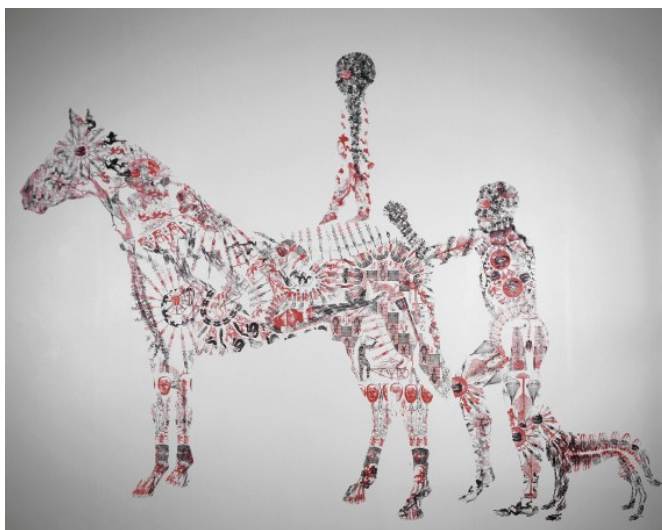


François Morelli

Drawings-Impressions: Wallpapers, 1993 – 2001



François Morelli, *Horse Sense*, 1995

Ink pad printing, 126" x 143" (320 x 363 cm)

In situ exhibition: *Open to the public*, Artspace, New Haven (Connecticut), USA

Artist's collection

© Guy L'Heureux

This exhibition marks the first in a series that we want to dedicate to wallpapers created by artists, designers, and architects.

Drawings-Impressions: Wallpaper 1993-2001 brings together for the first time a set of works on white wallpaper that François Morelli produced using an ink pad. It is an important part of the artist's approach, who from 1993 sought to go beyond the traditional framework of a work on paper and integrate the location of the exhibition as part of an installation forming a whole.

This exhibition continues a long tradition at the CIAC, highlighting specific series of works by an artist. Let us mention: *Autoportraits 1990-1994* by Pierre Dorion in 1994, and *Les pages-miroirs 1980-1995* by Rober Racine in 1995.

Claude Gosselin (CG): How did you come about to produce your large rubber-stamped drawings on paper strips associated to “wallpapers”?

François Morelli (FM): My interest in wallpaper dates back to the 1980s when I was living in the United States. During museum visits I discovered historical reconstructions as well as the period rooms at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. I was interested in the ornament and the decorative as narrative and popular forms of expression. In search of a pictographic writing form, I was drawn to the wallpapers from the Victorian era and the Arts and Craft movement, as well as the Egyptian hieroglyphics, Mexican codexes and decorative patterns on Indian fabrics. As early as the 1970s, I have tried to decompartmentalize printmaking by printing repeated patterns on unstretched canvases. I also juxtaposed graphic works with three-dimensional volumes during the 1980s; at the time drawings of different sizes occupied the walls of my installations. In the 1990s, I began to print using rubber stamps on paper. I soon found the size of the sheets of paper to be limiting and cumbersome for the breadth of my narratives. Favoring the human scale, I wanted to work on larger surfaces to create immersive environments. I felt the architectural scale was the best way to inhabit the space and to prompt the viewer into moving around, thus favoring multiple readings of the work. The white wallpaper, or liner*, fulfilled this practical need while facilitating the rubber stamping. I also liked the idea of the walls being wrapped. The wallpaper makes the walls smooth and its fibrous surface makes it easier to print, while also making the image more concrete.

*Liner is commercially manufactured for uneven surfaces and is designed as a primer for wallpaper.



François Morelli
Éléphant II, 1994
Ink pad printing
106" x 97" (269 x 246 cm)
In situ exhibition: *L'art du tampon*,
Musée de La Poste de Paris, Paris
(France)
Artist's collection
© Musée de la Poste, Paris

CG: When did you start producing work using this material?

FM: I first used white wallpaper in 1993 at the Chambre Blanche in Quebec City during my residency. However, I should mention that as early as 1974 I was drawing on long paper rolls and my drawings were composed of continuous repeated patterns.

CG: Is there a recurring pattern in your drawings?

FM: My rubber stamps are the base of my patterns. They are commercially made from reproduced and drawn images. These images refer to the human body, natural sciences, the tools in my workshop, and other historical and cultural artifacts. Each new project is an opportunity to add new stamps to my lexicon of images: a tree, a baby, a pair of scissors, numbers from 0 to 9, an androgynous Buddha, an insect, human skin, the inside of an eyelid, a fingerprint, a US dollar, small vise pliers... I now have over 75 stamps. This bank of rubber stamps allows me to build and rhythmically repeat my patterns. Symmetrical gridding, meshing, radiating and spiraling structure the organization of the compositions. Between 1993 and 2001, the color palette was limited to red and black. The various sizes of each rubber stamp allow a modular structuring of the patterns. Finally, stencils cut from large sheets of paper are used to create human and animal figures. These figures come from art history (the man and woman from Albrecht Durer's Dresden notebooks, Pisanello's dog, Tantric figure, Inuit figure...). They functioned as receptacles for the rubber stamps. Figures within figures, they were inspired by Moghul miniatures (elephants and camels made up of smaller animals) and 16th-century Mannerist painters such as Giuseppe Arcimboldo.

CG: What were your esthetic or political preoccupations when you producing these wallpapers from 1993-2001?

FM: As an iconoclast, I resisted the singularity and the finality of the idea of a finished work of art. I was more invested in the process, working with open, ephemeral, performative and in-situ graphic installations. I resisted the reductive and simplistic logics of the pure, conceptual and minimal forms of the neos (neo expressionism, neo geo, neo conceptualism...). I preferred hybridity and overload with their contradictions and paradoxes. I let intuition guide me in the possibility of inventing a language constructed of images; the sound and orality of the images echoed the sound of the stamps hitting the wallpaper and the walls. A form of delirious concrete poetry. I foregrounded labor and made it obsessive and compulsive. I sought to overthrow the hierarchy and the orthodoxy of the artistic disciplines, and to transgress the narrative taboos of illustration, ornamentation, and chintz. I used the body and architecture interchangeably to explore the normalization and control of our behaviors. I chronicled the political and social issues I perceived on the wall. I short-circuited the logic and good taste of modern order. Moreover, in reaction to the commodification and speculation of the art markets of the 1980s, I sought to counter the isolated object that was too easily diverted and consumed. To make meaning complicated and inextricable, and to suspend experience in an overabundance and multiplicity of possibilities. I was looking for an ecstatic visual form.

CG: Some of your wallpapers take the outlines of the walls where they have been placed. Are your wallpapers always made for predefined spaces?

FM: My wallpapers have always been designed in response to a specific location. Often composed on site, each work required a considerable investment of time and effort. Architecture played an essential role. The height of the walls, the openings (doors and windows), the stairs, the electrical sockets, the lighting... all these components had to be taken into consideration when creating a work. I sometimes worked from plans and photographs of the site to create a work in my studio before sending it to be installed in a group exhibition outside of Montreal. I would provide hanging instructions with the paper rolls.



François Morelli, *Deux femmes debout*, 1994

Ink pad printing

83" X 21" (each) (210 x 53 cm (each))

In situ exhibition: *Red Figure*, Mercer
Community College, Trenton (New Jersey),
USA

Artist's collection

© François Morelli

CG: Were these wallpapers commissioned?

FM: Most of my wallpapers were made for exhibitions and were not commissioned. However, in 2004 I did commissions for *Home Wall Drawing: L'art de manger*. These works were not made on wallpaper. I created the twenty-two rubber stamped drawings in France directly on the walls of the homes of the hosts who welcomed me in exchange for their favorite meals.

To learn more: www.ciac.ca

List of works

François Morelli

Indexer le lieu ; Inscrire le corps, 1993

Ink pad printing

106" x 292" (269 x 741 cm)

In situ exhibition: La Chambre Blanche, Quebec (Quebec) Canada

Artist's collection

François Morelli

Éléphant II, 1994

Ink pad printing

106" x 97" (269 x 246 cm)

In situ exhibition: *L'art du tampon*, Musée de La Poste de Paris, Paris (France)

Artist's collection

François Morelli

Les limbes, 1994

Ink pad printing

108" x 139" (274 x 353 cm)

In situ exhibition: Horodner Romley Gallery, New York, (New York), USA

Artist's collection

François Morelli

Deux femmes debout, 1994

Ink pad printing

83" X 21" (each) (210 x 53 cm (each))

In situ exhibition: *Red Figure*, Mercer Community College, Trenton (New Jersey), USA

Artist's collection

François Morelli

Horse Sense, 1995

Ink pad printing

126" x 143" (320 x 363 cm)

In situ exhibition: *Open to the public*, Artspace, New Haven (Connecticut), USA

Artist's collection

François Morelli

À tir croisé, 2001

Ink pad printing

126" x 108" (320 x 274 cm)

In situ exhibition: *Au-dessous du volcan*, Maison du parc, Cébazat/Clermont-Ferrand, France

Artist's collection

François Morelli

Déclaration des droits de l'homme, 2001

Printing on sheets and pillowcases

Sheet: 86 ^{1/2}" x 82 ^{1/2}" (222 x 210 cm)

Pillowcase: 2 (19 ^{1/2}" x 31 ^{1/2}")

2 (50 x 80 cm)

In situ exhibition: *Strike*, Lewis and Clark College, Portland (Oregon), USA

Artist's collection

François Morelli is a Montreal-based multidisciplinary artist holding a BFA from Concordia University (1975) and a Master of Fine Arts from Rutgers University, New Jersey. From 1981 to 1991, he lived and taught in New York where he created several graphic and sculptural installations, as well as other art practices that led him across North America, Europe, and North Africa.

His work has been exhibited internationally in museums, private galleries, artist-run centres and Contemporary Art events in Canada, the United States and Europe since 1976. Notably, he exhibited at the Musée du Québec (1979), the Musée d'art de Joliette (1980), the Musée Régional de Rimouski (1988), the Centro Culturale Canadese (Italie, 1989), the Horodner Romley Gallery (New York, 1994 and 1995), at Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (1994), at La Vitrine (France, 2004) as well as at Joyce Yahouda Gallery (Montreal, 2006, 2008 and 2014). Morelli also participated in the Biennale de Montréal (2002) and the Biennale du Havre in France (2006). In 2007, he presented major installations at the Atlanta Contemporary Art Centre and at Hamilton Art Gallery. In 2011, he participated in the Québec Triennial (Musée d'art contemporain, Montréal).

In 2015, François Morelli was awarded the *Conseil des arts et lettres du Québec's* artist residency studio in Mumbai (India), as well as in New York (UE) in 2011. In 2004, he was awarded the Canada Council for the arts studio residency in Paris (France).

François Morelli received numerous awards including the *Biennale de dessin, de l'estampe et du papier du Québec* Award in 1993 and the Louis Comtois Prize in 2007, by the City of Montreal in collaboration with the *Association des galeries d'art contemporain* (AGAC).

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D E M O N T R É A L

October 19th – November 4th, 2018

Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday: noon to 6 p.m.

Thursday and Friday: noon to 8 p.m.

Monday and Tuesday: closed

Free entry

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