

ATSA : 10 ans d'urgence

july 25 - september 3 2013

PUBLIC DISCUSSION AKA SALON CONNEX @ CSAC AUGUST 27

EXHIBITION OPENING + ARTIST TALK JULY 25 7 PM

Connexion is excited to present a curatorial project by Montréal-based artists ATSA (l'Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable / Socially Acceptable Terrorist Action). *10 Ans d'Urgence* (10 Years of Urgency) is an exhibition of diverse artworks by more than twenty artists – all of the works were contributions by artists and other citizens to ATSA's outdoor, public “manifestival” *État d'Urgence* (State of Urgency). Always staged in the heart of Montréal, *État d'Urgence* took place over thirteen years, between 1998 and 2010. Using a variety thematic frameworks, at its core each “manifestival” offered food, shelter and warm winter clothing, also providing an occasion to really grapple with the issues and stigmas around homelessness. *État d'Urgence* demanded of its participants an encounter with that often-feared individual: 'the outsider.' The category - “manifestival” - elicits the French *manifestation* (political demonstration or march) along with the joyful evocations of a public festival.

ATSA operates as a not-for-profit organization, founded in 1998 by artists Pierre Allard & Annie Roy. The pair create free public works and events that actively question the 'normal' operation of urban landscapes by promoting exchange and reflection in the public realm. The recipients of the 2011 Giverny Capital prize, the 2010 Pratt & Whitney Canada Nature de l'Art prize, the 2008 Citoyen de la Culture award, and the 2008 Artistes pour la Paix award, ATSA uses intergenerational educational strategies to draw people closer together – hoping to motivate as many citizens as possible to take an active role in improving society.

Connexion est heureux de présenter *10 Ans d'Urgence* – une exposition commissionnée par artistes Montréalaises ATSA (l'Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable). Après avoir produit treize éditions de la Manifestation État d'Urgence, ATSA réunit sous forme d'exposition visuelle pluridisciplinaire plus d'une vingtaine d'artistes de Montréal, du Canada et de l'étranger qui ont tous en commun d'avoir présenté ou conçu une œuvre originale pour l'événement entre 1998 et 2010 et couvrant les champs de la vidéo, photographie, dessin, peinture, affiche, film d'archives, bande sonore et installation. Le public est appelé à découvrir les œuvres d'art colorées, ingénieuses, sensibles, ludiques et percutantes d'artistes qui se sont penchés sur la thématique de l'itinérance et de la rencontre avec cet autre qui peut faire peur. Bienvenue dans l'univers artistique de l'État d'Urgence, un voyage dont on sort bouleversé et qui nous convainc que le geste d'art est aussi un geste de survie...

L'ATSA est un organisme à but non lucratif fondé en 1998 par les artistes Pierre Allard et Annie Roy. Sur un ton ludique et percutant, ils créent, produisent et diffusent des œuvres et événements transdisciplinaires sous forme d'interventions, d'installations, de performances ou de mises en scène réalistes motivées par le désir d'interpeller la population envers des causes sociales, environnementales et patrimoniales cruciales.

ATSA est récipiendaire du Prix Giverny Capital 2011, du prix Pratt & Whitney du Conseil des Arts de Montréal: Nature de l'Art en 2010, du prix Citoyen de la Culture 2008 décerné par les Arts et la Ville pour l'État d'Urgence et du prix Artistes pour la Paix 2008.

**Martin Savoie**

**Karen Spencer**

**Mario Duchesneau**

**Héloïse Rémy**

**Sylvie Cotton**

**Kyohei Sakaguchi**

**Steve Patry**

**Santiago Bertolino**

**Henrique Vera Villanueva**

# 1998

*a refuge camp in the heart of Montréal*

*un camp de réfugiés au coeur de Montréal*

**13 – 17 Decembre** (5 days) (5 jours) esplanade of / de Place des Arts, Montréal

*The refuge camp we see so often on television is now found in our midst. In collaboration with / en collaboration avec Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal & the Canadian Armed Forces / les Forces Armée canadienne. Le camp que nous voyons si souvent à la télé se retrouve dans notre quotidien.*

# 1999

*Christmas in a camp*

*un Noël au camp*

**16 – 26 Decembre** (11 days) (11 jours) at the corner of René-Lévesque Blvd. & Bleury St., Montréal

*À l'heure de la mondialisation, ATSA s'interroge sur l'avenir de ceux qui n'ont pas d'identité territoriale fixe. In collaboration with / en collaboration avec Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal & the Canadian Armed Forces / les Forces Armée canadienne. Refugees from our own camp : despite authorization from the police & fire departments, État d'Urgence is displaced by the municipal government. A Ferris wheel and a tepee address the subject of nomadism and Indian reserves—more refugees.*

# 2000 - 2001

**DERNIER RECOURS** : a smaller-scale project seeking support for État d'Urgence, after the Ville de Montréal's absolute refusal in 1999. *Cette performance politique fut montée dans le but de mettre de la pression médiatique sur la Ville de Montréal & les Forces Armées canadiennes.*

# 2002

*commemorating the life of Émilie Gamelin*

*commémorerons l'œuvre de la Bienheureuse Émilie Gamelin*

**1–4 February / Février** (4 days) (4 jours) Place Émilie-Gamelin, Montréal

*A refugee camp open 24 hours a day, three meals per day, clothing donation and a program of shows and activities for all ages. With the support from / supporté par le Ville de Montréal & the Canadian Armed Forces / les Forces Armée canadienne. Un camp de réfugié effectif ouvert 24h sur 24h, 3 repas par jour, don de vêtements et une programmation de spectacle et activités pour tous.*

# 2003

*banquet cochon !*

**5–8 Decembre** (3 days) (3 jours) Place Émilie-Gamelin, Montreal

*With a philosophy is conviviality, December 6 brings more than 100 street people together for a memorable dinner, with the underlying motivation that everyone is allowed to enjoy a good meal. With the support of / supporté par le Ville de Montréal + local restaurateurs, led by 2003 Gala des Chefs winner Martin Picard.*

*Convivialité : c'est avec ce mot en tête que nous avons conçu la soirée du 6 décembre qui réunira plus de 100 personnes de la rue à un banquet mémorable ayant comme motivation que tout le monde a droit au plaisir de la table*

# 2004

*un état d'esprit  
in a spirited state*

**December 1–5** (5 days) (5 jours) Place  
Émilie-Gamelin, Montréal

*A refugee camp in the heart of downtown, hap-  
pening thanks to the generosity of an im-  
pressive team of citizens, businesses, in-  
stitutions and groups, all united in their sup-  
port of the more than billion – and steadily  
growing – underprivileged, displaced, landless  
and homeless persons around the globe, starting  
with our own.*

*Un camp de réfugiés en plein centre-ville monté  
grâce à la générosité de toute une équipe  
de personnes, d'entreprises, d'institutions  
et de groupes en solidarité envers plus d'un  
milliard d'exclus, de déplacés, de sans-toit et de  
sans-terre qui ne font qu'augmenter, à commencer  
par les nôtres.*

# 2005

*a celebration of solidarity & a creative space fo-  
cused on social cohesion*

*une célébration de solidarité & un lieu de cre-  
ation qui réfléchit à la cohésion sociale*

**23–27 Novembre** (4 days) (4 jours) Place  
Émilie-Gamelin, Montréal

The État d'Urgence “manifestival” is now  
a fixture of Montréal's cultural scene!  
*Bienvenue à tous, avec et sans toit!*

# 2006

*le mani-festival ouvert à tous  
the mani-festival open to all*

**22–26 Novembre** (4 days) (4 jours)  
Place Émilie-Gamelin, Montreal

*A banquet, theatre, circus, storytelling, speech-  
es, nocturnal projections, performances, instal-  
lations, interventions, photography / Le ban-  
quet, parcours théâtral, cirque, contes, confer-  
ences, films, musique, performances, installa-  
tions, interventions, photos.*

# 2007

*le mani-festival ouvert à tous  
the mani-festival open to all*

**21 – 25 Novembre** (5 days) (5 jours)  
Place Émilie-Gamelin, Montréal

*Un rendez-vous de solidarité sociale et de créa-  
tion qui suscite la rencontre entre tous les citoy-  
ens et qui contribue à contrer l'exclusion sociale  
et les préjugés face à la pauvreté par  
l'utilisation des arts comme moteur de ras-  
semblement et de changement. Issues related  
to the harmonious coexistence of citi-  
zens in urban centres are quite topical in  
the current political climate.*

# 2008

*under house arrest  
assigné à résidence*

**26 – 30 Novembre** (5 days) (5 jours)  
Place Émilie-Gamelin, Montréal

Collaboration with /avec Amnesty In-  
ternational. Associate artist François  
Avard describes that, *here in Montréal  
itself, the presumption of guilt reigns over all  
homeless individuals.* Artiste associé Fran-  
çois Picard décrit qu'on *na pas besoin  
d'aller loin pour constater des droits bafoués.*

# 2009

*promoting proper social hygiene!*

*le manifestival qui favorise une bonne hygiene sociale!*

**25 – 29 Novembre** (5 days) (5 jours)

Place Émilie-Gamelin, Montréal

In the aftermath of the H1N1 scare, *État d'Urgence* takes up the discussion of *hygiene*

*Society often confers to social hygiene a connotation akin to asepticization, by refusing to look its own dysfunctionality in the face. With associate artists / avec artistes associé Sylvie Moreau & François Papineau. La société donne souvent à l'hygiène sociale un sens proche de l'aseptisation en refusant de se confronter à son propre dysfonctionnement...*

# 2010

*all-inclusive getaway*

*le tout inclus!*

**25 – 28 Novembre** (4 days) (4 jours)

Place Play Émilie-Gamelin, Montréal

The Final Edition. *A satirical critique of the glossy, squeaky-clean view of the world championed by travel agency brochures; also, also a biting commentary on so-called cultural tourism and the pressure it exerts to homogenize artistic styles and forms.*

Ultime Édition. *À la fois dérision et critique du monde « sur papier glacé » celui des brochures d'agences de voyages, celui du bonheur vendu en forfait, la thématique 2010 reprend à son compte l'esthétique du TOUT INCLUS (bracelet, palmier, chaises longues et parasols) pour mieux frapper les esprits et engager les débats.*

# PHOTOS BY / DE MARTIN SAVOIE

# of / de ATSA état d'ur- gence 2009 + fin nove- mbre2011

SOPHIA BARTHOLOMEW : What does it mean for you to bring these works together in an exhibition? What's the motivation behind it, for you?

ANNIE ROY : It giving us a view on what's been done, over all of these years, and the work of all these artists – their generosity, their imagination. When you encounter these artworks inside the project *État d'Urgence* it's outside and full of so many things to see ... well, when you put these works in a gallery you can really concentrate on the work of the artist.

PIERRE ALLARD : Yeah, because when you encounter that work in the camp, you're already full with the emotion of this encounter with homelessness in this space. You get like a *detachment* in the art gallery.

SB : That's interesting because I think that's often a criticism of art gallery spaces – that they're so *detached* from real things in the world. Maybe you're thinking that this is actually important – or – why do you think that this *distance* is important?

AR : Well, this is another way to make it live again, too, and for (the work) to touch another kind of public. Also to regroup, and to see some things ... when you bring these works together, you can see all of these different perspectives.

PA : The exhibition started because we had an opportunity to make a tour, in the city – to tour around to all of the different neighbourhoods and suburbs of Montréal (with these artworks) and it was interesting to try to reach that population who would maybe not come to the camp, because they were afraid. And then we realized the interaction with the public was so good, and then we thought that it would be good to tour it more, you know? That's why we're here now.

SB : To go back to something you said earlier – about the generosity and imagination of these artists you worked with – would you say that part of the motivation is to give something back to these artists who participated in *État d'Urgence*?

AR : It's true that sometimes, with a project like that, with the media and everything, they are focusing more

on the *cause* – on the cause of the homeless. So sometimes the artwork was less talked about. So of course, when you regroup all those works, you step back and you say *oh my god! There are so many things that have been done!* And it gives you a very special – a very concentrated – regard for that part of the project. And I think the artists were proud to see that we focused on that, you know ... that we acknowledged and honoured the work.

SB : I mean it's probably a success for *État d'Urgence* that the focus was on the issues around homelessness more than on the works of individual artists ...

AR : But then it's also exciting to see how much production came out of it. How inspiring it was, and how many artists did something there. It's very courageous to do an art piece at *État d'Urgence* because, well you don't know how your piece is going to be treated – if it's going to be accepted or not. It's not your normal milieu. For some of them it was really an act of faith.

SB : Can you think of an occasion when an artist's work was really badly received? Or when it was really difficult for an artist who was involved?

PA : With the china cabinet – Patrick Bérubé – for him he wanted to collect cups from homeless people, he wanted to exchange cups, and sometimes buy it, you know, and then he wanted to show it in a china cabinet, like it was all very precious cups. So for him it was all a very good concept for the art, you know he was very happy with the project, and then when he had to go and meet people – homeless people – he didn't know what to say, and he didn't know how to react with them, and so we had to team him with a friend who works as a social worker with homeless people. He spent a couple of days with him, and so he realized it was not that bad.

Also the first time when we designed our camp, we knew that homeless people would come, but wanted also for the public to come too and to have this experience of living in a refuge camp – or in a shelter, like if something really bad happened in the city. But the first night we were just packed with homeless people. All the public who came, they started to work with us – to find beds, and to take care of the street people. The project switched that first night, because as artists we had to deal with a huge volume of distress on the street. We didn't realize it was so much.

AR : Another difficulty was when an artist had made a small home with wood, to sell time. At one point in the camp, there was no more wood for the fire, and a big homeless guy – a bit drunk – started to want to break the home and to take the wood in the fire. Saying *you know, anyway you're going to destroy after and ...* So we had to deal with : okay, is art so important that we have to say “No, I'm sorry. It won't be for the wood for the fire tonight. It's an art piece, and it's staying this way until the end of the camp.” And that was our decision. But then you have to defend art too. Even if you're in this camp and you think, well,

maybe it's more important to put wood on the fire. But no, we had heated tents – people had a place to be warm.

Other times people are more natural towards the art, you know, not taking it so seriously. They say what they have to say about it, and it's not such an elite thing. And they talk about it.

SB : People aren't so intimidated ...

AR : Well no, they're not (intimidated) at all actually. This kind of encounter is very interesting.

PA : In the first years, a lot of them, they were not so interested about the art, but after a number of years they were coming and saying *hey – can I get a program? Who are the artists this year?* So it was kind of an educational program as well. And when I listened sometimes, they would be talking about the art, and really understood a lot of it, they have a sensibility – you didn't have to tell them about it.

SB : So for you the context of *État d'Urgence* – the creation of that framework is your work of art ...

AR : Yes, that social web. And when it happened year after year, we tried to grow it

artistically also, to make it really stimulating – *theatre, dance, music, visual art* – it was really like a big festival, and a social encounter at the same time. That was for us our art. To bring all of that together.

SB : I've just been talking about this with friends – about the 'invisible' work of the 'host.' It's something I see it in a number of different artist projects now (*The Periodical Project* and *The Artifact Institute* in Halifax, *The Loneliness Chapel* and *PSA Projects* in Chicago, *Feminist Art Gallery* in Toronto) and I see it in your practice – that you're taking this 'invisible' work of 'hosting' and bringing it to the forefront. Your work is happening 'behind' other peoples' work, but it is also an artwork in its own right ...

AR : I think that's part of it, but it's also about putting in front a real problem we don't want to see in our cities right now. The way we work is to conceptualize something and then invite people to be part of it, and to do something inside of a frame that we already set up. And then the pleasure of being part of something bigger.

PA : Something bigger than you. Even for us, it's about being part of something bigger.

AR : Because you can't do that by yourself.

PA : I always see the creation of that framework as the creation of a utopia, and then as soon as the project starts it becomes real life, because it's real people that you're working with. We call it 'A State of Emer-

gency' (*Etat d'Urgence*) so we became in that state for five days, twenty-four hours a day, and having to resolve different kinds of problems. It's an art project, so we have to deal with art problems, but we also have to deal with people needing to eat, and then people are also fighting ...

SB : There's this new category of 'social practice' being talked about now (in contemporary art) and it's problematic to me when social involvement is always discussed as something benevolent or intrinsically good. I see with your project – on the one hand this public face that you present on your website, to bring on financial support and media support – but behind that I have a sense that you have a more nuanced understanding of what the work is. That a big part of being together in community is *conflict* ...

PA : Yeah yeah, of course ...

AR : It's a space also where we don't control everything. Things are going to happen between people that you can't know beforehand. That's the magic of it too, that makes it lively.

SB : And it makes me think about something the collective Claire Fontaine has said about the way that they operate as an ever-shifting group of people, that things not going smoothly operates as driving force in their work, that "unresolved questions function as the motor and carburant of (their) artistic productions." I wonder if you think about your project

AR : I think out of this energy of fighters – that something positive is generated out of that. And that's also democracy, because if it were only *one* it would be a dictatorship.

PA : This project was also problematic – that we're in the city – it meant that we have to deal with fire fighters, the police – screaming at people on the phone. And you know, 'blue collar' people and 'white collar' people. So every year we had fights with people, every year we didn't know what was going to happen ... because it's so big ... and we always go further than what we can do, or are supposed to do. It's never enough, you know?

AR : This ephemera that's left – this exhibition – these works can continue to be something real in the world. A testimony. It feels especially important because we don't do this event anymore ...

PA : We still continue to do something at the end of November – called 'End of November' actually (*Fin Novembre*) – we still want to create the encounter – but now it's smaller – it's mostly our artwork. We still serve meals. You know, we have over twenty five thousand homeless in Montréal, this is like way too much. For me, you know, it's not normal. This ... at least, it's giving them a voice. *A scream*. It's a scream. I always see it as a big scream in the city. It's at the end of November, just as winter is coming – it gives them a break – some blankets, warm clothes. And it's to remind people that they're here, on the street. They're going to be out here for the winter time ...

AR : And as a reminder that art is there to say those kinds of things too. More and more, public artworks are there for *tourism* and make the city *nice*.

SB : As a distraction ...

AR : Yes. The nice picture of the city. *What you don't want to show, and what you do want to show*. It's only a city for certain kinds of people then. It's only your city if you're there to spend money ...

It's important for us in our practice when we talk about a subject, that we address a subject directly, and to involve the people who it concerns. I think we wanted people to get a reality shock, you know? It was important for us to have this *crash*. And it *was*. A lot of people *couldn't* come to the camp. Three hundred homeless in the same spot, when you're used to seeing one here and one there – it is a shock. But then year after year it became normal, so then we have to ask ourselves *did we make it more normal?*

PA : We wanted to create an encounter between lifestyles, also : with the arts it's a very nice way to invite people to come, to be on the street. The first years, we didn't invite other people to do art inside of it, because we were so busy with the structure itself, but after ...

AR : The art became a sort of pacifier and also an interest – it gives people something to talk about.

PA : Yes, a pacifier. The last couple of years we had a theatre group, and we designed an interactive theatre piece with them – and it became a kind of *security* in the camp. They were just doing their art, but for us, from the background, we could see that they were also calming people down, without really knowing it.

Luc Deschesne

Hans Winkler

Leonel Luna

Dominique Blain

Winfred Baumann

Sérgio Cezar

Jenna Maclellan

Luc Sénécal

orangetango

SB : As ATSA, how did you make the decision to become a non-profit organization?

AR : I think because part of our mandate was to be doing this work of dissemination – that not all artists are doing that ...

PA : But also I think it is like a dance group, or theatre ... a production company. Not so much in visual art, but in theatre and in dance, you get these non-profit but creation-oriented structures. For us it was easy to work within that kind of structure.

SB : What does it allow you to do that you weren't able to do without that status?

PA : It makes us able to get a charity number and write tax receipts ... At the end of the day I think it was mostly about the financial.

AR : And maybe when we grow really old and we can't do anything anymore, it can continue on as an organization. But then, at the same time the name – ATSA – is *us*, as artists, as creators. So ...

SB : Working with all of these different partners, do you find that you need to make compromises with your projects?

AR : No, the way that it works is that there is a project, and that project has needs, so you go and search for where you can make it happen – where you can get those needs fulfilled.

PA : But we don't compromise ...

AR : We ask *do you want to* and then the answer is *yes* or *no*.

PA : Sometimes the big shock has been about our name. *Socially Acceptable Terror-*

*ist Action*. But in the end, they really loved the project and so they wanted to work with us, you know?

AR : Like when we partnered with the Canadian Armed Forces, we had to find a way to sell the project that worked within their agenda. But we don't change the project ... You know for the prejudice thing, I think it was good for them to work with us as well ... Another thing that was really nice about working with the army was the youth. Because around the fire ... I would see youth from the street and young soldiers exchanging survival skills, how they do things. They would talk to each other with respect and interest. Normally I think those people would not talk to each other.

PIERRE ALLARD + ANNIE ROY  
are ATSA – l'Action Terroriste Sociale-  
ment Acceptable

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gallery connexion is a non-profit, member-based organization funded in part through the generous support of government grants, by the fundraising efforts of its membership, and with the support of private donors. presenting *10 Ans d'Urgence* would not be possible without the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, Cultural Development New Brunswick, the City of Fredericton, and Northampton Brewing Company.

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published in collaboration with rabbitown press