

PRESS RELEASE
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APPEARANCES

at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal
May 27 to September 11, 2005

Montréal, May 10, 2005. Counterfeiting, deception, visual puzzle, confusion ... Each of the strategies adopted in *Appearances* skilfully evades a superficial reading of the works. In a world in which the image has become a pervasive presence, this exhibition highlights the pitfalls and difficulties of interpretation that are encountered in viewing today's art. They figure, to varying degrees and in different forms, in the works of eleven Québec and Canadian artists. The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal presents *Appearances* from May 27 to September 11, 2005.

What you see is not what you see

The exhibition features some sixty works by eleven artists—mostly from Québec, Ontario and British Columbia—who are in early or mid-career. To better situate their practices, a selection of previous works is brought together with pieces specially created for *Appearances*.

In her ink jet prints, photographer **Annie Baillargeon** (Québec City) creates digital montages of her own body, multiplied many times, turning it into a wallpaper-like motif. Her work questions the social and psychological implications of our physical appearances and, more broadly, of our human behaviours. The works of **Jérôme Fortin** (Montréal), produced through a process of recovery and accumulation of materials, go against the trend of high-tech installations and make a strong case against our society of overproduction, overconsumption and speed. The various assembly techniques generate an optical effect that is reinforced by the works' presentation in what sometimes resembles a curiosity cabinet. **Germaine Koh** (Toronto) subtly infiltrates everyday objects which she diverts from their original purpose in order to make us aware of the things left unsaid, of our surroundings, nature, the economy and socialization. A turnstile connected to an anemometer, for example, becomes an indoor barometer of the wind outside! **Tim Lee** (Vancouver) uses his own image in works in which humour vies with absurdity. Questioning his dual identity (Canadian and Asian), Lee continually plays on hybridity as he moves between photography and video, citing recent contemporary art and North American pop culture, and relying on both authenticity and trick effects, in works that are sometimes literally diptychs. In his paintings, drawings, sculptures and videos, **Euan Macdonald** (Toronto) has developed a body of work centred on perception and time. The juxtaposition of media used gives rise to a complementarity which then draws in the viewer. "Scenes from ordinary life," Macdonald's videos examine a daily reality we no longer see, along with its incongruities: sheets of paper flying about in the air, or a snail inching its way along. For **Kelly Mark** (Toronto), art and life merge in the observation of an everyday reality that fascinates her. Here, she offers us drawings and audio and video installations in which the principle of repetition and accumulation transcends the ordinary. Out of the multiplicity of pieces in the puzzles of **Jean-Marc Mathieu-Lajoie** (Québec City), and their substitution, addition, removal and shifting, new meanings

emerge in the reading of these “board games.” Eluding the usual automatic reflexes of visual perception, his works call for an ever-vigilant eye. **Damian Moppett** (Vancouver) layers historical references on top of allusions to contemporary life and popular culture, establishing connections between official and unofficial history. In that spirit, the installation presented here takes spectators back and forth between the models in the foreground, including one of a sculpture by Anthony Caro, and the video which ultimately returns us to Caro’s work as if we were on an endless loop. Ukrainian-born **Taras Polataiko** (Vancouver) went back in 1994 to visit the site of the Chernobyl disaster, from which he returned contaminated. Polataiko has transposed to his works the concept of virus, of what is hidden, mutant. On the surface, the installation *Light Works* similarly presents several light sources that fluctuate in intensity from one to the next. Behind the scenes, the lighting units are connected to bicycles being pedalled by ten individuals performing compensatory work for minor offences committed. The luminosity varies with the regularity and intensity of their efforts. Working at the edge of sculpture, photography and sound, **Yannick Pouliot** (Saint-Casimir-de-Portneuf) turns experience into his raw material. In photographs and installations, he momentarily removes visitors from the reality around them. They are “teleported” to a different place, and led to an experience of utter pleasure. Through performance, installation, photography and video, **Ana Rewakowicz** (Montréal) explores the boundaries between uprootedness and belonging, private life and public space. In the works shown here, the artist raises the question of identity as it relates to habitat and clothing: nomadism, not in the sense of being homeless but as being capable of recreating one’s home everywhere. Here, clothing is viewed as portable architecture.

Contrary to the values of superficiality, speed, impatience and overconsumption conveyed in today’s society, these works urge us instead to take the time to look at them, figure out their subtle stratagems, challenge their descriptions so as to be able to appreciate and approach their complexity. *Appearances*: an exhibition that calls for a second look..

The MACM is a provincially owned corporation funded by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec. It receives additional funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts. The Musée also thanks the Lichen advertising agency for its financial support for this exhibition, and the YMCA of Montréal for its collaboration.

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Source and information:

Danielle Legentil

Media Relations Officer

Tel.: (514) 847-6232

E-mail: danielle.legentil@macm.org

Visual material available at:

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IN CONJUNCTION WITH *APPEARANCES*

Meet the artists

Two events are not to be missed on any account. First, on the day the exhibition opens, Thursday, May 26, 2005, meet artists Annie Baillargeon, Germaine Koh, Tim Lee, Jean-Marc Mathieu-Lajoie, Damian Moppett and Taras Polataiko in the exhibition galleries at 5 p.m. (meeting in French and English). The opening will follow at 6 p.m. Then, as part of Montréal Museums Day, on Sunday, May 29, 2005, meet Ana Rewakowicz at 1 p.m. (in English) and Jérôme Fortin at 2:30 p.m. (in French).

***Appearances* catalogue and postcards**

A 112-page catalogue on the exhibition has been published by the Musée. The bilingual publication contains essays by curator Gilles Godmer and art historian Nathalie de Blois, texts on each of the eleven artists, a list of works and a biobibliography. It also includes numerous colour reproductions of the works. The catalogue may be purchased for \$29.95 at the Musée's Olivieri bookstore or Librairie ABC Livres d'art, or from your local bookseller.

An edition of postcards from Germaine Koh's project *Sightings*, 1992-1998, is also on sale at Olivieri. It consists of postcards produced from photos found in various public places.

Reading room

A thematic reading room devoted to the artists in *Appearances* is at visitors' disposal in the Mariette Clermont Lounge adjoining the galleries.

Art workshops and tours

For Montréal Museums Day, to be held Sunday, May 29, 2005, our art workshops will offer *Strips Ahoy!* Using thin strips of coloured polyethylene and scissors, participants (age four and up) will create a circular work inspired by Jérôme Fortin's *Marine*, 2005. Schedule: 1, 1:30, 2, 2:30, 3 and 3:30 p.m. Free admission. Lasts 45 minutes.

Guided tours are provided for the general public by the Musée's educators on Wednesdays at 6, 7 and 7:30 p.m. in French and at 6:30 p.m. in English, and Saturdays and Sundays at 1 and 3 p.m. in either French or English.