

M E D I A R E L E A S E



Santo Subito, 2006, oil, charcoal, aerosol paint on canvas, 180 x 210 cm
 Courtesy Clint Roenisch Gallery

Dharma Bum

Sylvain Bouthillette: Selected Works, 1990-2006

20 April – 27 May 2007

Opening reception: Thursday, 19 April, 8 pm

Artist's & Curator's talk: Friday, 20 April, 6:30 pm

Talk on Buddhism in relation to artist's work:

Saturday, 21 April at 4 pm, reception to follow,

co-presented with the Shambhala Centre, Halifax

Punk rock and Buddhism combine to expand the boundaries of painting, in the latest exhibition at Saint Mary's University Art Gallery. *Dharma Bum* is the first mid-career assessment of work by Montreal painter Sylvain Bouthillette and his first exhibition in Atlantic Canada. Covering a 16-year period, the exhibition includes more than thirty works, drawing on sources as varied as circus posters and Tibetan Buddhist iconography.

For twenty years, Bouthillette has produced paintings, sculptures, photographs, sound works and prints that share an affinity with American so-called "bad painting." In the words of Bernard Lamarche, Contemporary Art Curator at the Musée régional de Rimouski, they show "an almost base materiality" in their "trash" aesthetic and use of pop-culture imagery. Tigers, horses, hares and squirrels make up "an untameable bestiary" that also alludes to stories from Buddhist legend.

The Main Gallery features large paintings on canvas and wood, using acrylic, oil, aerosol and chalk. The Side Gallery is given over principally to works on paper: drawings, silkscreens and linoleum and inkjet prints. Bouthillette often mixes disparate media, collaging digital photographs into his oil and acrylic paintings and drawing or spray painting on the paintings' surfaces. Some works incorporate sculptural, kinetic and sound elements, including a clown's head and a gyrating hare.

The exhibition title, *Dharma Bum*, refers to a 1958 novel by American Beat Generation writer, Jack Kerouac. A descendent of Québécois immigrants to Massachusetts, Kerouac was closely associated with writer Allen Ginsburg, who was in turn an associate of the Halifax Tibetan Buddhist community. First used by art critic Marie-Ève Charron to refer to Bouthillette's work, the term *Dharma Bum* testifies, in Lamarche's words, "to the central encounter [in Bouthillette's work] between materiality and spirituality." Bouthillette acknowledges Tibetan Buddhist meditation as an influence on his art. The titles of works such as *Milarepa*, *Song Khapa* and *Mahakala bombardant le conditionnement mental* (all 1999) refer directly to traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. The exhibition thus draws together aspects of Tibetan, American, Québécois and Halifax Buddhism and related cultural movements.

Dharma Bum is on exhibit at Saint Mary's University Art Gallery from 20 April through 27 May 2007. The exhibition opens with a public reception on Thursday evening, 19 April at 8:00 pm. The artist and curator will be present. Sylvain Bouthillette and Bernard Lamarche will give a talk on the exhibition on Friday evening, 20 April at 6:30 pm. As well, the artist will speak about the relationship between Buddhism and his art, in an informal talk on Saturday afternoon, 21 April at 4:00 pm, followed by a reception. This event is a co-presentation with the Shambhala Centre. Saint Mary's University Art Gallery is in the Loyola Building, 5865 Gorsebrook Avenue.

All events are free of charge and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

Dharma Bum is produced by the Musée régional de Rimouski in collaboration with EXPRESSION, le Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe, with support from the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec, the City of Rimouski and assistance from Pacart Québec Inc. This exhibition and associated activities are generously supported by programme funding from The Canada Council for the Arts.

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Contact: Robin Metcalfe, 902 420-5445
 Email: gallery@smu.ca
 Website: www.smuartgallery.ca
 Digital images/slides/photos available



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