

MICHEL CAMPEAU

THE DONKEY THAT BECAME A ZEBRA: DARKROOM STORIES

The Canadian photographer, artist and collector **Michel Campeau** (Montreal, 1948) has been active on the Canadian photography scene for well over four decades. The documentary project titled *Disraeli: Une Expérience Humaine en Photographie [Disraeli: A Human Experience in Photographs]* (1972), which he collaborated with three other photographers, marked a milestone in the history of Québec photography. In the wake of this venture, he continued to develop a practice that explored the subjective, narrative and ontological aspects of the medium.

The series *Weekend in «Earthly Paradise»!*, executed during the 1970s, expresses his fascination for his fellow human beings with an earthy realism reminiscent of street theatre. It was followed by a more introspective period, during which the artist delved into his own family archives.

In reaction to the switch to digital, Michel Campeau began photographing the increasingly rare darkrooms that still existed. This series gave rise to two publications and several exhibitions, notably at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2014), and at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2015). During the same period, he began collecting vernacular photography and pursuing his creative path through the photographs of others, seeking to unveil the underlying motive force behind the practice of photography.

His work has earned him a number of awards, including the *Bourse de carrier Jean-Paul-Riopelle* from the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec* (2009) and the *Duke and Duchess of York Prize* from the *Canada Council for the Arts* (2010). The original and multifaceted path taken by Michel Campeau's career, marked by intellectual and emotional integrity, establishes him as one of the most important photographers of his generation, in Canada and beyond.

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