

In autumn 2013, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection organized a solo exhibition of Quebec artist Karine Giboulo. *Karine Giboulo's Small Strange World(s)* focused on her stylistic and conceptual development since 2002. At the close of the exhibition, the artist generously offered to the McMichael a unique work, *What Is My Name?*. The sculpture and drawing were conceived especially for the exhibition and grew out of discussions between the artist and me, the exhibition curator, and demonstrate the collaborative relationship between a contemporary Canadian artist and the gallery. Inspired by the gallery's strong interest in Aboriginal art and culture, these works deal with the tainted historical relationship between indigenous peoples and Canada's governing bodies. The acquisition of artworks, particularly those that ensue from a McMichael-curated exhibition, is a reflection of the gallery's commitment to work in partnership with promising Canadian talents who are gaining international reputation for their art. Under its legislation, the McMichael is mandated to acquire for the permanent collection work by any artist who is making a contribution to the development of Canadian art, and Giboulo is increasingly being recognized for her work. The acquisition of *What Is My Name?* is a valuable addition to the Collection and solidifies the gallery's leadership role in understanding contemporary trends in Canadian art and building a new legacy for the future.

WHAT IS MY NAME?

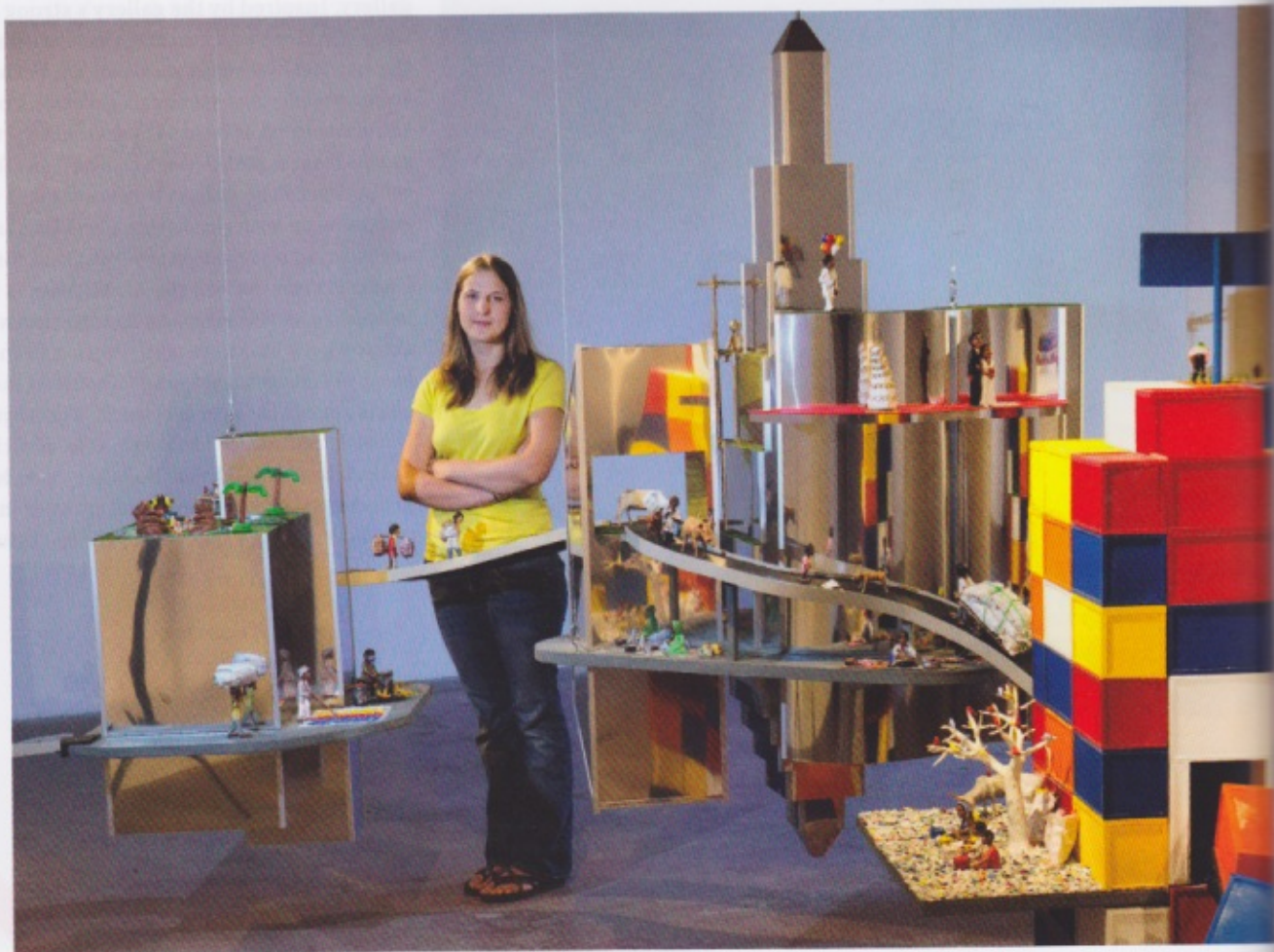
Background

Karine Giboulo (born Gibouleau) is a native of Sainte-Émélie-de-l'Énergie, Quebec, who currently lives and works in Montreal. A young artist, she is already earning her living by her craft. Since the early 2000s, she has been creating work in a variety of media, from paintings and works on paper to three-dimensional art, particularly gaining increasing attention for her dioramas of miniature human environments. A sought-after artist, fast rising on the national and international art scenes, Giboulo has participated in many solo and group exhibitions, and is collected by public institutions, including the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and 21c Museum Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky, as well as private collectors in Canada, the United States, France, and Belgium. Following the success of the exhibition *Karine Giboulo's Small Strange World(s)*, she was chosen Visual Artist of 2013 by the Montreal French-language daily newspaper *La Presse*. This honour is given annually to one nouveau visage (new face) who is making a difference in the arts. Recently, the McMichael co-published with EXPRESSION, Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe the first book on the work of the artist, titled *Karine Giboulo: Through the Eyes of the Groundhog*.

Art

Since 2006, Giboulo has been creating miniature dioramas, composed of meticulously hand-sculpted figurines and toy-like objects, which she feels help to express her artistic ideas, including those which she first captured in her paintings, drawings, and prints. The dioramas represent half-real and half-fictional world societies that are mostly set in the present. They reflect on serious topics about the human condition, from environmental concerns to consumerism and globalization. Her two-piece project *What Is My Name?* is in keeping with her practice of representing her ideas on multiple levels. The three-dimensional format allows her to create several viewpoints all at once, and in the accompanying work on paper, she can concentrate on a detail taken from the diorama, focusing on the particular rather than the general. When viewed within the context of the referenced diorama, the complementary drawing suggests a heightened sense of mood, and provides a different perspective on a particular subject. A rather all-inclusive approach of narration, stemming from the in-depth and field research she conducts for her artistic undertakings, Giboulo is generous in her offering, demonstrating that there is always more than one way of looking at the subject at hand.

Karine Giboulo with her artwork, *City of Dreams*, polymer clay, acrylic, plexiglass and mixed media, dimensions variable: footprint approx. 9.16 x 18.375 ft., 2013



**“When we talk
about others we
are actually
talking about
ourselves.”
—Karine Giboulo**



Unlike most of her large-scale dioramas, the sculpture *What Is My Name?* is set in the historical past and is based on actual events. It deals with the theme of forced cultural assimilation by a dominant group of people over the indigenous minority, and the resulting long-term repercussions. It exposes the history of the “Indian” residential school system, which saw thousands of Aboriginal children taken away from their families and homes, and put into the harsh and often abusive environment of church-administered, government-funded schools from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries.

Like a play staged in two acts, the work depicts scenes of traditional camp life and school life. It represents the physical and mental transformation of the children set against a real life-sized tree. The specially treated tree is composed in parts from two different hemlock trees that separate the trunk from the branches. The base of the tree contains scenes of life on the land, referencing the idea of family and cultural roots, the place where one comes from and to which one belongs. The branches, comprised of scenes from life at the residential schools, symbolize the growth of ill, even fatal, effects of contact with non-Aboriginals on Aboriginal peoples. Like the branches in a genealogical tree, they also suggest that future generations must deal with the consequences of the loss of cultural identity and ancestral languages.

Giboulo has taken one aspect of the school scene—the dormitory—and reimagined it in the accompanying black and white drawing. Here she depicts rows of empty white-sheeted beds that signify a graveyard with hovering hostile black crows representing the dark-cloaked priests or nuns who were responsible for the care, and the suffering, of the innocent children. The tree, a recurring image in her entire artistic oeuvre, stands desolate but central to remind us of a disappearing but not forgotten past. A symbol of life, it prevails in the presence of death. The drawing’s serene yet dramatic dormitory-cemetery scene is devoid of the children or the classroom. Its only allusion to the school is in the symbolic value of the repetitive beds.

In her previous projects, Giboulo focused on the social, economic, and political situation of “the other” in foreign lands, and the role of the Westerner or the outsider was minimized. The latter would usually make an appearance as a guest (or intruder) in the world of “the other.” The outsider’s presence was used as a narrative device to illustrate issues of globalization in the contemporary world. In this diorama, Giboulo focuses her attention on her own country. Claiming (as she often does about all of her work) that “when we talk about others we are actually talking about ourselves”, here she is committed to directly critiquing the self, while assuming the part of the oppressor.¹

What Is My Name? is an acknowledgment by the artist of the historical plight and suffering of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. It is meant to help the artist come to grips with wrongdoings from the perspective of a descendant of the transgressor. It is about exposing an abhorrent history through compassion and regret. Giboulo states that this project was “a labour of love”, and that she treated each of her delicately hand-sculpted figures with sensitivity, sympathy, and respect.²

Since its founding, the McMichael has been exploring Aboriginal art, history, and contemporary issues through exhibitions and programs, providing a forum for discussion and reflection on the significant role indigenous peoples have played and are continuing to play in the creation of the nation and its cultural identity. The acquisition of *What Is My Name?* reinforces the gallery’s ongoing engagement with themes that contribute to one’s understanding of Canada and its peoples. **MM**



Images on this page: Karine Giboulo (b. 1980), *What is my name? / Quel est mon nom?*, 2013, wood, plexiglas, polymer clay, acrylic paint, and mixed media, 249 x 125 x 133 cm, Gift of the artist, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 2014.3.1

ENDNOTES

1. Interview between Karine Giboulo and Sharona Adamowicz-Clements, Montreal, May 2013.
2. Telephone discussion between Karine Giboulo and Sharona Adamowicz-Clements, August 2013.

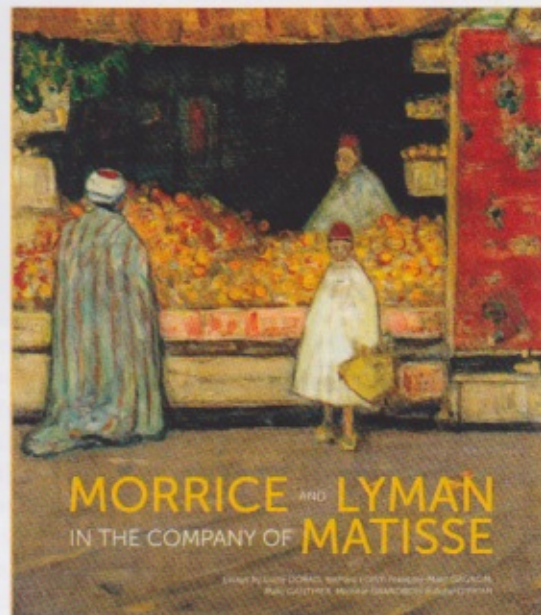
These books
are available to
purchase in the
Gallery Shop
and online at
mcmichael.com.



Kim Dorland by Katerina Atanassova, Robert Enright, and Jeffrey Spalding

Figure 1 Publishing, 2014
Hardcover, 192 pages

In October 2013, the McMichael unveiled an innovative new exhibition entitled *You Are Here: Kim Dorland and the Return to Painting*, which introduced the work of Toronto-based contemporary artist Kim Dorland (b. 1974), while simultaneously paying homage to the century-old tradition of landscape painting in Canada as represented by works from the gallery's renowned permanent collection. Co-published by the McMichael, this visually stunning and intellectually intriguing catalogue represents a timely addition to the discussion of the role of painting in contemporary Canadian art. *Kim Dorland* features essays by McMichael Chief Curator Katerina Atanassova, acclaimed art critic Robert Enright, and Artistic Director of Contemporary Calgary Jeffrey Spalding, as well as a preface by McMichael Executive Director and CEO Victoria Dickenson. More than 100 dramatic full-colour reproductions, along with studio and installation photographs, offer a comprehensive vision of Dorland's signature painting style—at once referential, material, psychological, uncomfortable, and beautiful.



Morrice and Lyman in the Company of Matisse

Essays by François-Marc Gagnon, Michèle Grandbois, and John O'Brian

Firefly Books, 2014
Hardcover, 256 pages

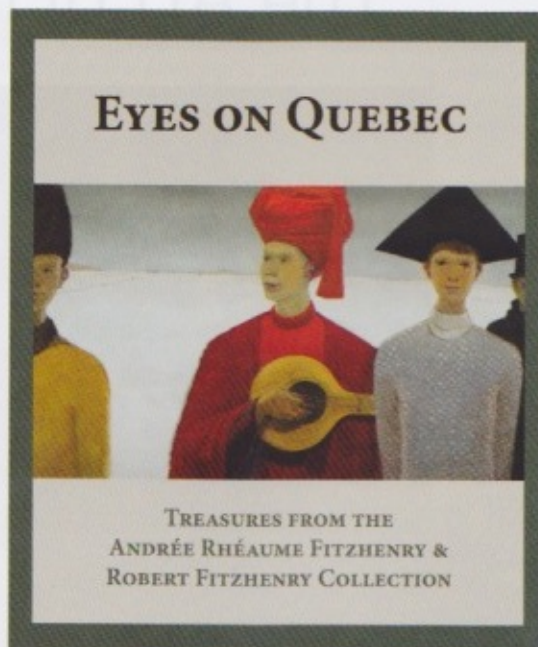
Morrice and Lyman in the Company of Matisse is a beautiful and insightful companion to the exhibition of the same name mounted at the McMichael from October 10, 2014 to January 4, 2015. This book juxtaposes works by three highly individual artists, revealing the ways in which they were connected, both personally and artistically, during a period of dynamic cultural change. Essays by exhibition curator Michèle Grandbois of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, as well as noted art historians Lucie Dorais, Richard Foisy, François-Marc Gagnon, Marc Gauthier, and John O'Brian, shed new light on the intersecting paths of two pioneers of modern art in Canada, James Wilson Morrice (1865–1924) and John Lyman (1886–1967), and the French master of colour, Henri Matisse (1869–1954). This richly illustrated catalogue, co-published by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, features 150 full-colour reproductions that reflect the painters' quest to capture shimmering light and vibrant colour.

Opposite left:
Kim Dorjand (b. 1974),
You are Here (detail),
Paul and Mary Dailey
Desmarais III,
Montreal. Photograph
by Eden Robbins

Opposite right: James
Wilson Morrice (1865–
1924), *Fruit Market,
North Africa (Tunis)*
(detail), 1914, oil on
canvas, 50.4 x 61.3 cm,
The Montreal Museum
of Fine Arts, David
R. Morrice Bequest.
Photograph
by MMFA

Above left: Jean Paul
Lemieux (1904–1990),
Les mi-carêmes, 1962,
oil on canvas,
91.4 x 137.2 cm,
The Andrée Rhéaume
Fitzhenry and Robert
Fitzhenry Collection,
© Gestion A.S.L. Inc.,
copyright holder of the
artwork of Jean Paul
Lemieux. Design by
Elliot Law for Business
and Office Centro Inc.

Above right: Karine
Giboulo, *HYPERLand*
(detail), 2014, polymer
clay, acrylic paint,
Plexiglas and mixed
media, variable
dimensions, Collection
of Karine Giboulo. Cover
design by Elise Eskanazi



Eyes on Quebec: Treasures from the Andrée Rhéaume Fitzhenry and Robert Fitzhenry Collection by Sharona Adamowicz-Clements, Katerina Atanassova, and Chris Finn

McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 2014
Softcover, 75 pages

This commemorative catalogue features masterpieces by renowned Quebec artists from a private collection, a promised gift to the McMichael that will augment the Collection's permanent holdings of Quebec art. The book includes an introductory essay about the collectors, Robert Fitzhenry and his late wife Andrée Rhéaume Fitzhenry, and their passion for the art of Quebec. Two other essays offer a closer view on the landscape and figurative tradition in Quebec and Canadian art, respectively. The first focuses on the landscapes of Clarence Gagnon and the other focuses on the often-overlooked figurative tradition in the history of Canadian art, with a special discussion on the human subject in Jean Paul Lemieux's practice. More than forty artworks by these artists and others, including Marc-Aurèle Fortin and Jean Paul Riopelle, are pictured in this limited edition.



Karine Giboulo: Through the Eyes of the Groundhog by Danielle Lord and Sharona Adamowicz-Clements

McMichael Canadian Art Collection and
EXPRESSION, Centre d'exposition de
Saint-Hyacinthe, 2014 | Softcover, 90 pages

In the past two years, up-and-coming Quebec artist Karine Giboulo has been recognized for many firsts in her young career. Her first retrospective exhibition, *Karine Giboulo's Small Strange World(s)*, which was developed by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in 2013, led to her being named Artist of the Year in Quebec by *La Presse*, then a subsequent exhibition at EXPRESSION, Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe in Quebec. This first publication about her work, *Karine Giboulo: Through the Eyes of the Groundhog*, features two major essays inspired by her whimsical art and philosophical vision of the human condition of the current age. The French essay "Réalité / Utopie" in this bilingual monograph is written by freelance curator Danielle Lord, and the English article "Between Home and the Absurd" is by McMichael Assistant Curator, Collections, Sharona Adamowicz-Clements. This is a co-publication between the McMichael and EXPRESSION, with the support of the Angell Gallery of Toronto.