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Gravité et tropisme
Un entretien avec Yan Giguère
Gravity and Tropism
An interview with Yan Giguère

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Attractions, 2009, épreuves à la gélatine argentique et impressions jet d'encre / gelatin silver prints and inkjet prints, various dimensions
Yan Giguère se distingue sur la scène québécoise de l’art contemporain depuis plusieurs années. Ses œuvres ont été exposées dans de nombreux festivals, galeries et expositions au Canada et à l’étranger, notamment au Musée de la photographie du Canada, à la Biennale de la photographie de Shanghai et à la Documenta de Kassel. Yan Giguère a également été invité à participer à des projets artistiques internationaux, tels que le Festival de la photographie de Shanghai et le Prix de l’art contemporain de la ville de Paris. Sa pratique artistique est centrée sur la photographie et l’installation, et il explore des thèmes tels que l’identité, la mémoire et la transmission des savoirs. Yan Giguère est également connu pour son travail sur les questions de genre et d’égalité, et il s’est engagé activement pour promouvoir la diversité et l’inclusion dans l’art contemporain.致富
Gravity and Tropism
An interview with Yan Giguère by Sylvain Campeau

Yan Giguère has been a well-known figure in the Quebec contemporary art scene since the mid-1990s. His most recent photographic works were in solo exhibitions at Galerie Optica in 2009, Centre VU in 2008 and 2002, and Galerie B-312 in 2002. His pieces, which are in a number of collections, highlight the poetry of the everyday in series with strong narrative potential arranged on the walls of the exhibition space. He is the coordinator of the carpentry workshop at the Centre Clark. He lives and works in Montreal.

SYLVAIN CAMPEAU: What strikes viewers when they go to see an exhibition by Yan Giguère is the special way you have of aligning images of very different formats and distributing them on the wall. It has been referred to as a constellation. How did you come to be interested in this type of presentation?

YAN GIGUÈRE: I had the idea of the constellation at the beginning of my career. It was in 1997, in the group exhibition at Plein Sud “Antidoté (la légèreté à l’œuvre).” At the time, I was fascinated by the idea that time doesn’t necessarily unfold in a succession of moments; instead, moments may burst out simultaneously. The dispersed way that the piece Ici et là hung refers to this sense of bursting. Then, for Chavirer in 2001, I didn’t use this presentation system. The dozen images displayed were all in the same format and hung in a line. For my exhibition “Bienvenue,” at B-312 in 2002, I reduced the number of images presented to three. At the time, I wanted people to look more at the images than at the grouping as a whole. But for “Choisir,” in 2007, which consisted of a group of portraits of my wife (taken over a fifteen-year period), I returned to that type of dispersed hanging because in this project, time as a subject was in the foreground. I wanted time as a subject was in the foreground. I wanted my process of taking pictures is indeterminate. I always try to pick out a subject. The subject emerges from the mass of photographs, starting with elements that are latent in them.

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The subject emerges from the mass of photographs, starting with elements that are latent in them. A dialogue is started with other images previously taken, which have been somewhat forgotten, which resurface.

SC: You chose two titles that refer to your practice: “Choisir” (Choosing) and “Attractions.” This suggests a way of forming a relationship with your images. You propose a guide...

YG: But not the diagram! “Attractions” does refer to my own way of forming a relationship with the images. I am attracted to certain images, certain places, intuitively. But “attraction” also refers to gravitational force and tropism — that is, how plants are drawn toward light — thus, two contrary forces, one upward, the other downward. And since the garden is a central theme in “Attractions,” it seemed completely appropriate. I like it when people enter my exhibitions as if they were going into a forest where there are a number of possible paths to follow, and each individual follows his or her own.

YG: That doesn’t mean that I’m not always on the look-out! I have periods when I take pictures, when I can rid myself of my other obligations. But the best pretext is when I want to try a new camera I’ve found at a junk shop. For a number of years, I’ve been collecting low-end amateur cameras. I’m always curious about their peculiarities, their way of “poorly” transmitting light onto film. Surprisingly, when I come back from these excursions, extraordinary things have often happened. So, I don’t go looking for one or several specific images.

YG: I don’t want to get bored, and I don’t want to bore other people either! Experimenting with new cameras, sometimes unsophisticated ones, offers all sorts of surprises. They, not I, determine what the image taken will be. Translated by Kathie Roth —

Sylvain Campeau has contributed to both Canadian and European magazines (Ciel variable, ETC, Photovision, and Papal Alpha) and has curated thirty exhibitions presented in Canada and abroad. He is the author of the essay Chambre obscure: photographie et installation and of four poetry collections.

SC: So, this collecting, this search for new cameras, isn’t just a whim.

YG: I don’t want to get bored, and I don’t want to bore other people either! Experimenting with new cameras, sometimes unsophisticated ones, offers all sorts of surprises. They, not I, determine what the image taken will be. Translated by Kathie Roth

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