

François-Marc Gagnon (1935–2019)

Legacy and Continuity



Photo: Gabor Szilasi.

François-Marc Gagnon taught art history at Université de Montréal from 1966 to 2000 and went on to direct the Gail and Stephen A. Jarislowsky Institute for Studies in Canadian Art at Concordia University. On March 28, 2019, he departed from the art and research world, in which he was still actively involved, leaving behind his loved ones, the academic community, and the artists of Quebec and Canada.

Teacher and researcher

To foster discovery and to transmit are sacred activities: the former reveals something to oneself and to the world; the latter allows one to experience the unknown with a feeling of safety and trust. The teacher is a guide that accompanies us in this exploration of the unknown, an exploration that is both stimulating and daunting.¹ In this capacity, François-Marc Gagnon was a faithful guide who turned anxieties and fears into stimulation and delight. His pioneering research dedicated to the Automatiste movement, to artists like Paul-Émile Borduas and Jean-Paul Riopelle, to missionary and First Nations iconography, as well as his talent for popularization and communication, have left an impact on researchers and the public alike. Through his teaching, televised courses, talks, and research work, he developed new paths for exploration, fostered dialogue between disciplines and forms of expression, revealed new spaces for reflection, and reconciled opposites—contextual and formal studies, scholarly and popular milieus.

On October 19, 2018, the “François-Marc Gagnon and Art History in Quebec” colloquium was held at the Musée de l’imprimerie du Québec. Researchers from various fields had the

opportunity to highlight the breadth and wealth of his contributions, and to speak to their friendship for him. A collected volume will come out of this event and include a biography and conference proceedings, as well as several testimonials. It will be published by Presses de l’Université de Montréal and edited by Jérôme Delgado (*Le Devoir*), Gilles Lapointe (UQÀM) and Louise Vigneault (Université de Montréal). Gagnon’s latest manuscript, *Jean-Paul Riopelle et le mouvement automatiste* has been submitted to the McGill-Queen’s University Press.

Gagnon nurtured and enriched several generations of students and artists, who have pursued and still pursue his work in several institutions. He also contributed to revealing Quebec’s artistic culture by encouraging the community to recognize its own wealth. His rigour, generosity, humanity, humility and humour are all part of the immaterial and intellectual legacy he leaves behind. ¶

Louise Vigneault
Associate Professor, Art History, Université de Montréal

1. See Yvon Rivard, *Aimer, enseigner* (Montreal: Boréal, 2012).