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Monika Kin Gagnon and Lesley Johnstone, eds., *In Search of Expo 67*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020. ix + 230 pp. \$49.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9780228001140; (French edition: *À la recherche d'Expo 67*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020. ix + 230 pp. \$55.00 CAD. (pb). ISBN 9780228001133.)

Review by Peter Sealy, University of Toronto.

Monika Kin Gagnon and Lesley Johnstone's edited volume *In Search of Expo 67* presents nineteen artistic installations from a 2017 exhibition of the same name at Montréal's Musée d'art contemporain (MAC). Commissioned for the fiftieth anniversary of Montréal's Expo 67, these artworks respond to the legacy of this seminal event in Canada's centennial. In this publication, they are complemented by an introduction and four longer essays addressing larger themes. If "[g]oing to Expo [in 1967] was for many akin to going on an otherwise unattainable world tour" (p. 8), as Kin Gagnon and Johnstone claim, then reading *In Search of Expo 67* offers a more localized experience, tracing present-day reactions by a largely Canadian group of artists and scholars. Most participants seem troubled—often in a very revelatory and productive way—by the persistent fascination Expo 67 provokes in the Canadian imagination. In fact, many chose to grapple with the gendered, racialized, and colonial undercurrents hidden beneath the seductive allure of Expo's mid-century aesthetic and its techno-utopian promise of a better future.

As Kin Gagnon and Johnstone note, the artworks exhibited at the MAC belong to a recent "archival turn" in artistic practice, suggesting contemporary art as a valuable means of engaging with past events and conditions. In David K. Ross's film, *As Sovereign as Love*, a drone-mounted camera follows the former path of Expo's futuristic Minirail. The prosaic nature of this journey (which is occasionally interrupted by trees and electronic interference, making the site a "co-editor" of its own representation) is balanced by an optimistic soundscape produced by Douglas Moffat. Leisure (Meredith Carruthers and Susannah Wesley)'s *Panning for Gold / Walking You Through It* pays homage to Cornelia Hahn Oberlander's Environment for Creative Play and Learning, while exploring the collaborative relationships between designers and their children. Charles Stankiech's *Until Finally O Became Just a Dot*, transformed Buckminster Fuller's USA pavilion (still extant as Montréal's Biosphere) into a gigantic radio antenna. In so doing, Stankiech "locates Fuller's USA Pavilion as *the* popular moment within his long history of techno-utopian production entangled with American imperial military logistics" (emphasis in the original, p. 53). It is exactly this sort of ambivalence which problematizes Expo's legacy.



David K. Ross, *As Sovereign as Love* (film still, 2017)  
 Reproduced with the permission of David K. Ross

Many artists addressed Expo 67's role as a multimedia hub; over 3,000 films were presented at Expo. As the editors note, "the spectacular large-format and multi-screen films were some of the most radical and innovative works of their time" (p. 23). In her essay, "Expo 67 and the Missing Archive, the Anarchive, and the Counter-Archive," Janine Marchessault explores a poignant question: "What do we make of the fact that many of Canada's most daring film and media experiments were lost when Expo 67...concluded?" (p. 194). If the hurried nature of Expo 67's planning and construction offers one explanation for the lack of a legacy plan, the immersive, inclusive, and continuous nature of Expo's multimedia installations—thereby rendering them (possibly) anarchival—offers another. Against this absence, Marchessault presents the "anarchive" of Expo 67 fan sites on the internet and the "counter-archive" of works produced for the exhibition, suggesting they conform to a heterogenous Canadian archival tradition of the "total archive."

Essays by Guy Sioui Durand and David Garneau are devoted to the Indians of Canada Pavilion, which had received shockingly little scholarly attention before the twenty-first century. Funded by Canada's Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development but largely under Indigenous curatorial control, this teepee-shaped pavilion confronted visitors—including Canada's head of state, Queen Elizabeth II—with displays documenting the abuse and deprivation suffered by Canada's First Peoples under settler-colonial rule. While not entirely free from paternalist government control, the Indians of Canada Pavilion marks "the birth of Indigenous curation," according to Indigenous curators (p. 139). As Garneau recounts in "From Indian to Indigenous: Temporary Pavilion to Sovereign Display Territories," the pavilion arrived at a moment of historical awakening in which Canada's First Nations were "transforming from subjects to agents, from 'Indians' to 'Indigenous'" (p. 139). The pavilion's presentation of Indigenous resistance directly challenged the narrative of Canadian nationalism on display elsewhere at Expo, producing what Garneau terms "the Indigenous haunting of Canada's

Centennial” (p. 135). The provocative value of the Indians of Canada Pavilion is confirmed by the fact that nothing similar was permitted at subsequent world’s fairs. Only recently have Indigenous-curated pavilions—*Unceded: Voices of the Land* in the 2018 Canadian Pavilion and the 2022 redesignation of the Nordic Pavilion as the Sámi Pavilion, both at the Venice Biennale—marked a welcome and overdue shift on this front.



“Interior of the Indians of Canada Pavilion. Canadian Corporation for the 1967 World Exhibition fonds, Library and Archives Canada, PA-177766.” Reproduced with permission of McGill-Queen’s Press from Monika Kin Gagnon and Lesley Johnstone, eds., *In Search of Expo 67*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020, p. 121.

Garneau presents the Indians of Canada Pavilion as a forceful gesture countering the historical place of Indigenous peoples at world’s fairs. All too frequently, First Peoples were presented as “primitive others” against whom the bountiful signs and spoils of techno-commercial progress on display could be adjudged. For Garneau, such “[d]isplays on the ethnic and the ‘primitive’ at world exhibitions are essential foils, or contrasts, to dramatically heighten displays of new technology and modes of being” (p. 136). Worse, the ephemeral yet influential utopias brought into being at world fairs lack grounding in land, community, or traditional knowledge, making them antithetical to Indigenous worldviews (part of the site for Expo 67 itself was an artificial island!). Garneau claims convincingly that the citizens of centennial Canada for whom Expo was conceived were “post-Indian” or rather, in reference to the official theme of “Man and His World,” at Expo “Indians are not ‘Man’ but part of ‘His World,’ part of the environment Man dominates” (p. 139).

Garneau concludes his thought-provoking essay by considering the place of First Peoples within colonial institutions such as museums. The author defines “Indigenous” not as a state of being but as an interrelationship through which First Peoples act upon the fact they have more in common “with each other than...with their colonizers” (p. 140). Indigenous consciousness can thus be understood negatively through a shared trauma resulting from colonial stereotypes and violence, or positively through shared values. Inspired by the example of the Indians of Canada

Pavilion, Garneau introduces the concept of the “sovereign Indigenous display territories” predicated upon the curatorial autonomy of Indigenous persons.

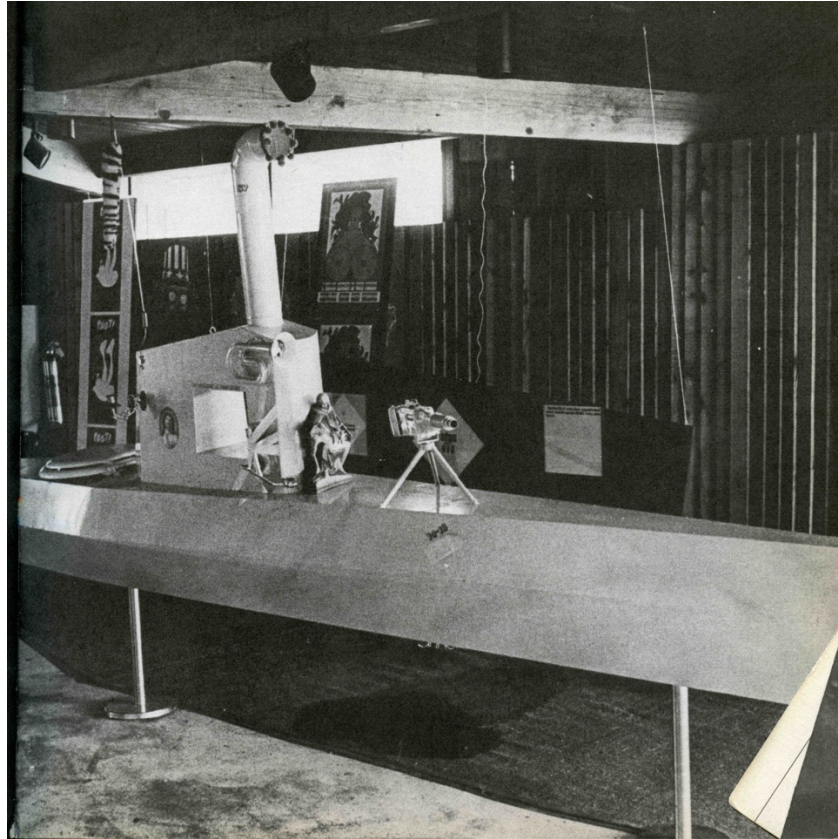
Guy Sioui Durand’s essay “The Indians of Canada Pavilion” also considers the clash between Expo 67’s ideology and Indigenous worldviews. He sees 1967 as a turning point when “a long period of resilience in the face of attempts at assimilation and cultural genocide gave way to a movement for decolonization and reappropriation” (p. 127). This was exemplified by the multifunctional nature of the pavilion, whose various manifestations of Indigeneity are presented by Durand as manifestations of what he terms “glocal Americity,” meaning the ability of events—such as a potlach or a world’s fair—to tie “local micro-relations to global issues” (p. 127). Durand concludes by considering strategies available to twenty-first-century Indigenous artists. One possibility is a process of “re-Indigenization” which seeks to restore the generational knowledge links sundered by residential schooling and attempts at forced assimilation; another is an updating of Indigenous identity through art.

Expo 67’s universal ambitions were often in conflict with national frames: most pavilions were organized by nation-states and the whole event was timed to coincide with Canada’s centennial. Beneath the veneer of global optimism, the Cuban, Algerian, and Indians of Canada pavilions “provided moments of ideological friction” (p. 63). The nationalism of Québec and its inhabitants offered another, with the tumultuous decade of the 1960s witnessing the Quiet Revolution’s overthrow of old religious and linguistic orthodoxies. Economic autonomy and unfettered cultural development were at the heart of this decade-long project to bring Québec into the modern world. The Québec Industries Pavilion at Expo 67 featured a live television feed from the construction site of Hydro-Québec’s Manicougan Dam. While perhaps best-remembered in Québec for Charles de Gaulle’s “Vive le Québec Libre!” speech delivered in Montréal during the fair, the successful organization of Expo marked a point of collaboration between “red” and “blue” (or federalist and sovereigntist) strains of nationalism. Expo symbolized Québec’s ambition to assume its full place, either within the Canadian federation or the global community of nations.

In considering the telescoping nationalisms within Canadian identity, Garneau and other writers in *In Search of Expo 67* do raise a crucial point. In its celebration of Canadian confederation, Expo 67 marked a moment of ascent for a bilingual version of Canada (one which tragically excluded First Nations and other Indigenous peoples.) Pierre Elliott Trudeau became Canada’s Prime Minister in 1968 and the Official Languages Act followed a year later. Yet Expo also marked a moment when Canadians were given a glimpse of the country’s multicultural future. While rightly considered to be a massive success over the ensuing decades, Garneau notes that waves of immigration have risked turning Canada’s First Peoples into another “minority.” The same unease is felt—whether justly or unjustly—in today’s Québec.

Johanne Sloane’s essay “Greg Curnoe’s ‘Dorval Mural’ as a Critical Response to Expo 67” considers how Québécois artists of the late 1960s negotiated contrasting countercultural and nationalist pulls, as exemplified by the Ti-Pop movement. As Sloane defines it, “Ti-Pop stages an encounter, which could be more accurately described as a collision or clash, between traditional French-Canadian culture and an up-to-date American-style pop culture. It was out of this encounter that a new Québécois identity would emerge” (pp. 67-68). Ti-Pop had a small presence at Expo 67, with André Montpetit and Marc-Antoine Nadeau’s *Le Premier sous-marin atomique de la force de frappe québécoise* displayed in the Youth Pavilion. Curnoe’s mural for Montréal’s Dorval Airport (re-named for Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 2004) exemplified a desire for

internationalism but also questions its ideological underpinnings during the Cold War, thereby anticipating the ambivalence shown by many of the artists featured in *In Search of Expo 67*.



André Montpetit and Marc-Antoine Nadeau. “*Le premier sous-marin atomique de la force de frappe québécoise* at the Youth Pavilion, Expo 67, 1967.” Reproduced with permission of McGill-Queen’s Press from Monika Kin Gagnon and Lesley Johnstone, eds., *In Search of Expo 67*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020, p. 64. (Originally produced in Yves Robillard, *Québec Underground 1962-1972, Tome 1* (Montréal: Éditions Médiart, 1973), p. 241.)

In the current political climate, nostalgia is far from neutral. *In Search of Expo 67* and the artworks it presents shed much-needed critical attention on the pull which Expo 67 still exerts. Yet the most striking question the book poses is just how different 2017 is from 1967. In certain ways, the gulf is enormous, but in others it is not as large as we might wish to think. Ubiquitous multimedia, continued technological utopianism, simmering global conflict, and environmental crises all testify to the capacity of world fairs to provide glimpses into the future. As Kin Gagnon and Johnstone note, “the complexities and tensions so visible in 2017 were equally present back in 1967” (p. 3). This is the material that the artists and authors featured in *In Search of Expo 67* so ably explore.

## LIST OF ESSAYS

Monika Kin Gagnon and Lesley Johnstone, “Introduction”

Johanne Sloan, “Greg Curnoe’s ‘Dorval Mural’ as a Critical Response to Expo 67”

Guy Sioui Durand, “The Indians of Canada Pavilion”

David Garneau, “From Indian to Indigenous: Temporary Pavilion to Sovereign Display Territories”

Janine Marchessault, “Expo 67 and the Missing Archive, the Anarchive, and the Counter-Archive”

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