

**C E N T R E  
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*From the series "Mapping the Automatists in Montreal", #102*

## 75, Sherbrooke Street West, apt. 5 Activities at the Gauvreau Residence

Claude Gosselin, C.M., July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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Madame Julienne Saint-Mars Gauvreau lived in apartment 5 at 75, Sherbrooke Street West, with her two sons Pierre and Claude, and her sister Adrienne Saint-Mars, affectionately known as Baba. She moved there in the late 1930s on the upper level of the property. The apartment had two bedrooms, one for the boys, the other for Aunt Baba, a living room where Madame Gauvreau slept, a fairly large hall, a kitchen and a bathroom.

Although cramped, Madame Julienne Saint-Mars Gauvreau always made sure her apartment was a place for meetings, sharing, conferences and exhibitions. For these activities, some furniture was removed from the living room. She was keen to give her sons and their friends a cultural environment that responded to their passions. She had held long before living at 75 Sherbrooke Street West, as early as 1937-1938, the "Lundis littéraires" (*Literary Mondays*) which welcomed many intellectuals and artists.

<http://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/2690699>. In the search bar, type "Lundis littéraires".



Cytrynbaum Homes,  
75-81 Sherbrooke W.,  
built in 1867. As it was  
in the 1940s.

Architects: George and  
John J. Browne. Photo:  
Pierre-Richard Bisson,  
1979. University of  
Montreal.

Among the activities directly involving the Automatists group, let us mention the following:

**1. The second exhibition of the Automatists, "TABLEAUX ET SCULPTURES", from Sunday February 15 to Saturday March 1, 1947.** The works of Marcel Barbeau, Paul-Émile Borduas, Roger Fauteux, Pierre Gauvreau, Fernand Leduc, and Jean-Paul Mousseau are showcased. Maurice Perron took pictures of the event. The exhibition is open daily, including Sunday, from 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. The opening was on Saturday February 15 at 2:00 p.m.

Tancredé Marsil Jr. published in *Le Quartier latin*, a student newspaper at the University of Montreal, on February 28, 1947, a review entitled "Les automatistes. L'École Borduas". The artists would henceforth be known as the Automatists.

For his part, Maurice Gagnon noticed a work by Borduas: "Borduas, the head of the School, exhibits a considerable canvas, entitled *1.47*, which is without a doubt the center of attraction of the exhibition. It is a harmony of green, white, red, and black with a stunning effect. I do not know what qualities we could add to this painting to make it more moving, more passionate, and I look in vain for the flaws it is criticized for. The painter of *Automatism 1.47* belongs to the race of the giants of tomorrow." (François-Marc Gagnon, *Paul-Émile Borduas 1905-1960. Biographie critique et analyse de l'œuvre*, Montreal: Fides, 1978, p. 212-213.)

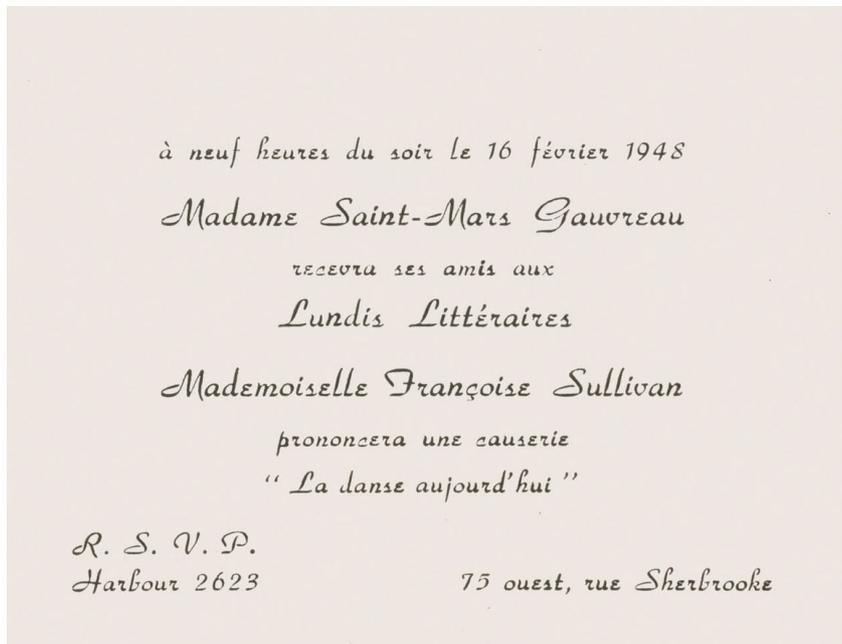


Invitation card for the exhibition (front) of the second Automatists exhibition at 75, Sherbrooke Street West, in 1947.

**2. Françoise Sullivan gives a conference: "La danse aujourd'hui" on Monday February 16, 1948, at 9:00 p.m.,** as part of Madame Gauvreau's "Lundis littéraires". The text is published in the manifesto *Refus Global* under the title "La danse et l'espoir". The launch took place on August 9, 1948 at the Librairie Tranquille.

Françoise addresses the audience: "Above all, dance is a reflex, a spontaneous expression of keenly felt emotions. Man has found in it a way to satisfy his desire for tangency with the universe... We must organically question man, be unafraid to go as far as necessary in the exploration of our whole self... What matters above all is that the emotions which created the rhythms and the style in which they took shape are found in their plastic representation and that the same breath of life animates them... The dancer must therefore release the energies of his body by the spontaneous gestures that will be dictated to him. He will do this by putting himself in a state of receptivity like a medium. By the violence of the force involved, he can reach trances and will touch magic points."

We find in these excerpts Françoise's desire to free the dancer from the tyranny of classical dance gestures, the need to bring the dancer beyond consciousness so that he finds the essential gestures called for by his whole body.



Invitation to Françoise Sullivan's public reading entitled "La danse aujourd'hui" as part of Madame Julienne Saint-Mars Gauvreau's "Lundis Littéraires".

**3. Assembling the manifesto *Refus global*, early August 1948.** “The preparation of the final work took place in the apartment of the Gauvreau family in Montreal. The text was typed on stencils and reproduced on a rented mimeograph (Gestetner). Riopelle's cover design was lithographed by a commercial printer [...] The unbound copies of the complete work were assembled on the Gauvreau's table, and this was done by simply folding the pages within the cover.” (Ray Ellenwood, *Égrégore. Une histoire du mouvement automatiste de Montréal*, Outremont: Éditions du passage, 2014, p. 121.) *Refus global* was launched on August 9, 1948 at the Librairie Tranquille.

*Translation by Vincent Godin-Filion, proofreading by Dominique Robb.*

#### **Acknowledgments**

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