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François Houdé, Lisette Lemieux, Gilles Morissette and Paul Hunter

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ACTUALITÉ / EXPOSITIONS

*François Houdé, Lisette Lemieux,
Gilles Morissette and Paul Hunter*



François Houdé, *Ming series*, 1987. Glass, wood, photograph;
128 x 92 108 cm. Photo: Jocelyn Blais

Architectonics - "... the poetry of space,
which can be felt, but not measured."

Pevsner

François Houdé's *Mémoires Illusoires*, a bi-partite solo exhibition held simultaneously at Museo-Techne and Galerie Elena Lee (November 7-28), was the largest and most impressive showing of the artist's *Ming* series to date. It was a cathartic event — one amenable to appreciation on a myriad of levels.

Inspiration for the series came from Houdé's earlier anthropological studies and from a fascination with the stocky member of the equidae family that pervaded Chinese art of the middle ages. Horse imagery was selected to serve a chronogram-like function — the image-vehicle through which the artist followed

the evolution of the animal's symbolic role in society. The horse was presented as the mythopoetic creature of the ancient Greeks and Romans; as the majestic animal revered by the Chinese in the T'ang dynasty; as the equestrian statue that served as metaphor for the power of the state and the glory of the monarchy in Renaissance Italy and Baroque France, respectively; as a memorial romanticizing war throughout the nineteenth and in the early twentieth centuries; and finally as the focus of sportsmen's attention in our contemporary era. Profiles of numerous pieces were appropriated directly from well-known masterworks. Images by Exekias, Phidias, Donatello, Verrochio, Dürer and Coysevox were recalled in homage.

Houdé played on the concept of glass as the architectural component one does not see. The cool, green edge of cut glass panes, blocks, and corrugated



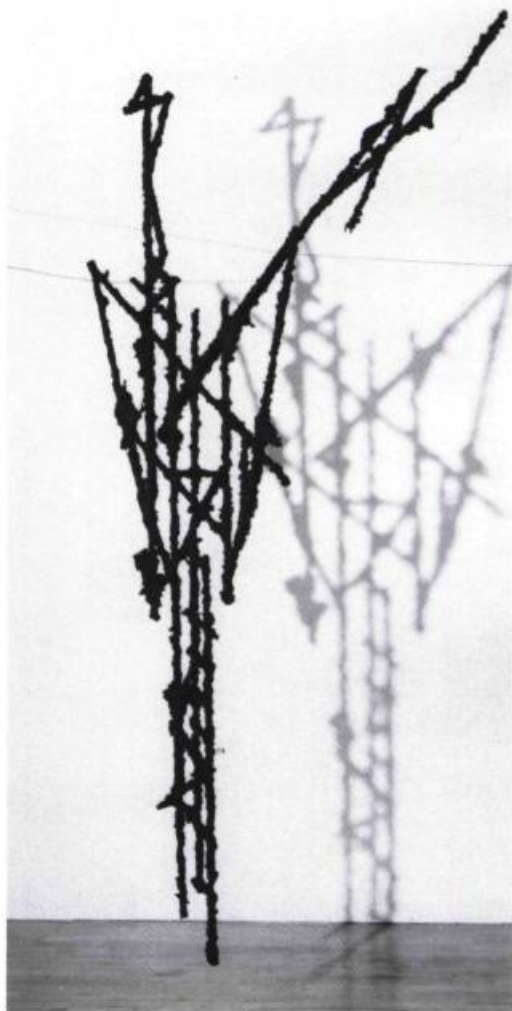
Lisette Lemieux, *Colonne incisive*, 1987. Cardboard, graphite, glass; 262 x 26 x 26 cm. Photo: Jocelyn Blais

plate served both as line and colour, tracing the contour of the horse images. Recycled window frames acted as structural support — shaped, stacked, superimposed and intersected. Fragments of photography, text, etched and cast elements, enhanced formalist and historical discourse. Concern for truth to material, fundamental means of fabrication, and the importance of defining space without creating mass, were all firmly grounded in the tradition of Russian constructivism, thus referencing a legitimate paternity for the employ of glass in the “high art” context.

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With *Verticalités* (Galerie du Musée, Québec, November 19-December 20), Lisette Lemieux tempered a long-standing ostensibly formalistic positivist philosophy with aspects of new historicism. Thirty, large-scale, perpendicular sculptures functioned as saddle-points between art as object and art predicated on emotion and recollection. An exchange was initiated between minimal-type statements and the materiality of their architectonic structure on the one hand, and a return to the logic of monument on the other.

In an accompanying statement, the artist described the exhibition as “an elaboration on vertical pluralities” and as “a tribute to elevation”. The column, in particular, was singled out from many erect architec-



Gilles Morissette, *Techno-Tour no. 374*, 1987. Paper, wood, pigment; 274 x 152 x 10 cm. Photo: Pierre Groulx

tural motifs — steles, totems, menhirs, towers, derricks — to celebrate its liberation from a reductive role as a load bearing component. In this ode to the vertical and allusion to freedom, there was an analogy to the evolution of humankind — man’s upward physical and intellectual mobility that began with “the appropriation of a standing position”.

Just as the architectural monument perpetuates the memory of a human achievement, so too does the tree hold in its substance the traces of its growth. In the presentation of a veritable “forest” of orthogonal forms and recognized symbols, Lemieux coalesced, in almost utopic fashion, an air of the environmental and the spiritual essence of the commonality of life experience.

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Gilles Morissette’s *Techno-Tours* (Galerie Noctuelle/ Michel Groleau, November 7-28) possessed an air of sculptural lightness, a physical openness of design, and a linear clarity, hitherto unseen in the artist’s œuvre. They functioned as “towers of communication” attempting integration and resolution of the supposed, mutually exclusive concepts of art, science, and spirituality.

The works sounded on three distinct notes. The first related to paper, Morissette’s chosen medium of expression. Thematically, and in their dominant two-

dimensionality (measure of depth was minimal, with one exception), the *Techno-Tours* echoed a preceding series of monotype prints, examples of which were also on exhibition. In the transformation of line drawing on a planar surface to a silhouette in space, there was reference to the recent phenomenon of paper's extended employ. Paper has been liberated from its traditional role as neutral support for image and may now serve as substance — an integral part of the creative artifice.

Many pieces were positioned in proximity to the walls and adjacent to the windows. Their shadows, by virtue of planetary rotation, provided constantly fluctuating secondary images, as well as temporal and spatial dimension.

Viewed in their totality the compositions generated an overriding sense of unease. In their "charged" and static shape; in the ephemeral and fragile qualities of their materiality; and in their precarious suspension on steel cables above the floor; there were manifold social, psychological and political implications — cogent expressions of the metaphysical perils inherent in existence.

...

In his first solo exhibition at Galerie Graff (November 5-December 1), Paul Hunter collected and presented what were referred to as "New York atmospheres, the urban poetry of devastated spaces". An untitled collection of thirty-five drawings and mixed-media compositions created haunting environments of confinement and solitude, and cast the viewer in the role of voyeur — a vulnerable witness to man's urban plight.

Works from the *N.S.* series were particularly unsettling. Fragments of city interiors and parkscapes, site and time specific, were dramatically scale-reduced and reconstructed in box-like enclosures pierced laterally with skylights and portals. Cool, diffused light illuminated isolated groups of human figures or animals, spiritually and physically overpowered by the awesome sense of void created in these stark dioramas.

The œuvre offered neither profound statement, nor enlightened direction. It did, however, reiterate one monolithic truth. It effectively underscored the radically contingent nature of "being", reminding spectators of their transient role within the universal play of time and space.

Allan Pringle

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Paul Hunter, *Discussion dans l'atelier*, 1985. Wood, plastic, paper, acrylic; 5 x 29 x 59 cm. Photo: courtesy Galerie Graff