

WINTER 2006 • \$4.95 US

Fine Art

“It is good for
New Yorkers to
bang on stone.”

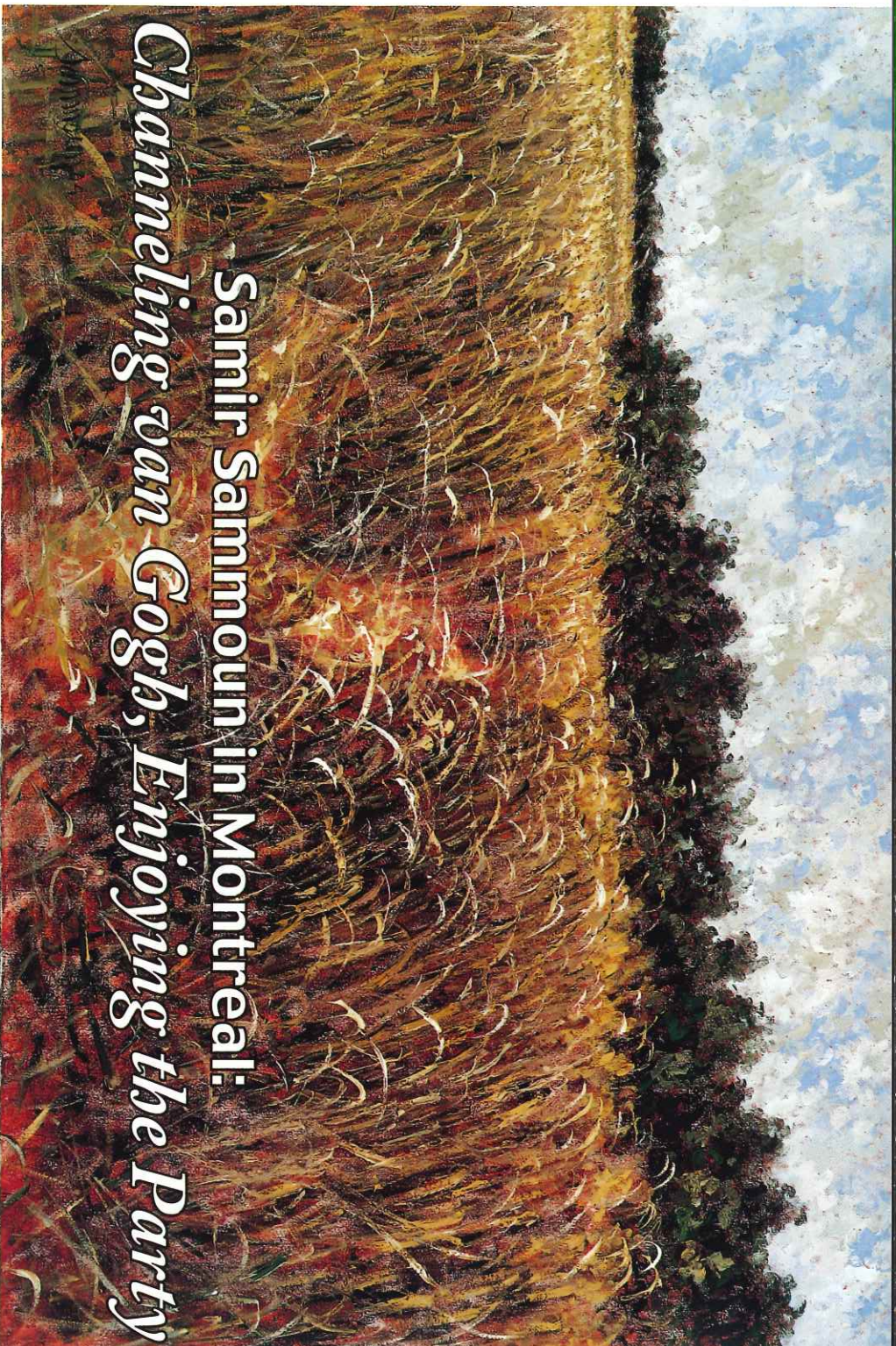
—AILENE FIELDS
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Samir Sammoun in Montreal: *Channeling van Gogh, Enjoying the Party*

It is always a party when Samir Sammoun mounts an exhibition of his paintings, so when the invitation came to head up to Montreal in November of 2005, I put the poodle in the truck (there is a dog friendly hotel, the Delta in the heart of town) and made the two hour journey from my upstate New York home. The fun always continues post-reception at the artists' favorite Lebanese restaurant with good companions, a fine glass or two of wine and the most excellent Middle Eastern cuisine this side of Beirut.

This particular show was held in an exhibition space attached to the bookstore at the Montréal Museum des Beaux-Arts and Samir's exhibition, while not exactly in the museum, had the ambiance of a museum exhibition. The room was, as Hemingway would say, "clean and well-lit" and it soon filled with a crowd of Montréal's elite persons, capped by the appearance of Quebec Prime Minister Jean Charest and First Lady Michelle Dionne, who stayed for quite a while, admiring the art and enjoying the camaraderie with the electorate.

Samir's paintings continue along a path he has found himself on for the past decade or two. He has a sweet vision for the world, making for paintings of exceptional beauty and tranquility. Even in the movement of great fields of wheat, forests, olive groves and floral scenes there is a stillness to which many collectors are attracted.

In addition, Samir brought out a few of his early works (not for sale) and a collection of the cityscapes of Montréal.

These are also quite breathtaking. Not monumental, but modest snippets of a beautiful city caught as only one who has visited the scene a thousand times can. His eye is severe, his brush strokes delicate and his demeanor throughout his entire body of work is consistent. Samir is like a poet who has found his voice, likes it, and continues to mine it. There are no gimmicks

here, no grandstand plays, just a sense of serenity that prevails.

Adding to the positive vibrations of the evening's festivities was the fact that proceeds from the sales (of which there were quite a few) went to the benefit of the Fondation de l'Hôpital Sainte-Justine, Canada's primary hospital for children. Here, the most difficult and crucial difficulties — from premature birth to terrible diseases — are treated and lives are saved with very little means.



Artist Samir Sammoun, his wife Yvette Charron, First lady Michelle Dionne and Quebec Prime Minister Jean Charest



Mr. Raymond Boucher, Mme Michelle Clerk Boucher, Samir Sammour.



Mr. Raymond Boucher President of Ste-Justine hospital foundation.

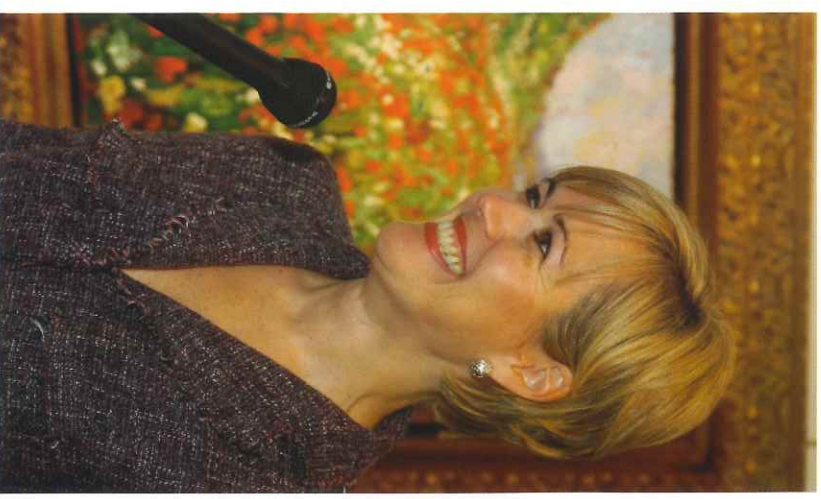
Exposition de Samir Sammour
*Galerie d'art-vente et location
 Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal
 Volunteer Association of the
 Montréal Museum of Fine Arts*
Benefit for St. Justine's Children's Hospital
 Sainte-Justine's mission is to improve the health of children, adolescents and mothers in Québec. Clinical staff offers the best care available and also contributes to the training of most paediatric physicians and other mother-child healthcare professionals. The hospital's research teams are dedicated to all the fields related to the health of mothers, children and adolescents. Assessing technology and promoting health are also part of the institution's mission.



Guests enjoy the reception



Mme Helene Hardie, Jacques Lantippe

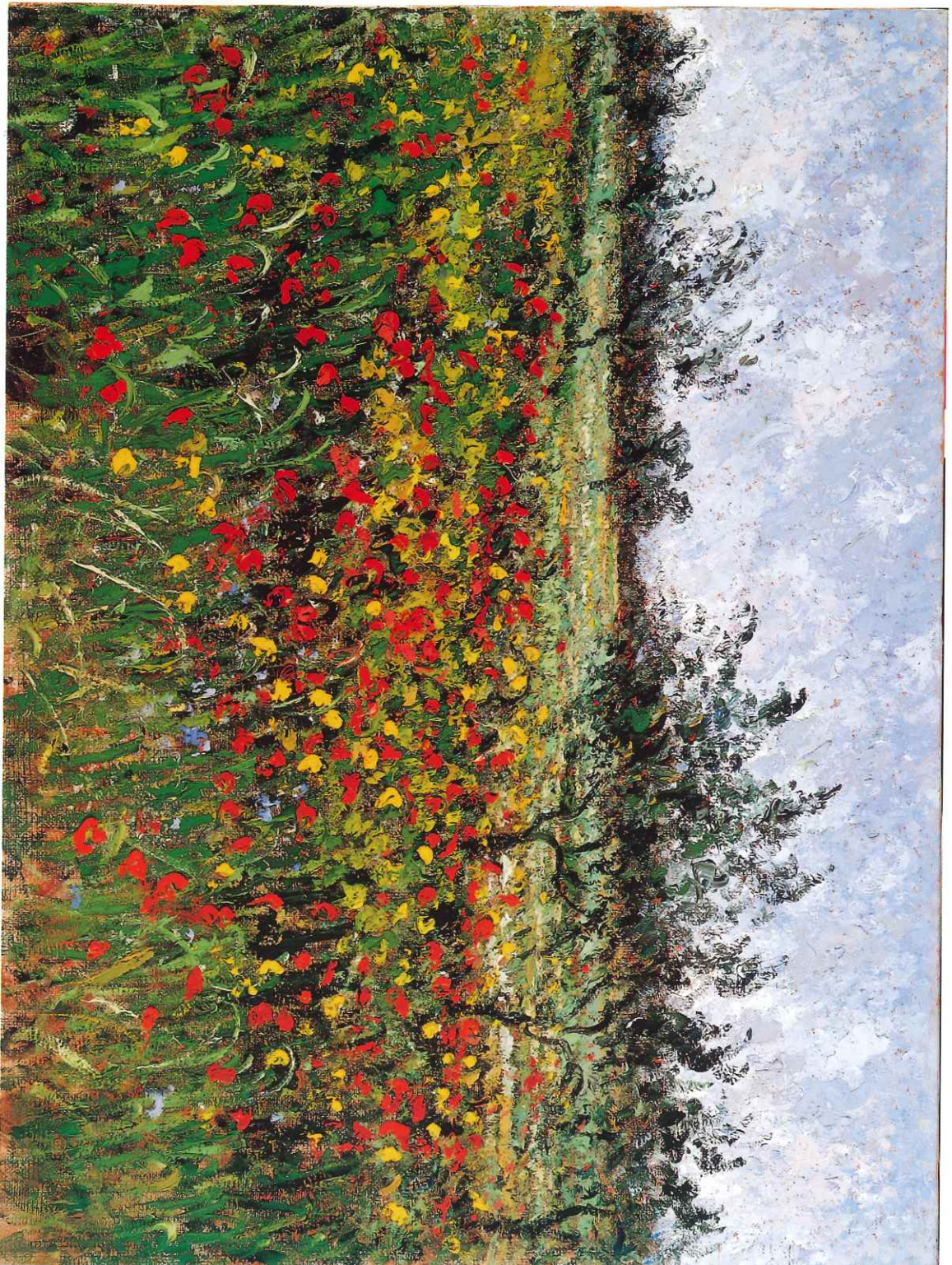


Mme Michelle Dionne Quebec's First Lady.



PHOTOS BY MARYSE

Invited guests at the exhibition



Sammoun Vincent

Another fascinating aspect of the Samir Sammoun exhibition went like this. Anyone who knows his art understands that Samir is following in the steps of his idol, Vincent van Gogh. Samir readily admits that he channels Vincent when he is painting, and one may go so far as to say that perhaps he was van Gogh in a past life. What is life but a series of metaphysical events or activities? and whether the above information appeals to you or turns you off doesn't really matter. This is simply how it is for that particular person. Where this is heading is that after walking through the myriad rooms at the Provence exhibition upstairs and arriving at the gallery space where Samir's work was hanging, you could not help but feel the energetic connection between van Gogh and Sammoun. The van Gogh paintings were in the very last viewing room, brilliant bursts of energy and light with an uncanny power—both emotional and artistic. Sammoun's touch

is somewhat more delicate and the angst, despair and total baring of the soul for which the Dutchman is revered is not evident, at least on the surface, in the art of the transplanted Lebanese native. Yet, the feeling of a continuation of the pure energy and point of view of the man who is perhaps the world's best known artist with the imagery of Sammoun was eerie, to say the least and noticed as well by my guide, the assistant promotional manager of the museum. It was good to experience this with an impartial observer as the proximity of a Sammoun exhibition to a collection of van Gogh's masterpieces may never occur again.

By now it was lunch-time and the energy of this marvelous coincidence lingered long after the sushi. *Vincent Sammoun? Samir van Gogh?* —VICTOR FORBES



Sainte-Justine's

Some Facts and Numbers:

- Nearly 18,000 hospitalizations per year
- 186,321 visits to outpatient clinics
- Nearly 3,000 births per year, with more than half high-risk pregnancies
- 4 children out of 10 are sent to Sainte-Justine's when they need specialized care (transplants, heart surgery, cancer, premature infants) Survival rate of premature infants is 83%

The cure rates for patients with cancer (75%) and leukemia (80%) are among the highest in North America
514-345-4931 • www.chu-sainte-justine.org