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Eloquent Earth

by ALAIN LABELLE

In line with Photography Month in Montreal, the Strathearn Intercultural Centre presents an exhibition called **NATIVE LAND - PROMISED LAND - WOUNDED LAND**, from the l'Agence Stock Photo. Three individuals, three cameras, three worlds.

This show, which runs until the 17th of September, brings together the works of three photographers who have nothing in common but their travels and their need to experience and document cultures

other than their own. Together they founded the collective l'Agence Stock Photo in Montreal in 1987. A place of passion and a sharing of the same vision: these photojournalists orient their work towards a long-term

view of their subject matter, each member following his own artistic eye, dedicated to contemporary issues and different social and political realities.

The exposition presents the impressions of Robert Fréchette, Jean-François Leblanc and Normand Blouin.

Native Land

"In 1987, wanting to get past the ignorance that characterised predominant views in Québec concerning native populations, I decided to document the small Montagnais community of Unamen Shipu," said Fréchette. "I was deeply attracted to and interested by this community, so I concentrated my work on the native question."

Fréchette set out to follow the Amerindian situation closely: the Oka crisis; contraband cigarette smuggling; the struggle of the Cree nation against the Great Whale project. Last year he lived with his family in an Inuit village at Kangirsujaq. "It's the subject of my life," he says. *Native Land* is thus in some senses a retrospective. It represents five years of photographic work done in eight different communities. Fréchette has tried to depict the ties among First-Nation elders as they care for their native land. "In this age of communications and complex technology, it seemed important to me to show that there are still people in Quebec for whom the land is the only true mother."

Promised Land

In October 1994 Jean-François Leblanc went to Palestine for the first time. He spent twelve days—an unforgettable visit, if frustrating because short: he wanted to linger, to explore. "On the contrary, the trip only gave me a global idea of the area and its situation, which strengthens my desire to return," explains Leblanc.

Promised Land, the land Moses promised to the Jews who roamed the desert after fleeing Egypt and slavery, is now the land which the Palestinian people hopes one day to make its own.

For this photographer, whose work is regularly admired in *Voir* and *Actualité*, the photographs in this exhibition are only a first impression of what he has experienced on this voyage.

Wounded Land

For Normand Blouin, being present at the right moment is the core of his work.

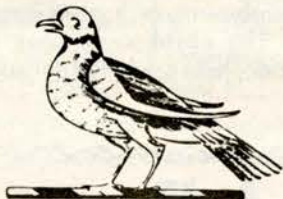
"*Wounded Land* is the result, the consequence of acts and decisions made by a handful of men in the name of the collective. Too often the people are the first victims of political issues, the first to suffer." *Wounded Land* is a series of visual essays from different parts of the former Soviet Union. Blouin has tried to show the suffering and the difficulties of these people living through world crises, the human tragedies of the civil war in Afghanistan and the conflict in Bosnia.

Blouin is aware of the beauty also to be found in these moments. "I find that man is complaisant in pleasure and is only forced to change by that which doesn't please him. I swear, I would like to shock even more," says Blouin. "*Terre Blessée* is only the tip of the iceberg, a reflection of my work in these last few years and a glimpse of my direction for the future."

NATIVE LAND - PROMISED LAND - WOUNDED LAND: at the Strathearn Intercultural Centre, 3680 Jeanne-Mance, until September 17th, 1995. For more information please call 982-1812.♦

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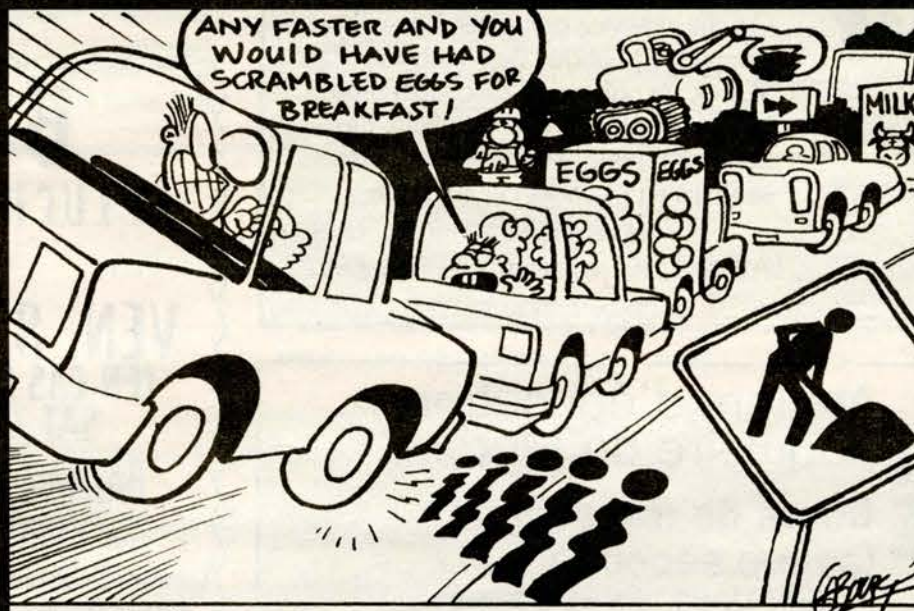


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