

Illusions Are Real

The Manif d'art 10 central exhibition – The Quebec City Biennial at the MNBAQ

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Québec City, Wednesday, February 16, 2022 ✕ **Manif d'art 10 – The Quebec City Biennial**, produced in collaboration with the **Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ)**, is back at last following a forced one-year hiatus. From **February 19 to April 24, 2022**, the MNBAQ will present the central exhibition of **Manif d'art**, now in its 10th year, focusing on the theme *Illusions Are Real*.

Both organizations are committed to the arts community and have succeeded in the heart of winter in creating genuine synergy and assembling the best contemporary art. This unique event raises the profile of Québec City, a World Heritage Site, and affords an ideal opportunity to discover distinguished contemporary artists from at home and abroad.

Guest Curator Steven Matijcio's comment on the theme chosen: Illusions Are Real



The 10th edition of the Manif d'Art Biennial extends across a multitude of venues, spaces and environments across Québec City – each one animating the core thesis, while also extending its questions and musings. *Illusions are Real* meditates upon the proliferating amount of artifice that inhabits our lives today, from synthetic flavours, altered photographs and viral conspiracies to political rhetoric, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, deepfakes and the concocted identities we live online. And while the history of half-truths is nearly as long as humankind itself, the acceleration, expansion and ubiquity of deception in the age of social media has led some to call this the “post-truth” era. The Manif d'Art Biennial navigates this disorienting terrain from a variety of perspectives, congregating artists from around the world who captivantly build and break illusions to consider both the seduction and danger of this growing phenomenon.

The central exhibition of the Québec City Biennial proposed by the MNBAQ assembles the work of 21 artists who explore varied, ambiguous wonders in the form of destabilizing abstractions, physical transformations, representations of animals, spectral presences, advancing technologies, and stupefying curiosities that waver between reality and manipulation. With the sheer volume of simulation and misinformation that colonizes everyday being, illusions have an increasing level of impact on shaping our perceptions and feeding our desires. Magicians, mythical beasts, oscillating surfaces, doppelgangers and ever-changing appearances nourish our inquisitiveness and challenge our orientation, as well as how we navigate a world where real and virtual are interwoven. In this perilous, but no less engrossing arena, the artists in *Illusions are Real* tickle our imaginations and admonish those who are too easily lured, implicitly asking who, and *how*, we trust today.

When artists amuse themselves by mystifying the public

The MNBAQ has assembled 100 works by 20-odd international, Canadian, and Québec artists grouped together by Steven Matijcio under a fascinating, mysterious, topical theme. Among the noteworthy artists exhibited in the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion, mention should be made of **Pierre Huyghe** (France), **Gillian Wearing** (England), **Titus Kaphar** (United States), **Gabriel Lester** (Netherlands), **Tauba Auerbach** (United States), **Tony Tasset** (United States), **Nicolas Baier** (Canada), **Michel de Broin** (Canada), **Brian Jungen** (Canada), **Karine Payette** (Canada), **Annie Baillargeon** (Canada) and **Karen Tam** (Canada).

The assembled works will afford visitors unforgettable experiences, ranging from the art of wonder that is at once ambivalent, fascinating, and disturbing, to the seemingly innocuous illusions that inundate our daily lives. The interplay of the *Illusions Are Real* exhibition has never been as thrilling.

Through a unique circuit in the temporary exhibition rooms of the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion, the public's pleasure will be twofold since in addition to marvelling at the fascinating works, visitors can discover artists whose artistic approaches are truly remarkable.



Seminal works from abroad

Seminal works include French artist Pierre Huyghe's *A Journey That Wasn't*, which proposes a cinematographic amalgamation in which reality and its reconstitution become indistinguishable. Images of an Antarctic expedition overlap images of a concert on the Central Park skating rink. At the boundary of the documentary, his film examines the distinctions between fiction and reality under a title that gives the impression that nothing of the sort ever happened.



American artist Tony Tasset dissects the American dream and its many mirages. He recovers emblematic images from the mass media and produces striking caricatures. *Snowman with Coke Can Mouth and Broom* is a doctored imitation of the snowman, an iconic popular art form.

Dancer and *Heavy Halter* by Sascha Braunig, a Canadian artist who lives and works in the United States, is also noteworthy. The artist amuses herself with luminosity in a sensorial approach to painting. The hollowed-out silhouettes in her works, reduced to thin luminous frameworks, appear to participate in an almost carnal game of hide-and-seek on the stage.

British Columbian artist Brian Jungen draws inspiration from traditions in his *Dane-zaa* heritage to transform mass-produced objects into whimsical sculptures. He manipulates objects by deconstructing and joining them together in such a way that they remain recognizable while ensuring that the new shapes allude to Indigenous material cultures.

Another outstanding work, American artist Tom Friedman's installation *Open Black Box* pushes the limits of perception and rationality by gravitating towards the fantastic. An immense cube remains partially invisible, which reflects the unconscious logic of perception that completes what is absent.

American artist Titus Kaphar masterfully produces faithful copies of historic works before cutting, crumpling, enveloping, shredding, twisting, tearing, or scribbling on them. The artist seeks to rewrite history and thus brings to light in a stunning work perspectives that the great canons of art have overlooked.

Seminal works from Québec

Data by Québec artist Nicolas Baier at first glance might pass for a big photograph of a lush spruce forest crossed by a stream. In fact, the landscape is entirely virtual, an optical illusion of disconcerting verisimilitude. The exhibition also includes the Montréal artist's first video.

In the three glass aquariums filled with translucent turquoise liquid in the work by Montréal artist Karine Payette, the constant toing and froing of a mysterious creature arouses a certain anxiety. Payette's installation *À perpétuité* clouds perceptions and brings visitors into contact with an unknown species that is an object of curiosity.





Salon chinois - White Gold, a new installation by Montréal artist Karen Tam, comments on the passing fad among Westerners for Chinese porcelain, also called white gold, and evokes the private living rooms formerly found in the homes of European nobility. However, the installation comprises, by way of an example, genuine artefacts and facsimiles from the MNBAQ's collection and fake decorative objects created by the artist, revealing in passing the violence to which can lead simplistic, caricatural, dehumanizing representations of the Other.

Artist Karine Fréchette, a native of Montréal, paints to fold the surface of her paintings, embedding in them an energy in which a spatial experience plays out between a psychedelic aesthetic and allusions to the screen and to the waves that surround us. *Sillages 6 (Le tableau de Leipzig)* is one of these outstanding paintings.



Lastly, Montrealer Maskull Lasserre infuses ordinary objects with a certain vitality by creating an illusion of mutability. In the sculpture *Conscience*, palpable tension emanates from a suspended steel skull subject, to our great surprise, to the invisible forces of magnetism.

Credits

The exhibition *Manif d'art 10 - The Quebec City Biennial. Illusions Are Real* if organized by the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec in collaboration with Manif d'art - The Quebec City Biennial.

Curatorship

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Biennial

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Guest Curator

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From February 19, to April 24, 2022**

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Page 1 – Top to bottom and left to right: Nicolas Baier, *Data*, 2016. Inkjet print, acrylic, steel, 106.7 x 172.7 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Blouin Division Gallery, Montreal. // Karine Payette, *Espaces sans espèces III*, 2019. Installation / Synthetic fur, wood, adhesive tape, silicone, engine, cement, neon lights, 306 x 306 x 306 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Art Mûr Gallery, Montreal. Photo: © Guy L'Heureux // Brian Jungen, *Persuasion Mask*, 2018. Nike Air Jordans sport shoes, copper, 109 x 79 x 38 cm. David Chau & Cc Foundation Collection Photo : © Rachel Topham // Maskull Lasserre, *Conscience* (detail), 2018. Steel, magnet, cable, 30 x 46 x 610 cm (variable dimensions). Courtesy of the artist and Blouin Division Gallery, Montreal.

Page 2 – Steven Matijcio, guest curator of the Manif d'art 10 – The Quebec City Biennial

Page 3 – Top to bottom: Pierre Huyghe, *A Journey That Wasn't*, 2005. Super 16mm film and video installation, color, sound, transferred to video 21:41 min. Exhibition Copy. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York Photo: © Pierre Huyghe // Tony Tasset, *Snowman with Coke Can Mouth and Broom*, 2017. Glass, resin, brass, enamel and oil paint, polystyrene, stainless steel, and bronze, 182.9 x 162.6 x 91.4 cm Courtesy of the artist and Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago.

Page 4 – Top to bottom: Sascha Braunig, *Dancer*, 2019. Linseed oil on panel, 139.7 x 63.5 cm. Private Collection. Photo: © Charles Benton

Page 5 – Karen Tam, *Whooping Cranes on Clouds (Migration Assistance)*, 2019. Gouache and ink on papier mache, 39.3 cm (height) x 20.4 cm (diameter); 58.5 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm (display case), Purchase for the collection Prêt d'œuvres d'art du Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (CP.2019.1012) Photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre // Maskull Lasserre, *Conscience*, 2018. Steel, magnet, cable, 30 x 46 x 610 cm (variable dimensions). Courtesy of the artist and Blouin Division Gallery, Montreal

General Information

OPENING HOURS OF THE
MUSEUM COMPLEX

Until May 31, 2022

Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Wednesday until 9 p.m.

Closed on Mondays except March 7 and April 18

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Adults: 25 \$

Seniors (65 and Over): 23 \$

Ages 18 to 30: 15 \$

Ages 13 to 17: 7 \$

Families (2 adults accompanied
up to 5 children aged 17 and
under): 54 \$

Group rate (15 people or more)
for hotels, tour operators and
companies: 22 \$

12 years and under: **free**

Membres: **free**

Wednesdays from, 5 p.m. to
9 p.m.: **half-price**

MNBAQ National Collections

Adults: 16 \$

Seniors (65 and Over): 15 \$

Ages 18 to 30: 10 \$

Ages 13 to 17: 5 \$

Families (2 adults accompanied
up to 5 children aged 17 and
under): 36 \$

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Membres: **free**

Wednesdays from, 5 p.m. to
9 p.m.: **half-price**

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