

Press release

New exhibition

From October 28, 2021 to January 9, 2022

LEMOYNE. Offside

A season in blue, white, red, and much more!



Parc des Champs-de-Bataille
Québec (Québec) G1R 5H3

418 643-2150
1 866 220-2150

mnbaq.org

Press Contact

Linda Tremblay
Media Relations Officer

418 644-6460, ext. 5532
linda.tremblay@mnbaq.org

Québec City, Wednesday, October 27, 2021 ☒ Québec art has the place of honour this fall at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ). From October 28, 2021 to January 9, 2022, a bold, unifying human adventure awaits visitors with *LEMOYNE. Offside*, a significant exhibition devoted to the unclassifiable Serge Lemoyne (1941-1998), a seminal artist in the history of Québec art.

Lemoyne, or the art of being in the vanguard

Lemoyne is credited with shaking the Québec art scene and contributing significantly to a basic calling into question of the language of the visual arts in Québec in the 1960s and in subsequent decades.

He was a multidisciplinary artist before his time and the instigator of the first happenings. He was also one of the first Québec artists to lay the foundation of practice that was more liberating than intellectual. Following the example of New York artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, and Allan Kaprow, whose work he admired, starting in the

1960s he ventured into the pop universe and became interested in participatory art and collective creation.

He defended with unwavering conviction the accessibility of art for everyone, a mission to which he devoted himself throughout his career spanning nearly four decades. In addition to his social commitment and the identity-related scope of his practice, much of his art developed around facets of his daily life.

“We are blue-white-red. It’s our culture, our history. It’s the French flag, the British flag, the American flag, which have also played an important role in our history. Blue-white-red is the red of Canada and the blue of Québec. The Montreal Canadiens’ uniform is highly symbolic for me.”

– Serge Lemoyne, 1992

A period in blue, white, and red

In light of his determination to democratize the arts, Serge Lemoyne focused for 10 years on the theme of hockey, which for him represented more than a sport. It is the phenomenon par excellence that affects the greatest number of people, regardless of background: intellectuals, workers, blue-collar, white-collar, and red-collar workers, and brothers of the Sacred Heart. It was in conjunction with a performance organized in London, Ontario in 1969 during which Lemoyne transformed the 20/20 Gallery into a hockey rink that the “blue, white, red” cycle inspired by the colours of the Montreal Canadiens, his favourite hockey team, was born, and continued until 1979. The exhibition includes the following outstanding works in the series: *Slizzler rouge* (1969), *Sans titre* (1975), *Bleu, blanc, rouge continu 1, 2, 3* (1976), *Lafleur Stardust* (1975), *Béliveau* (1975) and, obviously, *Dryden* (1975).



A unique exploit

The thematic exhibition presents an outstanding summary of Lemoyne’s output, at once playful and forceful. The MNBAQ has achieved a genuine exploit by assembling nearly 200 works and 100 archives. No fewer than 37 private lenders and 15 institutions, including the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the National Gallery of Canada, the Musée des beaux-arts de Sherbrooke, and the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, have facilitated the organization of this major exhibition.

It celebrates a larger-than-life artist and highlights his craving for total freedom expressed through all forms of creativity and a dissident attitude toward art and traditional arts and cultural venues, as reflected in his numerous ephemeral, interactive and occasionally subversive interventions.

The Acton Vale house, or the disturbing fluid work

Lemoyne also used his home in Acton Vale as a source of creation. The family home, in which his grandparents, parents, sisters and he lived, is central to his approach. It sustained his pictorial production and became the raw material for sculptures comprising assemblages of items taken from it. Through the initiatives that he undertook there, Lemoyne pursued his ideal of abolishing the boundaries between art and life.

The MNBAQ presents Ken Dryden’s mythical mask for the first time

For the very first time, the MNBAQ has the privilege to present a mythical object at the *LEMOYNE. Offside* exhibition: the protective mask of Ken Dryden, the legendary Montreal Canadiens goalie who contributed to six of the team’s Stanley Cup victories in the 1970s. The elite athlete is also the subject of *Dryden*, a well-known huge painting by Serge Lemoyne produced in 1975.

A hockey player, lawyer, politician and author, Ken Dryden has received numerous awards and honours, including the Order of Canada, in 2013. Above all, he is celebrated for his performance as the Montreal Canadiens goalie, before he retired in 1978. In an interview with Sylvie Lacerte, art

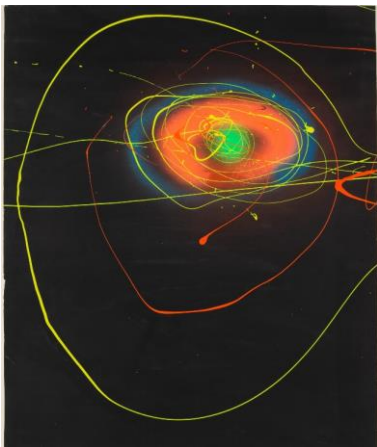


historian and independent curator, which appears in the publication that accompanies the exhibition, Ken Dryden recounts his connection with Serge Lemoyne’s work, his initial contact with the painting, his relationship with art, and the political context in which he developed with the Montreal Canadiens. Above all, the interview reveals how an artist who was a hockey enthusiast who sought to build bridges between sports and art was inspired by a top athlete to create an emblematic work in the history of art in Québec.

Essential works

The exhibition seeks to reflect a career imbued with freedom, creativity, and subversion. It focuses on key themes (Artistic Face-Off, Cosmos, Tributes, Triangle, Trick Moves, Painting Out of Bounds, and Outside the Frame) that reveal outstanding works.

Some highlights: *Dryden* (1975) shows the celebrated goalie Ken Dryden, captured in action, in a tight close-up of his mask that is akin to sports photography; *Sans titre* from the *Cosmos* series (1966), is a drawing produced with fluorescent pigment under ultraviolet light that evokes a cosmic aesthetic and a futuristic spirit; *Trilogie d’un triangle noir* (1987) is an immense, impressive triptych comprising three triangular structures, each one dedicated to one of his artistic influences, including the Plasticiens, the Automatistes, and Christo; *Intersection jaune sur fond noir* (1982), in which a big “X” springs from the canvas and appears to radically affirm a new orientation after the blue-white-red series; *Position, trace et rigueur* (1982), dating from the 1980s, embodies Lemoyne’s twofold artistic identity as an Automatiste and a Plasticien painter; *Journal, tome 1* (1994), is the wall of a rented apartment in Montréal, painted on both sides, that he cut out when he moved; *Bleu, de la série Noms* (1983), which is part of the *Le triste sort réservé aux originaux* exhibition presented in 1984 at the Michel Tétrault Gallery, one of Lemoyne’s events that most disturbed artistic conventions since the artist decided to only project slides of the works and a video in which he is seen painting them, instead of proposing a traditional hanging; *Fenêtre à la balustrade* (1995), made up of fragments of his house in Acton Vale, reused in 1995, in works midway between sculpture and painting; and, lastly, *Planche à repasser [Cap Canaverall]*, (1963), a painted ironing board, a common object, that Lemoyne raised to the status of an artwork and disturbs its operation, thereby blurring conventional criteria



that come under the “fine arts.” This overview that is sure to strike the imagination.

Brilliant staging that is worthy of Lemoyne’s work

Bold staging was called for to pay tribute to Lemoyne’s unbridled imaginative universe. As soon as visitors enter the Grand Hall of the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion, *Sans titre* (1970) will quickly engage them. The giant-format work is reproduced on the ground and in the oval shape of an outdoor skating rink. From the outset, it plunges visitors into hockey fever, a passion very dear to the artist, before exploring the space devoted to his *Blue, white, red* period. Moreover, the two table hockey games, excerpts from the first hockey game between the Canadiens and the Nordiques, and the archives focusing on the *Slap shot* (1972) and *Party d’étoiles* (1973) events, are sure to delight interaction fans. Otherwise, the room lit with black light will surprise visitors and enable them to appreciate the *Cosmos* series, works produced with fluorescent pigment. Large-format photographs of Lemoyne, the profusion of archives, the spirit of the Acton Value house, with its pieces of walls and balustrades, and fascinating documentaries will round out this solid, intense adventure.



A two-part audio tour

To enrich visitors’ experience of *LEMOYNE. Offside*, the audio guide is the ideal tool to delve into the heart of the practice of the enfant terrible of the visual arts. In addition to broaching the seminal *Blue, white, red* period, the audio tour seeks to highlight the artist’s imposing multifaceted work through reflections drawn from archives and his contemporaries’ interpretations of formal aspects and the values that sustained the period and particularly sustained Lemoyne.

Montreal Canadiens’ fans will have the pleasure of following the audio tour by discovering stops commented by sports broadcaster and humourist Kevin Raphael. His vignettes, *Les mises en jeu de Kevin Raphael*, lend a humorous note to this major exhibition and shed new light on Lemoyne’s work.



Visitors can download the audio guide, available in French and in English, on their cell phones. To listen:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-426041794-859549171/sets/lemoyne-hors-jeu-anglais?si=obda4775f2554ccaa2d8a3fadc37924b>

Credits

The exhibition *LEMOYNE. Offside* is organized by the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec.

Project Director

Annie GAUTHIER
Director of Exhibitions and
International Relations, MNBAQ

Curatorship

Eve-Lyne BEAUDRY
Curator of Contemporary Art
(1950-2000), MNBAQ

Management

Marie-Hélène AUDET
Head of Mediation, MNBAQ

Graphic Design

Marc-André ROY

Yasmée FAUCHER
Head of Museography, MNBAQ

Gallery Mediation and

Audioguide

Valérie ALLARD, MNBAQ
Jacinthe OTIS, MNBAQ

Catherine GAUMOND
Head of Collections, MNBAQ

Design

Jean HAZEL
Marie-France GRONDIN
Designers, MNBAQ

*The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is a state corporation funded by the
Gouvernement du Québec.*

Québec 

LEMOYNE. Offside
Pierre Lassonde Pavilion of the MNBAQ
October 28, 2021 to January 9, 2022

INFORMATION: 418 643-2150 or 1 866 220-2150 / mnbaq.org

Page 1 – Photos from left to right: Serge Lemoyne, *Dryden*, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 224 x 346 x 5 cm. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Purchase, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' Volunteer Association Fund (2000.8.1-2) © Serge Lemoyne Estate / SOCAN (2020). Photo: MMFA, Jean-François Brière // Serge Lemoyne, *Blue*, from the "Names" series, 1983. Acrylic on canvas, 204 x 137 x 6.5 cm. Lavalin Collection of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (A 92 161 P1) © Serge Lemoyne Estate / SOCAN (2021). Photo: MACM, Richard-Max Tremblay

Page 2 – Photo: Serge Lemoyne, *House No. 9*, from the "House" series, 1985. Acrylic on canvas, 137.5 x 228.5 cm. Janine Carreau and Pierre Gauvreau Collection © Serge Lemoyne Estate / SOCAN (2021). Photo: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie

Page 3 – Photos from top to bottom: Serge Lemoyne, *Self-portrait*, 1988-1989. Acrylic and photograph on canvas, 137.5 x 101.5 cm. MNBAQ. Gift of Yves Laroche (2013.101) © Serge Lemoyne Estate / SOCAN (2021). Photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre // Ken Dryden's protective mask. Photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre

Page 4 – Photos from top to bottom: Serge Lemoyne, *Untitled*, from the "Cosmos" series, 1966. Acrylic and fluorescent aerosol paint on paper, 72 x 61 cm. Maurice Bourassa Collection © Serge Lemoyne Estate / SOCAN (2021). Photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre // Serge Lemoyne, *Yellow Intersection on Black Ground*, 1982. Acrylic on canvas, 209 x 147.7 cm. MNBAQ. Gift of Yves Laroche and Lise Gauthier (2018.355). Conservation treatment by the Centre de conservation du Québec © Serge Lemoyne Estate / SOCAN (2021). Photo: © Centre de conservation du Québec, ministère de la Culture et des Communications / Jacques Beardsell

Page 5 – Photos from top to bottom: Serge Lemoyne, *Have You Seen My Skates?*, 1990. Acrylic and skates on plywood, 167.5 x 213.5 cm. Salvatore Fratino Collection © Serge Lemoyne Estate / SOCAN (2021). Photo: Guy L'Heureux // Kevin Raphael, sports commentator and humorist. Photo: © Marie-Ève Rompré

Page 8 – Photo: Pierre McCann, photographer. *Children from the La-Brecque School painting the walls of Serge Lemoyne's artwork-house. Acton Vale, March 11, 1994*. Fonds d'archives et collections de Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

Page 9 – Photo: Serge Lemoyne, *Ironing Board (Cape Canaveral)*, 1963. Oil and enamel paint on wooden ironing board with cotton batting and fabric, 243.7 x 48.5 x 8 cm. National Gallery of Canada, purchase (39798) © Serge Lemoyne Estate / SOCAN (2021). Photo: NGC

Page 10 – Photo: Ed Heal, photographer. *Serge Lemoyne painting during the opening of his exhibition at the 20-20 Gallery*, October 28, 1969. Archives and Special Collections, Western University

Page 11 – Photo: Serge Lemoyne, *Station II*, Tribute to the Automatistes, from the "Black Triangle Trilogy," 1987. Acrylic on canvas and synthetic carpet, cotton rope, nylon rope and thumbtacks mounted on expanded polystyrene over a metal framework, 350 x 500 x 30.5 cm. Louis Lacerte Collection © Serge Lemoyne Estate / SOCAN (2021). Photo: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie

Page 12 – Photos from top to bottom: Serge Lemoyne, *Journal, vol. 1*, 1994. Acrylic and collage on plasterboard, 188 x 417 cm. Musée des beaux-arts de Sherbrooke (2014.8.2.7.1-7) © Serge Lemoyne Estate / SOCAN (2021). Photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre // Serge Lemoyne, *Window with Balustrade*, 1995. Acrylic on wood and glass, 206 x 373.5 x 32 cm. Louis Lacerte Collection © Serge Lemoyne Estate / SOCAN (2021). Photo: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie

Page 13 – Photo: Serge Lemoyne, *Red Studio*, from the "Prelude No 1: Tribute to Matisse" series, 1996-1997. Acrylic on plywood, 263 x 327 cm. MNBAQ. Gift of Marie-Ève Bolduc © Serge Lemoyne Estate / SOCAN (2021). Photo: MNBAQ, Pierre-Luc Dufour



Chronology of Serge Lemoyne's life

1941

Serge Lemoyne was born on June 13, 1941, in Acton Vale.

1958

He left Acton Vale at the age of 17 to study at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal (1958-1960).

1960

He was expelled from the École des beaux-arts because he constantly refused to abide by certain academic requirements.

1961

Lemoyne returned to Acton Vale and installed his studio in the attic of the family home. He maintained it throughout the 1960s and travelled between Acton Vale and Montréal.

European art, surrealism, tachisme, and informal art were his main sources of influence until 1963.

1962

Lemoyne produced works that drew inspiration from European lyric abstraction or American action painting. He exhibited his works in bistros and coffeehouses in Montréal.

1963

In New York, Lemoyne discovered Andy Warhol's work and the work of Allan Kaprow on the happening, as well as the combine paintings and photographic transfers on canvas of Robert Rauschenberg. He began to incorporate everyday objects into his works.

The Bar des Arts in Montréal, an exhibition and free expression site for young artists from various disciplines directed by Lemoyne, was inaugurated.

1964

With a diverse group of artists assembled under the title *Nouvel Âge*, he organized the *Semaine "A,"* a multidisciplinary event for the general public that sought to overcome artists' isolation and foster exchanges.

In November, Lemoyne occupied a window at the Monument-National on Boulevard Saint-Laurent. The environment comprised various objects, some of them painted, others assembled, thus creating uncommon combinations.

1965

Serge Lemoyne founded *L'Horloge*, a multidisciplinary collective creation group that produced happenings before audiences in bars and parks.

In late 1965, several members of *L'Horloge* and new members grouped together as *Le Zirmate*, a group devoted to a cosmic aesthetic in a futuristic spirit.

1966

For the exhibition *Présence des jeunes* at the Musée d'art contemporain in Montréal, Lemoyne presented a playful environment bathed in black light in which games painted with phosphorescent pigments were made available to visitors.

Lemoyne produced the "Cosmos," works produced with fluorescent pigment on a black background.

1967

Lemoyne devoted more time to performance and happenings. At the Montreal World Fair (*Expo 67*), he produced 50 public pictorial performances. Lemoyne also designed the environment of the Youth Pavilion's integral outdoor discotheque.

1968

Lemoyne devoted himself to participatory art by producing 20 events that invited people to express themselves and take part in cultural vitality.

He participated in the organization of the *Opération Déclat*, which sought to foster reflection on art's contribution to society and the artist's role in the Québec community.



1969

Lemoyne produced the “Blue, white, red” event, a live painting performance spanning five days at the 20/20 Gallery in London, Ontario. It was then that the artist undertook to restrict his chromatic palette to the colours blue, white, and red.

1970

Lemoyne won the first prize of the Concours artistiques de la province de Québec.

He stood in the provincial election in the Bagot riding under the banner of the Parti poétique québécois and received 38 votes.

1972

Lemoyne organized the “Slap Shot” event at the Galerie Véhicule Art, where visitors shot pucks at a goalie.

1973

Lemoyne produced the “Party d’étoiles” event at the Galerie Média, a table hockey tournament open to everyone.

1974-1979

Lemoyne confined his palette to the Montreal Canadiens’ emblematic colours. The iconography of the team’s uniform gradually faded through this series and only preserved the colours.

1978

Lemoyne purchased the house where he was born and returned to live there. Over the years, the house underpinned pictorial experiences and the site of several collective creation events.

1979

Lemoyne publicly announced the end of the “Blue, white, red” period at the Saint-Jean-Baptiste parade in Acton Vale.

He stood as a candidate for the Parti Rhinocéros.

1980

Véhicule (Montréal) presented an exhibition that took stock of his pictorial research in blue, white, and red.



1981

Lemoyne flew to Asia with 16 members of the Association des graveurs du Québec for a 60-day residency.

His daughter Marie-Ève was born on September 2.

1982

The painter's chromatic palette burst in compositions that combined the triangle, stains, and drippings.

1984

The exhibition *Le triste sort réservé aux originaux* was presented at the Michel Tétrault Gallery. Instead of being hung on picture rails, the photographed works were projected in turn on the wall using a slide carousel.

Lemoyne again stood as a candidate for the Parti Rhinocéros in the federal election and received 998 votes.

1985

The house in Acton Vale became an immense canvas that Lemoyne transformed as he saw fit. He repainted on canvas certain details of the residence work, an approach that he pursued until 1989.



1987

Creation of the “Trilogie d’un triangle noir,” an immense triptych comprising three triangular structures, each one dedicated to one of his artistic influences: *Hommage à Christo*, *Hommage aux Automatistes* and *Hommage aux Plasticiens*.

He then produced 33 small triangular assemblages that he grouped together as “Hommage aux artistes vivants.”

1988

The Musée du Québec held the first institutional retrospective devoted to the artist.

1989

Lemoyne was one of five artists to represent Canada at the first Jeux de la Francophonie in Morocco.

He participated in his capacity as an artist at the Symposium de la jeune peinture au Canada de Baie-Saint-Paul.

He again painted his house, using black as the background colour, enhanced with parallel yellow, red or white strips, which were then transposed to canvas.

1990

Lemoyne won the Prix Louis-Philippe-Hébert.

1991

For safety reasons, the Municipality of Acton Vale enjoined Serge Lemoyne to demolish part of his house. In this context, he conducted the Opération “M” during which a substantial section of the house was carefully cut up with the help of local firefighters. The fragments obtained were stored then reused in 1995 in sculptural works.

1992

A grant from the Ministère des Affaires culturelles enabled Lemoyne to live in New York for 10 months. The Keen Gallery in SoHo presented an exhibition of his works.



The Municipality of Action sued Serge Lemoyne and demanded that his house be demolished for aesthetic and safety reasons.

1993

Lemoyne produced a vast work entitled *L’art est un jeu* at the Casino de Montréal. The work was dismantled in 2011.



1994

The Superior Court of Québec decided in favour of Lemoyne in the litigation with the Municipality of Acton Vale and granted his house the status of a “work of art.”

Lemoyne carried out the Opération “Œuvres en direct” on his house, during which he invited artists to intervene in the house.

1997

Lemoyne completed “Prélude no 1. Hommage à Matisse” comprising 500 small wood panels painted with acrylic, assembled in seven chromatic dominances.

— **B**
M —
N —
— **Q**

He also produced 40 works that make up the “Trous noirs” series, the last series painted before his death.

1998

In June, the artist learned that he had a generalized cancer with brain metastases and that he only had three more weeks to live. He died on July 12 at the age of 57.



General Information

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