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OF FIRE AND PASSION



MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

OF FIRE AND PASSION

An exhibition organized by the
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Texts : Marie-France Bérard

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NICOLAS BAIER

Nicolas Baier uses photographic processes in his investigation of the unrepresentable. Although photography is generally perceived as a means of capturing reality, this artist examines the possibilities of constructing images that underscore the invisible link between body and soul. Each of his works fits into a whole that may be compared to a vast synoptic table illustrating the vital energy that animates our bodies, and its manifestation in the beating of our hearts, the movement of our organs, our nervous impulses, and the repercussions this agitation has on our consciousness. *Le Statique* shows us an empty armchair which, through its openness, indicates a possible occupancy or an invitation to the body. However, a distance seems to come between our perception of the photographed object and the somewhat blurred rendering of the image. And so, where are we to place this gap between a body at rest, perfectly static, and our consciousness that distances itself from reality?

ALAIN BENOIT

Multidisciplinary artist Alain Benoit is particularly interested in the various processes by which a creator leads us to the ultimate work or utopian idea, with the aim of then denouncing them. In his view, there is no message previous to the work which he has to bring out; his entire endeavour involves developing rhetorical strategies, devices that are meaningful in themselves. From this springs his desire to create. In the video installation *Les Fanfreluches antidotées*, the title of which comes from the novel *Gargantua*, this ardent disciple of Rabelais juggles with the absurd, both as content and as stylistic form. He asks us to notice the structuring of the various elements in his work, and examine the links that emerge between the projection and the model. We have to get beyond the apparent nonsense and incongruities, which are nevertheless important in that they take part in the dynamics of the work in obliterating the utopian city.

CARL BOUCHARD

In his work, Carl Bouchard wonders about doubt, responsibility, desire, needs, solitude, love and sexuality. Employing a whole range of materials and techniques, his investigations focus on the quest for meaning, by showing cause and effect at the same time. With *Suicide et autres assassinats*, the artist presents four sculptures which, in echoing one another, provide us with different points of view on a single theme. Through these pieces, which feature an occasionally cynical humour, there emerge thoughts on our failings and on our sometimes perverse, excessive or harmful behaviour towards ourselves and those around us. Inviting the viewer to open a dialogue with the works, the artist prompts us to reflect upon the beliefs and ideals that guide our existence, as well as upon our love affairs and their various relations of power and, finally, death.

MICHEL BOULANGER

Michel Boulanger's paintings demand to be scrutinized, examined at length by the eye. A brief glance allows us to pick out the readily identifiable motifs, such as tree trunks or clouds. After a while, however, our perception of solid volumes begins to disintegrate and threatens to fade, letting other images come forth. What appeared abstract, a kind of thick cloud, is revealed as filled with figures and bodies. Following this strategy, the painter attempts to question the way we receive the painted image. His work emphasizes the fact that the illusionistic space of the painting, within which an identifiable, measurable world or a story seems to unfold, is actually only a construction, in other words a device that succeeds in simulating reality. The signs produced by the artist may prove to be elusive, ambiguous, and slip from reality to reality. Even if what we see depends on our perception, we understand that any sign is capable of concealing another.

SYLVAIN BOUTHILLETTE

For Sylvain Bouthillette, a work must open a path that provides access to a host of ideas, to the emergence of positive, intense, deep feelings, and to spirituality. He inspires this quest in us through his treatment of the image and the object: the physical presence of the material, the lines engraved with the gouge, the words inscribed in chalk, the profusion of images and assemblage of objects that defy our conceptions of order and logic. The artist manipulates a language made up of signs; to grasp it, we must agree to let our emotions well up, and abandon our rational and aesthetic demands. In *Dharma*, *Tram*, *Stop*, the sculptural element is meant to be an entry point. The rabbit's head, apparently at the top of a totemic form, conjures up the underlying forces of nature, while the bell represents, in the Buddhist religion, the void, absolute space. Between nature and spirituality, the experience of the painting urges us to continue formulating meaningful connections.

MARIO CÔTÉ

For several years now, Mario Côté has worked in painting as well as video. While he prefers not to include them both in the same work, the two practices influence one another. In the installation entitled *Variations Vertov*, he creates video images by focusing on the framing, the non-narrative form and the composition. The work is partly intended as a homage to the Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov, director of *The Man with the Movie Camera*. However, in trying to go beyond commonplaces about the film, the artist underscores — in his working of the image, for example — certain details that are imperceptible in a normal viewing. In addition, he explores the structure of musical variation by presenting, at the start of the tape, the visual themes that will then be taken up and embellished. Côté has produced a work made up of a series of impressions, while also emphasizing the creative potential of his medium, but the non-narrative aspect of the piece gives it considerable poetic quality which the viewer may absorb.

CAROL DALLAIRE

Since the late eighties, Carol Dallaire has used a computer and graphic software as creative tools. This technology enables him to digitalize photographs, retrieve pornographic imagery from Internet sites, freely manipulate the texture of the images to create certain effects and, lastly, use a variety of elements to construct a new image and suggest a narrative other than the one proposed by each of them individually. With the three works from the album *Pathologies secrètes (Les Regards glauques)*, the artist employs the new technologies to question our traditional perception of the image. The editing, the computerized processing, the juxtaposition of details and the use of the text work together to suggest, not a single point of view, but an openness to a multiplicity of meanings and a perpetual confrontation between the apparent and the latent content.

JACKI DANYLCHUK

The works of Jacki Danylchuk resemble delicate, fragile lace. Since 1994, she has examined our imaginary constructions of the body by playing with its various representations. She takes photographs of a part of the body, then attacks the image by cutting it out by hand using a fine blade and following a specific motif. This painstaking work, which refers back to the artisanal traditions of a bygone age, contrasts with the use of the photograph, a mechanical production method characteristic of the contemporary media. The superimposition of an openwork design on top of a photograph blurs our understanding of the image and disturbs our usual perception of the body in its status as an object of view. In the works *Collier*, *Oreille* and *Peau*, the artist explores macrophotographic details and manipulates some images by distorting them using a computer.

MARIO DUCHESNEAU

Active since the early eighties, Mario Duchesneau is primarily a sculptor. He is known for his remarkable constructions produced with ordinary, extremely mundane furniture, such as a chest of drawers or a wardrobe. The objects are first cut up to reveal their interior space and emphasize their function as containers. Next, the artist assembles them in a complex structure which, through its size, develops an almost architectural space, and also, through the tampered aspect of the furniture and its accumulation, gives the sculpture a playful touch. In the work presented here, a new element appears: the introduction of a vast quantity of miniature furniture throughout the structure. The artist is suggesting a play on the notion of scale by contrasting actual and miniature size, as well as on the notion of balance. He invites the viewer to experience the paradoxes of feeling crushed by the monumental structure, which seemingly defies all the laws of equilibrium, and at the same time dominating a world made up of fragile, small-scale models.

LUCIE DUVAL

A multidisciplinary artist, Lucie Duval has concentrated for several years on the relations that are established when text, object and photograph come together. In her works, she tries to produce interferences between the image we see and the word we read, in order to shake up our viewing habits and grasp the meaning of the words and objects. The installation *Femmes du Sud* enables us to take a different look at three famous works in Western art: the winged *Victory of Samothrace*, the *Venus de Milo* and the *Mona Lisa*. Inevitable stops on every tour of the Louvre museum, these three feminine archetypes are grouped together here in a museological fiction in which the artist asks us to examine the commonplaces surrounding these representations of woman, namely strength and the idea of performance, love, and mystery. In addition, she prompts us to discover the lack, the incompleteness that characterizes each of them.

KARILEE FUGLEM

Karilee Fuglem produces works that give rise to a sense of strangeness. Her photographs and sculptures trouble and disturb us, since their physical appearance puts them somewhere between what we recognize as human and that which is indefinable, non-human. The artist is interested in the fears, phobias and certain aversions that surround the physiological functions of the body or that are sparked by our perception of the sometimes odd connections between a house and its inhabitants. She likes to anthropomorphize the sites where her works are shown, in order to destabilize our impressions of the place; she also tries to disrupt what our senses tell us to read in the objects she constructs. With some humour, *Langnor* is presented as three soft, shapeless sculptures, which nonetheless evoke a strange sensuality. These elongated forms, enlivened by their slow breathing, intrigue us with their duality, their vaguely familiar yet unnamable character and, above all, the tension that lies in the non-resolution of their ambivalences.

EMMANUEL GALLAND

Emmanuel Galland presents photography from several different angles, being interested in the various ways the work is displayed: in postcards, slipped into a bottle, gathered in an album, offered as a brochure. His themes focus on identity (through the portrait series) and the family (implying the idea of descendance, lineage, correspondence, relationship between individuals). With *Superman*, he uses industrially produced plastic figurines as a pretext for questioning human identity, as well as for examining the figure of hero. Continuing his exploration of the portrait, his close-ups show us swollen, sometimes misshapen, faces — a sad fate for a hero. This figure also falls victim to the use of a “mug shot” type of photo which pushes him over into the world of antiheroes, of criminals. A reflection upon the serial production mode and cloning, from the viewpoint of the disparities between these figurines produced in series, the work stresses the strength of individuality beyond the imposing of standards.

JEAN-PIERRE GAUTHIER

Seeing a Jean-Pierre Gauthier installation for the first time means noticing the use of materials from our everyday environment: metres of pipe, a few electric valves, a motor, wind instruments, plumbing accessories. Despite these complicated assemblages, it all seems installed in an informal, random fashion, without any particular reference. Then, suddenly, a noise draws our attention: we have to find its source; our body turns, and our gaze sweeps over the different components. In looking closely around, our eye notices a water level that rises, then falls, and our ear hears a curious buzzing. We get the feeling there may be connections between these various phenomena, relationships implying cause and effect. In the end, the work turns out to be alive; it breathes and whistles, fluids circulate and keep it supplied. Through the senses of hearing and sight, the sensations of the body, the artist invites us to discover a work that is strangely related to both a machine and a living organism.

FRANÇOIS LACASSE

François Lacasse's approach concentrates essentially on the phenomenon of vision. By producing paintings through the superimposition of two or three layers of images, he vastly increases the quantity of visual information and brings about a blurring of the pictorial surface, which can only be read with a thorough look. In his previous pieces, the overall perception of the work gave the impression that it was abstract, and yet each layer constituted a coherent representation, with motifs taken from the repertoire of the history of art. In his recent productions, such as the *Amblyopie* series, Lacasse sets out to establish another quality of vision. He no longer works through a superimposition of images. Although, in the background, we can make out a detail from a scene which takes its source in a sixteenth-century Dutch wash drawing, the artist now hides the image with a veil of paint. Just like the protagonist in the source image, we are blinded. In spite of what the painting reveals, the device it uses reduces its readability to virtually nil.

SUZANNE LEBLANC

Suzanne Leblanc develops her visual language by means of a computer. The use of computer graphics software allows her to convert photographs, film sequences and video clips into a homogeneous material texture. By superimposing a text that is read and an image, the artist creates a new text and formulates a visual style tinged with poetry. As its title indicates, the *Intérieur* installation takes up the idea of domestic spaces and alludes to a pictorial genre, but above all, it is meant as a metaphor for the mind's space. The artist asks viewers to let themselves be absorbed by the device, in order to be carried "somewhere else," as if it were possible for us to probe the thoughts of another individual. Over the course of the different paintings, the viewer is alternately witness to and author of thoughts on the subject of the psyche, our urges and our inner contradictions.

EMMANUELLE LÉONARD

The artistic approach of Emmanuelle Léonard is essentially photographic. Her work tends towards themes with an urban connotation, such as motel rooms, factories, mines and electric wires. In the *Description, Inscription* series, she photographs empty industrial parking structures. These spare-looking images appear simple, and yet they are skilfully constructed: in order to question the rules of an illusionistic perspective, the artist patiently composes each image by using the different components of the surrounding architecture and ambient light. This architecture seems, at first glance, basically static and cold; apart from a few openings on the side, there is always a wall at the back of the picture that blocks any vista. It is when the eye loses itself in the image and identifies ordinary details, like a drop of water or a crack, that a kind of perversion breaks up the perfection of the place, disturbing its order and introducing a bit of life.

SHELLY LOW

In her approach, Shelly Low sets out in search of her cultural identity, and is also interested in the relations that exist between East and West, nature and culture, being and knowing. Refusing to view them as essentially in opposition, the artist considers that these worlds always overlap. She wants to circumscribe their space of meeting in order to better understand her own image of her past. Her works are produced using different processes and with a multitude of simple materials; the forms created have an ambiguous character, but recall the natural, organic world. The sculpture *And, then, but, or.../Et, puis, mais, ou...* represents this possible meeting space. It displays this conjunction in dual fashion: in its title, as well as in the rope tying all the elements together. Standing directly on the floor, the work leaves an outline there that is vaguely reminiscent of the curve of a graph. To the artist, tables and diagrams symbolize an essential mode of information transmission, within the apparent fragmentation of our world.

ANNY ONE

Anny One, Olivier Sorrentino, Ann Onymous, Onymous are all one and the same physical person, but four different artists! Anny One's approach revolves around the concept of personality. Fascinated by multi-media, the Internet and Website discussion groups, the artist brings out the new means of communication which allow users to project completely fictitious images of themselves. Our society is currently involved in developing a new communication space that disembodies the individual, in contrast to a traditional communication space where individuals must meet physically if they want to talk to one another. In his work, the artist ponders the power we have to change, almost at will, our identity, which thus becomes a mere commodity. More and more, the virtual world is affecting our reality. What repercussions will this have?

NATALIE ROY

The sculptures and installations of Natalie Roy are characterized by the use of objects and materials taken from everyday life. Through her work, however, these objects lose their familiar, often intimate, look. Out of this material, in the installation space, the artist manages to derive images full of poetry, of wonder, and even to create objects of contemplation. With the installation *Mais où est donc passé le vent ?*, she encourages us to physically enter the work and plunge, body and soul, into an intimist space in which our eye, without settling on the literal meaning of things, gets carried away by the mysterious evocative power of the objects. With a great economy of means, the work generates an atmosphere and transports us somewhere else, to a place where the mind and the senses work together in formulating a meaning.

MARC SÉGUIN

For some years now, Marc Séguin has examined the painter's power to bring out, from a bare expanse of canvas, a world that may hold countless figures, as well as to suggest a space produced by colour, inviting the gaze to disappear in its vastness. While, since the Renaissance, painters have sought to produce the illusion that a painting is an open window onto the world, our modern era has seen the emergence of an artistic practice whose chief objective is to affirm visual language and create, within the work, a space specific to the painting itself, that is, one that does not try to imitate reality. Each canvas by Marc Séguin is a scene in which the painting basically talks about painting; it makes intimate companions of academic figuration, colour field, impasto and the line of graffiti, along with renderings that suggest different spaces. He is interested in the intersections, within the work, between what seems real to us (and therefore conveys meaning) and the sabotage introduced by strange figures or diverse pictorial actions that hamper the linear development of the narration and the pinning down of the meaning.

EUGÉNIE SHINKLE

Eugénie Shinkle is a photographer whose artistic work looks at the notion of landscape. Generally, landscape photography has a structure borrowed from traditional painting. In other words, the spectator, from an ideal viewpoint, stands before a piece of nature that has been staged, codified, reified. What seems to be the faithful documentation of nature, as we can possess it with our gaze, is only an image, hence a construction. Eugénie Shinkle wants to present landscape in a different way. Her work does not suggest a traditional space with its succession of planes, and the collage of photographs clearly states that the work is fabricated: a reading of the details and the overall sense of the image is required. The relief produced by the collage implies that our conception of landscape does not stem solely from our visual, objective relationship with nature, but also from our sensory experiences and our subjectivity. It further points up the fact that nature also has its own specific mode of construction.

KAMILA WOZNIAKOWSKA

At the heart of Kamila Wozniakowska's approach, we find a fascination for communication and the complexity of human relations. Her recent pictorial work examines the narrative in particular, and the question of its transmission and interpretation. In *Corrigé pour la postérité*, the painting is made up of a series of vignettes in which, through her handling of the image, the artist wishes to illustrate the possibilities of manipulating the narrative or story. Like a double exposure in photography, the visual interval between the various scenes in the background and the group in the foreground symbolizes a gap, a distance between two realities. The artist suggests the interval that may come between the fact or event to be recounted and the narrative, oft repeated, that becomes transformed into the official version, ready to enter into posterity.





OF FIRE AND PASSION

MEETINGS WITH ARTISTS

In connection with the exhibition *Of Fire and Passion*, participating artists will meet the public every Wednesday evening, between 7 and 8 p.m., from October 22 until November 19.

OCTOBER 22, 1997

Alain Benoit	video installation
Mario Duchesneau	sculpture
François Lacasse	painting
Eugénie Shinkle	photography

OCTOBER 29, 1997

Mario Côté	video installation
Carol Dallaire	computer-generated images
Karilee Fuglem	sculpture-installation
Marc Séguin	painting

NOVEMBER 5, 1997

Carl Bouchard	multimedia
Michel Boulanger	painting
Suzanne Leblanc	film and computer graphics installation
Natalie Roy	installation

NOVEMBER 12, 1997

Sylvain Bouthillette	painting and sculpture
Emmanuelle Léonard	photography
Anny One	interactive multimedia installation
Kamila Wozniakowska	painting

NOVEMBER 19, 1997

Nicolas Baier	photography
Lucie Duval	installation
Emmanuel Galland	photography
Jean-Pierre Gauthier	installation
Shelly Low	sculpture