

**Press release**

New exhibition

From February 24 to April 24, 2022

***Latent Energies:  
Paul-Émile Borduas  
in the Present***

***The donation by Michael J. Audain  
and Yoshiko Karasawa***

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

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Québec City, Wednesday, February 23, 2022 ✦ Created thanks to the exceptional donation of eight masterpieces by Paul-Émile Borduas to the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) by British Columbia patrons and collectors Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa, the exhibition *Latent Energies: Paul-Émile Borduas in the Present* offers a unique experience and an exhilarating adventure.

The exhibition revolves around iconic works by Paul-Émile Borduas – essentially paintings from the 1950s – which will establish a rich and fruitful dialogue with recent acquisitions of MNBAQ's National Collection. Works by contemporary artists **Dominique Blain**, **Michel Campeau**, **Nadia Myre**, **Alain Paiement**, **Jean Paul Riopelle**, as well as **Michaëlle Sergile**, will be presented as part of this exhibition.



Musée national  
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du Québec

Québec 

These works wonderfully embody MNBAQ's vision for the future, which is to be in tune with the movements that drive our society. They have in common an open and assertive desire to question the order of things and appearances, to reflect with lucidity on the things we think we know, and to exceed limits, even those we impose upon ourselves.

### *The power of Borduas's oeuvre in dialogue with today's artists*

The art of Paul-Émile Borduas continues to raise questions about life, creation, commitment and diversity. Like Borduas, several artists have anchored their artistic quest in a certain territory, as well as in the emotional, cultural and political ties that shape humans and the way they experience the world that surrounds them.



The first part of the exhibition's title, *Latent Energies*, poetically refers to the energy that exists around us without being apparent, to the changes in the state of matter and to the multiple polarities that are expressed in Paul-Émile Borduas's creation and vision. The energy of nature and humans is sometimes latent, sometimes liberating. Sometimes destructive, sometimes creative. Sometimes depressed, sometimes elated. These energies incubate in turn in matter, in one's body and spirit, between the Self and the Other. So many polarities demonstrate how complex human nature can be.

By boldly bringing these works together, the exhibition is an invitation to meet with the inexpressible, the pure emotion, and the incredible forces that originate from creation and which exceed us.

### *Scenography at the service of latent energies*

A sensitive layout also creates visual, aesthetic and intellectual links between the works presented. Shimmering red and gray accents symbolize the energy, incandescence and intensity, for the former, and reflection, for the latter. These colors represent the two opposite poles of latent energies and pay homage to the aesthetics of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde artists who approached creation with the same ambitious objective: to transform our perception of the arts and the world.

## *The exhibition's major works*



The artistic value of Borduas's paintings presented as part of this exhibition is priceless. Amongst some of the must-see masterpieces acquired thanks to the generous Audain and Karasawa donation, the public will be delighted to have the opportunity to admire *Grenouille sur fond bleu* (1944), one of the rare works produced by Borduas in the winter of 1944, while he was working in Ozias Leduc's studio in Saint-Hilaire, Québec. *Figures schématiques* (1956) is one of the largest paintings ever produced by Borduas during his career – the work has become an icon of the artist's Parisian period. Finally, *Sans titre* (1959), seems to have been executed all at once, without any preparation, but the powerful gesture represented in this painting is only an illusion. It was in fact produced during a very prolific period which saw Borduas create several works that were both gestural and calligraphic, and of which MNBAQ had no example until now.

As for the works that will be echoing Borduas's masterpieces, Michaëlle Sergile's textile installation (2017-2018) offers a critical translation of Frantz Fanon's 1952 book *Black Skin, White Masks*. According to the artist, transforming the text into a weaving code has shed light on "the absurdity of the words 'Black' and 'White' and the glaring lack of positive portrayal of women in this book."

The result of a complex and tedious process in photography, Alain Paiement's installation, *Dérive*, shows ice drifting on the dark waters of the St. Lawrence River, under the historic Québec Bridge. Aesthetically, the projection is reminiscent of the black and white works that Paul-Émile Borduas produced in Paris as he sought to go beyond the relation between form and pictorial background. Inspired by a quote from physicist and philosopher of science Étienne Klein – "Time is not passing by, we are the ones passing by" -, Paiement's work opens the exhibition in full force.



Finally, no one can remain impassive in the face of Nadia Myre's hard-hitting work, *Indian Act* (2002), which features 10 out of 56 elements composing a large-scale installation, representing the number of pages of the five chapters of the *Indian Act* of 1876 (amended in 1985). White beads cover the text of this colonial and patriarchal legal document specifically aimed at facilitating the assimilation and land dispossession of Indigenous peoples, while red beads replace the white of the Act's pages.

## The artists in a nutshell

### Paul-Émile Borduas

Paul-Émile Borduas began his apprenticeship in Ozias Leduc's studio in 1921, assisting the Québec master in many projects such as decorating churches and chapels. In 1923, Borduas started attending the École des beaux-arts de Montréal, where he distinguished himself and received numerous awards. From 1928 to 1930, he pursued his training in France with Maurice Denis, where he discovered more contemporary forms of artistic expression, especially with the Surrealists, a movement that marked a turning point in his oeuvre. Reading the works of André Breton, who defined Surrealism as "pure psychic automatism", had a major impact on Borduas.



Borduas became professor at the École du meuble de Montréal in 1937 and, two years later, along with John Lyman and Robert Élie, was one of the founding members of the Société d'art contemporain, created with the aim of promoting abstract art in Canada. His ideas' influence on art then started to grow in importance and a group of painters gathered around him. Jean-Paul Mousseau, Fernand Leduc, Pierre Gauvreau, Marcelle Ferron, and Jean Paul Riopelle, amongst others, established with him a new movement called "Les Automatistes". In 1948, driven by the desire to strengthen the group's positions and philosophy, Borduas wrote and published the *Refus global* manifesto. At the time, the document created such a shock wave in Québec that it caused Borduas to lose his teaching position at the École du meuble de Montréal.

Borduas therefore decided to devote himself entirely to his art, not without feeling bitter following his exclusion from Québec's cultural institutions. He left for New York in 1953, where his approach was confronted with the most recent developments in abstract expressionism, in particular with the works of Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline. There, his oeuvre found a certain resonance and some exhibition opportunities arose. But it was in Paris, France, that Borduas wished to gain recognition from his peers. His installation in the French capital in 1955 was however difficult, and he had to wait until 1959 to see his works exhibited for the first time in France, at the Galerie Saint-Germain. In 1962, two years after his death, a major retrospective exhibition was presented in Montréal, Québec City, Ottawa and Toronto.

### Dominique Blain

Dominique Blain lives and works in Montréal, Québec. Recipient, in 2014, of the Paul-Émile-Borduas Prize, Québec's most prestigious award in visual arts, Dominique Blain has had a prolific career since the mid-1980s. Her art, highly political, focuses on the wars that shake our world, on inequalities and on power relations. Her works, often including archive press images, refresh the political content of the images she retains in order to activate all the force they possess and to prevent their potential oblivion. Dominique Blain's works have been presented in several North American and European cities, as well as in Australia. To this day, three major retrospective exhibitions have been dedicated to her oeuvre. Dominique Blain has also created several public artworks in Québec.



### Michel Campeau

Born in Montréal, Québec, in 1948, Michel Campeau devoted his career to the practice of photography after studying at the Institut des arts graphiques du Québec, in Montréal, from 1964 to 1968. Starting as a documentary photographer, he became active on the national art scene in the 1970s. Campeau's works have been exhibited in Canada, the United States, Mexico, Japan, France, Belgium, Portugal, Germany and Wales. He has been awarded several distinctions, including the 1994 Higashikawa Overseas Photographer Prize, in Japan; the Jean-Paul-Riopelle career grant awarded by the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, in 2009; and the 2010 Duke and Duchess of York Prize in Photography awarded by the Canada Council for the Arts. His works are included as part of many important collections in Canada, Europe, the United States, as well as Japan.



### Nadia Myre

Born in 1974 in Montréal, Québec, Nadia Myre is an artist of Anishinabeg (Algonquin) origins and a member of the Kitigan Zibi First Nation. For over a decade, she has been disseminating her art focusing on themes such as identity, language, desire and loss. Her works have been presented in Québec, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, China and Italy. Several personal exhibitions, including major monographic exhibitions, have showcased her works. Nadia Myre has received several grants and awards, including a fellowship of the prestigious Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis, United States, the 2014 Sobey Art Award, and the 2021 Louis-Comtois Prize. She was inducted as member of the Ordre des arts et des lettres du Québec by the Conseil des arts et lettres du Québec (CALQ) in 2019.

### Alain Paiement

Alain Paiement was born in Montréal, Québec, in 1960. He is already and without a doubt one of the most influential names in the history Québec and Canadian photography. Inspired by painting methods, his approach to photography always maintains the photographic image's plastic dimension. The artist's works have been presented in Canada, India, Belgium, the United States, Hungary, France, Italy, Colombia, Spain and Finland, amongst many countries. They are also part of major institutional and private collections in Canada, the United States, Spain and Belgium. Alain Paiement has received several awards in contemporary photography. He was a finalist for the prestigious ScotiaBank Photography Award in 2012 and has created numerous public works of art in Québec. Alain Paiement was also awarded the Graff Prize in 1997, was appointed as a Brussels Cultural Ambassador in 1999 and received the Louis-Comtois Prize in 2002.

### Jean-Paul Riopelle



Riopelle (1923-2002) is one of the most renowned Québec artists throughout the world. The scope, the originality, and the influence of his oeuvre, linked in turn to the Automatiste movement, to abstract expressionism and to Lyrical Abstraction, have made him a leading figure in the development of modern art in the post-war era. Beginning to paint at the turn of the 1940s, Riopelle enrolled at the École du meuble de Montréal in 1943. He took part in the very first exhibition of Les Automatistes in 1946 and co-signed the historic *Refus global* manifesto in 1948, but quickly distanced himself from the movement. He left Québec for Paris, France, where his first personal exhibition was held in 1949. In the following decade, Riopelle was consecrated as one of the major representatives of the School of Paris, while simultaneously being recognized as an important figure of the American Lyrical Abstraction movement following an exhibition held in New York in 1954.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Riopelle's production started to diversify, with prints and sculptures taking a growing place. This evolving approach also brought an ever more affirmed representation and open references to nature. Certain recurring subjects – from owls to icebergs and wild geese – appeared in the artist's works following his multiple hunting and fishing trips in Québec, before he finally returned to permanently settle in his native province in 1990. Two years later, in 1992, the artist created *L'Hommage à Rosa Luxemburg* the day after the death of Joan Mitchell, a major American painter and Riopelle's companion for nearly 25 years. This spectacular triptych is now on permanent display at MNBAQ's Pierre Lassonde pavilion.

## Michaëlle Sergile

Michaëlle Sergile is an artist and independent curator working mainly with post-colonial period archives from 1950 to today. Through weaving, a form of art often perceived as craftsmanship and categorized as feminine, the artist reflects on gender and ethnicity domination. Sergile's works have been exhibited in Canada and the United States. She has received several awards and grants, including the Bourse des Fonds de recherche du Québec - Société et Culture (FRQSC) and the 2021 Plein Sud grant, which aims at promoting research and innovation amongst emerging contemporary artists in Québec.

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## Credits

The exhibition *Latent Energies: Paul-Émile Borduas in the Present. The donation by Michael J. Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa* is organized by the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec.

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**Québec** 

*Latent Energies: Paul-Émile Borduas in the Present*  
*The donation by Michael J. Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa*  
Pierre Lassonde Pavilion  
From February 24 to April 24, 2022

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INFORMATION:

**Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec**  
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Page 1 - From top to bottom: Paul-Émile Borduas, *Figures schématiques*, 1956. Oil on canvas, 130.4 x 195.5 cm. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Gift of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa (2021.184) Photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre // Nadia Myre, *Circle*, from the series *Scarscape*, 2010. Digital print, 2/5, 191.5 x 110 cm. Permanent collection (2020.864) Gift of Karine Vanasse © Nadia Myre / CARCC Photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre

Page 2 - Paul-Émile Borduas, *Sans titre*, 1957. Oil on canvas, 73 x 60 cm. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Gift of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa (2021.186) Photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre

Page 3 - From top to bottom: Paul-Émile Borduas, *Grenouille sur fond bleu*, 1944. Oil on canvas, 81.5 x 109.4 cm. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Gift of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa (2021.188) Photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre // Paul-Émile Borduas, *Sans titre*, 1959. Oil on canvas, 73.2 x 60.4 cm. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Gift of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa (2021.187). Photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre // Nadia Myre, *Indian Act*, 2002. Fabric, printed paper, beads, thread, adhesive tape, and needle, 46 x 38.7 x 5.5 cm (each of the ten elements). Permanent collection (2008.201) Purchase for the Prêt d'œuvres d'art collection in 2005, transferred to the permanent collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec © Nadia Myre / CARCC Photo: © MNBAQ, Idra Labrie

Page 4 - From top to bottom: Janine Niepce for the ONF, *Borduas in his workshop*, 15, rue Rousselet, Paris, 1959. Gelatin silver print. Collection Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec // Paul-Émile Borduas, *Arabesque*, 1955. Oil on canvas, 107 x 82.1 cm. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Gift of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa (2021.182) Photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre

Page 5 - From top to bottom: Michel Campeau, *Humus*, 2001. Silver gelatin prints, various dimensions. Permanent collection (2020.866) Anonymous gift © Michel Campeau/SOCAN Photo: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie // Nadia Myre, *Meditation of Black Lake. Temporal*, 2012. Digital print printed on rag paper, 7/7, 111.7 x 111.7 cm (paper); 86 cm (diameter of image). Permanent Collection (2015.983.04) Gift of the artist © Nadia Myre/ CARCC Photo: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie

Page 6 - Jean-Paul Riopelle, *Sans titre*, 1989. Ink, wood and collage on lithographic proofs laid on serigraphs printed on canvas, 189,3 x 380 cm. Permanent collection (2017.499) Gift of Huguette Vachon © Succession Jean-Paul Riopelle/ SOCAN Photo: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie



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Membres: **free**

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Ages 13 to 17: 5 \$

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12 years and under: **free**

Membres: **free**

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

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