

SYMPOSIUM

**METRO BORDUAS**

The Underground Landscape of Abstract Art in Montréal

Sunday, November 26, 2006  
1515 Sainte-Catherine Street, EV. 1-605

- 10:00 **Dina Vescio**, Welcome and Opening Remarks
- Merrilee Wolsey**  
*Noise and Sound Underground: Montréal's Subterranean Fanfare for the Common Man*
- 10:30 **Rewriting the Borduas Legacy**  
**Mike Rattray**, Moderator
- Christina Froschauer**  
*Primitivism and the Work of Françoise Sullivan*
- Alena Buis**  
*The Practical Side of Decorating: Borduas at the École du Meuble*
- Tatiana Mellema**  
*The Politics of Total Refusal*
- Chantal Généreux**  
*Egrégore Automatiste*
- Discussion/Questions
- 12:30 FOFA Reception
- 13:35 **Mapping The Borduas Legacy: Signatories and Styles**  
**Chantal Généreux**, Moderator
- Doug Pope**  
*Free Fall: Motion in Art from Borduas to Tousignant*
- Genevieve Pelletier**  
*Jean-Paul Mousseau and Claude Vermette: Searching for the Artists Common Sensibility*
- Discussion/Questions
- 14:30 Pause
- 14:40 **Critical Reflections on The Borduas Legacy**  
**Jacqui Sischy**, Moderator
- Mike Rattray**  
*Borduas as the Monstrous Double*
- Tammer El-Sheikh**  
*Borduas Off The Couch: A Kantian Alternative to the Surrealist/Psychoanalytic Interpretations of Borduas*
- Christopher Régimbal**  
*The Urban and the Contemporary*
- Stephen Schofield**, Artist & Guest Speaker  
*The Hiatus Project*
- Discussion/Questions
- 16:25 **Dr. François-Marc Gagnon**  
Reflections
- 16:45 **Dina Vescio**  
Closing Remarks

## PRESENTERS & ABSTRACTS

### **Alena Buis**

*The Practical Side of Decorating: Borduas at the École du Meuble*

In 1953 Paul-Émile Borduas (1905-1960) declared “I have never made designs for fabrics, nor for anything at all with any practical or utilitarian application. And I hope I never shall.” This statement, by the revolutionary painter, reflects the distinction often made between applied arts and fine arts, in the infamous “hierarchy” of the arts. Despite

Borduas’ statement, his role as an instructor at the *École du Meuble* and much of his production during that period provide examples of his active participation in applied arts. Using works of art created by Borduas while teaching at the *École du Meuble* I will explore the ways in which Borduas influenced and was influenced by Quebec's craft production.

### **Tammer El-Sheikh**

*Borduas Off The Couch: A Kantian Alternative to the Surrealist/Psychoanalytic Interpretations of Borduas*

Francois-Marc Gagnon has written extensively on the tension in Borduas’ work between control and spontaneity. While these opposed tendencies are often harmonized in the artist’s canvasses, the critical debate that they structure is far from resolved. Interpretations of Borduas’ work privilege the psychoanalytic and Surrealist virtue of spontaneity, at the expense of an investigation of the artist’s sophisticated pictorial logics. I will attempt to address and isolate this logic using an analytic framework derived from the Cubist critical literature and its Kantian sources.

### **Christina Froschauer**

*The Rhetoric of Primitivism in the Work of Françoise Sullivan*

In her book *Les Femmes du Refus Global*, Patricia Smart claims that 'primitivism' as a theme, served as a conductive thread throughout the works of Françoise Sullivan (1998, 72). Critics have described this theme as 'symbolic of marginality' in her early figurative works, as 'animalistic' and 'rhythmic' expression in her dance performances, as 'ritual' in the use of circles as sculptural motif, and as 'naturalism' in her later works. In discussion with Sullivan, I will attempt to uncover what 'primitivism' means to her, how this has changed through time with each mode of artistic expression, and its relevance to her life experience as an artist

### **Chantal Généreux**

*Egrégore Automatite*

Les Automatistes ont été plus qu'un mouvement artistique, plus qu'une école de pensée, ils étaient un groupe d'échange et de partage qui expérimentait leurs idéaux. Tout en jetant un regard intimiste sur les personnes qui en forme le terreau fertile du *Refus global*, je vous invite à découvrir les précurseurs potentiels d'un phénomène social bien connu des années '70, les communes.

### **Tatiana Mellema**

*The Politics of Total Refusal*

Published in 1948, Paul-Émile Borduas' *Refus global* became one of the most important documents in history of Québec, influencing remarkable change in both cultural and political life. Through a close textual analysis of the *Refus global*, this essay will examine Borduas' role as a political philosopher. The writings of Surrealist André Breton will be considered in relation to Borduas in order to contextualize the anarchist underpinnings of *Refus global*. The impact of the manifesto will be addressed by introducing the artist Serge Lemoyne and his use of *Refus global* throughout the nineteen sixties.

### **Genevieve Pelletier**

*Jean-Paul Mousseau and Claude Vermette: Searching for the Artists Common Sensibility*

In an interview dating from 1967, Jean-Paul Mousseau says that man cannot have all the knowledge in all domains; therefore he has to work in a team. He then goes on to say that the problem with team work is that every element of the team has to have, at least intuitively, some kind of common sensibility. Mousseau and Vermette are two pioneers of the integration of art to architecture in Québec, if not America. I am interested in the relation between the two men, and by looking at their belief and their work I am hoping to find this common sensibility.

### **Doug Pope**

*Free Fall: Motion in Art from Borduas to Tousignant*

Many abstract artists working in Québec from the late 1940s to the present capture a sense of motion in their work through the use of gestural marks, patterns and the dynamic arrangement of forms. Some artists suggest the nether region of dreams and the unconscious; others make analogies with nature and human body. In other works, one senses the kinetic potential of machines. My paper traces the ideas behind these different strategies by situating the work in a context of its time.

### **Mike Rattray**

*Borduas as the Monstrous Double*

This essay will provide a reading of Paul-Émile Borduas' expulsion from Québec society by the mass media outlets and popular opinion through the lens of Rene Girard's theories from *Violence and the Sacred*. Specifically this essay will examine Girard's notions of the monstrous double and mimesis, and the need for contemporary society to sacrifice a surrogate victim as a means of re-appropriating cultural deviance. Through this reading the essay will provide an, albeit brief, reading of the origins of Borduas' myth. It will elaborate on the necessity of his expulsion and subsequent death in allowing for the institution of Borduas the myth in exchange for Borduas the person.

**Christopher Régimbal**

*The Urban and the Contemporary*

This paper explores tactics used by contemporary artists to situate their work geographically within the urban. Taking as an example *La Cantine* (1995 - 1997) by Montréal artist Massimo Guerrera, this paper examines one way that an artist can enter into dialogue with the lived environment, simultaneously taking from and adding to our reading of the urban text. I begin my arguments with the exhibition *Métro Borduas* and an understanding that art is a tenant of social geography and that a sense of place is a powerful factor in the development of a notion of the contemporary.

**Stephen Schofield**

*The Hiatus Project*

Stephen Schofield, sculptor and professor in UQAM's Department of Fine Arts will be discussing his *The Hiatus Project* (2006); a document that traces the movements and practices of members of the contemporary Montréal arts community both within and beyond the city's limits.

**Merrilee Wolsey**

*Noise and Sound Underground: Montréal's Subterranean Fanfare for the Common Man*

The construction of train systems in Montréal and the sounds generated by these trains has had a profound impact on social response to landscape and the urban environment. This essay will explore the sounds generated in Montréal's underground network as an ephemeral work of public art. The métro has its own unique sounds not only because of the tire and traction system that generates its monotonous noises, but because of the people that use it. By exploring how some of the sounds are generated in this environment, the essay will reveal some of the psychological affects of experiencing common transport in Montréal and how that experience changes social relationships and interaction in and underneath the city.