

# NICOLAS FLEMING

## Montréal, Québec, 1979

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### *Une maison pour Marc-Aurèle, Louis-Philippe et Alfred*

### **[A House for Marc-Aurèle, Louis-Philippe, and Alfred]**

2020

Installation, various materials

312.4 x 914.4 x 914.4 cm

Collection of the artist

Invited by the Musée d'art de Joliette to take part in a unique dialogue with the bronzes of three great Quebec sculptors from the turn of the 20th century, Nicolas Fleming created an immersive work that integrates the sculptures of Louis-Philippe Hébert, Alfred Laliberté, and Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté, as well as his own. Visitors find themselves at the heart of a scaled-down reproduction of the interior of the Maison Antoine-Lacombe, a jewel in Joliette's heritage, built in the middle of the 19th century—the period in which the three historical sculptors were born. The work is not only visual, but experiential as well: one can wander, explore, even imagine living within it. In this project, Fleming eschews museological codes to propose an encounter with art in the intimate universe of a home environment. Characteristic of his production in recent years, the “under-construction” quality of the work foregrounds raw building materials—drywall (gypsum), plaster, particle board—which are at once very familiar and unusual, since they are most often concealed in a museum context.

In his art practice, Fleming draws on his expertise as an exhibition technician to reveal and exploit the aesthetic qualities of building materials while short-circuiting their original function. He directs our attention toward the formal qualities of plain drywall, whether through the grid pattern—widely explored in art history—or by recreating objects that then lose their utilitarian function, becoming sculptural works in themselves, and in so doing, blurs the boundaries

between home, technical, and artistic domains.

A great humility guides Fleming's work, and interaction lies at the heart of his concerns. For him, it is the encounter with art, artworks, and ideas that matters. All craftsmen contributing to the creation of the work are equal in his eyes: the technicians, the sculptors of the last century, and the architect of the Maison Antoine-Lacombe as much as the artist himself. Thus, unapologetically, he opens up a dialogue between his sculptures and those of Suzor-Coté, Hébert, and Laliberté. Noble materials and construction materials intertwine in an installation that speaks to the status of a work of art and to its limits.

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## Thematic texts about the bronze sculptures

### Small Bronze Statuary: An Emerging Market in the Early 1900s

Appearing in the last decade of the 19th century, small bronze statuary broke with the traditional practice of direct sculpting on wood that dominated the history of sculpture in Quebec up to then. Derived from modelling technique, it is achieved by building a clay model, which is fired and then moulded in plaster. This plaster model then serves to create a mould into which the bronze is poured. An art of replication, the bronze statuette was often produced in series and was addressed to a clientele of art collectors, increasingly numerous in Quebec at the turn of the 20th century, as well as middle class proprietors wishing to decorate their residences with luxury ornaments perfectly suited to the eclecticism of Victorian-style interiors.

As early as the 1890s, Louis-Philippe Hébert, a pioneer in his field, took charge of the edition and sales of his statuettes while calling upon the services of Belgian and French founders. Among his most successful sculptures is his statuette in the likeness of Miss Verchères—*Mlle de Verchères*. Following in Hébert's footsteps, Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté and Alfred Laliberté would also try their hand in this emerging market. Both of them would take advantage of the yearly salons and participate in fairs to promote their small statuary. They were also represented by art dealers who served as intermediary between the artists and the collectors. While many of Laliberté's compositions earned him critical acclaim, particularly his traditional figurines, he would never achieve the commercial success his colleague Suzor-Coté enjoyed with such works as *The Old Canadian Pioneer* and *The Old Pioneer's Companion*.

## Sculpture Serving the Nation's Heroes

Starting in the 1880s, commemorative sculpture gained unprecedented popularity in Quebec. Monuments were erected in the memory of missionaries, explorers, secular and religious founders, and political personalities who had marked Canadian history. By bringing them back to life in bronze, sculptors of the time helped make national heroes out of these historical figures. The vast project of decorating the facade of the Parliament Building in Quebec City, with its array of statuary forming a veritable pantheon of Canadian glory, falls wholly within this commemorative movement. At the forefront, were Hébert and Laliberté, who together produced over half the twenty-six sculptures adorning the Parliament facade. Hébert's composition *Fisherman with Two-Pronged Spear*, erected in honour of First Nations, is taken from this setting. Suzor-Coté, for his part, was commissioned to produce the statue of the explorer Louis Jolliet (1645-1700), for which he designed three models, among them *The Pioneer* and *The Hydrographer or Surveyor*. These two models were not selected for the Parliament. Nonetheless, the artist had them cast in bronze, in smaller scale, stripping them of any reference to Jolliet in order to produce archetypal representations, which were then well-appreciated by collectors. Hébert, on the other hand, brought his small statuary in line with his monumental production by drawing on subjects of Canadian history steeped in patriotism. His statuettes of Madeleine de Verchères (1678-1747) and of Dollard des Ormeaux (1635-1660) were instrumental in creating a veritable cult around these historical figures who were elevated to the rank of heroes.

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## Indigenous Iconography: Part Stereotype, Part Creative Freedom

By his own admission, Laliberté had never met Indigenous people when he conceived his *Young Indians Hunting* during his studies in Paris. Like other Canadian artists visiting France, the sculptor relied on his subject to distinguish himself from his European colleagues and to get noticed by the critics. His bet paid off, since the work earned him an honorary mention at the Paris Salon in 1905. His countryman Suzor-Coté did the same with his painting *Jacques Cartier Meets the Indians at Stadacona, 1535*, which portrays several Indigenous figures that he would later amalgamate into a single sculpture: *The Iroquois*. Fascinated since childhood by the history of New France and the relationships between European settlers and First Nations, Hébert drew on his imagination in

compositions portraying the “good Indian,” on the one hand, living in harmony with nature, as in *Fisherman with Two-Pronged Spear*, and the “bad Indian,” on the other, the cruel and barbaric warrior, as manifest in *Merciless*. Each of these artists made full use of the attributes of the Indigenous figure: partial nudity revealing an impressive build, loincloth, feathers, bows, arrows and quivers. Beyond these commonplaces, however, Indigenous iconography opened up a range of formal and thematic possibilities, prompting the sculptors to out-do themselves. With hunting scenes, battles, or the female nude, representations of First Nations enabled these artists to venture off the beaten path.

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## The Canadian Pioneer, Icon of an Idyllic Past

Slightly balding and sporting a collar-shaped beard, the old man in *The Old Canadian Pioneer* smokes a pipe while sitting in a rocking chair. His clothes are typical of old rural Canadian style. His particular physique belongs to one of Suzor-Coté’s favourite models, Esdras Cyr, resident of Arthabaska and one of the first settlers in the Bois-Francs region. The critical and commercial success this composition earned him at its first presentation at the Art Association of Montreal’s Exhibition of 1913 testifies to the craze for traditional subjects, tinged with nostalgia for an idyllic era that seemed outdated, or on the way to being so. In Suzor-Coté’s production, as in that of his contemporaries, including Laliberté, the figure of the Canadian pioneer or peasant seemed to serve as a bulwark against the loss of national identity, long-associated with agriculture, that seemed threatened by the urbanization and industrialization of Quebec society. Suzor-Coté’s statuettes devoted to traditional subjects often figured a vigorous peasant, ready to face the rigours of winter (*Father Fleury*) or toiling with physical effort and fatigue (*The Reaper* and *The Portage Carrier*). While Laliberté shares Suzor-Coté’s attraction to folklore, their respective approaches differ considerably. Working little from life models as his colleague did, Laliberté sacrificed physical detail for a simplification of form, relying on the figure’s general attitude or on the universality of the gesture, such as in *The Sower*, the miller (*The Wheat Meal*), and *The Winnowing*.

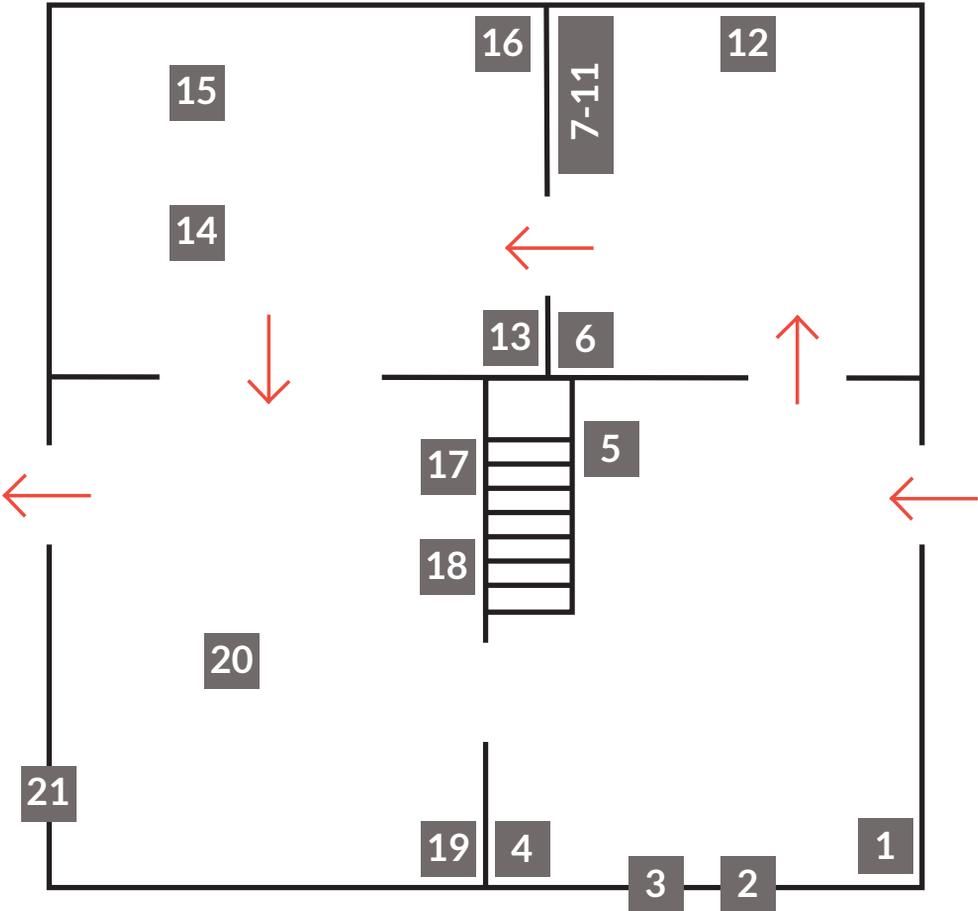
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# FLOOR PLAN

of the bronze sculptures in the house

1<sup>st</sup> floor

Salle EBI



## 1. LOUIS-PHILIPPE HÉBERT

Sainte-Sophie-d'Halifax, Québec, 1850 – Westmount, Québec, 1917

### *L'Gosseux ou Le Sculpteur en herbe* [The Whittler, or Sculptor in the Rough]

Around 1900

Bronze

37.6 x 14 x 14.5 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.054

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## 2. MARC-AURÈLE DE FOY SUZOR-COTÉ

Arthabaska, Québec, 1869 – Daytona Beach, États-Unis, 1937

### *Le Portageur* [The Portage Carrier]

1922

Bronze

41 x 20 x 31.8 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.063

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## 3. MARC-AURÈLE DE FOY SUZOR-COTÉ

Arthabaska, Québec, 1869 – Daytona Beach, États-Unis, 1937

### *Maria Chapdelaine*

1925

Bronze

37.8 x 23 x 19.6 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.065

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## 4. ALFRED LALIBERTÉ

Ste-Élisabeth-de-Warwick, Québec, 1877 – Montréal, Québec, 1953

### *Autoportrait* [Self-Portrait]

1912

Bronze

35.2 x 16.4 x 12.3 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.068

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## 5. LOUIS-PHILIPPE HÉBERT

Sainte-Sophie-d'Halifax, Québec, 1850 – Westmount, Québec, 1917

### *M<sup>lle</sup> de Verchères* [Miss Verchères]

About 1905

Bronze

48.3 x 28.5 x 16.5 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.055

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## 6. MARC-AURÈLE DE FOY SUZOR-COTÉ

Arthabaska, Québec, 1869 – Daytona Beach, États-Unis, 1937

### *Calling the Moose*

1925 or 1926

Bronze

52.5 x 21.2 x 31 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.062

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## 7. ALFRED LALIBERTÉ

Ste-Élisabeth-de-Warwick, Québec, 1877 – Montréal, Québec, 1953

*Le Vanneur*

**[The Winnower]**

1910-1911

Bronze

13.7 x 9 x 9 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.071

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## 8. ALFRED LALIBERTÉ

Ste-Élisabeth-de-Warwick, Québec, 1877 – Montréal, Québec, 1953

*Le Minot de blé*

**[The Wheat Meal]**

1910-1911

Bronze

14 x 8 x 9.2 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.070

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## 9. ALFRED LALIBERTÉ

Ste-Élisabeth-de-Warwick, Québec, 1877 – Montréal, Québec, 1953

*Le Semeur*

**[The Sower]**

1910-1911

Bronze

20.4 x 10.5 x 14.3 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.069

## 10. MARC-AURÈLE DE FOY SUZOR-COTÉ

Arthabaska, Québec, 1869 – Daytona Beach, États-Unis, 1937

*Le Pionnier*  
**[The Pioneer]**

1925

Bronze

51.5 x 26 x 21 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.067

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## 11. MARC-AURÈLE DE FOY SUZOR-COTÉ

Arthabaska, Québec, 1869 – Daytona Beach, États-Unis, 1937

*L'Hydrographe ou L'Arpenteur*  
**[The Hydrographer or Surveyor]**

1924-1926

Bronze

52.5 x 21 x 21 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.066

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## 12. MARC-AURÈLE DE FOY SUZOR-COTÉ

Arthabaska, Québec, 1869 – Daytona Beach, États-Unis, 1937

*Le Père Fleury*  
**[Father Fleury]**

1908

Bronze

26 x 28 x 20 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.060

### **13. LOUIS-PHILIPPE HÉBERT**

Sainte-Sophie-d'Halifax, Québec, 1850 – Westmount, Québec, 1917

#### ***Dollard des Ormeaux***

1916

Bronze

92.3 x 46.5 x 33.5 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.051

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### **14. MARC-AURÈLE DE FOY SUZOR-COTÉ**

Arthabaska, Québec, 1869 – Daytona Beach, États-Unis, 1937

#### ***La Compagne du vieux pionnier* [The Old Pioneer's Companion]**

1912

Bronze

40 x 22.6 x 40.5 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.059

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### **15. MARC-AURÈLE DE FOY SUZOR-COTÉ**

Arthabaska, Québec, 1869 – Daytona Beach, États-Unis, 1937

#### ***Le Vieux Pionnier canadien* [The Old Canadian Pioneer]**

1912

Bronze

38.8 x 21.2 x 36.9 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.058

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## 16. LOUIS-PHILIPPE HÉBERT

Sainte-Sophie-d'Halifax, Québec, 1850 – Westmount, Québec, 1917

*Fleur des bois*  
**[Forest Flower]**

1897

Bronze

53.5 x 32 x 17 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.053

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## 17. MARC-AURÈLE DE FOY SUZOR-COTÉ

Arthabaska, Québec, 1869 – Daytona Beach, États-Unis, 1937

*Le Faucheur*  
**[The Reaper]**

1907

Bronze

29.6 x 19 x 25 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.061

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## 18. LOUIS-PHILIPPE HÉBERT

Sainte-Sophie-d'Halifax, Québec, 1850 – Westmount, Québec, 1917

*Pêcheur à la nigogue*  
**[Fisherman with Two-Pronged Spear]**

1916

Bronze

67.6 x 27 x 25 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.057

## 19. MARC-AURÈLE DE FOY SUZOR-COTÉ

Arthabaska, Québec, 1869 – Daytona Beach, États-Unis, 1937

### *L'Iroquois* [The Iroquois]

1907

Bronze, posthumous cast

43.5 x 27.2 x 36 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.064

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## 20. LOUIS-PHILIPPE HÉBERT

Sainte-Sophie-d'Halifax, Québec, 1850 – Westmount, Québec, 1917

### *Sans merci* [Merciless]

1893

Bronze

46.4 x 27.7 x 34 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.056

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## 21. ALFRED LALIBERTÉ

Ste-Élisabeth-de-Warwick, Québec, 1877 – Montréal, Québec, 1953

### *Jeunes Indiens chassant* [Young Indians Hunting]

1904-1905

Bronze

37.3 x 35 x 24.5 cm

Collection A.K. Prakash

2019.072

## VIDEO DOCUMENTS

### ***S'arrêter pour écouter ce que ça éveille en nous*** **[Stop to listen to what rises inside]**

2020

3 HD videos

Approximately 6 minutes each

Contributors: Roger Echaquan, Eruoma Ottawa-Chilton, Nicole O'Bomsawin

Production: La Boîte Rouge VIF and Yändata' Productions

These videos were produced in the context of the exhibition

*Gazes in Dialogue: Hébert, Laliberté, Suzor-Coté, and Fleming. The A.K. Prakash Collection of Historical Sculptures, A Gift to the Musée d'art de Joliette,*

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