

Last fall, the Musée invited Geneviève Cadieux to plan an exhibition of works from the Collection. The artist proposed an inclusive, eclectic and generous selection of more than one hundred works, covering all disciplines and generations. Exuberant and carefully laid out within the space, this exhibition titled *L'Œil et l'Esprit* reveals a cohesive grouping of formal, conceptual and thematic affinities. Cadieux demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the Collection and shares with us her interest in the major genres, photography and, above all, art that matters and that transforms. What follows is a brief summary of her thoughts gleaned during a conversation that took place this past March 27. J.B.

L'Œil et l'Esprit *Point of View on the Collection*



The title. I was looking for a title that would summon up both the artist's thought and the artist's gaze. In glancing over my bookshelves, I came across *L'Œil et l'Esprit* (published in English as *Eye and Mind*), Maurice Merleau-Ponty's last book, written in Provence, while he was looking out at the landscapes painted by Cézanne. Although it's not a contemporary piece of writing, I find it quite powerful and it speaks to me in its fundamental relationship to painting, which is important to me. I was trained in painting, even though that's not the essence of my practice. I'm interested in all practices, in fact. In this show, many periods are paired together and different media are represented. We begin with a bold portrait and landscape gallery that displays paintings, photographs and drawings dating from 1868 to the present. Female portraits and nudes hang opposite male portraits and landscapes, with historical or clearly more contemporary photographs interspersed here and there. This to and fro between periods and stylistic movements is totally in keeping with the way I approach art history.



The works. I was delighted to accept this invitation because I see, in the curating process, complete freedom of choice and the possibility of achieving a creative drift in the Collection. I've been coming to the Musée for thirty-five years, so I'm familiar with many of its works. I also spent a long time exploring the database of the Collection inventory: by genre (portrait, for example), alphabetical order, origin... There are nearly 8,000 works in the Collection and the choices became agonizing. Admittedly, I could have put together several shows. But at a certain point you have to stop and make that leap. I worked intuitively, concentrating on certain priorities: the presence of women, which was essential, and of visionary works and figures, my interest in young artists, the rediscovery of constructivism, the fresh appeal of abstraction, a contextualizing of modern masters (Matisse, Arp, Giacometti), and so on.

The space. Of the hundred or so works that make up the exhibition, half are on view at the entrance to the galleries, in a specially built first gallery. Then, parallel to that gallery, and behind it, a series of twenty small sculptures are spread out on a long table. After that, the space is completely open, so that each work stands out on its own, but always in relation to those around it. From the outset—and this was very clear in my mind—I didn't want any walls. I wanted the works to coexist everywhere in the same way in the viewers' gaze: both in the enthusiastic accumulation at the start of the show and in the extent and relative economy of the two large adjacent spaces. I didn't want to configure a specific space for each of the works but, rather, offer them a mental space. I take a great deal of pleasure looking at the works without considering their scale—something that can be clearly seen in the constant changes in scale from one to the next. The progression through the exhibition takes you full circle, no matter where the gaze may alight: different connections are formed, depending on the visitor's movements. The exhibition layout works like one very large installation.



**Geneviève Cadieux,
Guest Curator**

From left to right: Works by Bruce Nauman [© Bruce Nauman/SODRAC (2015)], Raymond Gervais, Claude Tousignant and Ann Hamilton

Photos: Richard-Max Tremblay