

EN ROUTE

An Installation



BY EVELINE BOUDREAU

I presented *EN ROUTE* in St. Martinville, Louisiana, USA, August 2-15, 1999, at the Congrès Mondial Acadien - Louisiana '99, the second world congress of Acadians. An outdoor installation, it was composed of 27 pairs of life-size porcelain feet displayed on grass sods held up on pedestals. Each pair was cast from a different person, Acadians who live in Saskatchewan, Québec, New Brunswick and Louisiana.

The Feet - Collectively

EN ROUTE symbolized the history and survival of the Acadians and their culture. Descendants of French settlers, these people had lived long enough in their *Acadie* (over 100 years in what is now Nova Scotia) to have developed an identity and a nation of their own. Conflicts in Europe led, in 1755 and subsequent years, to the utter destruction of *Acadie*. The British forcefully deported the Acadians from their homeland and dispersed them to the New England colonies and elsewhere. This was followed by years of migrations by the Acadians to various places. Many returned to Canada, but they were not allowed back to their original lands in *Acadie*. *EN ROUTE*, an installation of feet, was located beside the Bayou Teche in Louisiana, which clearly related to the migrations of the Acadians, both on foot and by waterways.

The feet - Individually

By presenting each individually-cast pair of feet on a pedestal, I paid homage to the models as survivors. A close look at each pair of feet and its identity tag related the viewer to the model—a living, real person. Each pair of feet, planted firmly in the living grass of the sod, evoked the physical environment of the Acadians, their attachment to the land. The installation also included a few pairs of feet which were left unfired, disintegrating to the elements. Made from anonymous models, they represented the many Acadians lost during the deportation and the migrations. Normally, the mold technique is used to make multiple casts from one mold. However, only one pair of feet was cast from each mold to emphasize the individuality, the uniqueness of each model and hence, the Acadian people in general.



ABOVE View of *EN ROUTE*, installation presented in St. Martinville, Louisiana, at Evangeline Oak Park, on the Bayou Teche, during the Congrès Mondial Acadien - Louisiane '99, August 2-15, 1999. ABOVE LEFT Detail from *EN ROUTE*, showing pedestal with porcelain cast feet and identity tag of Acadian Nicole Boudreau-Légère of Bathurst, New Brunswick.

Collaborators

After having conceived the project, I became fully committed to it: that is, my time, sweat and finances. However, I feel thankful to the people who assisted me in putting up this installation. In helping with the logistics and other tasks, they volunteered their time, physical support, and mental energy. Some of them, the Acadian models, are integral to this project. Like me, they are descendants of the Acadians deported from their homeland over 250 years ago. They became involved on a personal level, and together we told our own story.

The general public

I was pleased and rewarded to see Acadians identifying with and responding to this installation. Further, the immediacy and individuality of the detailed feet reached the most personal and touching emotions of viewers in general. They recognized the universal elements of culture, history and war, as exemplified by the Acadian experience. Some viewers had a cathartic experience, remembering injustices of the past as well as those that continue today, such as "ethnic cleansing" in the former country of Yugoslavia. I believe that these issues gave power and credibility to the work.

Eveline Boudreau is a Saskatoon practicing artist and an occasional contributor to *The Craft Factor*. Samples of her work can be seen on the web: <http://www.ceramicstudio.com/EvelineBoudreau/index.phtml>