Voir, 22 au 28 mars 2001

Toucher du regard

Et si la création artistique était avant tout une occasion de rencontres, une chance de dialoguer avec des gens et non uniquement un isolement introspectif? C'est la leçon que nous donne RAPHAËLLE DE GROOT.

Nicolas **Mavrikakis**

Avec ses interventions artistiques et sociales, **Raphaëlle de Groot** nous offre une intelligente «revisitation» – plus discrète – du métier d'artiste et de sa fonction politique des années 60 et 70. Il y a eu Smithson, entre autres, qui collaborait avec des ouvriers. De Groot, quant à elle, ne vise pas une collaboration aussi authentiquement virile et «s'immisce» avec grand respect et une vraie curiosité dans des milieux très différents.

Avec ses *Dévoilements* présentés, à la galerie Occurrence, elle a rencontré (en leur offrant dans un premier temps de travailler pour elles) des sœurs œuvrant au sein des Hospitalières de Saint-Joseph. Par la suite, elle leur a demandé d'effectuer une série de dessins tout en faisant leur portrait. Un prétexte de conversation, quoi... Mais, dans les deux cas, elle fixait une règle: le travail du crayon devait se faire à l'aveugle! Du coup le processus créatif devient comme une métaphore des vraies rencontres où l'on ne sait pas vraiment où cela va mener, qui semblent se faire à l'aveuglette comme lorsque l'on marche dans le noir.

De plus, cette façon de faire n'est pas sans évoquer les dessins des automatistes où la main de l'artiste tentait de se libérer du contrôle conscient du cerveau. Le résultat est plus que beau. Les dessins ainsi réalisés sont comme des danses spatiales, de petites chorégraphies visuelles, une dynamique du trait, pourrait-on dire.

Nous avions déjà beaucoup apprécié son expo chez Skol où elle montrait son intervention auprès des utilisateurs de la Bibliothèque Centrale de la Ville de Montréal. Comme l'écrit **Lili Michaud** dans le texte de présentation, de Groot poursuit ici ses recherches qui «montrent les non-dits, pointent le caché, l'omis ou l'intime qui existent en latence dans l'espace public».

De Groot participe aussi à une expo, à la Galerie de l'UQÀM, sur la notion de temps (encore une! après celle de Paris, de Londres, la Biennale de Montréal...); l'on peut aussi y voir le travail de **David Altmejd**, **Jérôme Fortin**, **Marie-Josée Laframboise** et **Manuela Lalic**. Elle nous là montre une autre série de dessins réalisés, effectivement, à l'aveugle... puisque certains ont été faits par des non-voyants. Plusieurs des œuvres que l'artiste a élaborées avec ces gens ont été mises en relief pour que le spectateur puisse, lui aussi, expérimenter ce que représente la cécité. Une forme d'expérience qui donne tout son sens à l'expression «être touché»...

Un dessin de Raphaëlle de Groot.

JUSQU'AU 24 MARS
Espace Occurrence

JUSQU'AU 31 MARS
Galerie de l'UQÀM

ON PARLE DES YEUX

Puisque nous parlons du fonctionnement du regard, il faut bien sûr parler de **Carmen Ruschiensky** et son expo: *Globes oculaires.*

Les titres de ses tableaux forment déjà une curiosité. Cela va de *Globe délirant* à *Globe comestible* (qui ressemble à une olive - Hannibal Lecter ne serait-il pas loin?), en passant pas *Globe clairvoyant* et *Globe saillant.* L'œil s'y trouve scruté à la loupe comme pour y découvrir le mystère du fonctionnement du regard qui s'y cacherait. On a envie de conclure en disant que l'énigme réside plus dans le cerveau qui donne sens aux images véhiculées que dans la boîte rétinienne... Mais c'est justement le secret de l'œil que de n'être qu'un écrin vide n'offrant, malgré ➤

Artists preoccupied with stuff – lots of it

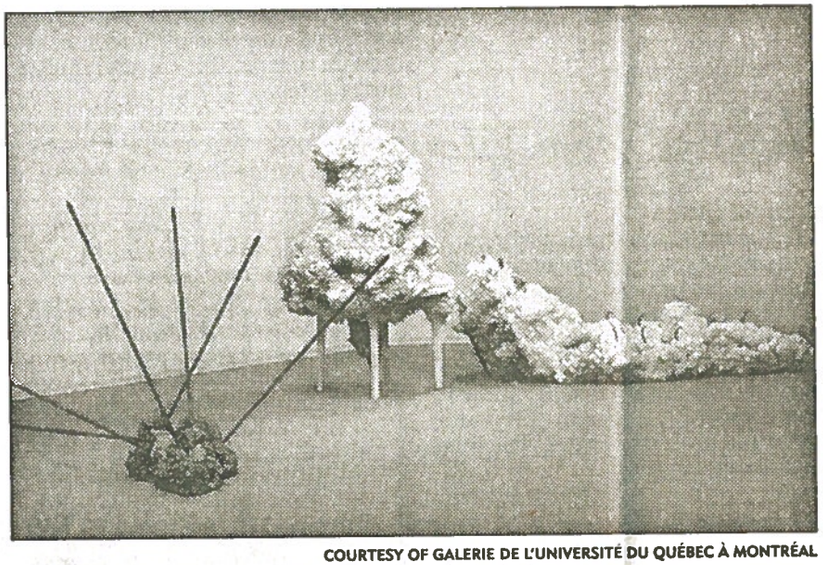
HENRY LEHMANN
Special to The Gazette

Stuff – lots of it and the cheaper the better – is the working material of an ambitious, touchy-feely show now at the Galerie de l'Université du Quebec à Montréal. Included are installations – all quite labour- intensive – by five young Montreal artists. The theme of their resolutely unbeautiful show, cryptically titled Point de Chute, is that slippery and impalpable element in which we are all immersed: time. According to the show's curator, Louise Déry, the title of the show can be translated very roughly as "the end and the beginning."

Some of the works, such as Manuela Lalic's outlandish work called Le Mariage de Raison, are provocatively ugly – and this is not the kind of modernist ugliness that lays claim to its own type of beauty. For her unlikely marriage of matter and labour, the artist has tirelessly stuck countless Cheese Doodles into plastic garbage bags to create an amorphous, bloated swamp of a thing. The blob seems to have been spawned in a domestic setting, as suggested by the brooms protruding antennae-like from part of the exuberant anatomy of the work.

Make-work is also an aspect Marie-Josée Laframboise's gawky creation Le Pleureur. It consists partly of multicoloured scarves draped from the gallery ceiling to suggest the foliage of a massive tree. The numerous knots in the cloth mark time. Reinforcing the tree metaphor is the thick concrete column at the epicentre of the work, which is a structural part of the gallery itself. On the floor in the "shade" of the tree are thousands of glistening little marbles – seeds that will never grow. The installation seems to mock the whole notion of a natural world.

If anything, Jérome Fortin's Point d'Orgue, a form of slo-mo action sculpture, seems even more tedious, asserting time as slave-master. For his loosely knit creation, the artist has painstakingly folded bits of paper into various symmetrical shapes and carefully skewered beer caps and cigarettes on shish-kebab sticks. We can almost feel the excruciating march of time as the artist went about his repetitive work.



COURTESY OF GALERIE DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

Outlandish: Manuela Lalic's Le Mariage de Raison.

In the case of David Altmejd's quirky creation 1 Loup-Garou, labour translates into a kind of craftsmanship. Precisely constructed Plexi-glass shelves contain assorted knickknacks, including hokey-creepy fragments of a hairy, long-fingered humanoid made of plastic, looking as though it should be returned to some funky discotheque. Alluding to the passage of time are yellowish crystals emanating from the body parts and from the Plexi-glass of the shelves. In this work, time is measured not so much in the hours it took to produce the art but in the imagined eons it took for the crystals to form.

The time it takes to understand Raphaelle de Groot's intriguing work titled Colin-Maillard (the name of an age-old game in which people reach into sacks and describe what they feel) is worth taking, though this piece is more psychology project than art. According to the text accompanying the work, the artist traveled to Europe where she met several people in various states of blindness. These people were invited to touch a number of irregular objects – made of salt paste and also in the show – and then to draw them.

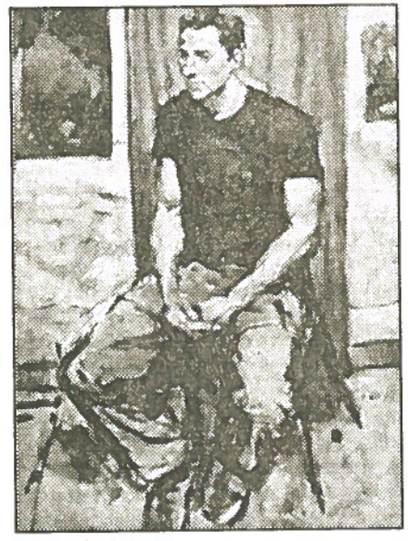
Meanwhile, de Groot drew pictures of some of her guests. These drawings, cartoonish and wobbly, were done "blind," with the artist having covered her eyes before feeling the faces of several of her participant-subjects. It would have been interesting to see photos of the blind subjects to compare with these drawings.

Finally, de Groot asked two blind people, Marco and Francine, to feel some of the drawings, which had been translated into Braille, and describe in words what they had "seen."

This process of seeing through touch is quite different from seeing through one's eyes. The descriptions by Marco and Francine are fascinating. Referring to one drawing of a face, they say that "between the eyes, an arrow indicates the direction of the gaze." In fact, however, the "arrow" is a squiggle indicating wrinkles.

Perhaps the message in this odd exhibition is that everything is relative, time as well as art. And ultimately, touch, whether through the eyes or with the hands, will never capture the essence of time.

✤ ***Point de Chute,*** *with works by Manuela Lalic, Marie-Josée Laframboise, Jérome Fortin, David Altmejd and Raphaelle de Groot, is at the Galerie de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, Pavillon Judith Jasmin, 1400 Berri St., Room J-R 120, until March 31. For information, call (514) 987-8421.*



COURTESY OF GALERIE SIMON BLAIS

Donald Assis, by Yann Leroux.

✤ ✤ ✤

Meanwhile, the seven young artists featured at Galerie Simon Blais have taken a very different artistic route, preferring to stay well inside the margins of the modern tradition. For them, art is still about the power of paint to convey a residue of reality.

In Yann Leroux's portraits, paint and image vie for attention. Depicted in one especially striking oil, Ian à l'Ordinateur (Ian at the Computer) is a man intently peering into that bottomless well, the computer screen. Painted in olive greens with dazzling highlights of yellow, the screen becomes a painting within the actual painting before us. Leroux's picture sends a note of warning – painting may ultimately be swallowed by the one-dimensional world of the Net.

In another of Leroux's paintings, titled Donald Assis (Donald Seated), the young man – constructed from spindly, painted scribble – is seated on a stool; the figure appears planted squarely in the pre-electronic realm of mid-20th century art, itself not yet killed off by the new millennium.

Also involved with the human figure are two other artists: Lenny Piroth-Robert's pallid Watering Hose is a portrait of a woman in perfect profile, giving her face an almost sculptural dimension. Mary Hayes in her oil Stephane (Diptych) methodically takes inventory of the human countenance.

If some of the works are figurative, others mix seeing and scene. This is at the crux of Rafael Sottolichio's delicious Paysages Americains. One of these works, based on an Edward Hopper etching, is what might called a visual quote, both of Hopper's image and his technique. It is seen Sottolichio's use of monochrome brown and of exaggerated striations, which transform the actual surface of the painting into a kind of man-made landscape.

Also employing visual quotes is Keer Tamchak. Inside, After Lancret features a seemingly opulent 18th-century setting in which the figures deconstruct into what appear to be puffs of powder.

Landscape, at once ultra-natural and exuberantly artificial, is the subject of artists Dominique Goupil and Peter Hoffer. Goupil's vistas are almost entirely abstract, with thick, horizontal streaks only alluding to the land. More real are Hoffer's works, with their references to the tradition of painting. The glazed surfaces of both Goupil and Hoffer's paintings have an almost mocking relationship with old masterpieces pickled in varnish.

This show proclaims that painting may be old-fashioned but is indubitably alive and well.

✤ *The paintings of the artists Yann Leroux, Lenny Piroth-Robert, Mary Hayes, Rafael Sottolichio, Dominique Goupil, Peter Hoffer and Keer Tanchak are at Galerie Simon Blais, 4521 Clark St., until March 31. For information, call (514) 849-1165.*

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