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## FOR A JUXTAPOSITION OF INCONSISTENCIES

Mélanie Rainville

Max Stern Curator

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View of Room A, *As Much As Possible Given the Time and Space Allotted*. Leonard & Bina Ellen Gallery, Concordia University. Photo: Paul Litherland.

The institutional collection that the Leonard & Bina Ellen Gallery is entrusted with preserving was developed by six individuals whose responsibility it was, as Gallery directors, to select objects for inclusion in it. Potential donations as well as prospective purchases were considered according to an Acquisitions Policy.

Today, it must be acknowledged that the acquisitions criteria outlined in this document were open to interpretation, consequently diminishing their merit as filters against various external pressures. The focus of the collection's content is, therefore, ill-defined due to its diverse composition. This practice of collecting, influenced by different aesthetic, political and social factors specific to each acquisition period, has resulted in an eclectic body of 1,700 works, 80% of which are donations.

*As Much as Possible Given the Time and Space Allotted* provides a unique perspective on the collection by revealing its disparate nature through an arrangement in space that is free of aesthetic criteria and value judgements. That the collection reflects a variety of aesthetic styles, degrees of quality and historical periods only increases the inherent difficulty of its presentation. Moreover, it includes a number of bodies of work both undefined and overdefined, which, all things considered, are not especially representative of the specific periods or artists to which they refer. The fragmented way in which this collection takes stock of art history, leads me to assert that its main point of interest resides in its position in the history of collecting. More specifically, these acquisitions reveal a close relationship with Concordia University: on the one hand, work by professors from its Faculty of Fine Arts is strongly represented; on the other hand, the Gallery's directors were closely connected to that faculty until the early 1990s. If one considers the professionalization of the curatorial discipline, this heterogeneous body of objects, presented almost in its entirety, illustrates a manner of collecting that belongs to the past.

The project in which the Gallery has agreed to participate has foregrounded numerous questions relating to the conservation, handling, exhibition and documentation standards applied to the works in the collection, serving as a basis for me to reconsider museological guidelines. *As much as possible...* prompts a series of negotiations around the rigidity of conventions and

the desire to present the collection by way of a unique exhibition. The sheer volume of objects involved, along with the singularity of their mode of presentation, led me to simplify the management protocols with which I normally comply. Work around the issue of copyright, insurance relative to the moving of the works, and the production of condition reports, among other things, would have been staggering had these tasks not been adapted to the curators' objectives; they would have hindered the realization of this exhibition. The university context within which the collection was first constituted emphasizes the fact that it is the product of research endeavours, and is constantly examined in relation to various problematics through singular experimentation.

*Translated from French by Michael Gilson*