The letters BGL are the initials of the surnames of Jasmin Bilodeau, Sébastien Giguère and Nicolas Laverdière, three artists who have been working together since they finished their studies at Laval University in Quebec City in 1996. Finalists for the Sobey Art Award in 2006, BGL have exhibited nationally and internationally at venues including the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; Art Museum, University of Toronto; Casino Luxembourg, Luxembourg; Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art, Kraków, Poland; Galerie Toni Tàpies, Barcelona; The Model, Sligo, Ireland; the Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; the Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec; Mass MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts; and the National Gallery of Canada. Their dynamic installations have also been presented in a variety of outdoor locales, including gardens, fields, streets and vacant public spaces at events such as Nuit Blanche, Paris, Nuit Blanche, Toronto, the 9th Havana Biennale, Havana, Cuba, and the 1era Bienal del fin del mundo, Ushuaia, Argentine. In 2015 BGL represented Canada at the 56th Venice Biennale.

For just over two decades BGL have been exploring human behaviour, with particular attention to consumer culture and its effects on identity, institutions, and the environment. Often working with everyday materials such as wood and cardboard, their production brings an indebtedness to artisanal traditions, vernacular and folk art to bear upon the realm of contemporary visual art and culture. Their works often play on contrasts between Fine Arts and craft, the technological and the handmade, the sacred and the profane, as well as desires and reality as these relate to issues of consumption and over-consumption, especially in the West. Objects such as telephone booths, cars, computers, and many others associated with progress or modernization are rendered in the artists’ productions through materials that could not be further disassociated from the actual make-up of these items, for example, the large-scale installation Perdu dans la nature (1998) featured a Mercedes-Benz, an above-ground swimming pool and a lawn, carved entirely out of wood. As the artists made clear at the time, the goal of their installations "is not to reproduce objects as such, but rather to create an incongruity that encourages contemplation and increased awareness."¹ According to scholar Lisanne Nadeau, with BGL "the object is never there for its own sake but to indicate behavioral situations."² This interest in creating situations and real environments has continued to manifest itself in the collective's works through to the present. For their exhibition À l’abri des arbres at the Musée d’art contemporain in 2001–2002, for example, the group created a series of labyrinths that transformed the gallery, turning the "sterile" white

² Lisanne Nadeau, 4 installations pour le Grand Hall du Musée du Québec, Québec City, 2003, p. 32, quoted in Ariane Noël de Tilly, "Réexposer Perdu dans la nature," Laval University, Québec City, 2006, p. 120.
cube of the exhibition space into an imaginary place where viewers encountered a cardboard forest, a room filled with presents, and cavernous corridors covered again with cardboard. Sandra Grant Marchand commented in the catalogue for the exhibition on how “BGL’s emblematic artificial environments evoke a drift away from landscape which is characteristic of our time. Showing traces of an ambivalent attitude toward ecology, the works in situ bear the seal of various forms of artistic intervention by the collective: appropriation of recycled materials, reflection on contemporary man’s unnatural environment, the utilization of crafts in the service of gestural poetry, all of which are leitmotifs of an ephemeral art made up of accumulation, assemblage and proliferation but also rigour in the ceaseless challenging of our society’s values.”

In 2007, the National Gallery of Canada acquired BGL’s The Discourse of Elements (2006) which comprised a veritable inventory of major projects created from the group’s inception through to 2006. Components from several of their earlier projects: Expo sur tapis/Quartet for Carpets (1998); Profession: arbres de Noël/Profession: Christmas Trees (2001); D’un millénaire à l’autre (2000); Rejoindre quelqu’un/Getting a Hold of Someone (1999); À l’abri des arbres/Sheltered from the Trees (2001); Montrer ses trophées (2005); Se la jouer commerciale (2006); Rapide et dangereux/Fast and Dangerous (2006); Le pouvoir de la fuite/Ability to Escape (2005); Marche avec moi/Walk with Me (2004); La chapelle mobile/The Mobile Chapel (1998); Se réunir seul (1999); and Bosquets d’espionnage/Thickets for Espionage (2004) were all brought together in one overarching installation that can be shown together, or in various configurations of the “elements” within. Some of these are vestiges of ephemeral performances or interventions, while others are stand-alone works.

Please cite in the following manner:

Jonathan Shaughnessy, Acquisition Proposal for BGL’s Canadassimo (Dépanneur), accession #47670, Curatorial File, National Gallery of Canada.

3 Sandra Grant Marchand, À l’abri des arbres, Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, Montréal, 2002, p. 4.