

Ginette Légaré

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joint is marked by an "X" as if to emphasize the artist's presence and his intention of keeping both parts separated. The "X" reminds one of a cross-roads. Often seen at train track crossings, it is a sign that marks progress and that has become natural in our every day life. In Gill's work, markings are a comment on humanity being at an intersection in its relation with the natural world and on the need for one to distance itself from the other, for one to respect the other.

William Gill is in awe of the natural world that surrounds him in Newfoundland. The land around St. John's is powerful: the roaring of the sea, the rugged coast line, the enormous floating icebergs, the massive boulders, and the dark wilderness of the forest — all inform his work. His abstract constructions negotiate our understanding of nature, its fragility, its force, that of industrialization, progress and their destructive power.

Interestingly, in many pieces, one feels the artist's dedication, his passion. He reveals that he never knows what the final product is going to be. Each work is often left aside for a period of time and then re-worked. He lets the pieces speak and guide him through the creative process. They take him on a mission. In their final form, his sculptures take us on a journey of personal discovery and questioning.² ←

NOTES

1. C. William Gill is a sculptor based in St. John's, Newfoundland, where he works as a technician in an artist-run Bronze Casting Foundry. Native from Ottawa, Ontario, his artistic journey took him to Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, where he graduated in Fine Arts in 1991. He exhibited in many group and solo exhibitions and did residencies at the Vermont Studio Center and at Terra Nova National Park.
2. This article is the result of e-mail exchanges with the artist. Some information has been taken from the transcript of an interview conducted by Mary Reid, curator of *William Gill: Into the Woods*, an exhibition held at the MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, Ontario, in 2000.

Ginette Legaré's *Eyeful* consists of 365 spoons arranged in an oval pattern directly on the wall. It is a sculpture installation where formal arrangement, shadow and light, and rhythm play a crucial role. The objects themselves are transformed entirely so that, in a moment of suspended belief, one sees not spoons but sculpture. Legaré's work is about seeing: about perception, metamorphosis, order and disruption. It presents itself as aesthetic and ordered, only to interrupt the aesthetics and order as it questions modes of representation, of looking, and how we define reality. Towards the bottom left of *Eyeful* an object has obtrusively inserted itself; a rounded thing, reminiscent of an eyeball or tongue, bulges out of a small change purse. It is a disconcerting object that breaks the order of the piece and introduces discomfort; its presence signals that this piece is more than simply a play with domestic objects or a study in light and shadow. The unease it evokes moves us to question how we see and how we construct meaning.

The transformative play with found objects runs through the entire exhibition. We see pieces made from altered paintbrushes, spoons, forks, flan pans and the metal blades from pizza wheels. Legaré admits that her viewers spend a lot of time trying to look for what they are supposed to see. What one finds is structure rather than content. She brings us back full circle to ideas around perception. *Through a looking glass*, lightly is an excellent example of this: mounted on the wall is a bowl cradling a long-handled ladle. Mounted adjacent to it is a tilted mirror, like the ones used for shaving. Peering into the mirror we probe what it is that we are supposed to see — mostly it is part of



the space around, not, as expected, a focused view of the object. It underscores the idea of multiple perspectives and undermines that of the autonomous object. As well, looking further, we see that the bowl is truncated, it is a container that cannot contain. The relationship between what we see and what we know is thus confounded, as are expectations regarding certain objects and their uses.

A paintbrush, for example, is intended to make a mark. When the end of the brush is inserted at the ends of coiled metal, like the kind used for plumbing, then the function, while recalled, is made moot nonetheless. The clean brush is a precursor to making a mark; making a mark is a translation of what we see, whether that be a drawing or a text. Again, Legaré takes us a step back to the point before the sign is made in order to question and ascertain the act of representation. When two ends connect in a flourishing loop from which to write, does this suggest

GINETTE LEGARÉ, *Painter's Stroke Series*, 2002. Photo: Peter MacCallum.

schizophrenia, multiplicity or negation? When a single brush emerges through a circular plate, is it then cut off from perspective, as the plate defines its space as flat and its view as limited? And when protruding from each end of a twisted knot, does it signal complexity or merely confusion?

When referring to this piece, collectively entitled *Painter's Stroke*, Legaré expresses an interest in the implications of the creative act: How does one think of the world and of the objects in it? She speaks of "pondering through painting," as art is clearly one way of making sense. In *Occlusions*, using the false bottoms of flan pans, Legaré has stacked four sets of two pans, each bent such that half the pan is angled at ninety degrees from the wall, creating a rhythmic stepping structure rising vertically. Recalling art history, *Occlusions* references minimalism and modernism, for-

CLAUDE PAUL GAUTHIER

Pierre Leblanc

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mally recalling both Donald Judd and Constantin Brancusi. While the reference to art history clearly positions her within the tradition, the work is also a feminist appropriation of this history, revealing an atavistic relationship to the history of art. Formally, it returns us to Legaré's concern with the material, for these pieces are both parallel and perpendicular to the viewer, meeting their space and projecting out into it in a way that is not entirely without menace. Hoping for a dialogue with the viewer, Legaré sees the wall as the mediating ground of an encounter.

This meeting ground is never passive with the artist: *Fork You* consists of twelve forks stabbed directly into the wall. The direct gesture serves as a reminder of the physicality of materials, art-making, and the appropriation of space. Legaré informs us that this is not always a gentle process. Conversely, the final piece, *Specs*, emphasizes humour and lightness, even as it returns us to the act of seeing. Made from the metal blades of pizza-cutters, it presents two round plates with plastic googly eyes rolled toward the bottom right-hand corner. *Specs* makes us smile and oversees the entire installation, marking how the viewer moves through the space, looks, and makes conclusions. The eyes silently watch the eyes of others, scrutinizing and re-thinking a world made from common objects manipulated and metamorphosing into different perspectives that jar our common knowledge and beliefs.

The exploring eye can express without gesture, as can the silent mouth. ←

« *Tant qu'il y aura des vivants, les morts vivront...* »

— VINCENT VAN GOGH, 20 AVRIL 1888

« *En présence du doute, de l'angoisse... en présence de l'œuvre à accomplir, pour ensuite se trouver en face de l'œuvre à défendre... finalement l'artiste, s'il n'y perd pas sa raison, ni la vie, pourra enfin s'acquitter de sa tâche.* »

— PIERRE LEBLANC, JANVIER 2002

De prime abord, la lecture des œuvres de Pierre Leblanc n'est pas évidente. Bien sûr, on est confronté à la présence de la forme comme pour toute sculpture, on comprend ou plutôt on croit comprendre, grâce à la nature réaliste des objets proposés, le sens des installations à travers lesquelles on se promène. Mais le choix des objets et des artefacts émane d'une histoire, initialement autobiographique, qui a permis à l'artiste de développer une méthode originale de collation et d'archivage de documents qui est devenue une véritable technique de préhension du réel et une source d'inspiration intrinsèque.

Pierre Leblanc est un conteur, mais il faut connaître le code pour déchiffrer, comme pour une partition musicale, le sens des histoires racontées. Il nous offre deux expositions simultanées, chacune présentant un ensemble de travaux qui se sont élaborés sur plusieurs années et qui témoignent d'un cheminement logique, partant d'une recherche autobiographique et ensuite appliquée à la représentation d'œuvres qui sont autant d'hommages donnés à d'autres artistes, amis de Leblanc ou références à l'histoire de la poésie moderne et de l'art contemporain québécois et européen. Ses œuvres sont des sculptures d'acier grand format, œuvres publiques et d'atelier et aussi des livres d'art, eux-mêmes sculptures par leur présentation tridimensionnelle, boîtiers, écrins, et même meubles.

MUSÉE DE LACHINE

Pierre Leblanc est né au 2026 de la rue Roberval, dans le quartier Côte-Saint-Paul, à Montréal. Il y a passé son enfance dans une maison entourée de cours à *scrap*, d'usines et de voies ferrées. Un environnement certes difficile, mais heureusement transcendé par la proximité du canal de Lachine et du fleuve, où il allait pêcher et se baigner (il ne faut

pas oublier que voilà 45 ans, le fleuve n'était pas encore pollué au point où la baignade aurait été proscrite et dangereuse comme maintenant). C'est alors qu'est arrivé le fameux projet de boulevard Métropolitain qui — comme tous ces projets « pharaoniques » tels l'édifice de Radio-Canada pour le « Faubourg à M'lasse » dans l'est de Montréal ou l'aéroport pour les cultivateurs de Mirabel et des environs — a bouleversé la vie de milliers de gens. Les Leblanc ont été expulsés car leur maison était dans la trajectoire de la bretelle d'accès de l'échangeur Turcot donnant accès au boulevard Métropolitain : comble d'ironie, rue Roberval, un des piliers de cette structure architecturale, a remplacé la maison familiale.

L'exposition *Livres ouverts / face cachée* à Lachine comprend, dans le bâtiment principal du Musée, une série de livres d'artiste, carnets de voyage, petits livres cadeaux donnés à des amis artistes, références à sa propre histoire et œuvres structurées dont quelques-unes font déjà partie de collections publiques, notamment celle de la Bibliothèque nationale du Québec. Ces livres-meubles-grimoires racontent l'enfance de l'artiste à partir de photos de

PIERRE LEBLANC,
À la recherche de
l'oreille de Van Gogh
(Nuit étoilée),
2000-2002. Acier oxydé.
249 x 599,4 x 568,9 cm.
Photo : avec l'aimable
autorisation de l'artiste.

