

# In Memoriam

## A Tree Rooted In A Stark Pure Land:

**Suzanne Guité, 1927–1981**



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*Kalene Nix*

*Suzanne Guité — in memoriam.*

'For me, the place to create is Perce. I am like a tree rooted in this stark pure land.' Thus spoke Suzanne Guité of her birthplace in the Gaspé region of Quebec. This was the home of her ancestors and imbued with its landscapes and seascapes, she left to seek her artistic training far afield in Chicago, in Paris and in Florence.

Brancusi, aging but alert, recognised her talents and dissuaded her from seeking a master other than herself and nature. But believing that all art needs more passion than patience, that she must constantly challenge herself, Suzanne Guité studied painting, weaving, architecture, geology, archaeology, metal work and glass blowing, travelling widely in her quest for more knowledge and greater understanding of mankind.

From 1952 she exhibited frequent

ly and held solo shows throughout Canada and the U.S. The strength, beauty and rugged forms of the Gaspé region permeated her works, particularly her sculptures. In wood and stone, she worked from within.

She said, 'To hear the voice of the universe, I must first be still and listen to my own.'

What did she hear? She heard the voice of humanity, the continuity of nature as depicted in her couple and mother/child pieces and in the totem poles. She believed in the 'incredible richness' of nature and by using a variety of media, strove to express 'a human truth in total awareness of nature.' The simplicity of her tapestries, the vitality of her watercolours, the warmth of her wood sculpture, the solidity of her stone pieces — all indicate her vast talent and physical strength.

She worked tirelessly, driving hundreds of miles to onyx mines for materials; dragging huge tree trunks through the hills; using wooden kilns to achieve the desired effect; mixing her own vegetable dyes;

learning to weave with the Mexican Indians. She was also a selfless worker, sharing her skills with the Indians and founding a Centre for Art in her native Perce in 1956. The centre reflects Suzanne Guité's own easy familiarity with different mediums, comprising, as it does, an art gallery, a theatre, a cinema and a school giving classes in art, pottery, drawing and painting.

Suzanne Guité crossed many borders in her lifetime, giving pleasure through her exhibits, sharing her talents and her energy. Although her roots were firmly in Perce, her work was universal in its appeal and themes.

She was a woman for all seasons.

1 *Maternity*, Guité, 1960, teak  
Photo by Michel Hebert  
Courtesy of: *La Sculpture de Suzanne Guité*. Published by Editions Aquila Limitee.