

Jocelyne Alloucherie, Ivan Binet, and Mathieu Cardin, *Vide et vertige*, 1700 La Poste, Montreal. March 24–June 18, 2017

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Automnal (diptyque), 2017, 102 × 127 cm ch.

Ces natures mortes, composées de tiges, de feuilles et de fleurs, inanimées et silencieuses, ne sont toutefois pas encore mortes, mais plutôt à tout jamais vivantes, immortalisées par le geste photographique qui marque, temporairement, un arrêt dans le cycle de la vie. Elles habitent un espace dit « surnaturel », pour reprendre l'expression de Barthes²; elles occupent un instant présent qui ne se produit qu'une seule fois et demeurent figées entre le temps de la prise de vue et le temps de la contemplation. Leur vitalité prend forme dans leur simplicité, grâce aux jeux d'opacité et de transparence des vases, des contrastes lumineux, des coloris sombres et vibrants se détachant sur un fond saturé – achromatique. Ce faisant, elles incitent à une réflexion sur les vanités qui, paradoxalement, symbolisent à la fois l'éphémère et

le permanent, le vivant et la mort. Evergon et Ringuette manifestent ainsi une conscience exacerbée du temps qui passe; ils cherchent à le saisir sur la pellicule malgré des infortunes et des incertitudes quant à son « existence matérielle ». En témoigne *Automnal*, diptyque photographique composé de plantes et d'objets accumulés qui, magnifiant la banalité du quotidien, nous font osciller entre le temps vécu comme métaphore qui borne l'existence et le temps construit qui invite à la délectation mélancolique – une sensation poignante qui, sans cesse, évoque l'aspect transitoire de la vie.

Au surplus, il s'agit d'une rencontre poétique entre le fond et la forme, l'un esquissant la discrétion de l'autre, l'autre insistant sur la nécessité de se soustraire à son environnement: la surface neutre et ouverte. Le fond



coloré crée un seuil de visibilité où l'organisation spatiale, délimitant un espace où les choses naissent, se développent et meurent, confère à chaque photographie une parenté stylistique qui, contrairement aux natures mortes aux fleurs du XVII^e siècle, composées de bouquets denses, arrangés dans des vases précieux et envahis d'insectes, défie les conventions du genre en mettant l'accent sur la géométrie et la texture matérielle des compositions florales.

Calmement installée entre les limites du cadre, chaque plante crée de magnifiques arborescences visuelles. Chacune, baptisée d'un prénom féminin, invite à la confiance – les artistes avouent s'y prêter pendant l'arrosage –, mais, aussi, à des retrouvailles d'amies qui, journellement, comblent les vicissitudes de la vie.

1 La photographie comme memento mori. Voir Susan Sontag, *Sur la photographie*, traduit de l'anglais par Philippe Blanchard, Paris, Christian Bourgois, 1993, p. 29. 2 Sur le rapport entre la photographie et la mort, voir Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire. Notes sur la photographie*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. « Cahiers du cinéma », 1980, p. 123.

Critique et historien de l'art, **Karl-Gilbert Murray** a publié de nombreux textes, catalogues et opuscules d'exposition. À titre de commissaire, il a présenté plus d'une quinzaine d'expositions au Québec et au Canada. Son champ de spécialisation, portant sur des questionnements identitaires, interroge les croisements entre les études de genre et les questions sous-jacentes aux sexualités alternatives, en particulier queer, dans le champ des arts visuels.



Jocelyne Allouche, *Brumes*, 2010, inkjets, wood and glass, photo: Guy L'Heureux

Jocelyne Allouche, Ivan Binet, and Mathieu Cardin

Vide et vertige

1700 La Poste, Montreal

March 24–June 18, 2017

This exhibition of works by Jocelyne Allouche, Ivan Binet, and Mathieu Cardin was brilliantly dovetailed in terms of theme – the constructive notion of “vertigo” and the viewer's experience in space, with an understanding of void as presence rather than absence – and installed with consummate finesse in mortise-and-tenon fashion from floor to floor in all the gallery spaces. The works demonstrated great visual clarity and successfully interrogated our commonplace assumptions about the bodies we live in and the spaces we inhabit.

The experience of vertigo has been philosophically understood in terms of a loss of balance between lived and objective space. Beyond aesthetic canons, the exhibited works communicated directly with viewers' bodily experience and anxiety sensitivity, as well as their imagination. In this sense, the “vertiginous” experience of the world



Ivan Binet, *Patinoire 1, Mine and Ligne bleue*, 2016, inkjet prints, photo : Guy L'Heureux

that all of these works offered was deep, sustained, and complex.

Let us begin on the mezzanine, where Jocelyne Alloucherie catapulted her viewers into a deep-freeze with her photographs and related sculptural elements pertaining to icebergs. Alloucherie is a gifted installation artist as well as a photographer with a long and salutary career. In an earlier exhibition, *Dédale*, at the Darling Foundry, she nimbly stepped inside the ambit of Montreal's nightside using photography, installation, and video to conjure up a seductive atmospheric from the city's network of alleyways. Here, she moves far from the experience of urban vertigo – the inner city – to the domain of icebergs – the interior of nature – with equal assurance.

In her Darling Foundry show, Alloucherie used white-painted architectural elements as framing devices for the alleys shown in the photographs and videos, and as surrogates for architectural forms found in the urban core. Similarly here, she employed white-painted plinths with cut-glass attachments to serve as both scaffolding for the images and portals through which they could be seen. Apparently, she photographed her icebergs up close, from a fishing boat off the coast of Newfoundland, and she captures something of the sheer immensity of their masses relative to her and our own smallness, even as they melt into oblivion, remaining immaterial, menhir-like cold ghosts.

One could either walk alongside the photographic images or view them through the “portholes.” Yet, the somatic and the purely visual experiences – the weight on the body and the fleeting glimpses of holy arctic ghosts on the water – were equally beguiling and resonant. Alloucherie demonstrated

in these works that she is at the height of her powers, and the icebergs were at once eloquent and meditative in their intensity, possessing a tactile and altogether alluring lustre.

The “vertigo” experienced before the icebergs, with the viewer perhaps assuming Alloucherie's position in the tiny boat alongside their flanks, was mirrored in Ivan Binet's photographs. Binet employed seemingly impossible vantage points, which induced an almost dizzying sense of spatial uncertainty, as one sought to reconcile the “where” of the composition with one's own station point in space.

Instead of centring the viewer, Binet ensured that we were decentred and, effectively, destabilized as we sought to wrest reconciliation and clarity from our dilemma on the brink. Without recourse to a network of verifiable spatial references, Binet induced the so-called high-place phenomenon with images of a mine tailings pond at Schefferville and of Montmorency Falls at the end of winter, where the angles are sufficiently high to trigger cognitive dissonance – and the urge to jump (down) into the scene.¹ The artist draws us into his photographs with the efficacy of certain optical illusions that work mischief on the brain. The mixed signals received in the cerebral cortex demonstrate his enviable success in invoking the forms and forces of nature – the deep chasm and the vertical descent – that affect human beings in certain environments.

Downstairs, illusion and dissimulation also reigned supreme in installation artist Mathieu Cardin's deconstructed and reconstructed images and sculptures. Cardin places the onus for separating reality from fiction squarely on the optic of the viewer, who is thus complicit in the making of meaning. The topographical segments of landscape have to be

reconstituted into the mountain ranges that they in fact are by the viewer, who is thus exposed as the ultimate reference pole. We must decide what is a simulation and what is a real, quantifiable thing, and this heuristic process is somehow the main point of work that insists that its viewers are also actors.

For Cardin, perspective is central to perceiving nature, and the perspective of the viewer is here propelled through



Mathieu Cardin, *I.D.I. #11 and 12*, 2017, inkjet prints, *L'invention des images*, 2017, installation, photo: Guy L'Heureux

hoops, with sculptural tableaux receding in endless iterations through a Hall of Mirrors. Yes, for all his visual hoopla, the artist requires us to bodily attend to the work, walking through and negotiating its spaces with a certain fidelity, thrown into rupture when a caesura opens up between our perception of a thing as real and our sudden discovery that it is only a simulation.

The exhibition was installed on three floors – with Alloucherie on the mezzanine, Binet on the ground floor, and Cardin below stairs – very deliberately and deftly, so as to dovetail complementary bodies of work without collapsing their different philosophies, and in a way that led viewers over the precipice – and beyond.

¹ The high-place phenomenon experience has been analyzed by the Florida State University psychology department. See J. L. Hames, J. D. Ribeiro, A. R. Smith, and T. E. Joiner, “An Urge to Jump Affirms the Urge to Live: An Empirical Examination of the High Place Phenomenon,” *Journal of Affective Disorders* 136, no. 3 (2012): 1114–20.

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