

NEW ACQUISITIONS

A Peek at the MAJ Collection

1. FRANÇOISE SULLIVAN

Montréal, Québec, 1923

Cycle crétois, 1982

[Cretan Cycle]

Acrylic and collage on canvas, 115.7 x 116 cm

Gift of Martin Champagne

2023.127

An inspiring artist who recently celebrated her 101st birthday, the still-active Françoise Sullivan never ceases to amaze. The MAJ recently acquired a work by this major abstract artist, completing the representation of her *Cycle crétois* series in our collection. The piece also provides a new reading of this series, which is comprised of about twenty works from the early 1980s.

Sullivan set to work on *Cycle crétois* after having spent a year in Crete, where she studied ancient ruins and sculptures. The area's dry and sterile landscape awakened her imagination and renewed her interest in primal forces and mythology. Here, Sullivan evokes the myths of creation, meditative moments or secret rituals, all while remaining resolutely abstract. In this particular work, two of the series' typical elements are actually absent, notably the integration of figurative elements—birds, snakes, rivers and mountains—and the use of a more vibrant palette. This makes this new acquisition particularly unique among this body of work.

2. JEAN ALBERT MCEWEN

Montréal, Québec, 1923 - Montréal, Québec, 1999

Le Drapeau écorché n° 10, 1985

[The Slaughtered Flag No. 10]

Oil on canvas, 188 x 102 cm

Gift of Indra Kagis McEwen

2023.118

In 2023, the painter Jean Albert McEwen would have been 100 years old. Over the course of his career, McEwen developed a body of abstract work that was concerned with colour, gesture, transparency, and the role of pictorial planes and margins. His work *Reunited Islands* was in fact the inspiration for the title of a permanent collection exhibition that was presented here from 2015 until very recently. Two paintings by McEwen, acquired last year, have filled areas of his practice that, until now, were missing from the collection.

Le Drapeau écorché n° 10, from 1985, is often associated with the iconic *Unknown Flags* series that McEwen developed between 1963 and 1964, when Canada was in the process of selecting its distinctive national flag. Compared with other works from the *Unknown Flags* series, which are square in shape, those under the *Drapeau écorché* title, created nearly twenty years later, follow an upright, rectangular form.

3. ANNE KAHANE

Vienna, Austria, 1924 - Mont-Royal, Québec, 2023

Soccer Player, 1974

Pine, 172 x 32.2 x 33.4 cm

Estate of Anne Kahane

2024.049

Untitled, before 1970

Ink on paper, 43.1 x 35.6 cm

Estate of Anne Kahane

2024.051

In 1958, Anne Kahane took part in the Venice Biennale and became the first woman sculptor to represent Canada at this prestigious international art event. Incidentally, Kahane also would have turned 100 last year. A short time after her death, the MAJ acquired two wood sculptures and a series of prints,

promptly expanding our repertoire of her work in the collection.

While most Québec sculptors worked from a single block of wood, Kahane preferred joining wood planks together, as seen in *Soccer Player*. She spent the 1970s exploring the body's expressive abilities, seeking to reduce it to its simplest expression. The sketch that accompanies this sculpture, quite likely drawn during the same period, illustrates how she deconstructed the body by flattening its volumes.

4. FERNAND LEDUC

Montréal, Québec, 1916 - Montréal, Québec, 2014

***Composition noir et blanc*, 1961**

[Composition Black and White]

Oil on canvas, 73 x 91.6 cm

Gift of Madeleine Forcier

2024.046

Fernand Leduc, a key artist in Québec's abstract art movement who died ten years ago, now has another piece in the MAJ collection. This abstract, four-colour painting is a fine example of the creative momentum he enjoyed in the 1960s, which saw him streamline his pictorial language while emphasizing the power of colour.

In *Composition noir et blanc*, coloured planes simultaneously play the role of background and form. With no chromatic modulation, each coloured area is set against the same plane. During the 1960s, Leduc began a new body of work in which he refined his surface even more. Starting in 1964, three years after making this piece, Leduc developed his binary chromatic works, in which he explored the synergy between background and form as a combined force. The result is an optical effect that renders the background and the painted form indistinguishable from each other. Although the present work is composed of four colours, it reflects Leduc's desire to minimize his palette, which in turn entails an obvious perceptual complexity where figure and background become interchangeable.

5. ULYSSE COMTOIS

Granby, Québec, 1931 - Montréal, Québec, 1999

A Joe, 1961

[To Joe]

Oil on canvas, 40.8 x 35.7 cm

Gift of Geneviève Dussault

2024.039

The works selected for this exhibition mostly revolve around abstract artists from Québec. This painting by Ulysse Comtois is a reminder of how modernity was a period of intense exploration in the local art scene. Comtois made the most of this and developed a free-thinking, independent spirit all his own.

Much like his production as a whole, Comtois' *A Joe* is typical of his approach, in which different artistic trajectories are brought together within the same piece. *A Joe* is part of the artist's late 1950s output, when his pictorial orientation confronted the commitment of the Automatistes and the principles of the Plasticiens, simultaneously moving away from one and towards the other.

The work's process is rooted in the gesture, while horizontal bands attempt to divide the pictorial space more systematically. This work embodies the artist's reflections on the relationship between dynamism and stasis, and the order and disorder that were at the heart of his practice in the 1960s.

FLOOR PLAN

3rd floor in the hallway

Espace 3^e étage

