

# Quebec Triennial has much to fire the imagination

**Exhibition at the Musée d'art contemporain features 135 works by 38 artists and collectives - but women are under-represented**

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Tomorrow is Montreal Museums Day, where 29 local museums offer free admission with complementary shuttle bus service between venues. Take advantage of this opportunity to go to see the Quebec Triennial that opened yesterday at the Musée d'art contemporain. This is one of the largest exhibitions the museum has ever mounted, with 135 works by 38 artists and collectives. The fact that it features work by some of the most interesting contemporary artists from Quebec makes it even better. The only bone of contention I overheard at the press conference was that Quebec's talented women are under-represented. The only place where women equalled men was on the curatorial team that selected the artists, which consisted of Josée Bélisle, Pierre Landry, Mark Lanctôt and Chief Curator Paulette Gagnon. They chose only 12 women or collectives out of 38. Add to that the fact that not one woman has had a solo exhibition at the museum in 2006, 2007 or 2008 and I wouldn't be surprised if Montreal spawned its own version of the Guerrilla Girls ([www.guerrillagirls.com](http://www.guerrillagirls.com)) before the next triennial!

The subjective nature of art means that an exhibition of this magnitude will always spawn a lively discussion in the local arts community about who should or should not have been selected. But no matter who you are or what you like, there is plenty to fire your imagination in this exhibition titled *Nothing Is Lost, Nothing Is Created, Everything Is Transformed*. Some of the artists are well known, like David Altmejd, who represented Canada at last year's Venice Biennale. His sculpture of a 12-foot tall giant was inspired by the video game *Shadow of the Colossus*. There is Michel de Broin's sphere made out of office chairs that won him the prestigious Sobey Art Award for top Canadian artist under 40 last fall. As well as images from Isabelle Hayeur's series *Nuits américaines*, in which she seamlessly combines familiar views of urban decay and growth in a way that makes us question the landscapes we are complicit in creating.

The work of Gwenaël Bélanger at the entrance to the exhibition caught my eye. His video *Le Faux Mouvement* captures the moment of impact as multiple mirrors smash on the floor. The soundtrack for this work is as hypnotizing as the images. There is also a series of one-minute videos created specifically for the triennial that are being shown at the museum and on Télé-Québec. Bélanger's is one of the more interesting films in this series as he again plays with twisting what we see and perceive. I am also a recent fan of the work of Patrick Bernatchez, whose televised spot inspired by Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* is my personal favourite among the shorts ([www.telequebec.tv/video/capsulesmac.aspx](http://www.telequebec.tv/video/capsulesmac.aspx)).

In the triennial, Bernatchez presents two longer films. One, titled *I Feel Cold Today*, is a mesmerizing projection of a snowstorm in an office building. The soundtrack, a mix put together by local musician Patrick Watson, creates a feeling of suspense as the office building slowly fills with snow. The second film is a remake of one exhibited earlier this year at Skol. It shows a man sitting in a car as it slowly fills with water, but this time Ronald McDonald occupies the driver's seat. Bernatchez comments, "With this work I wanted to create the feeling that the party is over."