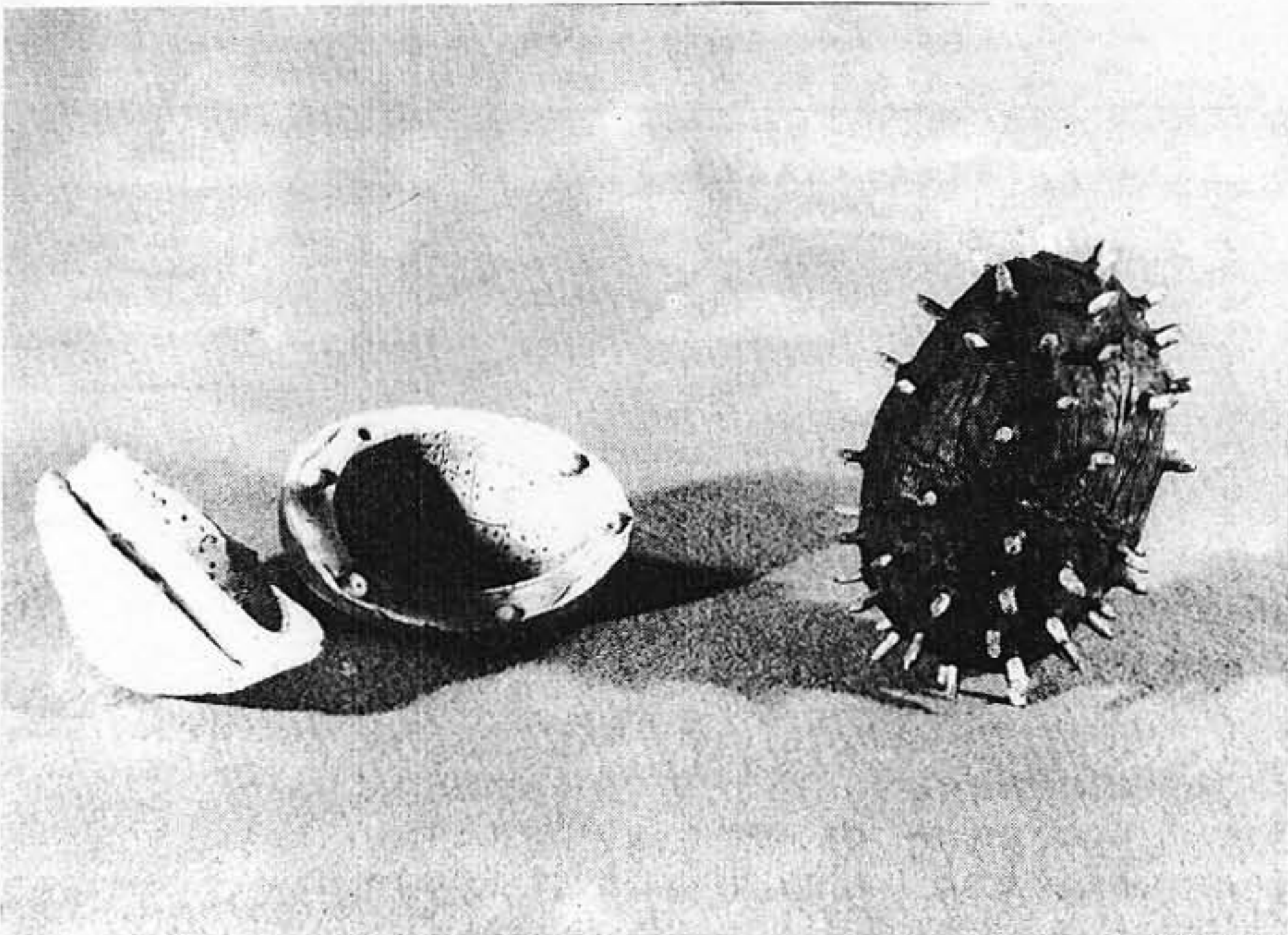


# Galleries in a nutshell

Some of the city's best: Trois Points, Circa and Occurrence



The shell and the kernel Dominique Morel's *L'un vient de l'autre* No. 1

JOSEÉ LAMBERT

by HENRY LEHMANN

**D**OMINIQUE MOREL'S works, now on view at the Galerie Trois Points, have a strange sense of latent power. What we see in this exciting show are rounded seed-shapes neatly placed on rows of actual tables.

For years now Morel has been developing an art based on organic shapes. But if her earlier work occasionally had the gentleness of the fibre pieces of Jackie Winsor or Eva Hesse, her current production is downright bellicose.

Laid out like specimens for examination, these exotic nodules—some as big as coconuts and others almost as small as walnuts—seem stranded far from their usual habitat. But whether these crusty forms come from the wild or from the hot-house tangle of human obsession is an open question.

Solid and present, these objects are all the more ambiguous; are they imitations of nuts or are they objects in their own right? In more philosophical terms, are they "art about" or "art as being?"

Made of plaster, wax, and metal, the works consist of two or more components—rounded nut-form and its spiky casing. Despite their formidable surfaces, these lovingly crafted forms are surprisingly sensual.

Sometimes the various components—the shell and the kernel—are partly together, with the inner form just emerging. At other times, the forms are wholly separated. Suggested is both fossilization and birth.

In a work entitled *Fruit et Noyau* No. 12, the toughness of the shucked-off outer shell, with its sword-like points, is matched by the hard inner kernel, itself covered with spines, just emerging. Something not especially tender has just been born.

Traditionally, nuts have symbolized fertility and divinity—a renewal of life. But these nuts pack the potential force of land mines ready to go off. Land mines, it is to be noted, are human

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creations, and so are Morel's works. That her objects are not meant to emulate that which is altogether natural is indicated by the metal studs and little metal clasps on some of them. Recalled by this punk hardware are certain African statues armed with insistently repetitive patterns.

Indeed, Morel's petrified fruits are, among other things, ceremonial fetishes for the 1990s—objects of enchantment and dread through which humans deal with the unknown. Perhaps in our technological society, Morel's pods are meant as magic bulwarks against the tyranny of reason.

Richard Deschenes' images, exhibited in the same gallery, are inventories of form in evolution. In one piece we see

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rows of swords, each one slightly different. In another image, we come across the architectural plan of a cathedral. The overall effect is mainly decorative. Works by Dominique Morel and Richard Deschenes will remain on display at Galerie Trois Points until Saturday, November 20.

Gilles Boisvert's work at Circa Ceramic Arts also has to do with tough carapaces in a hard world. But getting the message in these clichéd creations involves a simplistic meaning game. In one multimedia piece entitled *Les Oiseaux de malheur*, a series of metal birds projects from the gallery wall. Intentionally resembling military aircraft, these predatory steel figments lord it over a broken ceramic bird placed on the gallery floor. The lesson is "how fragile is peace."

Any simple pencil drawing of a dove

would have said it better. Boisvert's self-indulgent confections go to show that sometimes more is less. These sculptures remain on view at Circa Ceramic Arts through to Saturday, November 13.

Lorraine Dagenais, whose work is now on display at Occurrence, is yet another artist exploring the relationship between nature and culture. Her wall-pieces, often consisting of what look like giant wood chips may not be on the cutting edge of art, but they are appealing.

These forms, with marks indicating the process of creation, are arranged in organic patterns on the gallery walls. Often, as in *Trajet composé/Le Berceau*, the best work in the show, the flat wooden components are poised between togetherness and dispersal. And, wing-like, the various wood components in this piece tilt out at different angles, giving the entire spectacle a subtle sculptural presence.

But this physicality is intentionally countered by the way Dagenais has painted the chips. Streaked in greenish blues, the hard surfaces seem to melt into heathery tones—wispiness of James Herriot country. Reality blends with illusion.

Tamar Granovsky's interesting symbolist installation in the small room of the same gallery is dark and claustrophobic, like a dank and sweaty bad dream. Rather than observing this work, we are required by its composition to enter it.

We step into a space dominated by three elements—a black armoire filled with oozy, amber-coloured forms at once resembling bottles and the human anatomy; a loose pile of these same objects; and the prow of a black, tar-covered boat.

On a formal level, the work seems about order and chaos. On a mythological level, the theme has more to do with our fear of death and our yearning for immortality. The bodies/bottles seem ready to cross the River Styx into the nether world of life after death. Works by Lorraine Dagenais and Tamar Granovsky will be on view at Occurrence until Saturday, November 28.