

MATCH CUTS 1975

From the Collections of Vidéographe and Artexte

November 16 - December 17, 2016

Match Cuts 1975 is a call-and-response conversation between two collections. This first collaborative and experimental assemblage of video and print documents takes 1975 as a juncture around which the role and value of the art institution and the artist were re-examined and redefined. This exhibition presents a new video created from Vidéographe sources, and ephemeral documents, catalogues, monographs, and critical texts from Artexte's holdings. Together, the video and print documents from our respective collections reveal a push to recast the public's relationship with the art institution and the artist. Actions, words and voices fundamental to the discourse and debates, are the points of contact linking the documents produced around this catalytic time.

Two people are fundamental to this project. The video presented here is produced with the support of art historian Rose-Marie Arbour, who gave permission to re-edit and present interviews she conducted in 1976 with Fernande Saint-Martin, director of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (1972–1977), Lucette Bouchard, co-director of Galerie MÉDIA, and Normand Thériault, curator, arts organizer and art critic. This exhibition is equally supported by the crucial voice and work of Thériault through the archive he entrusted to Artexte.

VIDEO

The decision to produce a new video that compresses and collages a number of documentary sources is inspired by the fascinating and peculiar composition of the film *Québec 75*, a complex documentary produced by the Télécap group, which assembles footage of political activism and cultural events in Montreal between the years 1968 and 1975. The new video features segments of the public debates organized within the exhibition *Québec 75* intercut with Arbour's interviews. The identification of consensus, criticism and counter-point within the footage is the guiding methodology of this investigation into the many discursive and correlative alignments possible between our collections.

In Arbour's interviews, she questions her guests about the role of the art institution – primarily the museum – and its relationship with artists and the public. These discussions include Bouchard's views on the establishment of an artist-run centre in Montreal, Saint-Martin's work at the Musée d'art contemporain and Thériault's approach to overseeing a temporal 'institute'. The melding of Arbour's videos with the film *Québec 75*, while experimental, is also a recuperative act that brings forward views Arbour intended to share with a larger public through *Télé-visite au Musée*, a documentary series made for UQAM television but never broadcast.

PRINT DOCUMENTS

The print documents assembled here include critical writings by Arbour's interviewees and ephemeral documents, monographs and catalogues representing the work of art historians, curators, artists, journalists and arts administrators active around 1975. Placed together, these documents, along with documents such as exhibition pamphlets and public programme announcements, form a compilation that attests to the shifting role of institutions and artists here at the time. Selected documents from the Normand Thériault fonds intermingle with others from Artexte's collection and address the many crucial questions posed by Thériault's contributions to the visual arts in Montreal. All documents are from the Artexte collection, with the exception of the 'livre vert' (*Pour l'évolution de la politique culturelle, Document de travail*, by Jean-Paul L'Allier, ministre des Affaires culturelles, 1976), on loan from the Bibliothèque de l'UQAM. This much-debated document, mentioned by Saint-Martin in her interview, was celebrated and reviled, but ultimately became a framing device around which cultural institutions were developed in Quebec after 1975.

VIDÉOGRAPHE AND ARTEXTE

The decade between 1970 and 1980 saw the founding of numerous artist-run centres in Canada. Many of these new sites for art exhibition and production were created in response to the interests and needs of a new generation of artists, curators and administrators for whom the decentralization and expansion of access to the visual arts was crucial. A country-wide push towards self-management became the basis of a new form of governance in such arts organizations, which, paradoxically, were largely made possible by operational funds from the Canada Council for the Arts, and later from provincial arts councils. While the reliance on public funds was criticized for its undoing of independence through state-controlled money, artist-run

centres, which numbered 23 organizations nationally in 1975, contributed to the redefinition of what an art institution could and should be.

The establishment of Vidéographe in 1971 and Artexte in 1981 act as metaphoric bookends to the decade. Vidéographe, the first artist-run centre devoted to video in Canada, was initiated by filmmakers for filmmakers with the objective of democratizing the production and distribution of the relatively new medium of video. In the early years, much of the work was devoted to giving a voice to marginalized individuals and communities and documenting counter-cultural views and activities. Documentarians – and, later in the 1970s, video artists – and their respective publics gravitated to this hub for access to equipment, public screenings and distribution services.

Artexte, founded by two artists and an art historian, responded to the need to make contemporary art writing accessible locally, nationally and internationally. Artexte's book publishing and distribution activities supported the work of artists, researchers and writers and the bookshop became a place for free reading and discussion of the latest art books. Like Vidéographe, its physical location was a meeting ground for the community to discover and discuss art. Over time, both centres amassed collections of audio-visual and textual documents donated by members of their communities or acquired to support art production. As such, the two organizations developed a reflexivity regarding their role as repositories for the history of their communities.

Video documents:

Québec 75, produced by the Télécap group, 1976, 50 minutes.

Interview with Fernande Saint-Martin, directed and produced by Rose-Marie Arbour for télé UQAM, 1976, 51 minutes.

Interview with Lucette Bouchard, directed and produced by Rose-Marie Arbour for télé UQAM, 1976, 18 minutes.

Interview with Normand Thériault, directed and produced by Rose-Marie Arbour for télé UQAM, 1976, 37 minutes.

Télé-visite au musée, directed and produced by Rose-Marie Arbour with the support of UQAM, 1976, 32 minutes.

All video documents are from the collection of Vidéographe.

Acknowledgments

On behalf of everyone at Artexte, I thank our great partners at Vidéographe, director Julie Tremble, curator Karine Boulanger and technician and editor Éric Falardeau for their knowledge, kindness and dedication to this work.

Everyone at Artexte worked on this exhibition. I thank Zoë for her research and selection of print documents, and Jessica, Hélène, Marie-Claire, Joana and Frédérique for their insight and care.

Sarah Watson, General and Artistic Director, Artexte

