

AMALGAT: DANCE, TRADITIONS AND OTHER SPIRITUALITIES

2007

***Amalgat*, or “dance” in the Micmac language, is a photographic exploration throughout Quebec in the search of various old and new forms of human gatherings. Not an ethnographic investigation but rather an invitation, this journey urges us to “join the dance” and discover a series of religious and popular celebrations, processions, parades and balls where words are replaced by gesture and movement.**

What are these joyful celebrations and sacred ceremonies that are made up by various communities? What is the purpose of people coming together at key moments? How do humans use imagination and creativity in their rituals?

These gatherings take place outside the worlds of work, school or sports, outside of daily family life and outside of home – in public spaces where a “community circle” is constructed. The gatherings serve as necessary outlets and releases, taking place in moments “out of time”.



Maison de la culture Côte-des-Neiges, Montréal, 2007 © Caroline Hayeur

“In August 2003 I was visiting the First Nations reserve in Maniwaki, Quebec & heard about an annual event called *Spiritual Gathering* that was held at the home of William Commanda, the eldest father of the Algonquin nation of *Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg*. He is the keeper of three wampum belts, including the belt of the prophesy of the Seven Fires, created in the year 1400! This three day gathering is open to the public. It includes debates about First Nations spirituality, a place for prayer, a sacred fire, etc. When I arrived there, I set up my tent among 800 white people who came as pilgrims from Europe and across the Americas.

After the communal meal on the first night, one of the elders said, 'Now that we have eaten, we will have music, dance and sing because humans need to socialize'. When the Farondole (serpentine line dance) around the camp began, I knew that Amalgat was born”.

— Caroline Hayeur, *Amalgat: Danse, tradition et autres spiritualités*, Les éditions du remue-ménage



Maison de la culture Côte-des-Neiges, Montréal, 2007 © Caroline Hayeur

The photographer aimed to capture ephemeral communities, coming together in communion in the name of shared belief, in celebration or for traditional get-togethers. With dance and gesture in common, the celebrations chosen are not demographically representative, but rather they reflect the photographer’s personal bias to show that which is rarely seen. Thus, it is not by chance that images include a Jewish holiday celebrated by a female Rabbi with a farandole in the synagogue, or two outdoor weddings officiated by non-religious women celebrants, or a Sikh gathering where men dance and kiss.

From Mardi Gras in l’Isle aux Grues to the native Spiritual Gathering near Maniwaki, from the dervishes of the Sufi center to Montreal’s *Bal en Blanc*, this project presents around twenty events exploring the quest for friendship and spirituality by gathering in a public space.



Joliette Museum of Arts, 2010 © Caroline Hayeur

In the gallery, the body of work is presented in the form of mosaics, creating an imaginary society where all of the communities are mixed using aesthetic criteria of colour, texture, contrast or similarity of gesture instead of being sorted and grouped by ethnicity, religion, genetics or philosophical point-of-view.

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Technical description:

72 digital prints mounted on black "Gatorfoam", 35.5 x 23.5 in (90 x 60 cm)

Tour:

2010 – Solo exhibit, Musée populaire de la photographie – MPP (Drummondville)

2010 – Solo exhibit, Musée d'art de Joliette – MAJ*, curator: Catherine Dubois

2010 – Installation, Festival Mémoire et Racines* (Joliette)

2007-2009 – Solo retrospective exhibit DANZAS Y RITUALES EN QUÉBEC, FOTOGRAFIAS DE CAROLINE HAYEUR 1997-2007, tour in réseau des Alliances Françaises du Mexique (extraits de AMALGAT, MES NUITS BLANCHES et RITUEL FESTIF) ; coproduction avec la Délégation générale du Québec à Mexico

2007 – Solo exhibit, Maison de la culture Côte des Neiges (Montreal) including art workshops with neighbourhood French immersion groups

2007 – Solo exhibit, Action Art Actuel – artist centre (Saint Jean sur Richelieu)

* In the museum, the AMALGAT presentation was enriched by new photographs by the artist and two dance groups from the Lanaudiere region: the folk dance ensemble, La Foulée, from Joliette and the Club Bel-Âge from Notre Dame des Prairies. Also, photo-montages were presented as banners in the museum and throughout the festival.

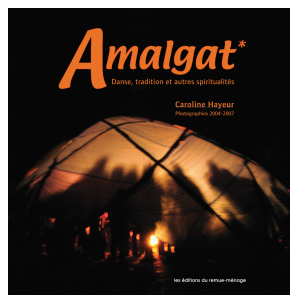


Installation during the festival Mémoires et Racines, Joliette, 2010 © Caroline Hayeur
Opening with the Montreal Chinese Lion Dance Club, Maison de la culture Côte-des-Neiges, Montreal, 2007 © Caroline Hayeur

Publication:

Book, AMALGAT: DANSE, TRADITION ET AUTRES SPIRITUALITÉS, **Les éditions du remue-ménage**, 8.5 X 8.5 in, 132 pages, 2007.

The publication also contains the texts of other collaborators: the social anthropologist François Gauthier explores in depth the complex link between the communities and their rites and celebrations. Two poets and a storyteller have also each contributed texts inspired by the photographs: Christine Germain, Jacques Boulerice and Renée Robitaille. Finally, there is an essay by Emmanuel Galland, an artist colleague and friend of the photographer.



[Order the book](#)