

TRANSCIENCE

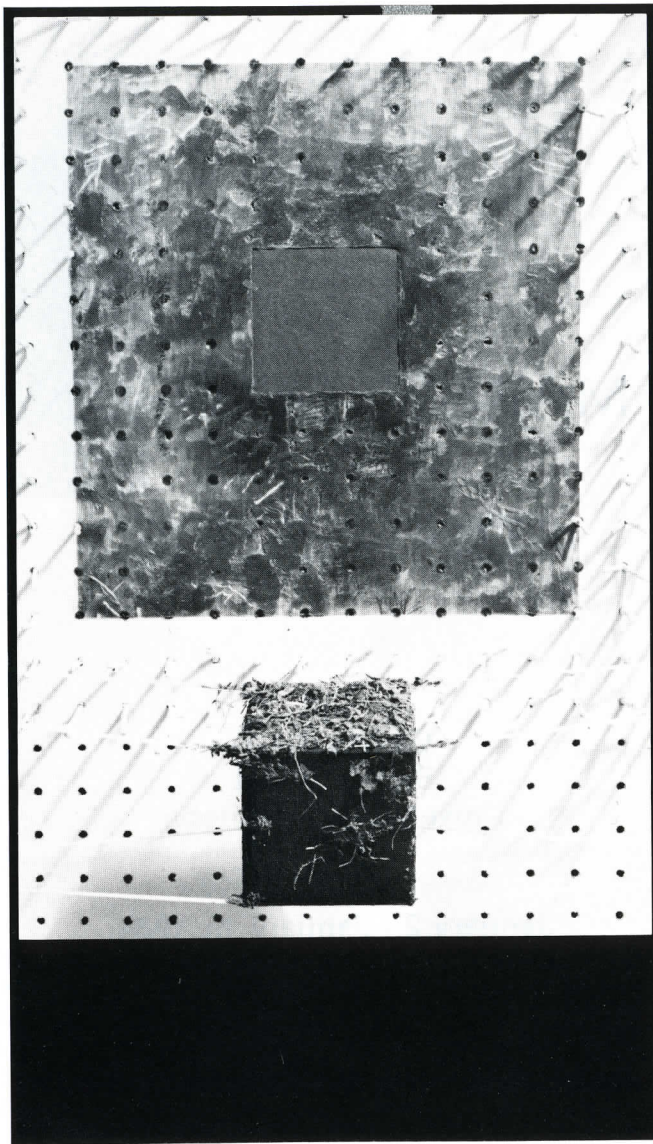
MARCEL GOSSELIN

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“TRANSIENCE”

Gallery 1.1.1.
School of Art
University of Manitoba

January 2 - January 19, 1984



Land Separation (detail), 73 x 61 x 27 cm., 1983

INTRODUCTION

Upon first meeting Marcel Gosselin, I was immediately warmed by his positive attitude, his enthusiasm for both life and art. Marcel's joie de vivre was substantiated by a cheery "Hello!", a warm but firm handshake, and an inquisitive sparkle in his eyes as they sought contact with mine.

I sense he is a man of firm beliefs supplemented by an intense inner desire to seek the truth by patiently trying the spirit of all matter as it confronts him. Simultaneously, man and artist internalize all incoming sensory data; questioning, examining, sifting, and re-examining that which he has observed. Then the final intellectual evaluation is made. A new truth intuitively reflecting the artist's process of becoming makes tangible that which was never before present to confront us. The work *TRACES* illustrates this process, even though to varying degrees of intensity this trying of the spirit is evident in each creation comprising this exhibition. *TRACES* is derived from the artist's love for Creation inextricably bound up in his "reflections on *SAPIENS ARBORA*" and subsequently frustrated by his lack of infinite power to prevent this beautiful vision of wisdom of the woods from deterioration. *TRACES* is a historical documentation, or writing, of the dialogue between God, Creation, and artist. It employs grass, leaves, and twigs, even rabbit droppings and the wing of an insect as the elements of nature. However, *TRACES* also incorporates Marcel's own rubberized latex creations which parallel nature. (ie. the spider web and the implications of leaves in various stages of deterioration.) Supplementary to these are: the rusty fencing staples, a small chip of red paint — that had been accidentally knocked from his son's tricycle — a sewing pin, and a series of fishing clinch bead sinkers crimped onto lines which demark the perimeter of the

work. All of these diverse componential mediums show the great time span that the artist has so intensely dealt with. *TRACES* encapsulates the artist's patient manipulation, his unyielding commitment to search out the soul of each work.

Marcel's art involves the viewer, each respective piece visually excites the eye and stimulates the mind, evoking myriads of intensely personal associations. *PASSAGE* shows this but also emphasizes Marcel's innate ability to pull together a great diversity of materials into a uniquely thought provoking statement. *PASSAGE*, for example, is composed of twigs, branches, material wrapping, small bits of foam, wires, wood, latex skins, electric lights and switches, all of which are superimposed on a sheet of pegboard that was first painted, then sprinkled with different colored grains of earth. Within the relief sculpture there is a ribbed branch covered with latex skins calling to mind the image of an ark or boat. Perhaps this is the mode of transportation used or to be used for the passage? *PASSAGE* confronts us with our personal and sociological beginnings and then returns us to our present day realities.

Marcel's oeuvre reflects the sensitive, observant intellectual being he is. The diversity of intent represented by his works becomes his blessing, in that this diversity sets him free to soar as an eagle on high. Even though works like *VENERATED GROUND* and *WITNESS* differ in intent, the most important unifying quality is always evident. That quality is love: for Creation, for mankind, a love to communicate his personal perceptions, a love to aptly express through the manipulation of materials, a love to create, to culminate the knowledge, love, and zest for life of its creator.

— Zared T. Mann

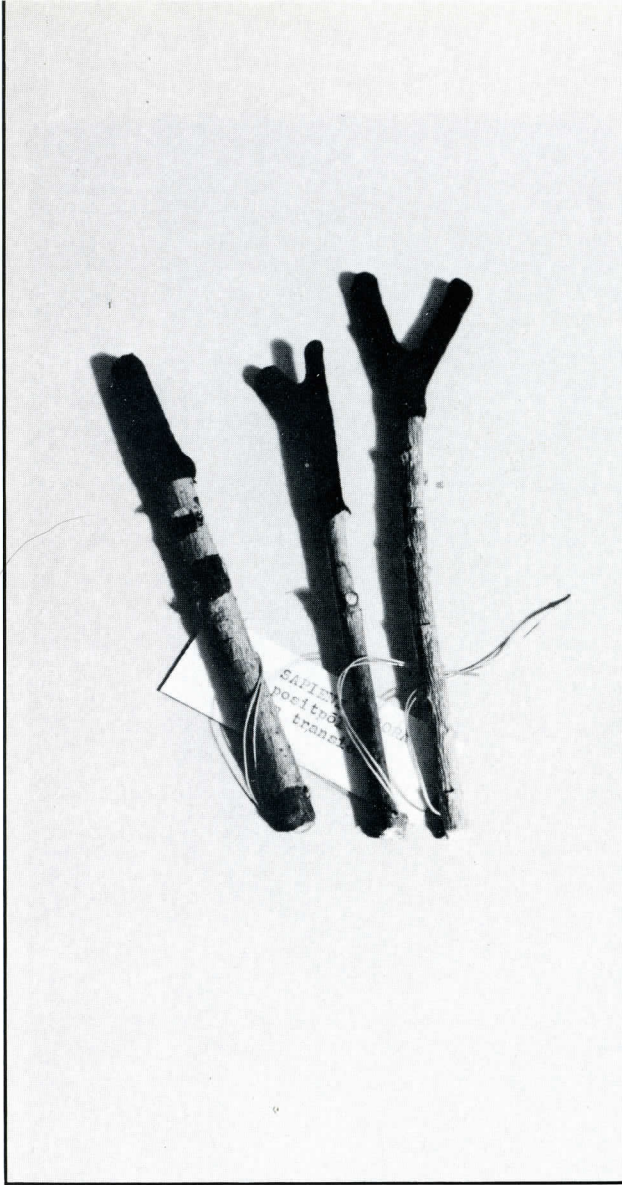
Extraits du journal de l'artiste Excerpts from the artist's journal

- 1 NOV 83 Au niveau technique, les décisions pratiques déterminent souvent la forme finale. Cette forme efficace est pour moi la plus esthétique.
- 3 APR 83 There must be a gap between the work of art and the viewer. Like the critical distance separating the two poles of an arc torch, it is the only way to have an intense reaction or art experience.
- 31 MAR 83 I see my objects as road signs. Yet I do not know what there is at the end of the road. There may not even be a destination. And so I discover what I can along the way.
- 25 DEC 82 Moments have a life span and are consumed by time. Art tries to capture moments by becoming them.
- 25 DEC 82 Memory and imagination are our means of return to the past and of our journey into the future. Art, working like a time machine, makes more alive our present by pulling us backward and forward into time.
- 25 DEC 82 Every step you take through time and space alters your perception.
- 20 SEPT 82 L'artiste ne veut pas prendre le temps d'être pratique, il est trop occupé à être perdu. Pendant que certains s'occupent à vivre (?), l'artiste s'occupe à trouver une raison pour son existence ou à tout simplement vouloir prouver son existence. Il essaie de définir sa maladie, sa folie, pour enfin y trouver un remède.
- 21 AUG 82 Notre existence est tellement fragile. Tout se tient ensemble par des fils. Sur le marché, on retrouve mille et une petites "patentes" pour arranger, réparer, rafistoler nos plus grosses "patentes". Des vis, des colles, des élastiques — il y a de tout pour nous empêcher de tomber en morceaux.
- 30 JUL 82 As a viewer of my own work I do not want labels. I like to be obliged to take on a child's vision, thus there is less recognition and more cognition. In this way I am curious and enjoy "getting to know" the work.
- 13 MAY 82 Quand je travaille, c'est comme me regarder dans un miroir: parfois mes cheveux sont dépeignés.
- 13 MAY 82 L'oeuvre est comme une alliance offerte à qui veut la prendre.
- 22 MAR 82 Un objet est important seulement en autant qu'il y a un humain là pour l'observer et y réfléchir. On parle des oeuvres de l'artiste comme si c'était là l'important. C'est vrai que c'est là le point de départ mais ce n'est pas là l'important.
- 31 AUG 81 Il faut qu'une oeuvre transmette un ton urgent, une nécessité d'être. C'est comme rencontrer une nouvelle personne qui nous fait voir dès la première seconde, sa vigueur, non par sa beauté physique ni par son intellect mais plutôt par une présence vitale. Cette présence serait peut-être ce qu'on appelle l'âme.
- 31 JUL 81 Si les choses vont mal, demande-toi si tu as aimé ton dernier geste; sinon, refait le pour qu'il soit un geste d'amour.
- 2 JUL 80 Elle est là
La ligne
Qui suit l'horizon
Et s'approche de toi
Elle se dépose sur ta main
Et fait spirale autour de ton bras
Pour obéir à ton front.
Elle est calme
Brillante
Bleue
Et si facile
- 20 OCT 79 Silverfish, Goldfish, J'm'en fiche.



Mirador: Le Soir, 31 x 31 x 55 cm., 1983

Réflexion sur SAPIENS ARBORA



Plus de X

Mais Y était resté, et
Maintenant il y avait
I
Je ne le connaissais pas
I
Comment le faire grandir?
Terre et eau — terre et eau
Terre, eau — terre, eau
I ne croît pas
Je m'en fiche, je le jette
Je les jette tous
au sol
Couverts de sable pour cacher
ma faute
ma très grande faute
Et de là — l'eau de là
le pōl grandit
Pas en hauteur mais en richesse
Riche d'un pollen foncé —
qui finit.,
Noircit le sable, et le change
le change
en terre.

A reflection on SAPIENS ARBORA

Sitting at the forest edge that morning, I had come to watch them change and die. There seemed to be no more X's, just Y's and now I's. They never saw me and so I did not exist. There were however the odd few that felt my presence and they were not indifferent. Some hated. Others loved. I was forced to respect their intensity whatever their feelings.

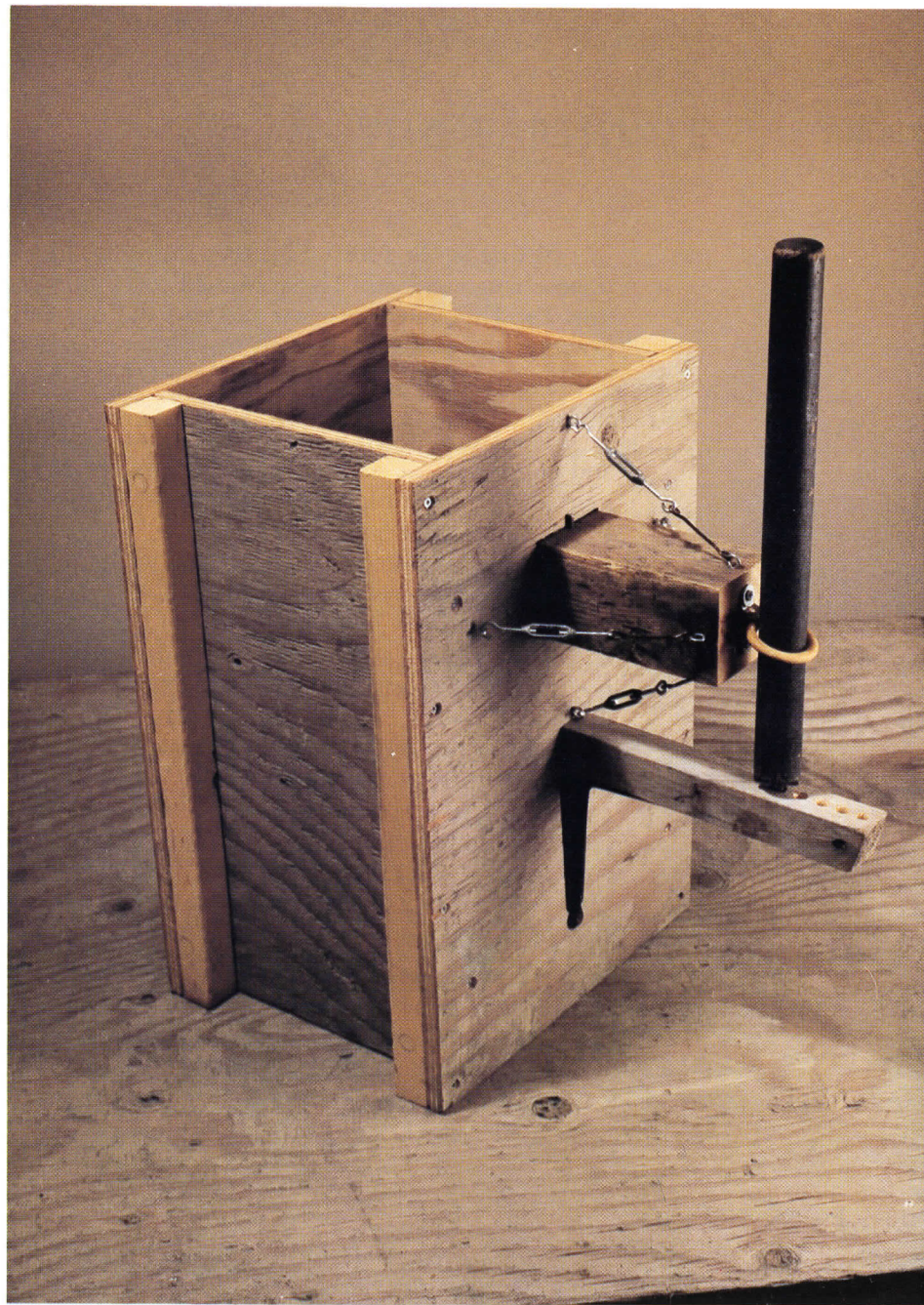
The ritual began when a strange vapour came forth from them and condensed on each of their extremities. It was as though a myriad of thin shining rods had suddenly appeared on the forest floor. I could not help but cry.

Clouds of fine black dust began to form what seemed to be dark nebulae against the daytime sky. Although the air was always charged, I had never noticed it more. I felt propelled forward and simultaneously held back by a soft invisible force. The clouds hovered for a moment above the trees. Then millions of particles funnelled toward each pole in a strange rite of pollination. Soon after, the wind swept away the remaining cloud traces and the stillness returned.

The time was near. Slowly and almost imperceptibly the black pollen lightened to a rich dark brown. Only once before, a long time ago, had I unknowingly seen them die. Somehow I knew that the final moment would again be important to them. But I could not let them die . . .

and so I killed them.

I rendered them permanent. Cut, banded, labelled and classified, they were rescued from their vital end. I had given them a defunct immortality. Again, I cried.



EarthSafe Matrix, 42 x 61 x 75 cm., 1983



EarthSafe, August 1983, 31 x 31 x 61 cm. at origin.

THE EARTHSafe

When Marcel Gosselin told me his piece was called "**EarthSafe**," that struck an inner chord. He was showing me photos of the piece with its deep, sun-caked fissures, and he talked of how the birds first avoided it as a suspicious man-made object and then gradually adapted to it and even fought over possession of it. Also, of course, insects, especially spiders, liked it very much.

"Is it art?" I asked.

"I hope not," he replied.

So we're back again at the attempt to bypass the pretensions of art history and the artificialities of mode and taste.

"But you're exhibiting it," I countered.

"Well yes, that's not right, I know."

On seeing three of these pieces, each at a different phase of weathering, one broken like an old peasant, one round-shouldered and deeply cracked and flaked and one foursquare, pristine, striated with rusty brown and deep umber, the three

standing in sun and wind on the artist's property in LaSalle, it seemed only possible to appreciate the real meaning of these structures in such a context — on an exposed prairie acreage next to a tall country church. It all fitted together so well that I shared the artist's apprehension about a gallery setting. Somehow the **process** would be arrested and "**EarthSafe**" would be just art: a final statement, a stasis, an end-product, which it isn't.

Gosselin is trying to avoid art, at least art as we think of it now. He strives to return to a primitive source. "**EarthSafe**" resembles the attempts of early mankind to shape nature crudely and with "massive" effect. It is a primordial gesture that gives nature a form expressive of a primal wonder at organic change. It suggests a latent awe not of the exploitable potency of earth but of its hidden spirit.

There is a religious feeling in this act. Why should a grown man in the twentieth

century spend his time moulding the earth in a box? The act of the imagination is **the** authentic act, that's why. This is not art to further tradition or be memorialized in a museum. It is symbolic of an intimacy of relationship with the earth itself and its processes of change. The piece is not made to last.

"**EarthSafe**" is in a sense a fertility goddess, but to say so, is to go against its true spirit. To label it is to see it as ART. Who can designate the ineffable? We should dumbly contemplate that sharply defined, geometric shape, the feebly emblematic resistance to death that pattern and design impose in all art, as, slowly, by means of organic invasions and weathering, it decomposes through fissured decrepitude as a mere relic of human creativity and finally returns to life and sinks back into itself.

This is not an art to replace or finalize art as we know it. It is still, inescapably, ART. In a way it is art come full circle.

That such a creative act as this is possible, I mean **culturally** possible, may suggest to some that painting and the other traditional visual arts really have nothing new to say at a deep level but are now variables in a set historical schema, even if, within these restrictions, there is still a great deal to be expressed. In this situation a piece like "**EarthSafe**" attests to a longing for the simplicity of a relationship that marks a quite new beginning, an adventure without a past, a birth of culture itself.

— Arthur Adamson

Arthur Adamson is a poet, artist, writer on the arts and a professor of English at the University of Manitoba.



EarthSafe, October 1983



Traces, 25 x 43 x 61 cm., 1983

Works in the Exhibition

1. *MIRADOR: LE SOIR*, 1983
Branches and plaster
31 x 31 x 55 cm.
2. *EARTHSAFE MATRIX*, 1983
Wood and metal
42 x 61 x 75 cm.
3. *EARTHSAFE*, 1983
Earth
31 x 31 x 61 cm. at origin
4. *LAND SEPARATION*, 1983
Branches, leaves, encaustic and string
27 x 61 x 73 cm.
5. *SAPIENS ARBORA*, 1983
Branches, latex rubber and earth
10 to 12 cm. in length
6. *TRACES*, 1983
Branches, leaves and latex rubber
25 x 43 x 61 cm.
7. *PASSAGE*, 1983
Earth, wood, leaves and latex rubber
237 x 114 x 32 cm.
8. *THE VENERATED GROUND*, 1983
Branches, earth, encaustic and latex rubber
73 x 61 x 16 cm.
9. *WITNESS*, 1983
Branches, earth, dust and latex rubber
76 x 76 x 15 cm.
10. *BOURNE*, 1983
Wood, earth, leaves and latex rubber
91 x 61 x 15 cm.

Marcel Gosselin

1948 Born in St. Boniface, Manitoba

1971 B.F.A. (honours) — University of Manitoba

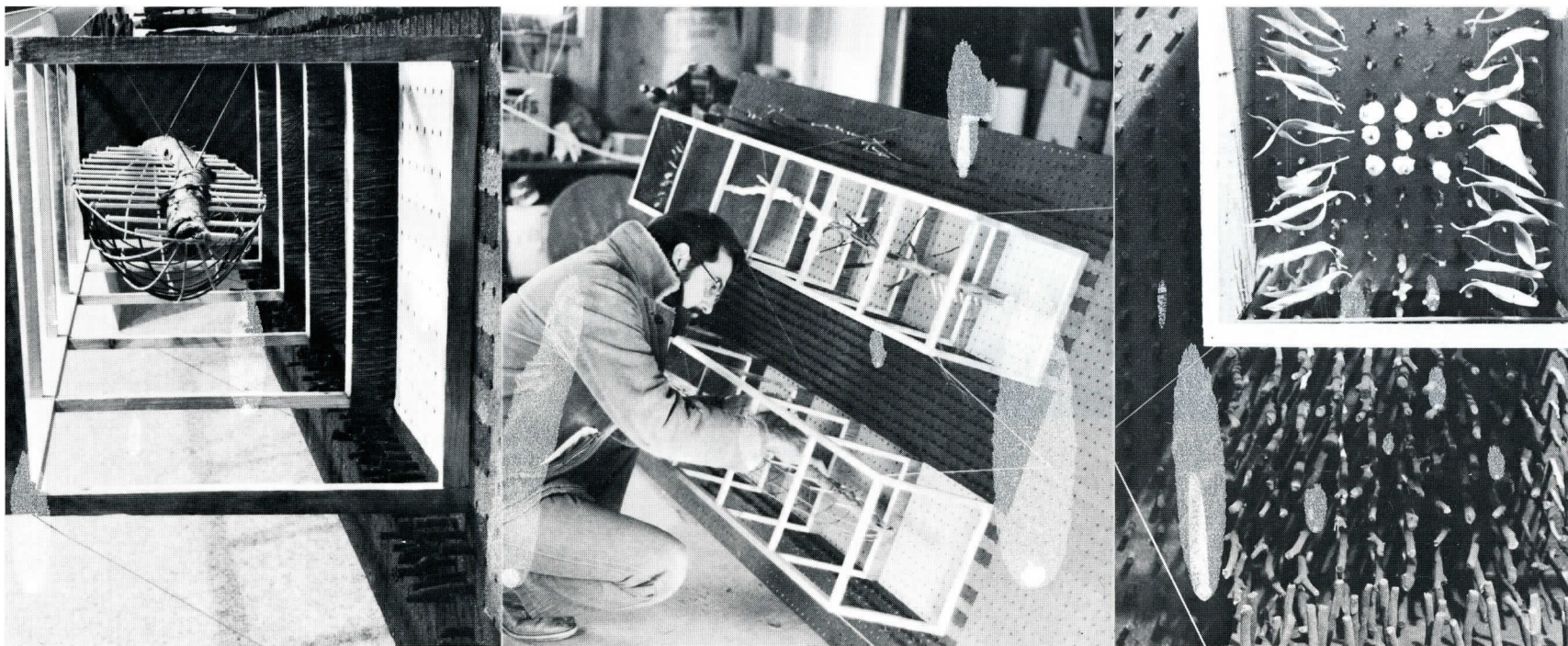
Grants: Manitoba Arts Council visual arts grant — 1983
Canada Arts Council project grant — 1979
Manitoba Arts Council project grants — 1981, 1980, 1976, 1973

Solo exhibitions: 1983 — Plug-In Inc., Winnipeg, Manitoba
1982 — Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain, St. Boniface
1980 — Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain, St. Boniface
1978 — Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain, St. Boniface
1977 — Graphite Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba
1970 — "Au 100 Nons", Saint-Boniface, Manitoba

Group exhibitions: 1982 — Winnipeg Archives, M.S.A. 50th Juried Show
1976 — Place Bonaventure, Montréal, Québec,
1974 — Plains of Abraham, Québec, P.Q.
1974 — Manitoba Theatre Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba
1972 — Winnipeg Concert Hall, Winnipeg, Manitoba
1969 — Gallery 21, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Collections: Canada Council Artbank
Manitoba Government permanent exhibition: Madagascar
Le Collège de Saint-Boniface
Le Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain

Bibliography: Arts Manitoba — Fall 1983 — Louise Kasper
Vanguard — March 1983 — Kip Park
Winnipeg Free Press — June 1982 — John Graham
Winnipeg Free Press — June 1980 — Bryan Rivers
Winnipeg Free Press — March 1977 — John Graham
La Liberté — July 1982 — Louise Kasper
La Liberté — June 1982 — Guy Smith
La Liberté — June 1980 — André-Yves Rompré



Passage, (final stages), 237 x 114 x 32 cm., 1983



Acknowledgements

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Marcel Gosselin
LaSalle
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