

Kent Laforme Sculpting a Philosophy

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Kent Laforme: Sculpting a Philosophy

DONNA D'AMOUR

Peacefulness and gentle force; East meets West. Such is the goal of sculptor Kent Laforme, son of a Japanese mother and Caucasian father.

Strong, clean lines define *Fountain*, a 3500-pound work of Pink Portuguese Marble created for the Cinque Terre building in Vancouver, BC. The art glistens as water flows around and down the inclined layers,

softening the pink and ivory coloured stone, spiralling beautifully, projecting calm and conjuring contemplation. This heavy stone appears light and creamy, soft and soothing, echoing the artist's theme.

Born in Nova Scotia, raised in Montreal, Laforme's passion for stone began early. "When I was nine, I illustrated a book titled *The Travels of a Metamorphic Rock*. I think it was a foreshadowing,

because twenty years later I am, again, giving new faces to stone."

Shortly after graduating from John Abbott College in Montreal, Laforme was hooked on sculpture when he picked up a chisel at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. In 1992, he was awarded a scholarship for independent study in Pietrasanta, Italy, where he specialized in marble sculpture.

"Pietrasanta is the world's Mecca for stone carving and it was truly the best place to learn," he says. "I fell in love with Italy and stayed there three years learning my art. I worked at Studio Leonardi with a group of international artists. I learned a lot from Sauro Lorenzini who was Isamu Noguchi's assistant. I also worked as an assistant for Taiwanese sculptor, Cynthia Sah, Japanese sculptor, Akiko Sato, and Canadian sculptor, John Greer. It's a great place to study as there is a great understanding of sculpture, with fantastic tool shops and Italian marbles and stones imported from all over the world."

In 1996, he moved to Hong Kong to work as a writer but he also participated in five multi-media exhibitions. He now has a studio in Victoria, BC, where he's equipped to handle large-scale pieces and commissions.

Laforme's *Prince Siddhartha* is a bust of Arabascata Italian Marble with fine features and clever use of lines, especially around the eyes to produce the idea of an eyebrow without actually carving one. "Carving stone is particularly engaging for the artist because it is reductive sculpture rather than additive," he says. "There is a tension that arises from the fact that you can't make many mistakes and get away with it. It is also very physical and requires endurance and patience, which I like."

Laforme works with the premise of the Golden Section, or Divine Proportion, which informs the Western concept of the Laws of Nature. He integrates Buddhist subject matter, underpinning the Laws of the Universe in an Eastern

philosophy. "A sculpture begins with a concept dictated by a personal philosophy toward the medium. I am particularly interested in ancient Buddhist sculpture and am working on what I refer to as contemporary stone carvings that have an Eastern philosophy behind them." Currently, he is continuing the Asian tradition of Buddhist portrait carving. His *Calcutta Buddha* of Italian Calacatta Marble evokes inner wisdom, peace, and strength.

In 2004, Laforme began working with a foundry in Vancouver that uses a process called "Lost Wax" to create bronze sculptures from his marble creations. They make a rubber mold of the marble sculptures, then cast a wax positive from the mold. A ceramic shell is made around the wax, which is then melted out and the bronze poured in. The pieces are welded together and cleaned up. A patina is applied using painting chemicals and a blowtorch. It's way of recasting ancient philosophy with modern techniques. Laforme has had exhibits in Hong Kong, Italy, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia. He also exhibits his work in a gallery in Calgary called Artists of the World.

Kent Laforme will be one of eight sculptors carving before audiences, between August 28 and September 10, at the first *Atlantic Stone Carving Symposium*, at the Inverness County Centre for the Arts, Inverness, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

All artists will work on 300- to 500-pound blocks of Cape Breton Marble extracted from the nearby River Denys quarry by MacLeod Resources. President Chris Trider says Cape Breton Marble is sold to markets in Carrara, Italy, to Stone Source in New York, and to several provinces in Canada. Buyers say it reminds them of antique marble used in churches in Italy hundreds of years ago. The richly veined stone comes in a variety of vibrant reds, from very dark to antique, pink, grey-blue, and a unique dark grey-blue with distinct spiral eyes. This provides a challenge to the artist, as the beauty of the stone

Kent LAFORME, *Fountain*. Pink Portuguese marble, created for the Cinque Terre building in Vancouver, BC. Photo: courtesy of the artist.





Kent Laforme said he hoped the public would gain an awareness of stone carving as a three-dimensional art as opposed to conventional painting. "Stones encapsulate geological paintings," he says. Although he's never worked with Cape Breton marble, he said he is excited to carve stone from the ground where he grew up. ←

Kent LAFORME working. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

Atlantic Stone Carving Symposium
Inverness County Centre for the Arts,
Inverness, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia
Aug. 28 – Sept. 10, 2005

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Donna D'Amour won the 2005 Atlantic Journalism Gold Award for Atlantic Magazine Article. She has been published in *The Globe and Mail*, *Saltscapes*, *Visual Arts Nova Scotia*, *Lifestyle Nova Scotia*, *Style at Home* and in the 2003 *Canadian Writer's Guide*. She lives in Louisdale, Nova Scotia.

can easily overwhelm their concept of the work. Other sculptors involved in the symposium will be facilitator Vanessa Paschakarnis, Kathryn Ellis, Carl Tacon, Laura Moore, John Greer, Gerard Kelly,

and Rudolph Henninger. The sculptures created during the symposium will be on exhibit at the Inverness County Centre for the Arts and will travel for a period of one year to the main sponsors of the event before

being put up for sale. This symposium will allow people to speak with the artists as they work, attend workshops and seminars on stone carving, and pick up a chisel and try their hand on sample stones.

PARUTIONS

LIVRES REÇUS

Arpenter l'île—Montréal, vues singulières, catalogue d'exposition. © Les artistes, les auteurs et la Galerie B-312, Montréal, 2004, s.p.

Ce très beau « petit » livre, tiré à 200 exemplaires et publié en parallèle à une exposition à la Galerie B-312, regroupe les vues singulières de 25 artistes — notamment Claire Beaulieu, Eva Brandl, Trevor Gould, Renée Lavaillante, Hélène Sarrazin et Suzan Vachon. « Aujourd'hui, précise Anne-Marie Belley, alors que le sujet est plus que jamais en danger, attaqué qu'il est de tous côtés par la rumeur, l'opinion, la généralisation à l'emporte-pièce, le nivellement, et tous les petits-maîtres qui veulent notre bien-être, *Arpenter l'île* — Montréal, vues singulières est une bouffée d'oxygène, un véritable manifeste de la subjectivité à travers 25 témoignages aussi sobres qu'efficaces car les auteurs s'éclipsent derrière les espaces esthétiques qu'ils ont ouverts si généreusement pour nous dans la plus ineffable des discrétions. »

Diane LAURIER et Pierre GOSSELIN (sous la direction de), *Tactiques insolites: vers une méthodologie de recherche en pratique artistique*, Guérin éditeur, Montréal, 2004, 183 pages.

L'ouvrage est issu d'une concertation entre théoriciens et artistes-chercheurs, ces derniers

voulant contribuer à la réflexion qui s'engage dans différents milieux universitaires autour des questions de méthodologie de recherche en pratique artistique.

Éric LANIOL, *Logiques de l'élémentaire (Le dérisoire dans les pratiques contemporaines)*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2004, 91 pages.

Artiste et enseignant-chercheur en arts plastiques à l'Université Marc Bloch de Strasbourg, Éric Laniol s'attarde sur les pratiques de divers artistes qui s'appuient sur le peu, l'insuffisant, le banal, le dérisoire, voire le médiocre d'où émane « le désir d'une forme renouvelée d'échange, comme l'attention à une proximité à la fois plus immédiate et plus vraie. »

Jacques MORIZOT (sous la direction de), *Art: Changer de conviction*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2004, 273 pages.

L'ensemble des textes constitue le troisième volet d'un triptyque consacré à approfondir la situation de l'art moderne et contemporain — après *Les Frontières esthétiques de l'art* (1999) et *L'Art à l'époque du virtuel* (2003). Cette fois, les divers auteurs questionnent la notion de conviction. « La conviction n'est pas une certitude donnée par avance, elle se manifeste de préférence à travers le changement et même la rupture. C'est par excellence la conquête d'une forme de

compréhension dont l'objet n'est rien moins qu'une redéfinition de la notion d'art. »

Des choses abjectes, catalogue d'exposition. Louis CUMMINS: commissaire. Textes de Louis Cummins, Jean-Pierre LATOUR et Ève DEGARIE-LAMANQUE, Éd. Centre d'artistes AXENÉO7, Gatineau, 2004.

Publié par le centre d'artistes AXENÉO7, *Des choses abjectes* est le catalogue d'une exposition qui eut lieu du 25 mars au 28 avril 2004 et qui réunissait dix artistes sur le thème de l'abjection. Offert sur CD-Rom, le catalogue propose des textes sur la question de l'abjection ainsi qu'une présentation des œuvres de chacun des artistes participants. À la suite des réflexions de Georges Bataille, de Julia Kristeva ainsi que de Rosalind Krauss sur l'abjection et le destin de l'informe, que peut-on dire de plus sur les problèmes que soulèvent ces notions et pourquoi formuler de nouveau cette question? Ayant à faire avec les dimensions psychologique, éthique ou culturelle, c'est toutefois l'unique disposition esthétique que le commissaire, Louis Cummins, traite par le biais de cette exposition. L'abject sera alors défini comme l'envers et le fondement des catégories esthétiques. Côté l'irreprésentable, l'abjection n'est-elle pas en effet une source d'intrigue pour les arts visuels? Une

chose semble claire: c'est qu'au sein de notre culture visuelle, l'art peut être le relais permettant de mieux comprendre ce qui est considéré comme à la limite « de ce qui serait encore admissible sur le plan des représentations d'un certain type d'affects ».



Naomi London. Trois projets sur le thème du plaisir, de l'espoir et du temps qui passe / Sweets, hope and the passage of time: three projects, catalogue d'exposition. Musée d'art de Joliette, en collaboration avec la Koffler Gallery de Toronto, 2005, 31 pages.

Le catalogue — bilingue et en couleurs — comprend un avant-propos signé par France Gascon et retrace l'exposition qu'a tenue l'artiste à la Koffler Gallery de Toronto et au Musée d'art de Joliette. Une exposition qui réunit des œuvres de diverses périodes et porte « une réflexion sur la condition humaine, ancrée dans ses aspects les plus quotidiens ».