

A red chair with yellow legs is positioned on the left side of the frame. A red carpet extends from the chair towards the bottom right corner. On the carpet, there are two red shoes. The background is a light gray wall.

Decorative Arts and Design in Québec

A GUIDE TO THE
COLLECTION

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COLLECTION

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“Things in relation to us are nothing in themselves. They are still nothing when they have a name but they begin to exist for us when we are aware of their relationships and properties.”

— Buffon¹ [TRANSLATION]

The imaginative universe of objects

How do we construct our universe? How does the world take shape in our minds? Before we conceptualize it using words, we do so essentially through sentient experience of the objects that compose it. The objects of everyday life – furniture, knick-knacks, photographs and souvenirs – are all landmarks of a personal or familial journey. From a collective standpoint, certain objects have meaning at a specific time and place while elsewhere and at other times they would have none.

An object, through the image that it arouses in our consciousness, participates in the elaboration of an imaginative universe. Such an image can be almost neutral: a chair in its simplest expression, which could be qualified as generic since it has no specific meaning in a given culture. Beyond its function, the act of sitting, it does not inspire any specific impression. However, this image, e.g. the small wooden chair with a woven rawhide strip seat commonly known as a babiche chair, can also be connoted. As soon as it enters consciousness, the image of this object (the object itself observed – a direct image – or, as here, its description alone – an indirect image) evokes in Québec a feeling aroused by the relationships that this object maintains with numerous elements linked to its history and context of use, the socioeconomic field to which it is attached, its rehabilitation at certain periods or, to the contrary, its rejection at other times.

In short, the imaginative universe of the object constitutes a represented, non-explicit, immaterial value that takes shape in each individual’s consciousness depending on his desires, dreams or aspirations and, collectively, according to the myths and beliefs that a community shares. The object thus acquires a specific value according to the representations and the social uses to which it gives rise. From an individual standpoint, the object acquires a meaning, and from a collective standpoint, a symbolic dimension is conferred upon it.

To present a series of objects from the decorative arts and design collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec by adopting this perspective is to bank on their historical and aesthetic significance because they possess this evocative power that affects individual or collective consciousness. Each individual can construct his Imaginary Museum, as André Malraux² might

1. Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, t. I, 1749), p. 25. The book is available in the Gallica digital library of the Bibliothèque nationale de France: gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k10672243/f41.image.r=.

2. André Malraux, *Le Musée imaginaire*, 1^{re} éd. 1947; 2^e éd. 1951, comme première partie des *Voix du silence*; 3^e éd. remaniée et complétée (Paris: Gallimard, 1965).



Fig. 1. Alfred Pellán (produced by Irène Auger), *Child's Room*, 1948, tapestry in crochet, 136 × 179 cm. MNBAQ, purchase, Concours artistiques de la province de Québec – 1st prize, decorative arts (1948.90).

have put it, but a government museum must also participate in the construction to the extent that it is the principal architect.

The community of the arts

The decorative arts experienced a renewal in Québec at the turn of the 1930s. In the realm of ceramics, Pierre-Aimé Normandeau was the tutelary figure. Upon the completion of his studies in Sèvres, Paris and Faenza, he headed the new ceramics section at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal. Although he established a teaching system that promoted “Canadian” production applied to small industry while making use of local resources, encouraged in this regard by authorities, who sought to establish a self-sufficient system in a time of crisis, some of the craftsmen discovered an artistic inclination. Louis Archambault (p. 14) and Jean Cartier (p. 20), in the field of ceramics, are undoubtedly the most important ones in this regard. The former produced “free” asymmetrical shapes and played on the contrasts between brilliant glazes and matte finishes. The latter worked in a sort of primitive purity and concentrated on the decoration of his pieces, as Rodolphe de Repentigny noted in 1954. In his workshop, Cartier trained and exhibited the work of young ceramic artists such as Denise Beauchemin, Annette Segal and Rose Truchnovsky. He exhibited in galleries, in particular along with Jean-Paul Riopelle at Gallery XII at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Maurice Savoie (p. 24), a Québec grant recipient, also furthered his training abroad in Faenza following Normandeau, then with a French master, Francine del Pierre, as Cartier had done several years earlier with Besnard. Upon his return, he resumed teaching and exercised a striking influence in this respect. Gaétan Beaudin turned, instead, to the United States and built on his experience at the Penland School of Handicrafts in North Carolina before opening La Poterie, his school-workshop, in North Hatley in 1954, which became a leading teaching and dissemination centre. In the meantime, Jacques Garnier established his workshop, L'Argile Vivante, in Saint-Marc-sur-Richelieu, where he engaged in the small-scale production of commercial ceramics. Associated for a time with Paul Lajoie, who left to study in Europe, Garnier pursued the venture with his brother Pierre.

The melding of the visual and applied arts, apparent at the end of the preceding decade, proliferated in the 1950s. A desire for democratization united the artists, who wished to produce useful work and broaden their presence. At the École des beaux-arts de Québec, Jean Dallaire painted allegories conceived as murals or tapestry cartoons. Alfred Pellán joined with Irène Auger to produce a tapestry in crochet (Fig. 1). Jordi Bonet collaborated with Claude Vermette, Jean Cartier and then Jacques Garnier before becoming the muralist we know. At the turn of the 1960s, Jean-Paul Mousseau designed lamps made of coloured fibreglass, a material that he also used in luminous totemic sculptures.

It was also at this time that Québec design made a real breakthrough. In the postwar boom, an architect by training like Henry Finkel found an environment propitious to the development of a host of consumer products, ranging

from a Bakelite intercom loudspeaker to hairbrushes and clothing, by way of an integrated cigarette dispenser and lighter that could be attached to a car's dashboard (Fig. 2). However, Julien Hébert (p. 16), affectionately called the father of Québec design, had an entirely different attitude when he appeared on the scene. Primarily a sculptor, he subsequently became a designer of utilitarian products, although he remained no less deeply attached to his ideals. For this humanist grounded in a strong philosophical culture, the work of art, whether sculpture or functional object, must be integrated into its environment. For any work, “it is a question of choosing the simplest solution, finding what is necessary and what cannot be otherwise.”³ [TRANSLATION]

Another key figure at that time, one who left an even more enduring mark, was undoubtedly Jacques Guillon (p. 18). A go-getter, entrepreneur and man of strong convictions, he quickly established himself on the Canadian design scene and headed one of the country's foremost multidisciplinary offices.

Numerous painters also engaged in careers as graphic designers. Advertising art, as it was described at the time, was taught starting in 1925 at the École technique de Montréal, then, as of 1935 and 1936, at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal and the École des beaux-arts de Québec respectively. During World War II, Charles Fainmel and Henry Eveleigh produced posters for the Information Service of the Department of National Defence. Few of Fainmel's works remain. However, an exhibition of his advertising art was held in 1946 at the Art Association (now the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts) and the items preserved reflect his modern approach, in particular through his treatment of photography. Eveleigh emphasized a more symbolic language comprising geometric or abstract shapes and photographs treated graphically. Allan Harrison (p. 22) rounded out this trio of artists/graphic designers. In the late 1940s, Harrison, along with Fainmel and Eveleigh, had great ambitions concerning the social value of advertising art. In 1945, in *Canadian Art*, Harrison called for art that allows for the expression of ideas through symbolic forms.⁴ Two years later, Fainmel and Eveleigh unleashed a quasi anti-capitalist socialist diatribe: “In any democratic society, where the well-being of the majority prevails, advertising must inform, educate and help cultural development by promoting good taste, health, safety, citizenship and social harmony. It must contribute not to making life more luxurious, but happier.”⁵ Then a fourth individual appeared on the scene and singlehandedly personified the notion of community in the art realm. Vittorio Fiorucci arrived in Montréal in 1951 and quickly befriended the artists of the time. A photographer and poster designer, he became a commentator on the social situation here and elsewhere. His poster *Visitez le Nouveau Québec* (Fig. 3), with its improbable travel agency campaign



Fig. 2. Henry Finkel, for Industrial Novelties, “Cig-a-lite” Cigarette Lighter, 1947, chrome-plated steel, 11.7 × 9.9 × 3.9 cm. MNBAQ, gift of Nina Valéry (1997.211).



Fig. 3. Vittorio Fiorucci, “Visitez le Nouveau Québec” Poster, 1967, silkscreen, 88.7 × 63.5 cm. MNBAQ, gift of Vittorio Fiorucci (2006.264).

3. MNBAQ, Centre de documentation, Fonds Julien-Hébert, P11, Journal personnel, undated.

4. Allan Harrison, “Advertising Art in Canada,” *Canadian Art*, vol. 2, no. 3, February-March 1945, pp. 106-110.

5. Charles Fainmel and Henry Eveleigh, “The Proper Function of Advertising,” *Canadian Art*, vol. 4, no. 4, Summer 1947, pp. 157-159.

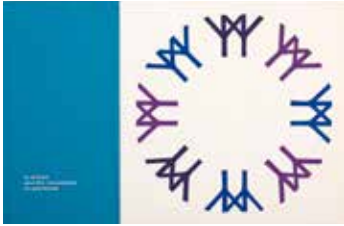


Fig. 4. Julien Hébert, for the Canadian Corporation for the 1967 World Exhibition, *Model for the Man and His World Logo (Expo 67)*. Carton 6, 1963, silkscreen and collage, 43.2 x 66.4 cm. MNBAQ, gift of the Estate of Julien Hébert (1994.194.06).



Fig. 5. Christen Sorensen (attributed to), *Expo 67 Chair*, 1967, fibreglass, chrome-plated steel and plaid, 78 x 77 x 67 cm. MNBAQ, gift of Stéphane Cauchies (2012.01).

personified by a headless cleric’s robe, summarized in a single image the situation in Québec at the end of the Quiet Revolution.

Major encounters

At Expo 67, *Vie des Arts* declared that design “reigned supreme,”⁶ while *Print*, the prestigious American graphic design magazine, saw the fair as a “sort of design laboratory.”⁷ To carry out this vast project, the country’s best architects and designers got together to form the Canadian Corporation for the 1967 World Exhibition. Among them was Jacques Guillon, whose “Alumna” furniture line was used to equip the corporation’s offices. Guillon had previously achieved the singular feat of convincing Mayor Jean Drapeau and his team to repatriate the design of the Métro cars and assign it to Montréal designers instead of Parisian engineers, who had developed the pneumatic tire technology. His firm (p. 26) took up the challenge and at the same time designed the signage: a simple downward-pointing arrow that is still used to indicate access to the underground trains. For Expo 67, Guillon and his firm designed the Man and His World Pavilion, which included animated three-dimensional representations of a human brain, neurons and a cell magnified a million times. Guillon also spearheaded the project to outfit the model units in Habitat 67, designed by Canadian designers, three of whom were working in Montréal: Sigrun Bülow-Hube, of Swedish origin and founder of the firm Aka Works, Christen Sorensen, of Danish origin, who worked with Guillon between 1958 and 1962, and Guillon’s firm. It was in this setting that the garden chair for the Habitat 67 terrace was designed.

The grand event that was Expo 67 has left few physical traces. However, one image endures: the logo designed by Julien Hébert in 1963 (Fig. 4), which perfectly conveys the concept of “Man and His World,” chosen as the event’s theme after the title of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s collection of autobiographical stories.

The spirit of Expo 67 dominated its era, characterized by feelings of confidence, happiness and hope, non-materialistic values that paradoxically emerged in a trendy material – plastic – associated from then on with the consumer society. Industries at the time relied on designers in order to break into the marketplace with new, inexpensive products that were easy to manufacture, light and easily transportable. Thus, the juice pitcher and glasses created for Mepal by Belgian designer Koen de Winter (p. 54) were available in Québec before their designer settled there several years later. If the material seems specific to the period, colour was as well. The same yellow appears in André Morin’s IPL collection (p. 38) and in the furniture of Giovanni Maur’s “Avant-garde 2000” series (p. 40). Orange and red are also prevalent, whether in the plastic of IPL’s “*Solair*” Chair (p. 42) or the Scottish plaid motif of the “*Expo 67*” Chair (Fig. 5) manufactured by Ebena-Lasalle for the Canadian Corporation for the 1967 World Exhibition.

This blossoming also expressed itself in shapes: Douglas Ball (p. 74) and John Berezowsky’s “Glo-Up” lamps, Albert Leclerc’s office objects (p. 34) and

François Dallegret’s *Kiiks* (p. 32) all favoured the use of circles and curved volumes. In graphic design, the brochure covers and medical sample boxes of Rolf Harder and Ernst Roch (p. 44) offered up full and spherical shapes. Guy Lalumière’s posters for the different exhibitions held during Expo 67 also used four round motifs: the iris of an eye for photography; a work enclosing two circles, one inside the other, for sculpture; a spherical jigsaw puzzle for design; and a circular brushstroke for painting (Fig. 6). And Julien Hébert’s logo was also circular...

After this great global celebration, Montréal did it all over again with the preparations for the 21st Olympic Games in 1976. In addition to a striking logo by Georges Huel (p. 44), a full program including a series of thematic posters drew on Québec’s best professionals. In the realm of objects and furniture, the Olympic flame designed by Michel Dallaire (p. 50) caused a sensation, even though it initially disappointed Montréal dignitaries, who were expecting a classical flame decorated with maple leaves. To furnish the Olympic village, Dallaire worked with André Jarry, a veteran who had to his credit ensembles designed for Opus in 1958 and for Simmons in 1970, as well as lengthy teaching experience at the Institut des arts appliqués. Constructed out of maple and particleboard and produced at low cost by Québec manufacturers, the Olympic village furniture could be arranged in different layouts to create private zones in areas of limited space. For the Olympic Park’s outdoor areas, François Dallegret devised the “Beta” system, comprising concrete blocks and perforated steel sections that, when assembled in various configurations, formed benches, picnic tables, garbage containers and planters.

Ceramics in transition

The 1967 World’s Fair and the 1976 Olympic Games provided design with a fertile environment in which to deploy more expansive and colourful forms. The decorative arts were not to be outdone but did not follow the same trends. On the ceramics side, small factories established during the 1930s and 1940s, in the wake of the educational programs promoted by the government, called on well-known ceramicists to renew their product lines. These artists subsequently became designers. Jacques Garnier, followed by Jean Cartier, thus joined the ranks of Céramique de Beauce. The former designed a series of pieces with sober, modern lines that broke with the traditional forms of the Beauce industry. Jean Cartier designed nearly 200 models, some of which figure among the great successes of industrial ceramics, in particular pieces in the “Skimo” series and, above all, his vase decorated with intersecting curved lines (Fig. 7).

Other ceramicists continued to work in their ateliers and spurred significant aesthetic change. While their predecessors in the 1950s had mostly gone to France to further their training, greater openness appeared around 1960;



Fig. 6. Studio Guy Lalumière, for the Canadian Corporation for the 1967 World Exhibition, “*Expo 67. Art*” Poster, 1967, offset, 76.2 x 50.9 cm. MNBAQ, gift of Lise Bourassa (2015.903).



Fig. 7. Jean Cartier, for Céramique de Beauce, *Vase (C-35)*, 1971, white earthenware, 43.2 x 36 x 26.6 cm. MNBAQ, gift of Daniel Cogné (1997.196).

6. Laurent Lamy, “Le design, roi et maître de l’Exposition universelle,” *Vie des Arts*, No. 48, Fall 1967, pp. 52-55.
7. Martin Fox, “Expo ’67: A Design Laboratory,” *Print*, Vol. 21, No. 2, April 1967, pp. 15-23.



Fig. 8. Gaétan Beaudin, for Sial, *Decanter and Goblets*, 1976, stoneware, decanter: 25.5 cm (height) × 14.6 cm (diameter); goblets: 7.7 cm (height) × 7.5 cm (diameter) (each). MNBAQ, gift of Daniel Cogné (1996.79.01 to 1996.79.03).

England, Scandinavia and especially Japan became centres of attraction. Studio pottery emerged from contact with the American movement, but also under the influence of the Englishman Bernard Leach, whose book became the bible of all potters.⁸ Paul Lajoie, a provincial grant recipient in 1960, was the only Québec ceramicist to study with Leach. Lajoie’s few known works, with their ample forms bearing clayey glazes and calligraphic patterns created by means of oxides applied with a brush, are reminiscent of certain works of his master.

Gaétan Beaudin annually offered three-week summer training courses in his workshop in North Hatley. In 1963, a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts allowed him to travel to Japan, where he visited the leading ceramics centres. Upon his return in the summer of 1964, Beaudin invited Tatzuo Shimaoka and offered a study session to 15 professional potters, including Satoshi Saito and Louise Doucet. A Canada Council grant enabled Doucet to follow largely the same Japanese route as Beaudin, between October 1965 and July 1967. Upon her return, solo exhibitions followed and, starting in the first half of the 1970s, Satoshi Saito’s contribution was fully integrated, the duo henceforth signing their works Doucet-Saito (p. 46). While Beaudin embarked upon an industrial venture with Sial, producing stoneware that preserved the visual and tactile properties of hand-crafted ceramics (Fig. 8), the American Dean Mullavey replaced him in North Hatley. He had arrived in Québec in 1961 with solid university training and had also lived in Japan for two years, preceding Beaudin in that respect by nearly ten years. The North Hatley formula not only allowed many amateurs to become familiar with ceramics, but also helped shape the direction of several careers, including that of Marcel Beaucage. A change of aesthetic corresponded with a change of model. It was the golden age of reduction firing, firing in wood ovens, ash glazes. The works, sometimes rustic-looking, remained intimately linked to the earth that produced them. Rosalie Namer’s stoneware pieces with textured finishes and Monique Bourbonnais’s raku are part of this trend.

In parallel with intimist, human-sized works, there was a marked development in Québec of public, monumental ceramics, on the scale of cities and crowds, from the 1950s to the 1970s. Muralists moved into religious buildings, educational institutions and especially commercial buildings. The leading practitioners of this movement included Joseph Iliu, Jacques Garnier, Claude Thériège, Maurice Savoie, Jordi Bonet and Claude Vermette. In 1953, the latter undertook a one-year study trip around Europe, where he met the architect Gio Ponti and the ceramicist and sculptor Fausto Melotti. After a second journey in Italy and Finland in 1957 his work method became more precise. He abandoned the “pictorial” mural composed of enamelled tiles for an arrangement of tiles or bricks integrated into the architecture. In his workshop, he tested new materials and processes, including pressing coloured earths into the structure of the work and integrating enamels. Aside from the many projects he carried out in the most diverse places – chapels, airport terminals, hospitals, schools and universities, courthouses, banks and “caisses populaires” – mention must obviously be made of his works in several Montréal Métro stations, notably Peel, where he collaborated with Jean-Paul Mousseau.

During this period of effervescence, the expression of great hopes led to the creation of objects that were vehicles of the spirit of the times by virtue of their forms, colours and materials. Since then, the decorative arts and design have oscillated between two poles: on one side, the refinement of usefulness that is fully accepted and sensitive to the user, the environment or the simple beauty of forms; on the other, the very questioning of such notions and their value in society in general and in the art world in particular.

Useful forms and diversions

The perfect matching of an object’s form, materials and use is a basic principle of design and the decorative arts. Even today, this remains one of the discipline’s reasons for being.

The degree of utility is sometimes decisive, indeed vital, and overshadows any other consideration. Aestheticism would appear to be futile. Gad Shaanan Design’s “*Spider Boot*” falls into this category (Fig. 9). The operation of this system, designed to protect feet from anti-personnel mines, is readily apparent: the off-centre contact points and elevation make it possible to reduce the impact of an explosion. We can easily imagine its utility and thank the designer for contributing to this innovation, beyond any aesthetic consideration.

Sometimes the high degree of technical perfection in an object is accompanied by a certain daring, a shaping devoid of all artifice. While turntables are usually housed in a wood cabinet, the “Oracle Delphi Mk I,” developed by Marcel Riendeau in the late 1970s, dared to visually convey its outstanding performance. The technological innovations that made it one of the best turntables on the market are virtually laid bare, conferring on the product a high-tech look that is perfectly in keeping with its design.

The search for the perfect form through attentive examination and a concern for detail pushed to the extreme can also enable the object to reach the user’s imaginative universe through its accomplished nature, a sort of inexplicable satisfaction in holding or seeing something that approaches perfection. The glasses in Guillaume Sasseville’s “Common Glass” series are of this calibre (Fig. 10). The glasses were produced on a small scale in limited numbers in Graz, Austria, in a shape inspired by the English tumbler manufactured by Dominion Glass in Montréal in the 19th century. Its proportions, thickness, curve and colour all contribute to a simple glass whose precision impresses. It has a capacity of eight imperial ounces and the rim of the bowl is extremely thin. In the hand, the glass is exactly the right weight, neither too light nor too heavy. The coloured crystal allows for a subtle variation in shade thanks to a discreet thickening of the wall from its refined lip to the



Fig. 9. Gad Shaanan Design, for Med-Eng Systems, “*Spider Boot*” Anti-personnel Mine Foot Protection System, 1998, thermoplastic and composites, 34.5 × 22 × 52 cm. MNBAQ, gift of Gad Shaanan Design (2006.541).



Fig. 10. Guillaume Sasseville, *Glasses from the “Common Glass” series*, 2014, crystal, production of 150, 11.6 cm (height) × 6.2 cm (diam.) (each). MNBAQ, purchase (2015.910.01 and 2015.910.02).

8. Bernard Leach, *A Potter’s Book* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1940).



Fig. 11. Savage Swift R & D, for Andromed, "Stethos" electronic stethoscope, 1995, acetal, nylon, polycarbonate, neoprene, silicone, steel and beryllium, 68 x 12 cm. MNBAQ, gift of Andromed Inc. (2000.136).

curvature of the base, which also gives the impression that the object is literally floating on the table.

However, the purpose of an object occasionally demands more conventional forms that reassure the user and are in keeping with well-established ways of doing things. When the firm Savage Swift R & D was developing the first electronic stethoscope to be marketed, it tested several prototypes with health professionals and ended up adopting a fairly conventional shape: a resonator and a flexible tube that divides into two branches ending in earpieces. Despite its traditional appearance, the *Stethos* (FIG. 11) is technologically a much more efficient tool than its acoustic counterpart. But its shape has symbolic value and should correspond to a precise standard in the minds of the people who will use it.

Many objects mask unsuspected subtleties behind their seemingly simple form and function. The structure of Elaine Fortin's "Punt" Chair (FIG. 12), designed for the Fogo Island Inn off Newfoundland, draws inspiration from the technique used to manufacture local fishing boats called punt boats, whose ribs are made of pieces carved from naturally curving wood taken from the base of spruce trees and larches at the point where the trunk meets the roots. An object results from a creative process closely linked to the environment that produced it.

Several artists and designers practise a kind of diversion from an object's codes. For some, it is the idea of the form or the image that constitutes the object's true function. The silhouette, for example, with neither volume nor specific traits, determines Gilbert Poissant's *Specific Objects* (FIG. 13), shapes appearing in various wood items collected by the artist. By working with this concept, Poissant rids them of their utilitarian straitjacket in order to make them pure forms, some recognizable – a statuette, a tool, a utensil – others not, transformed by the process into abstract motifs. In this way, he brings to the fore the uncertain nature of representation. The objects' specificity stems from their formal synthesis rather than any correspondence with a recognized utility. When Vittorio drew the posters for the Opéra de Montréal's 1990 season, he, too, resorted to the silhouette to illustrate Rigoletto, the puny hunchback buffoon (FIG. 14), and Falstaff, the obese, bawdy drunkard. A shadow, a lifeless form, succeeds in expressing the hatred and spirit of revenge of one and the easy-going, perfidious nature of the other. In this way, Vittorio appeals to our ability to project onto simple black cut-outs feelings inspired by the evocative motifs thus suggested.

Increasingly aware of the impact of their creations, several designers sought to produce "humble" objects, both as regards their materials and their manufacturing processes, which are often more aligned with the arts and crafts than industry. Antoine Laverdière's "Tupperware" Lamps (p. 80) are immersed in this universe that poetizes the ordinary, or transfigures the banal, as philosopher and art critic Arthur Danto might have put it.⁹ Erratum Designers' "July First" Console (FIG. 15) offers another example of this type of diversion. Enthusiasts of a "low-tech" aesthetic, the members of this duo also integrate

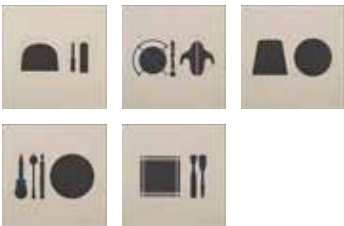


Fig. 13. Gilbert Poissant, *Specific Objects*, 2009, inlaid porcelain, 59.7 x 59.7 x 2.8 cm (each of five components). MNBAQ, purchase with support from the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisitions Assistance Program (2011.52).

a narrative dimension into their work: the console is always ready for the perpetual July 1 migratory waltz with its padded cover used by movers.

The charm of precious materials and the enchantment of the beautiful object can easily lead the decorative arts to fall into the trap of futility. Some confront this Medusa armed with a shield that reflects a horrifying image of it, deliberately and exaggeratedly using the codes of luxury, overstatement and kitsch. Léopold L. Foulem (p. 62) does so with the asserted intention of upsetting the stereotypes associated with ceramics and homosexuality in a work like *A Hard Man is Good to Find* (FIG. 16), a play on words that we could compound by saying that this piece literally thumbs its nose at the clichés that afflict both of them. Richard Milette (p. 72) does the same with his "Bachelier" Chinese Vase with Bananas that parodies Sèvres ceramics. Émilie F. Grenier (p. 92), for her part, directly attacks the notion of luxury and turns it on its head by shifting lustre to the very act of creating instead of the outcome or the materials used. In the realm of glass, François Houdé has also sought to escape the alluring aspects of his raw material: to avoid being Narcissus and sinking in the admiration of his own beauty; to be Perseus and turn Medusa's look against herself in order to then cut off her head.

Useful, decorative and artistic objects: so many things and especially images that leave a lasting impression in the individual and collective consciousness. Let us say images, above all, since when the object is appreciated visually or even just in one's mind, it leaves the utilitarian sphere and acquires the same value as the image. It is essentially through vision that we understand the world. Creating a mental image is an act of distantiation from and appropriation of an object. "Objects only exist if we think of them," wrote Jean-Paul Sartre.¹⁰ To think of an object is to touch the essence beyond appearances.

What is it, this imaginative universe of the object? At the conclusion of this journey, one could say that it has different faces. It is a heritage made up of images of awakening to modern society in a community spirit during the 1950s, and of grandiose celebrations, hopes and openness to the world in the 1960s and 1970s. For 40-odd years, this heritage has been built with projects linked to events that take place here and with others that have a universal scope; projects where the formal and functional solutions pertain to the Cartesian side of intelligence, and others where they rest more on fantasy and the critical dimension of the mind. It is a set of objects that makes an image, objects endowed with intention that propose to everyone their solutions or their ideas on a way of living or a way of being, all while preserving this area of freedom that allows each of us to inhabit them in dreams on the one hand and... in the imaginative universe.

9. Arthur Danto, *La transfiguration du banal: une philosophie de l'art*, translated from the English by Claude Hary-Schaeffer (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989).

10. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'imaginaire. Psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940), p. 24.



Fig. 14. Vittorio Fiorucci, "Verdi: Rigoletto" Poster, 1990, silkscreen, IX/XXV, 121 x 80 cm. MNBAQ, gift of Vittorio Fiorucci (2006.270.08).



Fig. 15. Erratum Designers (designed by Frédéric Callot and Vincent Hauspy), "July First" Console, 2006, white pine and padded cover, 80 x 93.5 x 28 cm. MNBAQ, purchase (2007.10).



Fig. 16. Léopold L. Foulem, *A Hard Man Is Good to Find*, 1996-1997, ceramic, decalcomania and found objects, 37 x 15 x 15 cm. MNBAQ, gift of Léopold L. Foulem (2014.09).

Urn

1949

Earthenware,
60.3 cm (height) × 37.8 cm
(diameter)

MNBAQ, purchase, Concours
artistiques de la province
de Québec – 1st prize, decorative
arts (1950.97)

At first glance, the reddish brown stylized birds that form a hieratic frieze around this seemingly crude vase suggest an object used in an ancestral funerary ritual. The title, undoubtedly given by the artist, is not insignificant. An urn is, indeed, a vase whose use is associated with death, although this one neither serves that purpose nor is the usual size of an urn. From the viewpoint of ceramics tradition, the item is monumental in terms of both its dimensions and its weight. Besides, unlike an urn it does not have a cover. The walls are thick and the earth-coloured outer surface displays cracks and gaps. A cream-coloured glaze covers the interior of the receptacle and the upper portion of the substantial lip of the opening.

The object is ambiguous and evokes, through certain traits, the functions of the urn that it is supposed to be without, however, truly displaying the characteristics specific to such a vase. Is the artist deceiving us? Technically, the piece was not thrown on a potter’s wheel – given its dimensions, that would be an achievement – but built from the inside by plastering slabs of clay in a mould progressively built up around the form, which created the irregular surface. While the clay, once fired, became reddish, a surface finish obtained with an iron oxide wash gives it a dull, almost dirty appearance.

Louis Archambault often used these techniques to produce works that evoke African art, which modern artists greatly appreciated in the early 20th century. The series of masks that made him famous (FIG. 17) uses the same stratagems: a moulded slab, an interior glaze and matte decoration on a rough surface.

Louis Archambault

Montréal, 1915 – Montréal, 2003

In so doing, Archambault followed a trend that relied on new languages and different artistic traditions, without fear of breaking the rules, an attitude that placed him in a community of artists in full expression. Continuing his approach, he would later abandon ceramics for sculpture, although it is not easy to establish the boundary between the two since the material alone does not make it possible to determine which discipline a work belongs to.



Fig. 17.
Louis Archambault
Mask, 1950
Earthenware, 34.2 × 27.2 × 4.5 cm
MNBAQ, purchase, Concours artistiques
de la province de Québec – 1st prize,
decorative arts (1950.98).



“Contour” Lawn Chair

1951

For Sigmund Werner

Aluminum, canvas and rope,

60 × 167 × 63 cm

MNBAQ, gift of the Estate

of Julien Hébert (1994.169)

A lawn chair immediately invites rest and relaxation. It is the item of furniture whose shape evokes the human body in a prone position, so much so that in 1968 French designer Olivier Mourgue designed such a chair that included legs and a head!

Garden furniture is also synonymous with leisure and recreation, which intensifies the object’s comforting aspect. Add the lightness and perfect balance that allow users to readily switch from one position to another and they are almost floating. However, the chair’s design relies on the period’s most minimalist precepts: aluminum piping, canvas and rope are its only components. “Nothing in excess and everything essential,” said its designer, Julien Hébert.

Hébert was a sculptor who became a designer after achieving recognition when he participated in a competition to promote the use of aluminum in everyday objects. He was promptly contracted by the Sigmund Werner company to design pieces of furniture using this newly fashionable metal that combined sturdiness with lightness.

Julien Hébert’s “*Contour*” *Lawn Chair* (1951) earned him first prize in the Concours artistiques de la province in 1957, when, for the first time, the event was devoted to the “industrial aesthetic,” according to the French terminology of the period. It was added to the collection of the Musée de la province de Québec (now the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec), although it appears to have been lost or destroyed. This version, which Hébert’s heirs gave to the MNBAQ in 1994, had already been loaned by the artist in 1988 during an exhibition celebrating the winners of the Prix Paul-Émile-Borduas, an award he received in 1979. However, a slight difference is apparent: the portion supporting the head does not have the angle that appears on the versions marketed in 1951 (FIG. 18). This might be a prototype or a subsequent reworking, perhaps for the 1988 exhibition, altered by the designer.

Julien Hébert

Rigaud, 1917 – Montréal, 1994

Hébert’s chair has an antecedent: the “Barwa” chair of designers Edgar Bartolucci and Jack Waldheim. Both pieces of furniture have the same shape, the same materials and techniques, and the same principle of tilting through a transfer of weight. Only the solution adopted differs: the seat of the Americans’ chair relied on two angular rockers while Hébert opted for an inverted V-shaped structure that also formed the armrests. Thus, design often resides in a subtle variation, an innovative and more elegant idea that produces a similar result.



Fig. 18.
Michel Brault, photographer
“*Contour*” *Lawn Chair*, circa 1951
Gelatin silver print,
22 × 30 cm
MNBAQ, Fonds Julien Hébert (P11,B)



“Nylon” Chair

1952

Laminated maple
and nylon parachute cord,
82.8 × 62.5 × 57.1 cm

MNBAQ, gift of Pierre Brassac
(1994.168)

Lightness, sturdiness, ingenuity and simplicity are the hallmarks of this chair. Moreover, advertising focused largely on these notions when it was marketed in the United States and Canada. In 1953, *Life* magazine published an article vaunting the merits of the *Parachute Cord Chair* with this slogan as a subtitle: “Strung like a racket and made like a ski it holds 450 times its weight.”

It was the early 1950s, television had just appeared and American and Canadian homes were modernizing. According to *Life* magazine, furniture had to be light, transportable and sturdy. Jacques Guillon, the designer of this innovative piece of furniture, was a young McGill University architecture graduate. His chair, first produced by Modernart in Montréal, was later manufactured in the United States by Alexis Andreef, an American entrepreneur living in New York State, who specialized in the production of tennis rackets and skis. He was often presented as the object’s designer by those who praised the “Andreef chair.” The *Life* article stressed his contribution: in one photograph, he appears balanced on a ski suspended between two chairs and, in another, stringing a chair using a racket and a reel (FIG. 19). Fortunately, Guillon had patented his creation in his own name in the United States on October 11, 1952, four days before Andreef filed a patent covering his method of cutting and assembling the wood components.

The “*Nylon*” *Chair* comprises three main U-shaped parts made up of three stiles, each of which has the same number of layers of maple or ash cut along the grain. During manufacturing, the layers were assembled at angles according to different cuts and glued with a thermosetting resin, which ensured maximum resistance of each

Jacques Guillon
Paris, France, 1922

component. The three main shapes were then assembled using precisely angled scarf joints. Walnut, elm or black plastic veneer provided the finish. The nylon or orlon cord used for the seat and back was offered in seven colours.

The chair launched a long, prolific career for Jacques Guillon, who subsequently headed Canada’s biggest multidisciplinary design office, where he fulfilled major mandates starting in the 1960s.

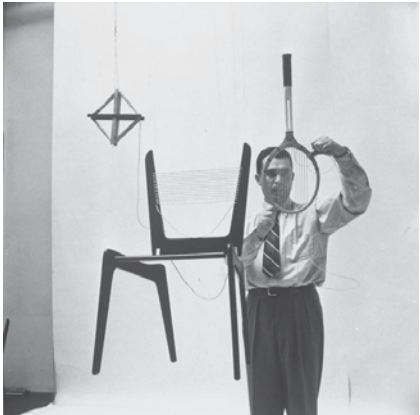


Fig. 19.
Yale Joel, photographer
*Alexis Andreef showing
how a tennis racket and chair
are strung*, March 1953
Full view of the picture
published in *Life*



Dish

1954

Earthenware, 50.4 cm (diameter) MNBAQ, purchase, Concours artistiques de la province de Québec – (1st prize ex æquo, decorative arts) (1954.270)

Ceramics uses an array of techniques to obtain decorative effects that are at once mastered and unforeseen, at the whim of controlled risks. This fragile equilibrium is fascinating and entrancing. Recourse to abstract motifs that are imperfectly, almost repetitively reproduced compels the perpetual shifting of our gaze, a movement accentuated by the object’s circular shape. A simple ceramic dish consequently becomes a portion of infinite space.

In the early 1950s, ceramics in Québec experienced an unprecedented blossoming. Pierre-Aimé Normandeau, who in 1936 had established a program at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal to teach the discipline, paved the way. Louis Archambault, one of the program’s first graduates, taught in the program with Normandeau. Jean Cartier trained with both of them. From 1949 to 1951, he received further training in Paris, with the renowned French ceramic artist Jean Besnard in particular, who instilled in him a taste for simple shapes and particular attention to the treatment of surfaces. Moreover, several of Cartier’s pieces reveal the opaque white glaze endowed with shrinkage properties that Besnard used on his own ceramics (FIG. 20). Upon his return from Europe, Cartier engaged in a rigorous effort to draw the broadest array of decorations from a single type of clay and five or six glazes. His approach to ceramics was recognized by the critics, who from then on treated this form of expression on an equal footing with the other artistic disciplines.

Jean Cartier

Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, 1924 – Montréal, 1996

The large dish Cartier presented at the Concours artistiques de la province in 1954 is a masterpiece as the term was understood in the Middle Ages, a sort of challenge that he posed to himself, instead of by a master to his apprentice, in order to prove his mastery of decorative techniques. On an initial black manganese-based glaze, the artist drew his motifs in wax before covering the entire object with a white glaze. During firing, the black motifs were revealed by the withdrawal of the areas protected by the paraffin. Cartier also added a lead-based, lightly purplish glaze in addition to deliberately emphasizing the crackle effect by patiently drawing it with a brush using a green glaze.

Jean Cartier’s dish is a perfect example of a ceramic piece whose marked decorative dimension overshadows neither its artistic value nor the recognition that the arts community accorded him.



Fig. 20.
Jean Cartier
Plate, 1952
Earthenware, 55 cm (diameter)
MNBAQ, purchase (1959.210)



“Place des Arts. Give to Make it a Reality” Poster
1959

For Place des Arts
Silkscreen, 61 × 40 cm
MNBAQ, purchase (2000.353)

Letters drawn without any embellishment, white, black and two complementary colours in flat tint, then two lines drawn with the same colours in contrast: that is the essence of this poster for a fundraising campaign for the construction of Place des Arts, which was completed in 1963. Typography, the art of the letter, its composition and its layout, experienced a glory period in the 1940s and 1950s. Ontario native Carl Dair was then working in Québec and joined with Henry Eveleigh to establish one of the first graphic design firms in the province. Dair published several brochures on print and the art of typography (Fig. 21) for the E. B. Eddy paper company in Hull (Gatineau).

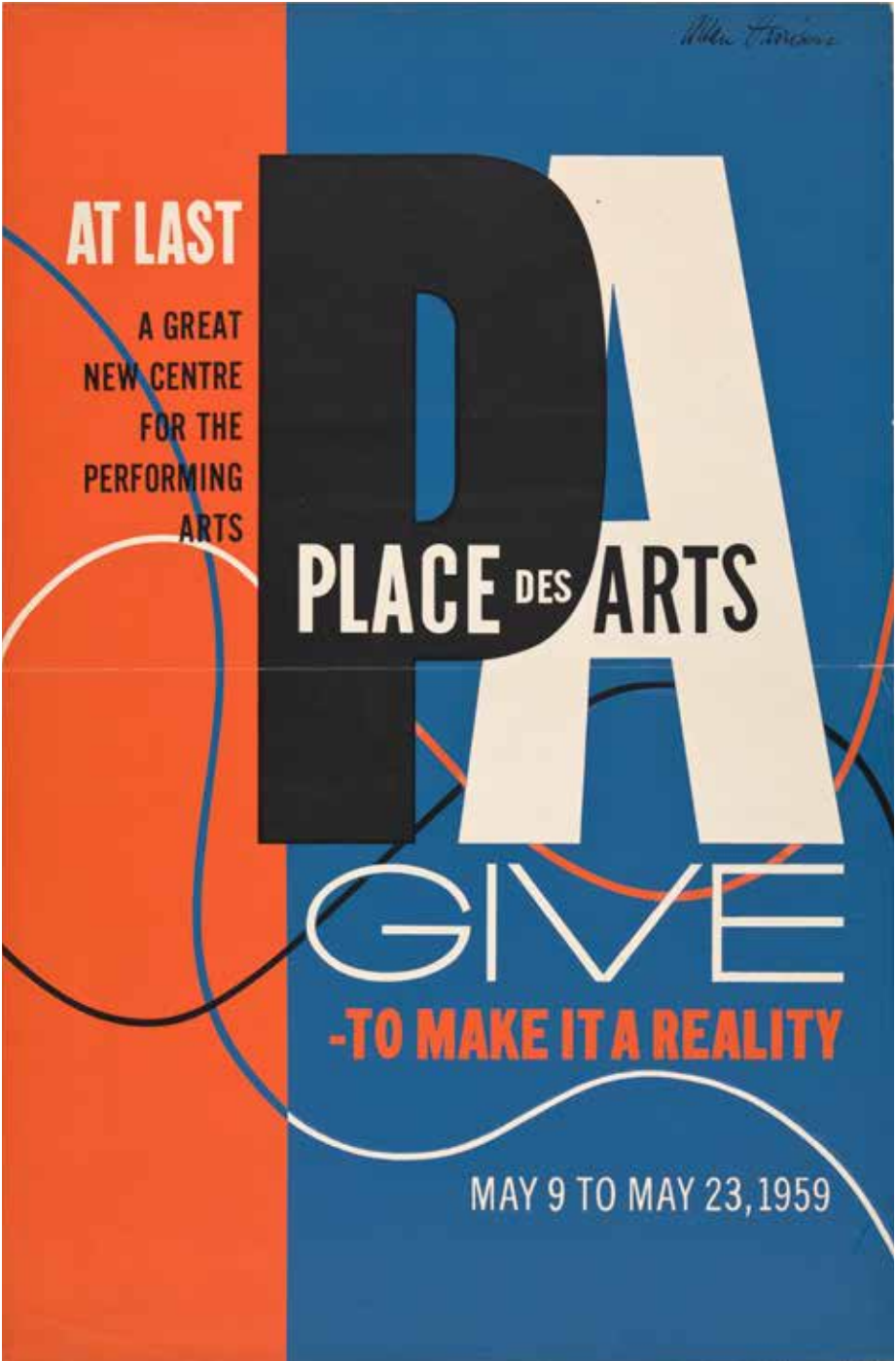
Montréal could also rely on the contributions of Charles Fainmel and Allan Harrison, both of whom were artists and graphic designers. The latter, designer of the poster for Place-des-Arts, studied at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal in 1929-1930. From 1933 to 1935, he lived in London, England, where he produced posters, in particular for Marks & Spencer. On his return to Montréal he served as artistic director at J. Walter Thompson from 1940 to 1946. During this period, he published an article in *Canadian Art*, on advertising art in Canada, in which

Allan Harrison
Montréal, 1911 – Montréal, 1988

he displayed his predilection for the European approach, where symbolic forms convey the expression of ideas, while the American trend emphasized realism instead. Harrison noted: “Symbolic designing offers brevity and simplicity, directness and compulsion. The true advertising designer must enjoy the opportunity for scope in the wide variety of material to be used in posterish symbolic work, photos and flat tints, photograms and surprints, real opportunities for the maximum joys of texture, tone, line and colour.” The poster for Place des Arts reflects that way of seeing through the bold, chromatic typography it displays.



Fig. 21.
Carl Dair, for the E. B. Eddy Company
“The Art of the Printer, Being a Collection
of Random Notes & Observations on
the Art & Practice of Typography”
Brochure, 1956
Offset, 22.6 × 14.8 cm, MNBAQ,
anonymous gift (2005.2611)



Bottle

1962

Stoneware,
83.3 cm (height) × 15.6 cm
(diameter)

MNBAQ, purchase, Concours
artistiques de la province
de Québec – 2nd prize, decorative
arts (1962.153)

The material and the shaping of it should not be the foremost criteria in appreciation of an artwork. However, they are often the predominant features when the time comes to judge a piece of ceramic or glass. The arts and crafts are, unfortunately, prisoners of their specific classification, frequently based on material or technique.

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that technical mastery is fundamental and confers meaning on certain objects. If the objects do not conceal any message and have neither philosophical import nor innovative pretensions, what, then, accounts for the fascination that they can hold for us? The balance of the shape, the harmony between the parts, the colour and the materials define the degree of satisfaction that the object offers, what is still commonly called its beauty, although the notion is now increasingly being called into question. This brings us back to technical mastery, since all of that is only achieved through perfect balance between the means and the result.

Maurice Savoie followed the same career path as his colleague Jean Cartier, who, like him, studied with Pierre-Aimé Normandeau and Louis Archambault. In 1956-1957, he pursued his training in Europe, where his teachers included Francine Del Pierre, from whom he learned the technique used to produce this slender and, relatively speaking, monumental bottle. Indeed, Savoie constructed the piece using hand-rolled clay coils that he then pinched to thin them and patiently assembled on top of one another. The end result is an upward-thrusting shape whose yellowish-green colour was undoubtedly obtained through an ash-based glaze and reduction firing. This alchemy is specific to the field of ceramics, which resorts to all manner of mineral or organic materials that react differently depending on the temperature and the presence or absence of oxygen during their amalgamation, hence the expressions “oxidation firing” and “reduction firing.”

Maurice Savoie

Sherbrooke, 1930 – Longueuil, 2013

During his long career, Maurice Savoie tried out several other processes. For example, he used an extruder to create various cylindrical shapes that, once arranged, made up a collection of phantasmagorical beasts and vehicles (FIG. 22). Maurice Savoie’s works include an undeniable imaginative dimension, due to his mastery of material and technique.



Fig. 22.
Maurice Savoie
Nautilus, 2002
Porcelain, bronze and metals,
28 × 60 × 19 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Maurice Savoie (2005.78)



Model of the Montréal Métro Car

1963

For the Commission de transport de Montréal
Polyester resin, rubber, steel, wood, vinyl and paint,
17 × 79.5 × 17.3 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Morley Smith (2000.130)

In the early 1960s, Montréal experienced an intense period of modernization that witnessed the construction of major boulevards and freeways, as well as important public and private buildings, including Place des Arts and Place Ville-Marie. Expo 67 and the Métro project, approved in 1961, contributed to this remarkable blossoming. Construction of the Métro began in the spring of 1962 and the underground transportation system was ready in time for the World’s Fair. The two were closely linked: excavation materials from the Métro tunnels literally underpinned the “emergence” of Île Notre-Dame for Expo 67.

Jacques Guillon’s firm designed the Montréal Métro cars. Each small car had four doors on each side and the interior design favoured rapid passenger flows through the arrangement of L-shaped seats: single benches on either side of the doors and back-to-back double benches in the centre. The use of rubber tires also afforded various advantages, such as a quieter, smoother ride, faster deceleration and the ability to climb a gradient of 6%, thus making it possible to travel under the river.

In order to achieve the desired result, Jacques Guillon called upon Morley Smith, an American engineer and designer, whom he had met several months earlier. Smith worked on the plans and produced this model, used during numerous presentations. A full-size version was subsequently built between February and October 1963, and was exhibited during an event at the Palais du Commerce, where the public was asked to vote on the colour of the car. While Jean Drapeau opted for a combination of white and red, the city’s emblematic colours, Jacques Guillon favoured a “dirty” blue that was easier to maintain. Mayor Drapeau does not appear to have prevailed, which was very rare indeed!

Jacques Guillon / Designers
Design firm established in Montréal in 1962

Design plays a crucial role in numerous aspects of life. Public transportation thus benefits from an approach that places the user at the very heart of the designers’ concerns. Jacques Guillon’s firm also achieved renown in the realm of rail transport by designing the LRC (light, rapid and comfortable) train (Fig. 23), which relied on innovative technologies and focused especially on passenger comfort. These two models reflect, at a reduced scale, means of public transport that, on a daily basis, are part of what defines Québec society. In the same way as many other objects, they are specific to a period and to a very precise place, and can be deemed significant cultural signs.



Fig. 23.
Jacques Guillon / Designers
for the Consortium of Montreal
Locomotive Works, Alcan and Dominion
Foundries and Steel
Model of the “LRC” train, 1967
Wood, metal and plastic,
12 × 213.4 × 14 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Morley Smith (2006.562)



“Confrontation ’66” Poster

1966

For the Musée du Québec
Silkscreen, 101.5 × 76.8 cm

MNBAQ, transfer from the Fonds
d’archives institutionnelles to the
permanent collection (2000.208)

“Posters are the art of the street,” as the old saying goes. If they are still widely put up and exposed to the four winds, they are equally to be found properly protected under glass, in public places, to be sure, but also in galleries, museums and private homes. For they have become collector’s items, works of art. However, they nevertheless retain their sense of immediacy, since in order to engage the passerby they must express straight out what they mean and get directly to the point. “The art of the poster is closer to the short story than to the novel,” Vittorio noted during an interview in 1987 in the *Ottawa Citizen*.

Vittorio Fiorucci, known primarily by his first name, was in his early thirties when he produced the *Confrontation ’66* poster (1966). An Italian immigrant born on the Dalmatian coast (the city of Zadar – Zara in Italian – was then part of the Kingdom of Italy), he grew up in Venice and had arrived in Montréal 15 years earlier. He quickly befriended the young artists who frequented the European-style cafés, where they mixed with Robert Roussil, Armand Vaillancourt and several others. He drew, took an interest in film, engaged in photography and led a bohemian life. He created posters using high-contrast black-and-white photography, such as when he chose, for the announcement of the Robert Roussil exhibition presented by the Musée d’art contemporain in late 1965 (Fig. 24), to frame the controversial anatomical detail of the father in the sculpture *La Famille* (1949). While Roussil’s work had been carried off in a paddy wagon by the Montréal police for offending public morality more than a decade earlier, Vittorio’s poster was torn from the walls on the evening of the vernissage!

Vittorio also composed his posters by tearing or cutting coloured cardboard to build his models. In this way, he obtained abstract works that drew their strength from the contrast of solid, vibrant colours. The assertion of the flatness of the medium paradoxically gives his posters an extraordinary sculptural meaning. For *Confrontation ’66*, as the title suggests, he contrasted two black, multifaceted

Vittorio Fiorucci
Zadar, Croatia, 1932 – Montréal, 2008

shapes that traverse the sheet and appear to continue beyond our field of vision. Two flat surfaces, one red and one blue, are placed in a state of tension on either side. Plain typography in block letters provides information. The poster strikes the consciousness and imprints itself there through graphic means alone, beyond any representation, and even to the detriment of the event itself. It is almost a misrepresentation, although it is undoubtedly one of the most forceful posters in the history of Québec graphic design.

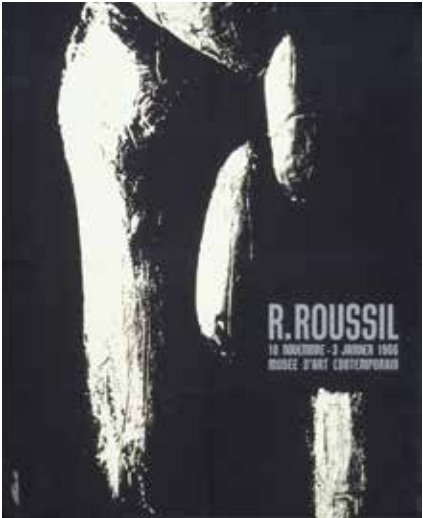


Fig. 24.
Vittorio Fiorucci, for the Musée
d’art contemporain
“R. Roussil” Poster, 1965
Silkscreen, 91.5 × 75.2 cm
MNBAQ, anonymous gift (2004.286)



Expo 67 Street Lamp

1966

For the Canadian Corporation
for the 1967 World Exhibition
Concrete, steel, fibreglass
and electric device,
375 × 152.5 × 152.5 cm

MNBAQ, gift of the Société
du parc Jean-Drapeau (2000.131)

Luis F. Villa / Frank Macioge
& Associates
Philadelphia architectural firm

“In 1967, everything was beautiful. It was the year of love, the year of Expo,” as the Beau Dommage song says. Nearly 50 years later, there remain few physical vestiges of this monumental happening that, over a single summer, made Montréal the centre of the universe.

Architectural magazines at the time celebrated several striking achievements, including Buckminster Fuller’s dome for the United States pavilion, which became the Biosphere, the Québec pavilion designed by Papineau, Gérin-Lajoie and Le Blanc, now converted into a casino along with the former French pavilion, and Habitat 67, designed by Moshe Safdie. These are essentially the sole survivors of that incredible event. While the quality of graphic design, under the responsibility of Paul Arthur, and the inventive technique of several exhibitions, including that of Gustave Maeder for Québec, were highlights, it was the street furniture, above all, that aroused widespread praise. All observers lauded its overall design, unifying impact and elegance.

Comprising information booths, street lamps, benches, garbage containers, flower boxes, fountains, mailboxes, telephone booths and clocks, the street furniture was the work of Luis F. Villa and Frank Macioge, two young architects from Philadelphia. In his portrait of Expo 67, Robert Fulford noted enthusiastically: “Villa carried that triangle through most of his designs – the benches were wood slats resting on triangles of concrete, the planters were simple concrete triangles, the drinking fountains rested on concrete bases. Villa’s masterpiece, if it was not his phone booth, was the family of lighting standards. Each light consisted of a translucent fiberglass reflector at the top of the pole and a cylinder beneath. A high intensity light beam from inside the cylinder was projected up to the reflector, which spread a soft, diffused glow over a wide area. The light source, of course, was invisible, so

there was no possibility of glare. At Expo one of the prettiest sights was a long row of Villa light standards beside a lake.”

Documents from the period attest that Villa and Macioge’s street furniture was a success (FIG. 25), although few vestiges of it remain. Luckily – and this is where the fundamental mission of a museum comes in – a street lamp has been preserved for posterity and bears witness to its past glory “on a magic island like a painted summer scene,” as the official Expo 67 theme song by Stéphane Venne put it.



Fig. 25.
Nighttime view of the Expo 67 site
showing the street lamps in operation.



The MNBAQ's example corresponds
to the street lamp seen in the
foreground.

“Spring” Chair

1967

Aluminum, 98.2 × 45.8 × 66.5 cm MNBAQ, purchase (2008.418)

In the realm of objects, the chair poses the ultimate challenge from the standpoint of creation. There are thousands of models of chairs, although nothing could be simpler in appearance: a seat and a back supported by four feet or some sort of base. Hundreds of architects and designers have nonetheless sought to revise the concept. With his “*Spring*” *Chair* (1967), François Dallegret met the challenge. His proposal is one of those that explore a single material around the notion of an uninterrupted line and a minimal formal structure.

Alternately an artist, architect or sculptor depending on the dimension and purpose of his projects, François Dallegret is undoubtedly the most unclassifiable of our designers. After studying architecture at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris and then spending a year in New York, he settled in Montréal in 1964. The American magazine *Industrial Design* devoted an article to one of his Fantastic Machines, drawings of futuristic vehicles for which he was already famous. In 1965–1966, he illustrated various articles for *Art in America*, and was even featured on the cover. Also in 1966, he created the café-restaurant Le Drug, on Rue de la Montagne in Montréal, veritable underground organic architecture made up of round cement shapes painted entirely in white, a project that was widely noticed the world over. This feverish period was also notable for the appearance of the *Ballomatics* or *Plooks*, metal spheres on feet that moved randomly by vibration; the *Abstratomic*, a game in which marbles trapped between two glass plates composed instantaneous works, and the *Atomix*, its smaller commercial version; *Tubula*, a stationary automobile for (perfectly ecological) immobile trips; *La Machine*, a 30-foot-long electronic musical sculpture; *Arctubalu*, a spiral-shaped tubular aluminum sculpture for an amusement park; and the *Kiiks* – in their sculpture version, derived from a project for a playing field at the University of Chicago, in their medication form that can be manipulated to “stop smoking or start drinking,” and in their unstable lamp version, the *Lumikiik* (FIG. 26).

François Dallegret

Kenitra, Morocco, 1937

Although the “*Spring*” *Chair* was never put into production, it received widespread media coverage. There are three known prototypes. This one, which is slightly smaller and has a higher back, is undoubtedly the last of the line. Dallegret used aluminum, a material that was prized in the 1960s, and fulfilled the dream of several designers by creating an object of disarming simplicity spawned by an ingenious idea. The result was a chair, of course, but also a perfectly elegant, balanced sculpture.



Fig. 26.
François Dallegret
Lumikiik, 1970
Aluminum, Plexiglas and lead balls,
53 × 20 × 20 cm
Kiik 69, 1969
Stainless steel, glass and plastic,
5 × 2 × 2 cm (with the container)
The Three Chicago Kiiks, 1968
Aluminum, 7/9, 29.1 × 11.4 × 11.4 cm each,
MNBAQ, purchase (1995.479, 1995.477
and 1995.476)



Pencil Holder, Paper Clip Holder and Memo Holder

1968

For Olivetti
Chlorosulfonated
polyethylene and melamine,
10.3 × 30 × 15.8 cm (pencil
holder and paper clip holder);
8 × 14.5 × 5.3 cm (memo holder)

MNBAQ, gift of Albert Leclerc
(2006.528 and 2006.529)

Albert Leclerc
La Prairie, 1935

With one foot in Italy and the other in Québec, Albert Leclerc is a key figure who influenced an entire generation of designers. In Italy, he worked with two great masters, Gio Ponti and Ettore Sottsass. In Québec, he headed the design program at the Université de Montréal from 1992 to 2004, where he made an enduring mark.

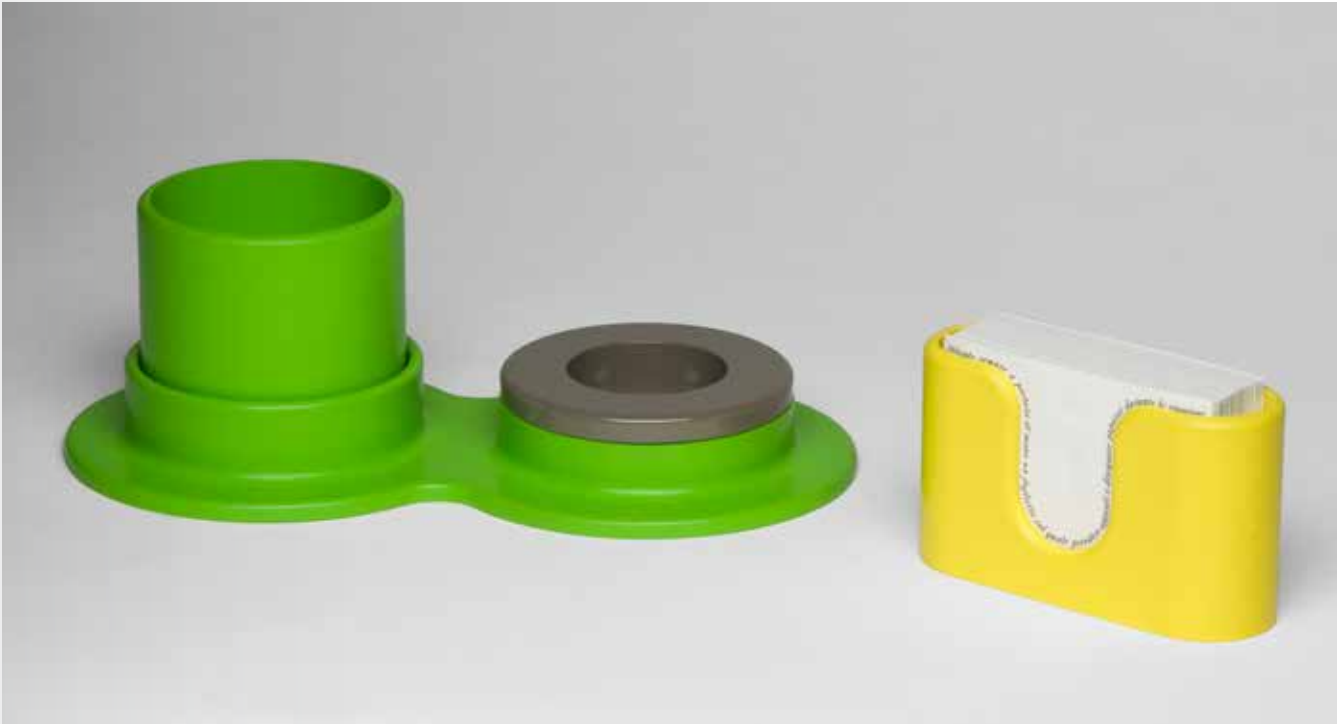
In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Albert Leclerc worked in Italy as head of exhibition design for Olivetti, a leader in the realm of office equipment, and more specifically in typewriter design. With Ettore Sottsass, he collaborated on the Sistema 45 (1973) office furniture project, the A5 and A7 (1974) electronic calculators, and the Lexikon 90 (1975) typewriter.

At that time, Olivetti produced original, exclusive corporate gifts such as books, calendars and personal items related to working life. Giorgio Soavi, Marcello Nizzoli, Ettore Sottsass and Bruno Munari, in particular, contributed to the design of such items. In 1968, Albert Leclerc produced these two office accessories out of synthetic rubber. The brochure for the memo holder notes, not without humour: “Always have a little slip of paper handy, you will often find it extremely useful. You will slip many notes into this memo holder (not a wallet) that Albert Leclerc designed and Olivetti is giving you.”

The curvilinear shapes and very bright colours – the series was apparently also offered in purple, red and black, according to the review *Domus* – are entirely typical of the period. If the 1960s were marked by significant social change, objects also freed themselves from the rigid, severe yoke of preceding decades. Albert Leclerc’s designs perfectly demonstrate this change, as the series of clocks that he created for Lorenz during the same period attest (Fig. 27).



Fig. 27.
Albert Leclerc, for Lorenz
“Arcobaleno” Wall Clock, 1969
Aluminum, enamel and plastic,
40 cm (diameter)
MNBAQ, gift of Albert Leclerc (2007.148)



Lunch Box

1969

Stoneware, 24.3 × 23.7 × 13.3 cm MNBAQ, purchase (1977.370)

Throughout the lengthy history of the arts, the notion of reproducing reality predominated until it was called into question in the 20th century. The desire to imitate the real gave rise to various anecdotes and legends. Accordingly, Pliny the Elder recounted a contest in Ancient Greece that apparently pitted the painters Zeuxis and Parrhasios against each other. Zeuxis, having deceived birds that came to peck at the grapes that he painted, conceded defeat after asking that the curtain before his rival’s painting be drawn, a curtain that was in fact represented on the painting. In painting, this manner of deceiving the observer by realistically reproducing an object is called “trompe-l’oeil.” While the term has been widely used, not all works that faithfully represent an object are trompe-l’oeil. Certain conditions are essential, including the veracity of form and rendering. That is why Georget Cournoyer’s *Lunch Box* (1969) cannot be deemed trompe-l’oeil. Unlike the ceramic boots, bags or coats of his colleague Marilyn Levine, who strives to perfectly render not only the original form of objects but also their material (Fig. 28), Cournoyer’s pieces preserve their ceramic aspect. Through the surface treatment, the artist even emphasizes the rustic nature often associated with this art form.

Cournoyer’s *Lunch Box* is also part of the Pop Art movement. In the 1960s, several artists attributed greater autonomy to the object in their works, even introducing consumer products to highlight the contrast between elite and popular culture. The lunch box, associated with factory and construction workers, symbolizes popular culture, just like the handbags and luggage that the ceramic artist also represented. As was true of his colleagues in the American Pop Art movement, it was not a question of

Georget Cournoyer

Montréal, 1931

reproducing the object through trompe-l’oeil, as Marilyn Levine does, but of treating it as the subject of a specific culture, in addition to associating it with the ceramic artist’s craft. The result is objects whose content is literally transitional.



Fig. 28.
Marilyn Levine
Coat, second half of the 20th century,
Clay, 76.2 × 50.8 × 11.4 cm
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase,
Saidye and Samuel Bronfman Collection
of Canadian Art (1970.Dp.3)



RCA Stereo Sound System (Model SFA 1094)

from the “Forma Collection”

1969

For RCA Victor
Laminated particleboard, acrylic,
steel, enamelled steel and fabric,
66.5 × 60.7 × 56.5 cm (central
unit); 35.2 × 25.5 × 25.5 cm (each
of the two loudspeakers)

MNBAQ, purchased through
the Fonds d’acquisition
des employé(e)s du Musée
national des beaux-arts
du Québec (2007.289)

Sometimes a shape, material or colour can evoke an entire era all by itself. Here, the pink acrylic cover of this stereo sound system plunges us straightaway into the 1960s, a period associated with terms like “pop” and “a gogo,” which capture the imagination. On the one hand, the period witnessed pop culture, music and art, which are North American or, indeed, worldwide phenomena and, on the other hand, gogo dancing, gogo boots and gogo masses, which are in part specific to Québec. It might be said that what we have here is a gogo stereo sound system!

Its designer, André Morin, studied design at the Institut des arts appliqués de Montréal, then at Syracuse University. In 1963 he began his career at Canadian Marketing, then worked from 1965 to 1967 for Marconi, where he designed a series of radio receivers, turntables and portable televisions. In 1967 he joined RCA Victor as head of audio products. One of his first assignments was to create a stereo sound system that was to sell for \$199. Company executives rejected out of hand the prototype of the “Forma” model he submitted. But with the support of a sympathetic vice-president, Morin convinced Eaton’s department store to test the market with some examples. Eaton’s sold 16 of the units on the first day and placed an order for 500 more. RCA then undertook an initial production run of 5,000 units, which sold in a month. During the first year, 165,000 “Forma” stereo sound systems were sold in the North American market, an unprecedented commercial success for RCA’s Canadian branch.

André Morin

Montréal, 1941

The original design of the SFA 1094 model was simple and direct: a white cube on a central trumpet bell-shaped pedestal inspired by the base of Eero Saarinen’s celebrated “Tulip” chair, an international design icon. The model was also offered with teak or walnut veneer on a metal pedestal with a blue, green or more traditional smoked cover. However, it was truly the white melamine version with a magenta cover that was the object’s hallmark.

André Morin achieved another major success with his collection of receptacles and utensils produced for IPL, a Beauce company. The first series, marketed in November 1978, comprised 12 items (Fig. 29-30). Four years later, thanks to public enthusiasm, it had expanded to 35.



Fig. 29.
André Morin, for IPL
Pitcher from the “IPL Collection,”
1978
ABS plastic, 24.1 × 18.5 × 12 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Daniel Drouin
(2006.533)



Fig. 30.
Phase 2 of the development of the
“IPL Collection.”



Stackable Chairs

from the “Avant-Garde 2000” series
1971

For Treco
ABS plastic, 77 × 49.5 × 48 cm
(each chair)

MNBAQ, gift of Giovanni Maur
(2012.26.01 to 2012.26.04)

The invention of synthetic plastics has played a prominent role in the history of design, especially starting in the 1920s. A multitude of abstruse chemical and trade names, while occasionally simplified in the form of initialisms or evocations of the inventor of the product that they designate, adorn the fact sheets of the objects stemming from these dazzling technological breakthroughs of the 20th century: Bakelite, PVC, Plexiglas, nylon, polystyrene, polypropylene, polyethylene, polycarbonate, Teflon, Formica, Kevlar. As for ABS, it is a copolymer comprising acrylonitrile, butadiene and styrene. No sooner said than forgotten! What is noteworthy is that ABS is a plastic that is easy to mould, relatively light and fairly shock-resistant.

The *Stackable Chair* from the “Avant-Garde 2000” series (1971) corresponds to number 41 of the 100 catalogue numbers of an exhibition held in Milan in 1975, which sought to recount “the history of the production of plastic chairs from their origins to the present day.” The exhibition also included the chair that Italian designer Vico Magistretti designed in 1969, a polyester plastic chair reinforced with fibreglass cast in one piece whose shape, with its slightly off-centre back legs to allow for stacking, undoubtedly inspired Giovanni Maur. However, the latter had to adapt his design according to injection moulding technology that appeared in the industry in the early 1970s. Produced by IPL on behalf of Treco, the chair was made in three colours: red, yellow and white. It was launched in 1971 and by the following year there were 35,000 on the market, sold by The Bay, Simpson’s and Eaton’s.

Giovanni Maur, the chair’s creator, is a designer who worked for the Treco company during the 1970s. While

Giovanni Maur
Gorizia, Italy, 1937

some of the models he designed were fairly traditional, others followed new contemporary design trends. The bedroom suite in the “Avant-Garde 2000” series is therefore noteworthy for its drawer fronts in ABS plastic with circular moulded raised handles (Fig. 31) while his modular shelves, which could be assembled almost without any tools, displays an ingenuity to make the Ikeas of the world green with envy.

If there is one material closely linked to the second half of the 20th century, it is indeed plastic. Québec is no exception and has contributed several striking pieces to the pantheon of design, an empyrean inhabited here as elsewhere by colourful objects made of compounds with complicated names.



Fig. 31.
Giovanni Maur, for Treco
Chest of Drawers from the “Avant-Garde 2000” series, 1972
Melamine, ABS plastic and chrome-plated steel,
74.2 × 105.2 × 48 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Giovanni Maur (2012.28)



“Solair” Chair

1972

For IPL
Polypropylene and painted
wrought iron, 70.7 × 73 × 75 cm

MNBAQ, gift of the Myriam
Beth’léhem Family (2006.527)

Certain objects are part of our visual heritage but arrive there in a roundabout way. Present in our daily life, but virtually ignored for several years, even sneered at because they express a lifestyle that does not correspond to our aspirations, they come back in force and are suddenly acknowledged and appreciated.

The “*Solair*” Chair (1972) perfectly illustrates such a reversal. During the 1970s, it enjoyed unprecedented popularity among Québec motel owners. The chairs appeared everywhere, aligned along the establishments’ facades, forming a colourful necklace that enlivened the monotony of the rows of rooms that punctuated Québec’s scenic routes. Anyone who toured the Gaspé Peninsula at that time will remember them (Fig. 32). However, motels and scenic routes also meant rejection by the right-thinking class in the 1990s, which condemned in the same breath the coloured plastic chair associated with them.

In the early 2000s, thanks to the rediscovery of motels as a social phenomenon, the acquisition by the MNBAQ of a copy of the “*Solair*” Chair, an exhibition on Québec design, and media infatuation with this stereotypical object, the chair was rehabilitated and again became “desirable.” Still produced and easy to get hold of, it can now be found without shame on balconies and in the backyards of a number of city dwellers.

At the time of its creation, IPL (yet again!) already had a chair of this type in its catalogue, but design flaws made it fragile. The company called upon two young designers, Fabio Fabiano and Michel-Ange Panzini, both of whom held a master’s degree in industrial design from Syracuse University. The latter, born in France to a family of Italian

Fabio Fabiano and Michel-Ange Panzini

Città di Castello, Italy, 1939 –
Washington, D.C., 2012;
Périgueux, France, 1942

origin, arrived in Montréal in 1956 and obtained a degree in architecture from the Université de Montréal in 1968. Fabiano and Panzini formed a partnership after their studies and established their design office in Montréal in 1972. However, their collaboration was short-lived. Panzini returned to architecture, a field in which he continues to work in Montréal, and Fabiano undertook a teaching career in Maryland.

With its one-piece slatted plastic shell that snaps onto a foldable steel frame, the “*Solair*” Chair evokes, as its name suggests, a lovely sunny day but also youth, a happy-go-lucky attitude and joie de vivre, values specific to the period that witnessed its birth, a period marked by radical change in social mores and optimism. That it has now regained public favour perhaps means that pockets of happiness are still possible in the turpitude of everyday life.



Fig. 32.
David Olivier, photographer
A Motel in Gaspésie with its Row
of “Solair” Chairs, image from
the book *Motel univers: bienvenue
au Québec* (Héliotrope: 2006)
(detail)



“Montréal 1976” Poster
(the five Olympic rings)
1972

For the Organizing Committee
for the Olympic Games
Offset, 84 × 59.3 cm

MNBAQ, gift of Georges Huel
(1998.186)

The symbol of the Olympic Games is extremely well known: five intertwined rings representing the union of the five continents and the meeting of athletes from the entire world. What could be added to that image to make the notion of a gathering even more resonant? How could it be made more dynamic? This was the challenge tackled by graphic designer Ernst Roch in 1972.

Roch arrived in Canada in 1953, after studying in Austria, and worked for various graphic design firms before opening his own agency. However, his most productive period was undoubtedly when he participated in Design Collaborative, a firm he founded in 1965 with graphic designers Rolf Harder and Anthony Mann and industrial designer Albert Faux, and whose offices were located in Toronto and Montréal. Roch and Harder were particularly recognized for having been the leaders in Canada of what is commonly known in graphic design as the International Style or the Swiss School, a current in the sphere of influence of the European modern movement that rejected individualism and expression in favour of clarity and simplicity of the means employed. On the page, this led to the use of clear, unadorned typography, precise drawing, bold, rich colours and a specific graphic treatment of photography aimed at eliminating its anecdotal or overly realistic nature. That is precisely what Rolf Harder did, for example, for the cover of a brochure that presents the benefits of an anxiolytic medication (FIG. 33). The work of Roch and Harder was featured in 1970 and 1977 in two joint exhibitions that celebrated their contribution to the world of Canadian design. The two graphic designers subsequently pursued separate careers.

In 1972, when he designed his poster for the Games of the XXI Olympiad, which would take place four years later, Ernst Roch was one of numerous professionals approached by Georges Huel, director of the event’s graphic design program, who created the logo of the Montréal Olympics: the five rings surmounted by a stylized, rounded “M” that at once evokes an oval running

Ernst Roch
Osijek, Croatia, 1928 – Montréal, 2003

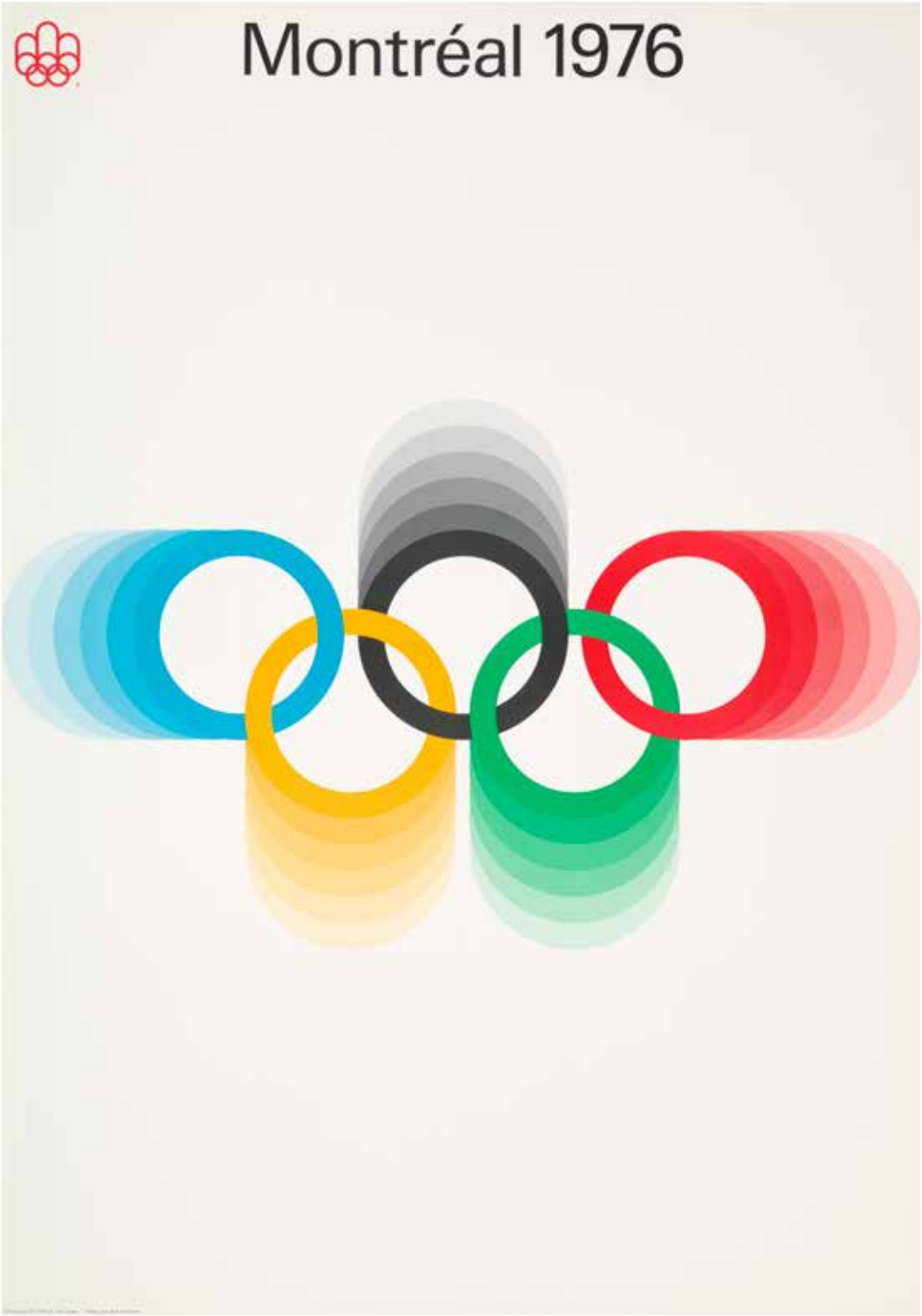
track and the winners’ podium (FIG. 34). To produce his illustration, Roch simply reworked the Olympic symbol by suggesting, through shaded colours treated graphically, the movement of the five rings toward their point of unification in the logo, thereby directly and effectively amplifying the notion of convergence. The poster is fully in keeping with the spirit of the International Style, of which he was one of the most brilliant representatives in Québec and in Canada.



Fig. 33.
Rolf Harder,
for Hoffmann-LaRoche
“Le Stress et le comédien, n° 3”
Brochure, 1973
Offset, 19.5 × 19.5 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Rolf Harder
(2000.169)



Fig. 34.
Georges Huel, for the Organizing
Committee for the Olympic Games
“Jeux de la XXI^e olympiade, Montréal
1976” Poster (the emblem), 1972
Offset, 59.5 × 41.9 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Georges Huel
(1998.193)



Groupe 5

1975-1976

Stoneware, 43.4 × 37.2 × 40 cm;
45.2 × 33.4 × 25.8 cm;
31.5 × 21.9 × 15.5 cm;
47.6 × 32.6 × 45.4 cm;
40.2 × 26.2 × 22.8 cm (left to
right)

MNBAQ, purchase (1976.606.04,
1976.606.02, 1976.606.01,
1976.606.03 and 1976.606.05)

What is the difference between an object and a sculpture? At what point can one aspire to become the other? Some observers opine that art is in essence undefinable. However, we can without too much risk advance that everything is a question of intention and appreciation. When an object is created, manufactured, assembled or simply chosen by an artist – let us name him accordingly straightaway – with the avowed or at the very least deliberate idea of submitting it to an audience so that it can appreciate it, the object crosses the Rubicon that shifts it from the utilitarian to art, to varying degrees of success depending on the case. It is not usually technical mastery that determines whether or not the transition is successful: “Art is liberal and craft is mercenary,” philosopher Emmanuel Kant wrote.

Accordingly, when ceramic artists Doucet-Saito assembled five of their vases to create a grouping that they entitled *Groupe 5* (1975–1976), the intention was abundantly clear: you are no longer looking at five utilitarian or strictly decorative objects but are appreciating a sculpture comprising the five objects. Each piece, through its shape, finish and colours, is certainly in itself “appreciable” and one could undoubtedly qualify it as an “art object,” a sort of middle-of-the-road expression that ascribes to the object an artistic pretension, just like “arts and crafts,” which assembles the two terms that Kant contrasted. But the creation of an ensemble, the installation items in a group, proposes to the viewer a new image, one that makes it possible to free the object from any utilitarian contingency and plunges it into the pure realm of art.

Doucet-Saito

Louise Doucet and Satoshi Saito

Montréal, 1938; Tokyo, Japan, 1935

“The die is cast,” as Julius Caesar said when he crossed the Rubicon. Louise Doucet and Satoshi Saito placed five vases on the ground (a vase is usually placed on a table), while preserving their usual characteristics, and made a sculpture out of them. Over the years, the couple has pursued its quest, preserving this reference to the historic reality of ceramics but always by pushing back the limits that it imposes. The *Untitled* – here again is another strategy borrowed from the artistic field – that the duo produced in 1982 (Fig. 35) preserves a vestige of its utilitarian component but, once again, is more aligned to sculpture than to an “art object.”

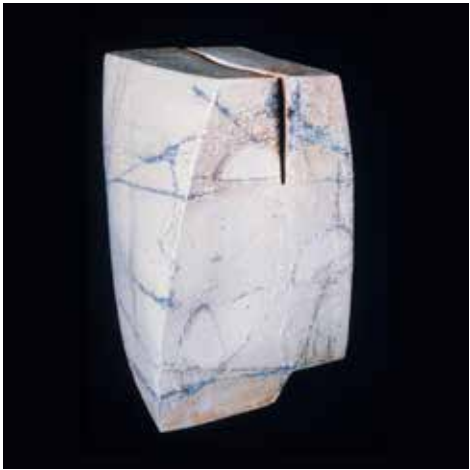


Fig. 35.
Doucet-Saito
Untitled, 1982
Stoneware, 32 × 19 × 19 cm
MNBAQ, purchased for the Prêt d’œuvres
d’art collection in 1983, transfer to the
permanent collection (2001.96)



“Lotus” Chair

1976

For Artena
Polypropylene and chrome-plated
steel, 72.5 × 63 × 59 cm

MNBAQ, gift of GID Itée
(Roland Lajeunesse, President
and CEO) (2005.79)

Office furniture is a privileged sphere of activity for designers. In Québec, many designers have worked for companies specializing in the field or have managed them. As early as the 1950s, designers such as André Jarry, Jacques Guillon and Christen Sorensen were collaborating with industries such as Opus, Ebena Lasalle and Art Woodwork.

Artena was one such company that merged several years later with Bonnex and Opus to form Artopex, which is still in operation today. Paul Boulva was its lead designer between 1972 and 1982. He was part of the first generation of designers from the Université de Montréal following the establishment of the industrial design program by Julien Hébert and André Jarry. The “*Cobra*” Chair (FIG. 36), one of his first creations, won a prize in 1975. The following year, he designed the “*Lotus*” Chair, also hailed by the Québec design community, which each year rewards the most deserving achievements. It was noted at the time that “the organization in Montréal of the Olympic Games served as a pretext for launching a multi-purpose chair with clean lines, the 2000 chair.” Indeed, that is what it was first called.

There is a certain kinship between the two pieces of furniture from Boulva’s early career, since both make use of the notion of a curved, continuous shape. This is apparent in the “*Cobra*” Chair, whose armrests snake on each side as though they were a single piece and slide under the seat. For the “*Lotus*” Chair, the concept was pushed even further with the plastic shell that forms the seat and back and which, thanks to the angled sides that can serve as armrests, makes this object a compromise between a chair and an armchair. The opening at the back gives the

Paul Boulva

Montréal, 1946

impression of a big loop and perhaps inspired, by analogy with the lotus leaf, the name given to the chair.

The chair was produced for 20 years and enjoyed considerable success. It is stackable and can be arranged in a row and back to back. It is still widely present in hospital waiting rooms and other public venues. It is found in several colours and is also equipped with integrated cushions to enhance its comfort.



Fig. 36.
Paul Boulva, for Artena
“Cobra” Chair, 1974
Steel, polyurethane foam and fabric,
120 × 65 × 65 cm
MNBAQ, gift of André Marier (2011.21)



“SportRack” System

1981

For Pinso
Extruded aluminum,
epoxy paint, rubber, nylon,
hardened steel and injected
acetal, 14.1 × 113 × 11.8 cm;
17.3 × 113 × 11.8 cm;
8.6 × 113 × 11.8 cm

MNBAQ, gift of Michel Dallaire
(2007.149.01, 2007.149.04
and 2007.149.05)

A young entrepreneur with an idea and a designer with the solutions to carry it out make for a winning combination. Maurice Pinsonnault, the owner of Pinso, which has been manufacturing cross-country skis under the Karhu-Pinso brand name since 1976, wanted an affordable ski rack that could be quickly installed on a car roof and just as quickly uninstalled. Michel Dallaire, who had already achieved renown as the designer of the Olympic torch in Montréal in 1976 (Fig. 37), proposed an ingenious, elegant system.

A simple, slightly curved aluminum structure sits on two truncated pyramid bases and is firmly held in place by stretchable nylon straps injected with synthetic rubber and steel fasteners covered with natural rubber that clamp onto the vehicle’s rain gutters or door edges. As is always the case with Dallaire’s work, the visual aspect of the ensemble was carefully designed. Refinement is once again apparent: nothing aggressive, straight lines and curves in perfect harmony.

The SportRack was the first luggage rack for a car roof that could be installed and removed without tools, solely by using stretchable straps. The idea is that it is simpler to store the rack in the car trunk between each use than to secure it by means of a theft-protection device. The SportRack was easy to manufacture, affordable, simple and light, made out of materials resistant to cold and harmless to the vehicle’s finish. It was also modular: with the addition or removal of various accessories, it could be used to transport skis, snowboards or bicycles. The SportRack enjoyed significant commercial success. Barely two years after it was put on the market, more than

Michel Dallaire
Paris, France, 1942

100,000 units had been purchased in North America. In 1982, the system was sold to Bic, the French multi-national firm, and has since changed hands many times. The SportRack company still exists but the original system is no longer manufactured. In 1990, Pinso also marketed a second version of the system designed by Michel Dallaire.

The SportRack is a perfect example of the added value of a well-thought-out design that satisfies a specific need. After more than 30 years, the rack continues to impress people and is still occasionally seen proudly sported by cars on city streets.



Fig. 37.
Michel Dallaire, *Official Torch
of the 21st Olympic Games in Montréal,*
1975
Aluminum painted with silicone
and thermosetting polyester,
65.9 cm (height) × 7.6 cm (diameter)
MNBAQ, gift of Michel Dallaire (1995.436)



“Circus” Table

1982

Designed by Jean-François Jacques
MNBAQ, purchase (1997.106)
Laminate and lacquered wood,
38.1 × 101.6 × 101.6 cm

An object can conjure up an image. It can evoke, through the association of ideas, something other than the purpose it serves, and its shapes and colours can even arouse emotions. The modern age – essentially the first half of the 20th century – divested the object of any affect: neutral and efficient, it had to confine itself to the strict minimum. Starting in the 1960s, but even more so in the 1970s, artists and designers tackled this so-called functionalist perspective. Design played a significant role in the advent of what is commonly called postmodernism. In Italy, in particular, Studio Alchimia, under the impetus of Alessandro Mendini, advocated at that time a “new arts and crafts” with unique pieces of furniture or items manufactured in small runs whose pronounced decorative nature is often symbolic. The Memphis group, established at the instigation of Ettore Sottsass in the winter of 1980–1981, assembled artists from far and wide and fomented a considerable international stir by proclaiming the aesthetic value of colours, symbols, embellishments, heterogeneous materials and irregular shapes.

In Québec, Hélène Benoit, Jean-François Jacques, Pierre-Marc Pelletier and Jean-Yves Rouleau, four young graduates of the Université du Québec à Montréal, founded Météore Studio in the early 1980s. The group presented its collection at the “Production n° 1 du Nouveau Mobilier” event, held at the same university in the fall of 1983. The “manifesto” accompanying the exhibition declared: “Météore Studio is offering an alternative to pure functionalism. Its objective is to prove that furnishings can be amusing, allusive and echo numerous images unrelated to function.” [TRANSLATION] The furniture presented by the young designers made use of laminate and lacquered wood. They all offered up colourful, geometrically shaped objects with evocative names.

One of the seminal works in the collection, the “*Pompa*” *Lamp* (FIG. 38), created the same year by Pierre-Marc Pelletier, celebrated, somewhat to the contrary, the new Philips PL-9 fluorescent tube, magnifying its function

Météore Studio

Design collective established
in Montréal in 1981

and placing it unadorned and without artifice above a base that resembles a gas pump. However, it is undoubtedly the “*Circus*” *Table* (1982) by Jean-François Jacques that exemplifies the collection. Simple and effective, the use of points culminating in spheres and coloured triangles immediately evokes the world of circuses and festivals and is a bit reminiscent of a harlequin’s or a lunatic’s hat.



Fig. 38.
Météore Studio (designed
by Pierre-Marc Pelletier)
“*Pompa*” *Lamp*, 1983
Laminated particleboard, plastic,
decalcomania and Philips PL-9
fluorescent tube, 117 × 40.5 × 40.5 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Pierre-Marc Pelletier
(2006.547)



Teapot, Warmer and Cups

from the “Chinese Porcelain” series

1984

For Danesco
Porcelain, 20 × 18.5 × 15 cm
(teapot); 7.2 cm (height) × 15 cm
(diameter) (warmer);
10 × 11.5 × 7.8 cm (each cup)

MNBAQ, gift of Koen De Winter
(1995.444.01 to 1995.444.04)

While objects manufactured in China are now pervasive in our daily lives, such was far from the case 30 years ago. When Koen De Winter designed his white crockery, which he called simply *Chinese Porcelain*, and had it produced in China, the country had barely emerged from the Cultural Revolution, which condemned age-old traditions, the Four Old Things that had to be eliminated: ideas, culture, customs and habits.

Designer Koen De Winter is a native of Belgium. He trained in northern European schools and already had striking achievements to his credit, such as the “66” *Pitcher* and the glasses that accompany it, a mainstay of the Mepal company (FIG. 39). He settled in Canada in 1979 and worked for Danesco, a firm that designs, markets and distributes design products for residential use. De Winter notes that “the best objects that our societies have produced are the ones that have resulted from a long, sometimes slow evolution.” In this spirit, “design must fall within the scope of continuity: acknowledge and master past achievements, reinterpret the problem in light of knowledge of the situation, and formulate what demands new solutions” as he explained in 1985.

The “Chinese Porcelain” series, produced in 1984, is significant in this respect. First, and strictly from the standpoint of design, it builds on the ancient know-how of Chinese porcelain. Based on traditional models, De Winter updated the object, simplified the forms, added a touch of originality, without his doing so being an end in itself – in the flat element that breaks the circular uniformity, for example – and enhanced certain components, such as the spout of the teapot or the “pads” that multiply the contact points under most of the pieces. However, the objects in this series also reflect an in-depth knowledge of ceramic materials and techniques. Koen De Winter’s expertise in this field enabled him to design all of the moulds for the manufacture of these pieces over the course of several weeks that he spent in a factory in Chaozhou, a city in Guangdong Province in southeastern

Koen De Winter

Mortsel, Belgium, 1943

China, where he was able to restore to this more than a century old industry part of the knowledge lost in the wake of Maoist reform: the location of sources of clay rich in kaolin, the revival of the use of settling ponds, and the calibration of pieces. Without his knowledge of ceramics, the project would never have emerged. Industrial design is not innovation alone but is also a question of traditions and technical expertise.



Fig. 39.
Koen De Winter, for Mepal
“66” *Pitcher and Glasses*, 1977 and 1974
Melamine, 22.8 × 19.4 × 10.2 cm (pitcher);
9.1 cm (height) × 8.1 cm (diameter)
(each glass)
MNBAQ, gift of Lise Bourassa
(2006.532.01 to 2006.532.07)



Prototype of the “Itech” Hockey Visor

1984

For Leader
Polycarbonate,
20.3 × 21.5 × 13.2 cm

MNBAQ, gift of Martin P. Pernicka
(2006.545)

In sport, design is present from head to toe, from shoes, boots and skates to protective helmets. Several Québec achievements in this field are noteworthy (FIG. 40). Trends, fashions and technological breakthroughs impose a furious pace on the designers of such items, sustained by commercial imperatives that constantly demand “new and improved” products, as a well-known advertising slogan puts it, but which quickly become outmoded and obsolete. For such an item to resist the onslaught of the consumer society for more than 30 years is a singular achievement. Innovation and optimum design are the keys to such longevity. This is true of Martin P. Pernicka’s hockey visor, which, while it is in its third or fourth version, essentially remains unchanged and continues to be produced by Bauer, which bought Mission-Itech in 2008.

Established in the early 1970s, International Forums first specialized in the manufacture of swimming goggles. Then, aware of the importance of protecting the eyes in racket sports, it developed the first goggles for racquet-ball, squash and badminton players and adopted the name Leader. Industrial designer Martin P. Pernicka joined the team at that time. He focused principally on the development of a one-piece polycarbonate hockey visor with the support of General Electric, which marketed the plastic under the Lexan brand name.

No hockey visor of this type existed at that time and metal cages were the only equipment available. The challenge consisted in designing a product offering better visibility, good ventilation and effective protection that could be installed on all types of helmets. The absence of visual distortion, an anti-fog inner coating and an exterior scratch-resistant coating, and a floating chinstrap that

Martin Pierre Pernicka
Brno, Czechoslovakia, 1946

hampers movement also set Pernicka’s design apart. Leader then established the Itech hockey division, which marketed the product and made it its spearhead.

Martin P. Pernicka’s visor effectively satisfied a specific need and provided a new technological solution that has stood the test of time. The design of this technical but visually attractive object perfectly reflects its protective function and transmits a feeling of performance that is essential to its success.



Fig. 40.
Toboggan Design, for Rossignol
“Balanze” Helmet for Snowboarders
and Skiers, 2005
Polycarbonate, polystyrene and nylon,
23 × 27 × 22 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Toboggan Design
(2006.551)



“Forestier. La Passion
selon Louise” Poster
1986

For Louise Forestier
Silkscreen, 96.9 × 63.5 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Lise Bourassa
(2007.151)

Yvan Adam is perceived, a generation later, as Vittorio’s alter ego. A number of his film posters are famous, like the films they advertise. Who is not familiar with Denys Arcand’s *The Decline of the American Empire* and its demonic poster (FIG. 41)?

An autodidact, Adam produced his first poster during a sojourn in Paris in 1976 at a time when he was trying to live off the proceeds from his painting. He returned, penniless, to Montréal in 1977, where he drew several posters, then was hired by the Théâtre populaire du Québec in the late 1970s. In 1980, he created his first film poster. His work from this period is linked to the tradition of illustration. However, in the mid-1980s, his approach became more graphic and *Forestier. La Passion selon Louise* is an excellent example, with its masses of bold colours that establish a parallel with Vittorio.

This poster advertises the recording Louise Forestier launched in 1987 and adopts the same composition as the album cover. A woman’s body, cut off at the chest and thighs, is drawn in broad black strokes on a blue background. A partly hidden saxophone mouthpiece initiates a spiral that entwines the body and turns into a simple red brushstroke. The coloured line interrupts its movement at the top of the stomach and reappears behind to discreetly evoke the bell of the instrument. The calligraphic gesture here translates the almost erotic dimension of music.

Yvan Adam
Mont-Saint-Hilaire, 1955

During the 1980s, Adam produced several posters that started with the graphical gesture, often combined with a more realistic image, as was the case with *The Decline of the American Empire*. Starting in the 1990s and especially in the following decade, photography supplanted drawing, but the poster designer maintained the bold, direct approach that gave his subjects immediate impact (FIG. 42).



Fig. 41.
Yvan Adam, for Les Films René Malo and the National Film Board of Canada
“*The Decline of the American Empire*” Poster, 1986
Offset, 96.5 × 66.1 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Lise Bourassa
(2007.324)



Fig. 42.
Yvan Adam, for the Association coopérative de productions audiovisuelles
“*The Novena*” Poster, 2005
Offset, 171.5 × 120 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Yvan Adam
(2007.53)



Ming X

1986

Glass, stained glass, wood and tarot cards, 103.5 × 75.6 × 38 cm

MNBAQ, purchased for the Prêt d'oeuvres d'art collection in 1988, transfer to the permanent collection (1994.232)

In his treatise on painting, Alberti defined a painting as an open window through which we can observe history. This formula has become the most celebrated definition of Renaissance art, which was dominant for centuries until modern art called it into question.

François Houdé's works also offer a glimpse of history, but through the window itself in its full materiality, one or rather several windows that do not allow us to see but present themselves to be seen. Houdé always focused on the “imperfect” aspects of glass – fragility, opacity and roughness – and sought to surpass the notion of almost charming beauty linked to the material through the use of eroded, uneven surfaces and glued or assembled fragments. Accordingly, for the works in the “Pygmalion” series (FIG. 43), which preceded the “Ming” series by several years, he used a manufacturing defect, devitrification – crystallization that occurs when glass is heated too long – to obtain pieces that resemble northern landscapes, whose white surfaces are marked by folds, peaks and contours.

Ming X, as the figure indicates, is the tenth in a series of 23 works produced between 1985 and 1989. The title refers to the Chinese dynasty whose reign was renowned, in particular, for its artistic production in the realm of ceramics. However, the horse motif is linked more to earlier periods, in particular to the so-called three-colour Tang dynasty ceramics and the mounts of the terracotta warriors in Emperor Qin's mausoleum, discovered in 1974.

In *Ming X* and several other pieces in the series, the window serves as a metaphor for perception. By means of the cut-outs of glass sections from a multi-paned window, cathedral glass and a sheet of wired glass, Houdé

François Houdé

Québec City, 1950 – Québec City, 1993

summons an entire system of representation through the ages in the figure of the horse, which symbolized power in Ancient China. *Ming X* looks like an archaeological vestige comprising modern materials, an object spawned by an almost magical operation that the two tarot cards – the Chariot and a knight – emphasize. Here, the glass serves the artist's intention to measure the gap between the past and the present, between reality and the artifice of representation: a window *thanks to* which we can observe history, to paraphrase Alberti.



Fig. 43.
François Houdé
Pygmalion No. 1, 1983
Kiln-cast glass, 20 × 69 × 61 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Elena and Stuart Lee
(2009.249)



Coffee Set

1988

Fine earthenware and wire mesh, 9.3 × 15.5 × 10 cm (creamer); 22 × 27 × 21 cm (coffee pot); 11 cm (height) × 10 cm (diameter) (sugar bowl)

MNBAQ, purchase (1997.103.01, 1997.103.03 and 1997.103.02)

What allows an object to be referred to by such and such a name? Is it merely its ability to properly fulfill the function that its name implies? Not really: any receptacle can be used to serve tea or coffee and contain milk or sugar. In a pinch, a teapot could very well serve as a coffee pot. Instead, it is when an object possesses the formal or conceptual attributes that allow us to associate it with a function that we recognize a specific use, either out of habit or through social consensus, without having to prove it.

At first glance, it is obvious that Léopold L. Foulem’s *Coffee Set* (1988) can serve no purpose whatsoever. Each shape was produced with “chicken wire” and covered with white ceramic through repeated dipping in a slip that was fired after each dipping. The shapes thus determined three “containers” perfectly unsuited to containing anything whatsoever. The interior volume is accessible and visible through the openwork walls of the objects, which appear somewhat as spectral images of themselves, a phenomenon accentuated by their matte whiteness. In the text accompanying the exhibition of the series in 1988, the artist explained that the constituent items “demonstrate that even if the clay form is lost, it can still be perceived as a container because of the generic volumetric shape of the object.” He also maintained that it is the shape as a conceptual entity and the volume as an abstract reality that define as such the coffee pot, creamer and sugar

Léopold L. Foulem

Bathurst, New Brunswick, 1945

bowl in his *Coffee Set*. Foulem had previously explored this notion of volume as a negative space in a series of no less radical teapots obtained through cut-outs of simple voids in black ceramic plaques (Fig. 44).

Ceramics is a sovereign art and just as valid as any other form of expression: such is the perpetual quest of Léopold L. Foulem. Based on the codes and concepts specific to the genre, he is not interested in the real object (the thing) but in the object in itself (the idea), and he creates works that constantly call into question the stereotypes that distort appreciation of them.



Fig. 44.
Léopold L. Foulem
Teapot, 1983
Ceramic, 23.6 × 27.5 × 7.2 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Léopold L. Foulem
(2014.06)



“Design international 91”
Poster

1991

For the École de design, UQAM
Silkscreen, 122 × 91.5 cm

MNBAQ, gift of Alfred Halasa
(2001.116)

A poster must deliver its message quickly and effectively. Its purpose is to announce an event and in order to do so, it must first attract the passerby’s attention, then directly, incisively impart the information. In some instances, symbols interfere with the message, which then must be decoded like a veritable puzzle.

Alfred Halasa is a native of Poland, a country in which the poster is a longstanding tradition. He arrived in Québec in 1976 and, the following year, began teaching at the École de design of Université du Québec à Montréal. After nearly 40 years of teaching and graphics production at the university, Alfred Halasa has had a considerable influence on numerous graphic designers who are now making their mark. Moreover, his contribution has been highlighted by several exhibitions presented at the Centre de design de l’UQAM (Fig. 45).

Halasa’s posters focus largely on university-related activities such as study programs, the new academic year, conferences, colloquia and exhibitions. Established in 1982, Design international is one of the annual events that allowed him to give free rein to his imagination. For one week each year, in the spring, internationally renowned guests, paired with lecturers from the École de design, give lectures and lead workshops. Since the spring of 1984, Halasa has produced the poster for the event. In 1991, to announce the Swiss contingent, the graphic designer represented a green land marked with a white cross on a red background, a national symbol, surmounted by black mountains outlined against a blue sky. What are the two white spots doing in this landscape: are they firn or fragments of cowhide? Falling from the sky, a wide brush bears the names of the guests and, on its handle, the figures, letters and inscriptions “Helvetica,” “Bold” and “1291.” In 1991, the Helvetic State celebrated the 700th anniversary of the former Swiss Confederation and one of the country’s striking achievements in the 20th century was its dominant position in the realm of graphic design, notably

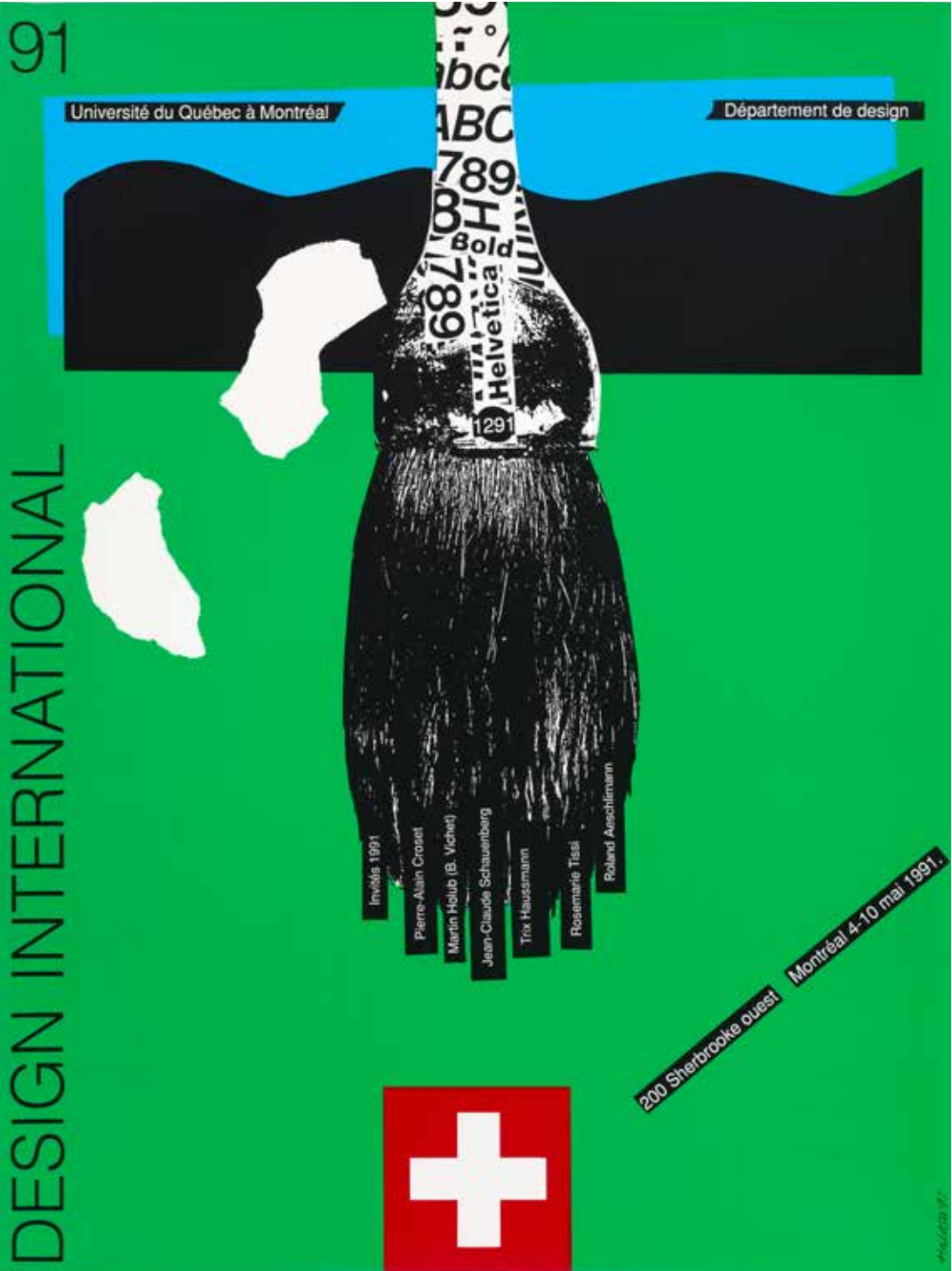
Alfred Halasa
Zawada, Poland, 1942

with the creation of the Helvetica font, which is still one of the most popular.

Over the years, Halasa’s codes have grown in number and become increasingly autobiographical. Thus, the appearance in his compositions of his own face, his skull from which a cobra or a tree stem emerges, and Poland, evoked by means of a beret or a stork. When all is said and done, doesn’t an artist always more or less talk about himself?



Fig. 45.
Alfred Halasa
“Alfred en liberté” Poster, 2014
Silkscreen, 112 × 82 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Alfred Halasa (2015.130)



Comme un souffle dans l'onde confuse

1991-1993

High-warp tapestry, 268 × 275 cm
MNBAQ, purchased through a contribution from Les Amis du Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (1995.475)

“Imposing form on a period of time is what beauty demands, but so does memory,” to quote Milan Kundera; which is what Marcel Marois has done in his long and patient work as a fibre artist. Using the traditional tapestry technique as practised at the Manufacture des Gobelins since the time of Louis XIV in Paris, Marois slowly creates images of eminently contemporary subjects.

During the 1980s, he proposed a reflection on the fragility of our environment. Based on ecological events reported by the press, Marois reproduced a front-page image, altered it and recreated another reality that he invites us to perceive through the affect, as in a dream. The tension between the real and his representation, between narration and abstraction, forces these episodes to lodge in the depths of our memory.

Initially, works such as *Non-retour* (FIG. 46) display an alternation between such images drawn from current affairs, partly disintegrated and using a limited range of colours, and large, plain surfaces structured according to the possibilities that the medium and the original subject offer. Then, the image occupies a larger portion of the tapestry’s surface, becomes more abstract and is rendered by means of a much more varied palette of colours. The image of *Comme un souffle dans l’onde confuse* comes from a news report on the accidental take of dolphins by Peruvian fishermen. Only a few strokes that identify the group of mammals remain and snatches of text, partly decomposed, on three sides of the image evoke the medieval tradition of borders and phylacteries.

Marcel Marois

Saint-Éphrem-de-Beauce, 1949

Marois has deliberately chosen a rather coarse weave, thus respecting the materiality of his medium. Each point is meticulously composed by means of the arrangement of several coloured threads in order to create a shimmering effect that, in the manner of an aura, translates the vital energy emanating from the subject. The dissolution of the image confers on the entire work an atmosphere of reminiscence, of a ghostly recollection. This blurring compels us to resort to decoding and to mentally recompose the real dimension of the drama. In this way, Marois restores to the event the entire depth of the phenomenon, i.e. an image that the conscience discerns and that lies within more profound structures that embody what endures.



Fig. 46.
Marcel Marois
Non-retour, 1980-1981
High-warp tapestry, 253 × 415 cm
MNBAQ, purchased for the Prêt d’œuvres d’art collection in 1983, transfer to the permanent collection (2005.2776)



La Mise en Abîme
(after Juan Sánchez Cotán)
1992

Porcelain, 20 × 45 × 45 cm (set) MNBAQ, purchase (1995.486)

A “stack of dishes,” such as after a good meal, while the plates pile up in the sink: that is how Paul Mathieu describes this work and an entire series of other works produced in the early 1990s. A complete dinner service makes up the set, that is, four plates – a plate, serving plate, dessert plate and salad plate – as well as a cup and saucer. The proportions are generous, adapted to a gargantuan meal. And what does the artist serve there? He turns to a famous still life, a *bodegón* by Spanish painter Juan Sánchez Cotán, exhibited at the San Diego Museum of Art. The austerity of *bodegones* sets them apart from Flemish still lifes. In the painting by Sánchez Cotán, a window frame contains a sliced melon, a cucumber, a quince and a cabbage (Mathieu eliminated the latter) suspended from strings.

The precise stacking of the pieces of porcelain recomposes the image of the painting but, to properly see it, the viewer must be standing perfectly perpendicular to the pile. As a result, the set loses its three-dimensional aspect as the image flattens the volumetry of the objects. However, the Spanish painter’s canvas is itself supposed to be a “trompe-l’oeil,” the realistic reproduction of objects in a frame of perspective that gives them an almost tangible appearance. The presentation of Mathieu’s work can never, however, achieve this “effect,” which only photography can render, and its sculptural nature is always predominant.

Another impossibility of this work, at least in the context of a museum exhibition, is the unstacking piece by piece of its components, which would reveal notable alterations made to the image represented. Sexual allusions, frequently found in still lifes, are exacerbated here by the very act of touching: the erect cucumber becomes phalloid; the melon overripens, opens up and reveals its flesh. The real time of the manipulation superimposes itself on the time of the image, whose passing is made perceptible by the transformation of the vegetables. The association between still life and sexuality is also found

Paul Mathieu
Bouchette, 1954

in a major work by the artist dating from the same period. *Garniture #2* (Fig. 47) presents eight vignettes showing a fragmented male nude and a still life in an interior. The scene takes place by day on one side and by night on the other. Once again, as with *La Mise en Abîme (after Juan Sánchez Cotán)*, the objects must be manipulated in order to access both aspects, the gesture participating in the temporal metaphor, with a shift from reverie to action, then from repose to decay.



Fig. 47.
Paul Mathieu
Garniture #2, 1990–1993
Porcelain and bronze,
46 × 117 × 30.5 cm
(set of five pieces)
MNBAQ, gift of Paul Mathieu
(2009.70).



Salads 1 to 6

1993

Fine earthenware, 9 cm (height) × 23 cm (diameter); 10 cm (height) × 23 cm (diameter); 9 cm (height) × 20.5 cm (diameter); 8 cm (height) × 23 cm (diameter); 8 cm (height) × 20.5 cm (diameter); 10 cm (height) × 21.5 cm (diameter)

MNBAQ, gift of the family in memory of Jeannot Blackburn (1997.101.01 to 1997.101.06)

“Somewhere between the speech soup and the communal grave of interpretations, you will be sold a luminescent salad of deceitful crudités that will make you blush. Tossed and seasoned, served in individual portions, you will swallow it in (full) knowledge of the facts.” That is how Jeannot Blackburn presented his work in 1993.

At a time when AIDS was wreaking havoc, the clasped, mutilated bodies speak more of suffering than pleasure. Blackburn broached this topic in the late 1980s with a series of teapots, which, while they preserve a certain reference to function, are above all a pretext for explorations of pain, their handles and spouts piercing dislocated, fragmented bodies. The appearance of symbolic letters in early 1990 allowed new investigation, still on the theme of the afflicted body: *D for Dolores*, *F for Françoise* teapots (Fig. 48), followed by four-letter series that herald degeneration: *Rape*, *Slap*, *Fall*.

The “Salads” series comprises six combinations of bodies or body parts of male nudes, enamelled in “lettuce” green. The first one, comprising ten interlaced bodies, shows a veritable orgy. The legs and arms define the festooned edges of the bowl. The second one comprises three bodies and the third, a single, highly disarticulated body. Finally, the last three comprise pieces – legs, hands, feet, fingers, penises – whose sections are clearly marked in red.

Jeannot Blackburn

Dunham, 1959 – Montréal, 1996

The vessels do not invite us to the pleasure of a feast but instead to the horror of a mass grave. Blackburn knew by then that he had AIDS and his work is neither pornographic, nor moralizing, nor satirical. Should we perceive the hope of redemption in the white body curled up in the bottom of the last bowl? Unfortunately, Blackburn did not escape the disease and died three years later.



Fig. 48.
Jeannot Blackburn
“F for Françoise” Teapot, 1990
Partially enamelled terracotta,
glass, 17 × 28 × 5.5 cm
MMFA, Liliane and David M. Stewart
collection, gift of Anne and Sophia Tétreault
in memory of the artist (D97.121.1)



“Bachelier” Chinese Vase with Bananas

1993

Fine earthenware and decalcomania, 50 × 24 × 24 cm
MNBAQ, purchase (1997.109)

This is a strange, hybrid thing, a melding of an art object of great luxury and ceramic fragments found during an archaeological dig, adorned with bananas and what appears to be studded leather. Indeed, we might think Richard Milette is thumbing his nose at history if we did not know that he is actually occupied with criticizing its misrepresentations instead.

It is essential to know the history of ceramics to ascertain all the layers of meaning of such an object. This is almost an abiding feature of Milette’s work, which also refers frequently to Greek ceramics (Fig. 49). First, the name: the “Bachelier Chinese vase” was part of the catalogue of the Sèvres royal porcelain manufactory, the Mecca of French ceramics in the 18th century, headed at the time by Jean-Jacques Bachelier, which produced the models bearing his name. In Sèvres, several celebrated painters also created decorations, often courtly scenes, to embellish the bellies of these opulent vases. Moreover, Milette’s work uses gilding and “Sèvres blue,” the emblematic colour of the factory, two other characteristics of this output that perfectly embody the frivolity of aristocratic society at the time.

The main body of the “*Bachelier*” *Chinese Vase with Bananas* (1993) is covered with fake shards that reproduce, some by means of decalcomania, various decorations typical of Oriental, European and American ceramics: Sancai, Meissen, Wedgwood, Mimbres, and so on. So many traditions, stemming from very different cultures and periods, offering up a condensed history of ceramics. Then, three golden bananas clasp the vase and serve as handles. Lastly, the artist has adorned the cover knob, pedestal and base of the vessel with a decoration that imitates studded leather.

Richard Milette proceeds by inversion: he replaces noble materials such as gold, silver and bronze with substitutes whose sole purpose is to embellish the piece with imitations of contemporary materials or symbols with obvious

Richard Milette

L’Assomption, 1960

sexual connotations associated with sadomasochism and homosexuality. Conversely, where the original vase displayed allusive decorations, usually an amorous heterosexual scene, he produces an inventory of ceramic decorations from the earliest times to the present day.

With this work, Milette broaches the question of the fetishism of precious materials and of the beautiful object and highlights, by means of diversion, the historical and contemporary stereotypes that stigmatize ceramics, thereby compelling us to re-examine our criteria for analysis of this art form.



Fig. 49.
Richard Milette
Lecythus 12-7528, 1987
Earthenware, 38 cm (height) × 13.1 cm (diameter)
MNBAQ, gift of Richard Milette (1997.110)



“Clipper CS-1” Workstation

1994

For New Space
Maple, laminated maple, maple
plywood, polycarbonate, steel,
aluminum, lighting and ventilation
systems and computer,
150 × 122.5 × 205.5 cm (closed)

MNBAQ, gift of Douglas Ball
(2009.69)

A workstation, like an aircraft cockpit, allows the user to operate his computer and work there, either alone in his bubble with the shutters closed or in collaboration with other users in their own cockpits, by deploying the tiny wings of this unusual object.

The workspace has changed markedly over the years, swinging like a sort of pendulum between open plan and closed offices, between proximity conducive to collaboration and isolation geared to concentration. Industrial designer Douglas Ball has explored all of these avenues from the 1960s to the dawn of the 21st century.

He originated the concept of modularity in the realm of office furniture. In 1967, he invented “System,” wooden units that could be combined to create different shapes. From then on, “system” referred to any modular suite. Two years later, he proposed “System S,” in metal (Fig. 50), then, in 1978, the “Race” system, comprising beams and columns that could be configured in numerous ways and to which were attached various modules and accessories.

In 1986, Douglas Ball designed the first prototype of the “Clipper CS-1” Workstation, which was marketed in 1994, an autonomous computer workstation that incorporated in a single unit a work table, chair, storage space, lighting and ventilation system. Installed on rails that allowed it to easily move forward and backward, the chair could be locked into the desired position simply by tilting it backward. Two swivel-arm lamps descended from the ceiling. The aviator-style directional air vent and miniature toggle switches were mounted on a textured steel plate. The armrests were incorporated into the gates, which also served as filing cabinets and allowed access to the interior of the unit. The workstation could be completely closed for greater tranquility or left open by lowering two shelves and raising two polycarbonate panels for added social interaction.

Douglas Ball

Peterborough, Ontario, 1935

The “Clipper CS-1” Workstation was not widely distributed and was only briefly marketed in the United States. At most, 50 or 60 units were produced. At its launch in Chicago, it provoked mockery: as a plywood lobster shell, a cross between a UFO and a birchbark canoe, a worker’s tomb. It nonetheless represented an exemplary approach from the standpoint of design: imagine a new solution for a known problem and thus completely rethink a product.



Fig. 50.
Douglas Ball, for Sunar
“System S” Work Table,
1969-1970
Painted steel, chrome-plated steel
and plastic, 74 × 154 × 76.5 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Douglas Ball
(1997.194)



Septet 3.98

1998

Earthenware painted with black slip, 109.2 cm (height) × 17.8 cm (diameter) MNBAQ, purchase (1999.06)

This work by Roseline Delisle has the poise and bearing of a ballerina. It is common to resort to this type of analogy, to transpose the inanimate to the world of living beings. The nomenclature of ceramics is especially conducive to doing so since we speak of the lip, the neck, the belly, the foot, and even the bottom of a vase!

This immobile ballerina is nevertheless enlivened by a vibration stemming from its decoration of alternating horizontal black and white stripes that assert, in the same breath, its verticality. The white stripes correspond to the colour of the bare clay, while the black stripes are painted. Their apparent precision stems from the optical play of the repetition. The resulting kineticism contributes to energizing the piece and to contradicting its stasis. When the object is viewed from a perfectly perpendicular position, the stripes contribute to its transformation into an image, to the transition from three-dimensional to two-dimensional, an impression that contradicts itself when one changes the viewing angle.

In the book *Designed for delight* (1997), the artist has explained her approach this way: “The starting point for the work is the concept of the complementarity of opposites: white and black, strength and fragility, movement and immobility. The profile of each piece is designed as an elevation drawing and comprises various components in geometric shapes.”

The output of Roseline Delisle, who unfortunately died in 2003, displays great consistency – almost all of her pieces satisfy the same technical and aesthetic criteria. The parts of each work, which can number up to eight, are roughly thrown, then gradually reduced to shape the foot, the finial and the fins, which are assembled later. After stone-polishing, the object is painted with black or blue

Roseline Delisle

Rimouski, 1952 – Santa Monica, California, 2003

stripes traced freehand using a brush while turning on the potter’s wheel. The title is determined by the number of parts (some of which are detachable), the sequence number and the year of production. Pieces prior to 1996 were usually small (Fig. 51), but certain subsequent compositions reached a height of two metres thanks to the insertion of a metal rod through the body of the object. *Septet 3.98* belongs to the latter category and is one of the artist’s most accomplished works.



Fig. 51.
Roseline Delisle
“Quadruple 7 Paratonnerre”
Covered Jar, 1989
Partially engobed bisque porcelain,
52 cm (height) x 22.2 cm (diameter)
MMFA, Liliane and David M. Stewart
collection, anonymous gift (D96.154.1a-d)



“Le Colonel Oiseau” Poster
2000

For the Théâtre de Quat’Sous MNBAQ, gift of Lino (2006.595)
Silkscreen, 152.5 × 101.8 cm

The performing arts and graphic design go hand in hand in Québec. For decades, every cultural calendar has engendered its share of programs and posters, many of which sweep up prizes at events that showcase the best graphic designs of the year.

The firm Orangetango has won more than its share of honours in the field. Founded in 1996 by Mario Mercier and Annie Lachapelle, it was associated in turn with Excentris, Les Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois, Le Festival du nouveaux cinémas, Les Nouveaux Médias, the Opéra de Montréal (Fig. 52), and the Théâtre de Quat’Sous. Orangetango’s creations are noteworthy for their nonconformism: varied typography that adopts unexpected directions, powerful, naïve illustrations and photographs incorporated using different processes. On several occasions, Orangetango collaborated with painter and illustrator Lino, particularly between 2000 and 2004, when the latter enjoyed the trust and support of Wajdi Mouawad, artistic director of the Théâtre de Quat’Sous.

One of the firm’s striking series, and among its most celebrated, was produced for the Quat’Sous in 2000-2001 and includes the annual program in poster form and a brochure, as well as cards, programs and posters for the plays *Le Mouton et la baleine*, *Novecento* and *Le Colonel Oiseau*. The series plays on the contrast between traditional typography and the tense drawing of figures entrapped in forms made with broad white strokes on three backgrounds in solid colours.

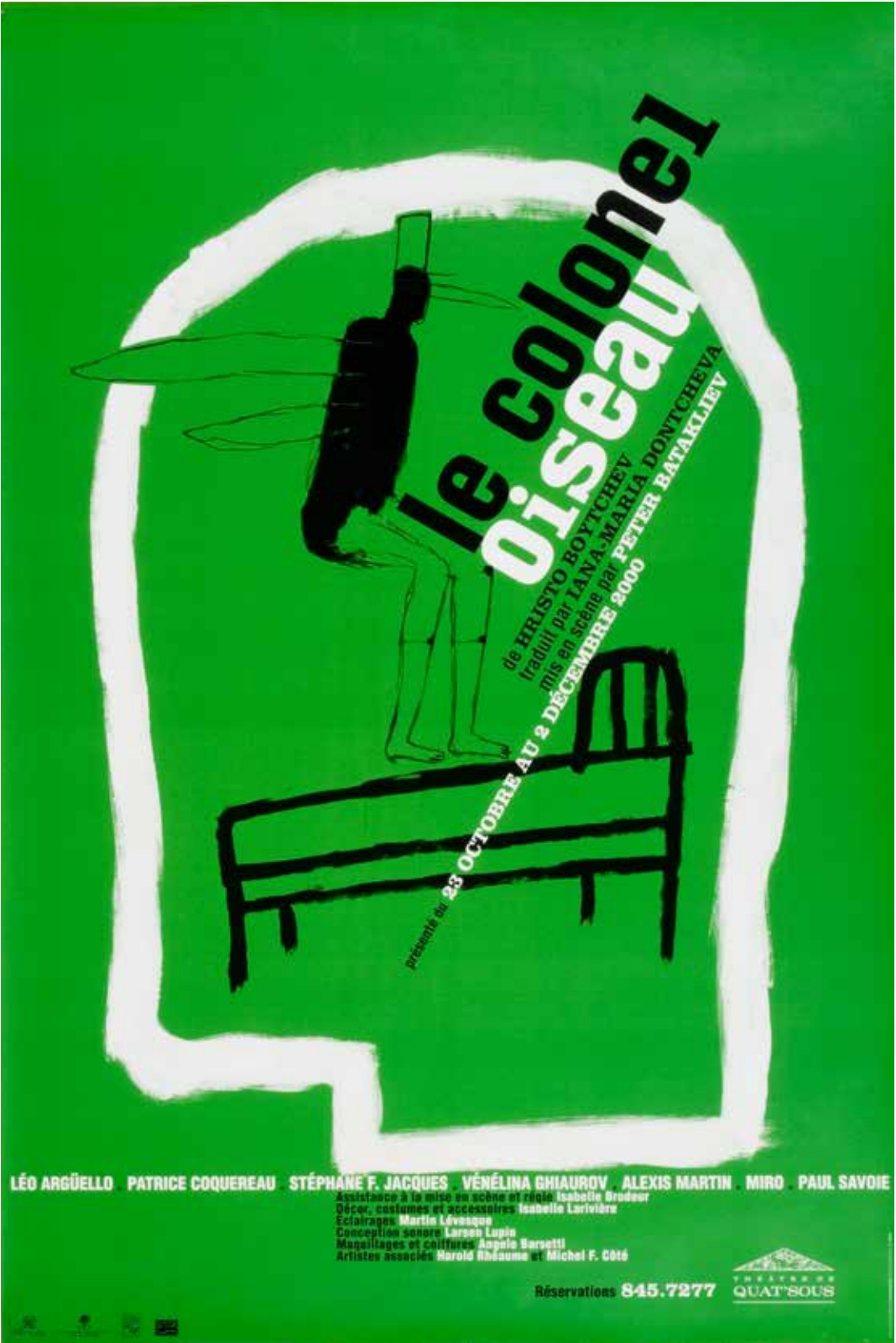
Le Colonel Oiseau plunges us into the heart of madness, with order and power as the only outlet. Where a physician has failed, himself almost sinking into the insanity of

Orangetango
Graphic design firm established
in Montréal in 1996

his patients, a former soldier charged with a pseudo-UN mission succeeds in giving them back a semblance of normality. Deprived of any means of communication, the characters send messages using migratory birds. Like an omen, the colonel interprets the code of a banded bird that returns several months later and they are off on their redemptive mission. Lino’s illustration shows the colonel, who has become a bird, on a bed in the asylum. The white shape surrounding him is at once the asylum and a skull, from whose confinement the bird will soon escape.



Fig. 52.
Orangetango, for L’Opéra de Montréal
“Turandot” Poster, 2004
Silkscreen, 90.8 × 63 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Orangetango (2005.127)



“HIH (Honey I’m Home)”
Chair
2002

Designed by Cédric Sportes
Neoprene and painted
particleboard
76 × 41 × 137 cm (carpet),
76 × 41 × 50 cm (chair)

MNBAQ, purchased with support
from the Canada Council for
the Arts Acquisition Assistance
Program (2006.231)

“Honey, I’m home!” How can an object express this stereo-
type of the husband who works from 9 to 5 and returns
home, where an attentive spouse and perfect housewife
awaits him? The man is the king of the abode and his wife
rolls out the red carpet upon his arrival. His chair awaits
him with his newspaper and his slippers are ready: he can
leave the worries of the day behind.

Cédric Sportes’s “*HIH (Honey I’m Home)*” *Chair* (2002)
embodies all of these clichés, treated in a contemporary,
humorous manner. The title, the slippers and the red
carpet made of neoprene covering the yellow chair, like
the gilding of a throne, highlight the North American
male chauvinist attitude. Another creation by Sportes,
the “*Rocco*” *Mirror*, enables the same man to accurately
appraise the attributes that make him the adulated male
that he is!

Cédric Sportes is a native of Paris and worked for sev-
eral leading agencies before settling in Québec in 1999.
Two years later, he joined with Itai Azerad and Antoine
Laverdière to found the collective Modesdemploi, which
presented his chair and mirror. The public could also view
at that time his rocking coffee table. As for his colleagues,
they proposed wine glasses without feet, an ottoman
that takes shape when filled with dirty laundry, a rug that
metamorphoses into a low table. A couple of years later,
Laverdière also attracted attention for his “*Tupperware*”

Modesdemploi
Design collective established
in Montréal in 2001

Lamps (FIG. 53), obtained by fitting together transparent or
coloured recycled plastic containers.

Modesdemploi was ultimately nothing more than the ad
hoc union of three designers, an isolated event, but one
that nonetheless somewhat shook up the morose design
scene at the beginning of the new millennium and, above
all, highlighted its members’ determination to go beyond
the strictly utilitarian dimension of objects and critically
examine the society around them.



Fig. 53.
Antoine Laverdière
“*Tupperware*” *Lamps*, 2005 and 2003
Cut-out, interlocking Tupperware
and Rubbermaid containers and
electrical device, 27 cm (height) × 12.5 cm
(diameter); 29 cm (height) × 18.5 cm
(diameter)
MNBAQ, purchased with support
from the Canada Council for the Arts
Acquisition Assistance Program (2005.86
and 2005.85)



2004 Agenda

2003

Offset, thermoforming and pad printing, 15.6 × 13.4 × 5 cm MNBAQ, gift of Paprika (2005.103)

Design is an art of constraints. To satisfy the needs of a business and ensure that the customer will be satisfied without jeopardizing quality and integrity is akin to walking a tightrope. But when a graphic design firm takes charge of its own promotion, those are not the stakes. Instead, the budgetary side comes into play, and that becomes a challenge rather than a compromise.

Paprika has made its mark in this field and in many others. Over the years, the Montréal firm has won numerous awards both at home and abroad. Established in 1991, Paprika operates in several fields of graphic design: brand images, identity programs, brand strategies, packaging, brochures, annual reports, posters and exhibition design. Co-founder Louis Gagnon is its guiding spirit and has served most of the time as creative director.

In the graphic design sector, it is sometimes difficult to describe one firm’s work or style in relation to that of its competitors. Let us say that certain firms stand out because of a more exuberant, bolder approach, like Orangetango, while others rely on elegance, refinement, even minimalism. Paprika is undoubtedly more closely aligned with the latter school. Several distinctive features, such as the use of embossing and tone-on-tone, are its hallmarks.

The *2004 Agenda*, designed as a business gift, clearly illustrates its personality. The object was produced with affordable technical means but displayed advanced research and was a sensation at home and abroad. At first glance, it is the agenda’s very pure white cover on which

Paprika

Graphic design firm founded in Montréal in 1991

2004 appears on two lines, obtained by thermoforming, that catches the eye. Then, inside, each day of the year is indicated by a photograph of an object or place that includes the corresponding number (FIG. 54-55). The idea was not new, but its application to the 365 days of the year and its thematic structuring for each month were, on the other hand, quite exceptional.

The invitations and posters created for the design boutique Commissaires, which operated in Montréal from 2005 to 2010, are also noteworthy pieces from Paprika (FIG. 56). They reveal the same qualities: produced with limited means, they display considerable inventiveness, undoubtedly encouraged by the total trust between the artist and the client.



Fig. 54-55. Paprika, *2004 Agenda*, 2003
Inner pages



Fig. 56. Paprika, for Commissaires
“Comme une forêt de fil. Kwangho Lee” Poster, 2008
Silkscreen, 91.5 × 61 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Paprika (2011.41)



“Mamma” Rocking Chair

2005

Fibreglass coated with high-gloss urethane, 94.9 × 66.5 × 116.8 cm MNBAQ, anonymous gift (2006.572)

The rocking chair figures prominently in the imagination of Quebecers and has a strong affective connotation. It is associated essentially with a baby being nursed or rocked to sleep and, at the other end of the spectrum of life, old age.

Several rocking chairs by famous designers have earned a place in the history of contemporary design. One of the most radical chairs is undoubtedly that created in 1967 by the duo Cesare Leonardi and Franca Stagi, a sort of inverted chair whose cradle extends far toward the front instead of the back. You can imagine how difficult it is to use.

Patrick Messier also sought to rethink and update this mythical object. Maternity (and paternity, too, of course) triggered his project. The curves, white colour and uniform finish of the “*Mamma*” *Rocking Chair*, which he produced in 2005, evokes the romantic image often linked to maternity. His precariously balanced design also suggests a pregnant woman’s protruding abdomen. From a technical standpoint, the use of fibreglass ensures that the chair is sufficiently rigid while maintaining the thinnest possible profile. The robust, brilliant plastic finish gives the object its lustre and purity.

Messier was undoubtedly familiar with the rocking chair by the two Italian designers since his chair also evokes another of their achievements, the “*Ribbon Chair*” from 1961. Indeed, Messier’s work also unfurls like a ribbon in space, an impression emphasized by its whiteness and lustre.

Patrick Messier
Montréal, 1974

Another Québec designer just recently tackled this emblematic piece of furniture. For Les Ateliers St-Jean, Guillaume Sasseville proposed his own take on the American Windsor-style rocking chair. He also has successfully transmitted elegance, purity and comfort with his “*Étoffe*” *Rocking Chair* (FIG. 57), whose traditional inspiration, material and name echo North American artisanal know-how: another object to be included in the catalogue of Québec design.



Fig. 57.
Guillaume Sasseville
for Les Ateliers St-Jean
“*Étoffe*” *Rocking Chair*, 2014
White oak, 90 x 84 x 82 cm
MNBAQ, gift of Les Ateliers St-Jean
(2015.913)



Into the Forest

2006

Heat-shaped glass, chokecherry branches and copper wire, 122 × 82 × 176 cm

MNBAQ, purchased through the Fonds d'acquisition des employé(e)s du Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (2010.217)

Clothing and, more specifically, the dress, is a recurring theme in contemporary art. For Tanya Lyons, who is interested in the subject, the garment can be a “shell or a shield that attracts or repels those around us.” Several of her wall hangings or pieces suspended in space display dresses and, above all, kimonos sprinkled with heat-shaped glass components (Fig. 58). Other works are self-supporting, sometimes draped on a mannequin, sometimes comprising a steel structure or, as is the case here, branches. Chokecherry branches also appear often in her creations: “I use these objects as a focal point, taking them out of their natural environment to draw attention to them,” she notes. These bits of nature collected during her peregrinations in the vicinity of her workshop give life to her works and add colour, texture and familiar accents to the glass items she attaches to them. In her piece entitled *Into the Forest* (2006), the delicate glass leaves attached to the branches are like luminous ghosts from a nature that is partly sacrificed for the benefit of culture. The translucent leaves embellish, in particular, the bodice of the dress, like a heart crown. But the branches instead form a cage, a frequent image in the artist’s production.

Lyons’s *Into the Forest* is a product of sculpture in a field related to “arts and crafts.” We might wonder here how the sculpture of a glassblower distinguishes itself from that of a sculptor who also uses glass in his works, in the same way as metal or wood, and who relies on a “crafts-person” to assist him. Does the difference stem solely from the classic sociological question of the circuit of production, distribution and consumption of the work? Lyons was trained in the realm of glass, her works are exhibited in venues associated with glass and are collected by art lovers and museums interested in the discipline. Or does the difference reflect more fundamentally that glass is part of her work, a part of its essence, rather than a simple technical component, one material just like any other? Lyons’s aim is not exclusive to the art form that she practises, but this art form allows her to express her ideas and even to guide her approach in an

Tanya Lyons

Barry’s Bay, Ontario, 1973

original manner, with a sensitivity and technical possibilities that are specific to this means of expression and that even define, in part, the artist’s perspective. Heat-shaped translucent glass melds subtlety and ambivalence. It has formal flexibility although it is rigid, sturdiness although it is fragile, considerable visual presence although it is transparent, and brilliance although it only partly reflects light. Placed here and there on this structure of twisted branches, the glass has a spectral presence that speaks of life and death.



Fig. 58.
Tanya Lyons
Survival, 2014
Blowtorched glass, pillowcase, lace and paper, 107 × 81.5 × 10 cm
MNBAQ, purchased through the bequest of Louise and Laurette D'Amours (2014.284)



Rita’s Living Room

2006

Designed by Karine Corbeil,
Stéphane Halmaï-Voisard
and Francis Rollin
Screenprinted
plywood and Plexiglas,
244.5 × 308.5 × 308.1 cm

“Here is the typology of a Québec living room, with its mix of styles and influences taken from all sorts of trends throughout the years, with its archetypes both spacious and ornamental. Far from the modern living rooms of the condos-style-loft-trends that one sees in the pages of hip magazines, this living room, perhaps yours, is it really design? Does it deserve that qualifier? ” This is how Rita, an artists’ group comprising at the time two graphic designers and a designer of objects and environments, define this living room in a text posted outside the construction.

A small room with papered walls including two entrances, *Rita’s Living Room* (2006) is furnished with a sofa with two cushions, a coffee table, two occasional tables, a wardrobe decorated with various objects, a TV set on another table, a pendant lamp, pictures and a rug. All the components, except for the Plexiglas lamp, are made of rough plywood. Each one occupies roughly the space of the object represented by monochrome green silkscreen printing on the visible surfaces. Accordingly, a table consists of a cube whose printed sides display the curved profile of a vaguely Queen Anne-style table. The TV encloses a “real” television set that broadcasts a video which presents the trio and its approach in an unrestrained manner.

Rita

Multidisciplinary workshop established
in Montréal in 2004

Through the living room, the artists’ group is advocating “the cohabitation of a two-dimensional and three-dimensional universe because it seems natural for Rita that graphic design, the design of objects and event design are interconnected.” [TRANSLATION] The creation of an intimate space, the deconstruction of the object in terms of volume and surface (in a palette that is, what is more, confined to a single colour) and the cultural reference to the Québec universe give rise to an entertaining experience. Whoever enters the living room is immediately aware of being in an environment that is at once familiar and strange. He recognizes each object, both real and at the same time the bearer of its own image. Is the living room a work of design? The answer to the question posed by the three designers is, of course, yes, and it even achieves a mise en abyme of the design.



Fig. 59.
Rita
Rita's Living Room, 2006 (details)



Circle

2011

Blown and etched glass,
25 cm (height) × 11.5 cm
(diameter)

MNBAQ, purchased through
a contribution from the Conseil
des métiers d'art du Québec
(2011.86)

For thousands of years, stories with a moral meaning have been illustrated on objects. Often, through its surface that unfolds on more than one plane, the object makes it possible to extend the narration and to reveal the action in time and space.

Mathieu Grodet makes use of the tradition of glass in a very contemporary manner and skilfully combines it with the world of drawing. Sometimes he etches the surface of stemmed glasses in traditional shapes that he blows himself. Sometimes he shapes tiny objects such as bones or figurines with a blowtorch, which he attaches to the surface of drawings on paper. His creations are tinged with humour. They propose dense scenes that criticize society's failings: overconsumption, the ascendance of capitalism, environmental problems, and so on.

While most of the themes that the artist broaches are topical and his compositions clearly draw on the aesthetics of contemporary comic strips, Grodet draws inspiration from the past. The shape of his glasses comes from the repertory of 18th- and 19th-century glassworks (Fig. 61-62). He also refers to the tradition of Jacobite glassware, engraved with symbols and portraits that revealed the political sympathies of English royalists in the 17th and 18th centuries. As for the individuals drawn by Grodet, they belong to different periods and cultures. The *Circle* glass (2011) includes on its nub, a spherical bulge on the stem of the foot, a quotation from the artist, performer and writer Jean-Louis Costes: “Welcomed by my drunk ancestors, I sit down in the ring of fire. The elders close my eyes.” [TRANSLATION] The circle is that of life and death. Grodet illustrates it on the chalice of his glass in three main steps. Birth is represented by a fetus linked to a cow that resembles a cave painting and also evokes the myth of Io, the mistress of Zeus. A man with multiple arms, a sort of Shiva holding a chainsaw, a soccer ball, a bottle, a syringe and other unusual objects, embodies maturity. The myth of Prometheus, condemned by Zeus to be chained to a rock on Mount Caucasus, where every day an eagle devoured his liver, which then regrew

Mathieu Grodet

Orléans, France, 1977

every night, evokes the end of life. Let us add, to come full circle, that it was Hercules, a descendant of Io, who, in the end, freed Prometheus, as the latter had predicted to Io when they met on Mount Caucasus. On the base of the glass, three vignettes represent the same cycle applied to civilization: an idyllic landscape (birth), an urban view of skyscrapers (maturity) and a scene showing an automobile abandoned in nature (death).

Some will say that, in the end, they are just stories told around a glass...



Fig. 61.
Mathieu Grodet
Shit, 2011
Blown and etched glass,
20.8 cm (height) × 11.9 cm
(diameter)
MNBAQ, purchased through a
contribution from the Conseil des
métiers d'art du Québec (2011.88)



Fig. 62.
Mathieu Grodet
Nuclear Meat, 2011
Blown and etched glass,
23.7 cm (height) × 10.7 cm
(diameter)
MNBAQ, purchased through a
contribution from the Conseil des
métiers d'art du Québec (2011.89)



Disquiet Luxurians

2013

Stone chisels and brass stop, feldspar ring and glass bell, three feldspar objects and uncut feldspar specimen, silk chiffon boiler suit and seven images of the performance (digital inkjet prints on Moab foil paper); variable dimensions

MNBAQ, purchase (2015.917.01 to 2015.917.09)

Luxury is a very relative notion. Diamonds, emeralds and rubies are, after all, stones. What sets them apart is their brilliance and rarity. The luxury industry is lucrative but ever so discriminatory. Émilie F. Grenier asks the question: “How one can design for the 1% without going to hell?”

Her creation *Disquiet Luxurians*, comprising a performance and a series of objects, is, as it were, her exercise of redemption, the artistic manifestation of her anxiety over the phenomenon of luxury. She suggests turning the industry’s production and consumption chain upside down. First, she chose as the material for her objects plagioclase feldspar, a common, “worthless” stone. Feldspar makes up nearly 60% of the earth’s crust and is used to manufacture industrial products. Then, dressed in a silk chiffon suit, she collected the mineral ore using brass tools, increasing the difficulty of the task, which she accomplished in accordance with a ritual recorded in the photographs (Fig. 63). Some of the samples collected are carved into geometric volumes: a cylinder, a cone and a cube. A piece of feldspar left uncut, another carved into a base to hold a glass bell, and an Art Deco-inspired ring round out the grouping. The transformation was also a delicate, complex operation, since feldspar is a flaky stone that is hard to shape.

Émilie F. Grenier
Montréal, 1983

Grenier defines herself as a designer of narrative experiences. She uses different disciplines of design to create narratives that allow her to interact with the public. However, *Disquiet Luxurians* is more in keeping with performance. The action and the attendant artifacts demand observation and reflection on consumer society. The work proposes a reversal of the contemporary trend to more highly value the rarity of a material to the detriment of the know-how necessary for its extraction and processing.



Fig. 63.
Émilie F. Grenier
Images of the Performance, from
the *Disquiet Luxurians* series, 2013
Digital inkjet prints on Moab foil paper,
43.1 cm × 28.7 cm (each)
MNBAQ, purchase (2015.917.09
and 2015.917.06)



Published in conjunction with the launch of the decorative arts and design collection in the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec’s Pierre Lassonde Pavilion, which opened on June 24, 2016.

Curator : Paul Bourassa
Coordinator of the exhibition:
 Denis Castonguay, exhibition’s curator, MNBAQ
Publishing: Catherine Morency, associate publisher, MNBAQ
Editing and correction: Jane Jackel
English translation : Terrance Hughes
Iconographic Documentation and Copyright:
 Lina Doyon et Mélanie Beaupré, MNBAQ
Graphic Design: Feed
Printing: Deschamps Impression

Photo Credits
MNBAQ/Ildra Labrie, apart from:
MNBAQ: fig. 15, p. 14, 20, 44, 46; MNBAQ/ Patrick Altman: fig. 8, fig. 9, p. 17, 22, 24, 26-27, 34-35, 38, 39, 43, 47, 49, 52, 55-56-57, 58, 72, 77, 81, 85; MNBAQ/ Jean-Guy Kérouac: fig. 2, fig. 4, fig. 11, fig. 14, p. 15, 19, 33, 58, 59, 66-67, 74-75, 78-79, 82, 83; MNBAQ/Denis Legendre: p. 28, 68, 73, 82, 90-91; MNBAQ/ Pierre-Luc Dufour: p. 44; Michel Brault: p. 16; Yale Joel: p. 18; Roger La Roche: p. 30-31; Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal / Christine Guest: p. 36; René Delbuguet: p. 38; David Olivier: p. 42; François Brunelle: p. 50; Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal: p. 70; Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal / Gilles Rivest: p. 76; Tristan Thomson: p. 92-93.

Cover: Modesdemploi (designed by Cédric Sportes), “*HIH (Honey I’m Home)*” *Chair*, 2002

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The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is a government corporation funded by the ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec.

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ISBN: 978-2-551-25862-8

Diffusion and distribution
Diffusion Dimédia
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