun, *Raccord* (detail), 2009. Acrylic on canvas, human scale Photo: Idra Labrie, MNBAQ

Page 5 - Photos: Top to bottom: View of the exhibition *Raccord* Photo: Idra Labrie, MNBAQ // Numa Amun, *L'une des nombreuses demeures*, 2013. Acrylic on canvas, human scale Photo: Idra Labrie, MNBAQ

Page 7 - Photo: Numa Amun. Photo: © Courtesy of Numa Amun

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## General Information

OPENING  
HOURS OF THE  
MUSEUM COMPLEX

### Until September 2, 2019

Monday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Wednesday till 9 p.m.

### From September 3, 2019 to May 31, 2020

Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Wednesday till 9 p.m.  
Closed Mondays (except October 14)  
Closed December 25)

### ADMISSION

Adults: 22 \$  
Seniors (65 and Over): 20 \$  
Ages 18 to 30: 12 \$  
Ages 13 to 17: 7 \$  
Families (2 adults and 3 children  
13 to 17): 48 \$  
Families (1 adult and 3 children  
13 to 17): 26 \$  
Children 12 and under: free  
Members: free  
Wednesdays from, 5 p.m. to  
9 p.m.: half-price  
Reduced rates for groups

### SERVICES AVAILABLE

Parking, Librairie-Boutique,  
café, restaurant, free Wi-Fi and  
Cloakroom

### CONTACT US

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