

1970  
40<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire  
2010



Centre  
culturel canadien  
Paris

Press Release

An installation by  
**Robert Houle**

# Paris / Ojibwa

**April 13, 2010**

**Gallery talk around the installation project / 5:00 pm**

**Robert Houle**

**Mick Gidley** / University of Leeds

**Donald Smith** / University of Calgary

Limited access

Reservations : 01 44 43 21 49

**Opening / 6:30 pm**

**from April 14 to September 10, 2010**



Photography © Michael Cullen (detail)

Galerie Orenda International also presents

**Cendres et Diamants [Robert Houle, peintures / Edward Curtis, photographies]**

Opening April 8 at 7:00 pm

Exhibition presented from April 9 to May 22, 2010

54 rue de Verneuil, Paris 7 / 01 49 26 90 09

[www.orenda-art.com](http://www.orenda-art.com)

The Canadian Cultural Centre presents an installation by Robert Houle which travels back in time of 1845 in Paris. *Paris/Ojibwa* evokes an exotic contact with the Ojibwa which impressed the Parisian imagination in the 19th century and inspired painters and poets, among them Delacroix and Baudelaire.

The installation was conceived in 2006 during the artist's residency at La Cité des Arts in Paris. The work is an homage as well as a reflection on the theme of disappearance. The title of the work alludes to contact between Parisians and a group of indigenous people from Canada guided by a remarkable man, Maungwudaus (a Great Hero).

From April to December of 1845, Parisians saw authentic Ojibwa on the streets as performers and always as a curiosity. These Ojibwa who were also called Mississauga or Chippewa, came from what was then known as Canada West. At the behest of painter George Catlin, Maungwudaus and his family and companions travelled to Paris to replace the Iowa, another aboriginal tribe, in the *tableaux vivants* that complemented the display of Catlin's paintings in Paris. Catlin describes their arrival in Paris:

"In the midst of my grief, with my little family around me, with my collection still open, and my lease for the Salle Valentino not yet expired, there suddenly arrived from London a party of eleven Ojibbeway Indians, from the region of Lake Huron, in Upper Canada, who had been brought to England by a Canadian, but had since been under the management of a young man from the city of London. They had heard of the great success of the Ioways in Paris, and also of their sudden departure, and were easily prevailed upon to make a visit there. On their arrival, I entered into the same arrangement with them that I had with the former parties, agreeing with the young man who had charge of them to receive them into my collection, sharing the expenses and receipts as I had done before."

Centre culturel canadien - Canadian Cultural Centre

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Accès : Métro et RER : Invalides, Bus : 28, 49, 63, 69, 83, 93

Horaires d'ouverture :

Entrée libre du lundi au vendredi de 10h00 à 18h00, jeudi jusqu'à 19h00.

Contact Presse : 01 44 43 21 49 / [arts-visuels@www.canada-culture.org](mailto:arts-visuels@www.canada-culture.org)



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The Ojibwa entertained king Louis-Philippe and queen Amélie, as well as the king and queen of Belgium, at Saint Cloud. The French monarch had spent more than three years of his exile during the Napoleonic Wars in the new republic of the United States of America (1796-1800). He had traveled from Louisiana to Maine and had contact with the Anishnabe (Ojibwa) and the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) throughout the New England states and the Appalachians.



Maungwudaus' troupe. An 1851 daguerreotype of six of the Chippewa (Ojibwa) that visited Europe in 1845. Photo credit: Chicago Historical Society.

Paris/Ojibwa is an empty room made from deconstruction, not constrained by apocalyptic tones, a language of manifesto that still respects classical forms or at least attempts to respect them. When it comes to looking at and "reading" the installation, it is Anishnabe history, which speaks of healing from the ravenous gaze of pending disappearance. It is a voice of endurance claiming the sacred heritage of a sweat lodge representing the universe and connecting the participants to the past, the earth and the spiritual world. The painted figures, a shaman, a warrior, a dancer and a healer become abstract monochromatic icons whose indigenous roots connect to the landscape in each painting. Together they are a poetic, symbolic, transatlantic return home through the magic of art, the spiritual aspect of memory.

Robert Houle, Toronto, March 2010

## Robert Houle

Robert Houle was born in St. Boniface, Manitoba and currently lives and works in Toronto. Houle is a contemporary Anishnabe artist who has played a significant role in retaining and defining First Nations identity in Canada. He draws on Western art conventions to tackle lingering aspects of European colonization and its postcolonial aftermath. Relying on the objectivity of modernity and the subjectivity of postmodernity he brings aboriginal history into his work through the interrogation of text and photographic documents from the dominant society. He studied art history at the University of Manitoba, art education at McGill University and painting and drawing at the International Summer Academy of Fine Arts in Salzburg.

Robert Houle has been exhibiting since the early 1970's. His most recent exhibition, *Robert Houle: Troubling Abstractions* was co-curated by the McMaster Museum of Art and the Robert McLaughlin Gallery. Among his many solo exhibitions are *Lost Tribes*, at Hood College, Maryland; *Sovereignty over Subjectivity*, at the Winnipeg Art Gallery; *Palisade*, at the Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa; and *Anishnabe Walker Court*, an intervention at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. He has also participated in several important international group exhibitions, including *Recent Generations: Native American Art from 1950 to 1987*, at the Heard Museum, Phoenix; *Traveling Theory*, at the Jordan National Gallery, Amman, Jordan; *Notions of Conflict*, at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; *Real Fictions: Four Canadian Artists*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia; *Tout le temps/Every Time*, at the Montreal Biennale 2000 and *We Come in Peace...: Histories of the Americas*, at the Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal.

He was curator of contemporary aboriginal art at the Canadian Museum of Civilization from 1977 to 1981 and has curated or co-curated groundbreaking exhibitions.

As a writer, Houle has penned many essays and monographs on aboriginal art and contemporary First Nations and Native American artists. He also taught native studies at the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto. Houle's considerable influence as an artist, curator, writer, educator and cultural theorist has led to his being awarded the Janet Braide Memorial Award for Excellence in Canadian Art History in 1993; the 2001 Toronto Arts Award for the Visual Arts; the Eiteljorg Fellowship in 2003; membership in the Royal Canadian Academy and most recently, the Canada Council International Residency Program for the Visual Arts in Paris.

Currently, he lectures on the subject of indigenous abstraction and is working on a group of portraits based on the research done for his current exhibition at the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris, as well as continuing to work on drawings based on memory from his childhood experience of forced attendance at residential school on his reserve, Sandy Bay.