

# Sculpting Diverse Materials



photo © Caroline Gagné

Été Paysages-Vêtements, boutons, fils métalliques, armatures, abat-jour, dessins : pyrogravure sur papier fait main, 2015



Série *Cultiver le sport*. Scène de chasse, édition 10, impression numérique sur papier coton

"Throughout their career paths, artists are faced with various challenges and demands. These events allow them to set bases for new research, further develop a subject, experiment with new techniques and thus open themselves to new possibilities. Whatever the creative context may be, symposium, artistic residence or public art contest, artworks have a story and reasons to exist."

Nathalie Racicot, Commissionner, *De l'idée au geste* exhibition 2018.

In the world of art, a creator is often defined according to his artistic practice in the mind of spectators. However, some creators manifest such versatility of genres and maintain a creative rapport with such a variety of materials that the usual characterizing nomenclatures cannot apply. Sculptor, textile artist, multidisciplinary artist and hybrid practice specialist, Carole Baillargeon is simultaneously all of that and much more.

Carole Baillargeon's practice begins in the world of theatre with her obtaining a bachelor's degree in scenography, furthered with a master's degree in visual arts, specialization in textile art, from Concordia University in 1996 and doctorate studies in the practice of the arts at UQAM. In 1989 she is awarded a grant to complete an internship at the Banff Arts Center and explores the creative possibilities of handmade paper, a material she will work with for over ten years. This work yields a first series of moulded and painted circular works entitled *UN...* from which simultaneously emanate the ephemeral quality of the fibre and the impression of confinement resulting from the circular form. This duality between the themes of boundary and fluidity will periodically reoccur in her work as an expression of our geographical definition of frontier, or confinement, and of human beings expressing the shifting nature that exceeds it, transcends it and redefines it indefinitely through wars, migrations, the fragility of ecosystems, etc.

The great diversity of Carole Baillargeon's artworks and installations exemplifies the variety of paths she has borrowed throughout her career. Understanding her creative process allows us to establish contact with the artist's narrative and more fully understand her language and what she is attempting to convey.

From the beginning, her researches in sculpture deal with humans and with clothing. The meanings and functions associated with clothing materialize in a plastic research that scrutinizes this familiar vehicle, carrier of the human experience. Although the human body is absent in Carole Baillargeon's work, its presence is revealed through counterparts and indicators such as clothing, furniture, tools and materials as well as cultural environments. For almost 30 years, this is how she evokes the human figure, its complexity, its vulnerability and its ephemeral nature. In so doing, she underlines the importance of the original gesture, its historical roots, and its status in the history of humanity.

This direction evolves through a hybrid practice in visual arts that reference scenography and arts and crafts through the use of a variety of materials (textiles, paper, everyday items, wood, metals, ceramics), all of which are commonly simple and require much patience, as stated by the artist herself. Her primary material is the initial idea. Then comes the structural framing of the project, followed by the choice of material that will best illustrate her idea. During the creative process, anything and everything may interfere in her production. She will not limit herself to her initial choices and will let herself be guided by the materials. Her creations always reflect her observations and surroundings, based on the news, environmental preoccupations, nature, her life experiences, etc.

This multidisciplinary is fully utilized in the *Paysages-Vêtements* series, a grandiose project she realized between 2000 and 2015 which questions the static nature of the exhibition and focusses on how seasons influence subjects and treatment as much as the favoured scenography. For the Winter portion, for example, she will create fifteen head coverings in subtle shades of white that she will feature, seeking to set them in motion via theatre, dance, song and music with the help of co-designers and performers.

Literature was the catalyst for the creation of the *La robe écrite* series of works. Drawing inspiration from texts written by authors interested by the dress theme, she created six sculptures choosing for each one the materials and techniques in accordance with their expressive potential. As for all of her creations, the works are built per her own story and her rapport with feminine apparel in history as well as the authors' vision.

The *La main qui pend* series tirelessly repeats the same motif, that of a glove's pattern laid flat without a thumb. A hand with eight fingers, as if the left and right hands had fused together to form one entity. The artist explains: "To create these works I've used a great variety of techniques. Many pieces were produced using the handmade paper technique. The paper paste has at times a cotton or linen base or derives from plants in my garden. There is also presence of glued or sewed-on vegetation, printing techniques such as lithography, embossing and collagraphy, collages, paper weavings, acrylic paint, the written word, as well as other materials such as undulated cardboard, wood, nails, and tea bags. The positioning of motifs within a frame evokes binary relationships. Each grouping expresses the components of a duality."

Carole Baillargeon jump started the year 2018 with six exhibitions, solo and collective, including *Contextile* at the Contemporary Textile Art Biennial in Portugal's Sampaio Museum, followed by a research and creation residency in Guimarães during the summer. The Winnipeg Centre Franco-Manitobain will welcome the exhibition entitled *Ainsi...* starting December 13. This ever evolving recent production questions the loss of skills and knowhow. The theme, approached through the metaphor of mending oneself,

features the highs and lows of life presented through a process of adaptation conducive to resilience. Continuously created over the past few years, the works of the *Ainsi...* series illustrate suffering (loss of knowhow), acceptance and healing. The swaddled tools and scissors represent as many warriors with once precise gestures, who today display their wounds and stitches now dressed with metaphoric bandages mending them with the present. The works are divided into three main families: Afflicted, Bereaved and Resilient.

**Marie-France Bégis**



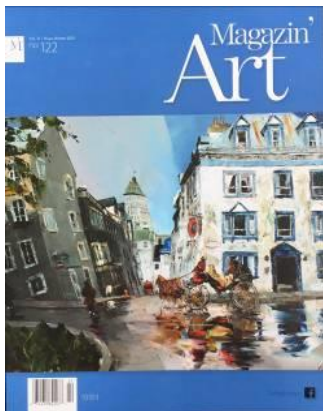
*Série Ainsi... Bereaved 63*, scissors, synthetic moss, fabric, thread, ring cushions, brackets, 2018

To know more about Carole Baillargeon's body of work:  
[vimeo.com/215582959/dbefd23d56](https://vimeo.com/215582959/dbefd23d56)  
[www.lafabriqueculturelle.tv/capsules/6927/](http://www.lafabriqueculturelle.tv/capsules/6927/)  
[www.lafabriqueculturelle.tv/capsules/10002/](http://www.lafabriqueculturelle.tv/capsules/10002/)

Ongoing exhibitions:

*De l'idée au geste*: Maison Hamel-Bruneau, Sainte-Foy-Sillery borough, Québec  
 September 18 to December 16, 2018

*Ainsi.../ Thus ...*: Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain, CCFM, Winnipeg  
 December 13, 2018 to February 7, 2019



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