

ETC



Carol Wainio: Blow-up

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Carol Wainio: *Blow-up*



Carol Wainio, *Revolutions per minute*, 1989. Acrylic on canvas; 112 x 284 cm
Photo : Louis Lussier, Gracieuseté : galerie Chantal Boulanger

**Carol Wainio, *Haut-parleur*
Galerie Chantal Boulanger, Montréal
February 24 to March 24, 1990**

In her most recent exhibition *Haut-parleur*, Carol Wainio offered the spectator another of her intellectual projects, in this instance, an exercise in *hyper-parole* which echoed somewhere in the expanses between the ecstasy of communication and near-total sensory deprivation. The subject matter of the eight acrylic paintings (five on canvas, three on paper) suggested, on the one hand, the totalitarian vision of Moholy-Nagy's technological optimism, and, on the other hand, an Orwellian sense of cultural dyslexia generated by a society unable to grasp the precise association between ultra-modern science and the current historical moment.

The mind-numbing velocity of technological evolution has virtually outstripped humankind's ability to assimilate and cope with change. As a result, it would appear that the centre of our traditional values has collapsed in the white sound of a techno-mediascape that loads our perceptual intake while blocking ready access to enlightenment. We have thus been exiled to the fringes of existence where we subsist under the constant menace of a myriad of double signs — memory/amnesia, production/loss, freedom/constraint, pleasure/pain, image/resolve, mass/energy ... and ultimately hope/despair — signs both paradoxical and ambivalent.

Wainio's "split-screen" paintings, with their simple bi-partite division of pictorial space (affording easy juxtaposition between A and B, foreground and background, subject and object), offer seductive planes

for an investigation of the aching contradictions between our consciousness of living precariously and our evident indifference to the finality of impending disaster. *Revolutions per Minute*, 1989, can be seen as typifying the duality of that agenda. Overhead a whirling disc of cosmic proportions (a turntable, our sound pick-up?) functions as a (dis)continuous vision involving perpetual rebirth; its motion either drawing in (destroying) or spinning out (engendering) diminutive humanoid figures. Below, other stick-beings, apparently oblivious to the sound and the fury above, scramble across a bleak landscape while engaging in everyday activity (manual labour, military confrontation, ceremony). Their open, oval-shaped mouths utter neither cries of horror nor shrieks of surprise but rather vowels without consonants (eeeeeee's, ooooooo's, aaaaaaa's), sounds without syllable, vocalizations without communication. Their plight is almost comedic. Like the legendary Mr. Bill, they stand wimpshly by in anticipation of their inevitable dismemberment and dispersion across the technoscape. Haplessly (prophetically) our society may be destined to share a similar fate. Thanks, in some measure, to Mr. Bill and Wainio's gumbie people, we have the comfort of knowing that we should "*blow-up* real good". We are forewarned that "science without conscience" (Rabelais) must certainly return us to a silence on the other side of the Big Bang.