

# ARTSWEEK

**ARTISTAT:** The number of days you have to explore the beauty of the city's architecture with tours, exhibits and events happening across the island as part of Operation Patrimoine's Les Boîtes Montréalaises starting this Friday, Sept. 23-17

## Mystic Middle Eastern opus

Craig Thompson, best-known for his award-winning 2003 memoir *Blankets*, took seven years to complete the 672 pages of his new graphic novel *Habibi*, an epic story about the enduring relationship between two former child slaves, set in a timeless Arab world.

"After drawing *Blankets*, I was really sick of drawing myself," Thompson says of his move away from autobiography and the impetus for his impressive opus. Like his past work, *Habibi* revisits motifs of love, spirituality and tormented upbringings with a dedicated craftsmanship in both story and graphics that demonstrates the author's fascination with Arabic calligraphy and mysticism.

"I wanted to create something outside of myself, something larger than myself, and I was considering two trajectories: either a fantastical epic, that might be difficult of comics, or something more journalistic, like Joe Sacco's work, with sort of a social political edge, and what ultimately happened was *Habibi* met in the middle."

Thompson, whose launches have mostly been packed and paying events, will show slides, talk about his work, and sign books for free at the Drawn & Quarterly bookstore (211 Bernard W.) this Friday, Sept. 23, 7 p.m.

—YANIYA LEE



**MOVING AWAY FROM THE SELF:**  
A panel from *Habibi*



**INTERACTIVE ANAL:** From 'Xis', an installation by Philomène Longpré

## Honouring Ana Mendieta

"First came the book *Who is Ana Mendieta?*" says curator and author **Christine Redfern** of the exhibit *Anima*, which is at the Fofa (1515 Ste-Catherine W.) until Oct. 7 and takes inspiration from the work of the Cuban-American artist.

"The book is a collaborative project with **Caro Caron**—technically, I wrote the story and she did the drawings, but we had a hand in both." The book tells of Mendieta's trajectory from a pre-teen Cuban refugee to renowned performance and multimedia artist.

"When looking at women in the art world their contributions are pretty obvious, but their names don't get passed on through generations," Redfern says. "The thing that made the biggest impression on me was how much Mendieta did with new media. She was working with the cutting-edge medium of the time, and she was prolific."

The exhibit honours this aspect of her work, with selected works by the artist as well as videos by **Karlee Fuglem**, **Elena Willis** and **Jason Sanchez** and an interactive space by **Philomène Longpré**.

The book launches, with free drinks, on Saturday, Sept. 24, 2 p.m. (before the Art Spiegelman talk). Redfern will also moderate a round table discussion on Sept. 28, 6 p.m. "I'll be timing people, so they don't talk too long," she jokes.

—SACHA JACKSON

### IS IT ART?

**DIY SNEAKERS:** It's rare that anything other than life beer and cheese snacks land on our desks at the *Mirror*, but we recently had the chance to try Urshuz, a DIY flip-flop/sneaker/desert boot made partly of recyclable material. The brainchild of shoe designer



Grant Delgatty, Urshuz are for men only and have an unusual concept: instead of coming ready-to-wear, you purchase the soles (\$24.99) and

uppers (\$19.99-\$44.99) separately, allowing you to mix-and-match styles.

To put the two parts together, however, you have to hook little elastics on the bottom of the uppers around grooves on the sole. Which can be tough on your fingers—if you forget to use the special device hidden in the sole. Nevertheless, male *Mirror* staffers found the shoes comfortable and perfectly stylish for their purposes.

[www.urshuz.com](http://www.urshuz.com)

### ARTSHOLE

**CULTURE CLASHING:** A group of artists working and studying in Concordia's theatre program have created *Differences/The Clash*, a bilingual play that looks at our multicultural world. It makes its debut this Saturday, Sept. 24, 5 p.m. at the Cazalet Theatre (7141 Sherbrooke W.), with a second performance on Saturday, Oct. 1, 7:30 p.m. at the Centre Alexandre-DeSève (2040 Alexandre-DeSève). A voluntary contribution of \$5-\$10 is suggested. ♦ **IT TAKES TWO:** Two artists explore the urban landscape and their immediate surroundings at Galerie Les Territoires (372 Ste-Catherine W., #537). David Manseau's *À l'échelle de la ville* and Caroline Kelley's *Terra Incognita: Stories of Imaginary Places* open with a vernissage tonight, Thursday, Sept. 22 at 6 p.m. Both shows run until Oct. 8.

## Virtual unreality

*RealTime UnReal*, which is on at the MAC (185 Ste-Catherine W.) until Oct. 2, doesn't exist without its viewer. A screen showing a static image comes to life only when an individual enters the interaction area. Fitted with 3D glasses for fuller effect, the participant interacts with the virtual space, while the artwork reacts to the participant's location, movements and speed.



**YOU ARE HERE:** *RealTime UnReal*

It's familiar technology to video game players, but not a familiar experience. Artistic collective **Workspace Unlimited** use elements of gaming technology to contrast this virtual reality with the real space of the viewer.

Participants navigate the virtual space, interacting with the artwork, with the space around them and with their own bodies. Becoming part of the work, both for themselves and for the viewers watching from the periphery of the room.

Although the piece could easily be brushed aside as a novelty, it slowly simmered in my mind long after I left. The themes of real versus virtual resonate in today's digital age, but so does the experience of being fully integrated into an art piece, to be both viewer and viewed in the same piece. There's potential here to make us question how we experience both space and art.

—CHRISTINA GUNN

## India, Paris, NYC, MTL

When you get stuck in Paris on your way to India, the only natural thing to do is write a play about it, which is exactly what happened to New York-based writer **Damien McRae**. His new play, *India Kim*, tells the story of a wealthy gallery owner from New York City who decides to travel to India to visit the "girl who got away" and find new meaning to his life. When he's not allowed to board his connecting flight in Paris, he faces a different kind of transformation than he was expecting in the French capital.

Although McRae has been living in the Big Apple for 15 years, he thought Montreal was the perfect place to present his play.

"There's a lot of commentary in the play on New York, its art world and American culture, as well as a lot of commentary on Paris. I thought Montreal was a good place, because there's a pretty strong connection to both places and it's a good spot to step back from both."

The play runs at Théâtre Ste-Catherine (264 Ste-Catherine E.) until Saturday, Sept. 24, every evening at 8 p.m., \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door. For more info, visit: [theatrestecatherine.com](http://theatrestecatherine.com).

—ROXANE HUDON



**A GALLERIST DELAYED:**  
Cast of *India Kim*