

# ARTINFO

## Montreal's Cerebral Art Scene Gets Its Due at the Quebec Triennial



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To

summarize

the

**Triennale**

**Québécoise** 2011 in 500 words requires unjust brevity.

Housed within the **Musée d'art Contemporain**, the Quebec Triennial is a large-scale survey of emerging artists in and around the Montreal area. The exhibition involves the work over 40 artists selected by five curators, complimented by a series of performances and talks. The whole thing is the product of extensive research into what art in Montreal looks like today. The exhibition takes its name, "The Work Ahead of Us," from a recent installation by Tennessee-born, Montreal-based artist **Grier Edmundson**, who himself lifted the title from an essay by great Russian Constructivist **Vladimir Tatlin**, thus setting up a theme of the play between history and the present that continues throughout.

One highlight in this vein is **Myriam Yates**'s video "Racetrack Superstar Ghost" (2011), which documents the construction of a pavilion created for rock band **U2**'s recent 360 tour at the site of the **Hippodrome de Montréal**, a legendary racetrack that is currently scheduled for demolition. Both precise and disinterested, Yates's camera drifts over the landscapes with a melancholic grace. By documenting the scaffolding assemblage on the abandoned Hippodrome, Yates weaves a complex narrative between these two architectures, the one deliberately temporary, the other more lasting but doomed. In the parting shot, as fireworks signal a grand finale, a lone skunk runs across some grass a kilometer from the venue.

“Racetrack Superstar Ghost” nicely captures a sense of transient spectacle.

For his contribution, **Francois Lemieux** placed two small trees within the exhibition space and surrounded them with a large wall painting. The trees sit within matching hexagonal pots. Lemieux has affixed two accompanying letters explaining the trees’ original locations and the institutional activities he undertook to procure them from their previous locations within the city. The work is at once romantic in its reference to nature, and institutional — in the gallery the trees appear orphaned. The surrounding wall paintings have a familiar uncomfortable/comforting pastel palette reminiscent of a neglected hospital ward. Lemieux’s work encourages a reflection upon the gallery’s ability to re-frame the everyday world — both inside its spaces and beyond.

Grier Edmundson’s installation centers around a small monochromatic painting of Italian Futurist **F. T. Marinetti**. Like Tatlin, Marinetti produced more ideology than art. The echo of Marinetti’s 1909 exhortation to “destroy the museums, the libraries, every type of academy” rests bemusedly within the ethers of its present context, a contemporary museum. Stenciled simply onto an unstretched canvas curtain, a text reads “Sometimes I am content.” The statement’s simple duality speaks volumes: it is reflective, modest, and self-aware. Rather than declaring some revolutionary ambition, it remains a soft and restrained puzzle.

Other highlights in the exhibition include a towering paper installation by **Seripop**, performances by **Eve K. Trembley & PME-Art**, abstract paintings by **Chris Kline**, photos by **Jessica Eaton**, sculptures by **Valerie Kolakis** and **Fabienne Lasserre**, and an immersive video installation by **Julie Favreau**. **Lorna Bauer**’s project “Éminence Grise (How to Sell Burroughs Paintings)” (2011) incorporates a text both instructing one on how to sell works by **William S. Burroughs** and explaining these paintings’ historical relationship to **Brion Gyson**, thereby standing out as a consideration of the re-appropriating and reframing tendencies of contemporary work suggested by the Triennial’s title.

Overall, the show touches on a variety of human emotions: There is something ominous, something upbeat, something about the inevitable passing of time. Appropriated from elsewhere, the title “The Work Ahead of Us” comes to frame and modify the local present. In the end, it seems to offer a positive mantra to emerging artists, in Montreal and elsewhere.

*The Triennale Québécoise 2011 runs from October 7, 2011 to January 3, 2012.*

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