

Young unknowns provide overview of local artistic scene

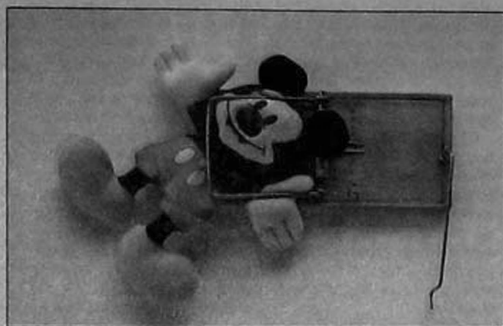
HENRY LEHMANN
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

of the anonymity of the artists. Each viewer is required to make his or her own judgment, without recourse to labels containing famous names.

For instance, there's what might be called the archeological approach, with the artist cramming in as many personal symbols and cryptic allusions to memories as possible. Certainly, this is so with Mathieu Levesque's triptych *Nostalgie*, a heady, paradoxical mix of naïveté and industrial-strength sophistication spread out over three panels, the whole as big as a garage door.

This bleak expanse, sealed in thick coats of silver metallic paint, is the arena for Levesque's satirical, pop version of Proust's *Memories of Things Past*. Seemingly mired in Levesque's greys are, among other things, an iconic, cliché snowflake, the flashy red sign of Pizza Hut and a giant depiction of an Oreo cookie; the latter is a so-familiar object, yet here it brings to mind comic-book UFOs of the 1950s.

Some of the other artists that are busy excavating commercial



COURTESY OF MUSÉE JUSTE POUR RIRE

Marc-Marinescu Constantin's *Et puis quoi?* (Mickey Mouse).

icons, cartoon characters and corporate logos relentlessly deposited in our collective unconsciousnesses are Bruno Gareau, in his evocation of *Pokemon*, and Daniel Lafrance, in his make-over of the multi-limbed goddess Shiva. This Shiva, however, has four stereotypically pretty heads possibly inspired by the TV show *Most Eligible Bachelor*.

In his large-scale, mixed-media work grandly titled *Homage to Mark Rothko*, Marc Seguin, who conceived and organized this show, alludes to mythology and archetype, placing what looks like a real bird carcass flat against the canvas.

Submerged in black pigment, its wings cruelly spread, it looks like another avian victim of man's need for oil; the "oil"

patch can be seen alternately as viscous death-hole or as window onto the night. This latter reference recalls Abstract Expressionist painter Rothko's own artistic obsession with windows.

Artist Christian Audet, in his bold painting, *Romulus and Remus*, done in traditional oil, makes no bones about his affinity to history. Featured in this powerful work are two colossal heads, one dark, the other light, trapped under a restless mesh of thick red lines. This stylized, highly controlled filigree, is arguably a homage to veteran, international art star Arnulf Rainer's famous photographic self-portraits covered with scribble.

Much of the art in *Made in Montreal* is based on a tradition of painting and pictorial space that seemed on its way out not too long ago.

There is no doubt that Yana Kehrlein uses good old pictorial space, the illusion created by mere surface pattern, to extremes in her stunning series juxtaposing digital, photographic images of star configurations

upon night photos of major cities at night.

As for celestial bodies in the round, there is Philippe Allard's 3-D bubble, a kind of unearthly nova glowing with the natural light from the gallery window. Painstakingly assembled from countless shards of red and orange car reflectors, this parked star, the stylistic descendant of 1970s art-power art made of scavenged leftovers, has inherent appeal as it is at once dreamily ethereal and super-banal, like so much splintered plastic.

As organizer Seguin asserts, *Made in Montreal* constitutes a "broad overview of the current art scene, not a manifesto or movement."

It's precisely for its openness - for its lack of an agenda - that this show has its particular value, as true vista on the changing topography of local artistic endeavours.

Made in Montreal is at the Musée juste pour rire, 2111 St. Laurent Blvd., until Feb. 12. Admission is free. Call (514) 845-5105.

The time is long gone when Montrealers could view vast amounts of the latest in art being produced here by the upcoming generation under one roof in those much-missed spring shows at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Those raucous, open-ended exhibits, accepting at least as much art as they rejected, were updates on the glorious salons of 19th-century Paris. Well, the good times are here again, in the form of a vast, shambling, fascinating, must-see, eye-opener of a current show at the Musée Juste pour rire. Called *Made in Montreal*, the show includes about 150 works - videos, prints, drawings, paintings and photos - by 28 mainly young, up-and-coming Montreal artists, none with anything approaching general recognition.

Dramatically installed, with works hung high and low in the spooky, cavernous spaces of the Musée Juste pour rire, this show works its spell precisely because