

ETC



English translation / Traduction française

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Number 82, June–July–August 2008

Être/To be

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/34601ac>

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Publisher(s)

Revue d'art contemporain ETC inc.

ISSN

0835-7641 (print)

1923-3205 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Poulin, P. & Lanteigne, J. (2008). English translation / Traduction française. *ETC*, (82), 38–45.

N. H. : J'espère bien que non : nous serions alors comme des monades sans forme, sans attachements, sans liens, sans « prise » sur le monde ni « prise » à donner à autrui pour nous atteindre – et probablement, aussi, sans émotions. Ce qui me paraît souhaitable, en revanche, c'est que le fait d'avoir une identité – ce qui est constitutif de l'existence humaine – ne s'accompagne pas inévitablement d'une « revendication identitaire », qui est quand même le degré zéro de la conscience citoyenne ; et qu'on ne traite jamais un individu en fonction des propriétés natives, sur lesquelles il n'a aucune responsabilité, comme le sexe, l'appartenance raciale ou ethnique, la nationalité. Mais c'est là un combat politique – pas une utopie philosophique, ni un fantasme individuel !

É. C. : *Enfin, de la même manière que vous avez réfléchi à la problématique identitaire des auteurs, pouvez-vous préciser sous quelles conditions un sujet peut dire « je suis artiste » ?*

N. H. : J'ai montré, dans *Être écrivain* (et cela peut aussi s'appliquer aux artistes), qu'il faut pour cela, premièrement, pouvoir se percevoir soi-même comme artiste (ce qui ne va pas de soi, car ce sentiment n'est pas conféré par un diplôme ni même une formation spécifique) ; qu'il faut aussi, deuxièmement, être désigné comme tel par autrui, ou par les institutions compétentes (ce qui exige un travail assez complexe, à travers un certain nombre de preuves et d'épreuves : production d'œuvres convaincantes, expositions, constitution d'un curriculum vitae adéquat, etc.) ; et que, grâce à ce sentiment intérieur doublé d'une reconnaissance extérieure, il faut enfin, troisièmement, pouvoir s'autoriser à se dire comme tel, à se représenter à autrui comme artiste (éventuellement par l'adoption d'une posture ou d'un « habitus » adapté). Auto-perception, représentation, désignation : tels sont les trois « moments » de l'identité, parfois cohérents entre eux, et parfois dissonants. Dans ce dernier cas, on a affaire à une « crise d'identité », à laquelle les créateurs sont particulièrement vulnérables du fait de l'indétermination constitutive de leur activité, notamment l'indétermination de la frontière entre amateurisme et professionnalisme.

Ce qui me frappe aujourd'hui, c'est à quel point l'accès à cette identité d'artiste semble, chez certains, constituer le véritable but de l'activité de création, laquelle devient non plus une fin mais un moyen pour obtenir l'appartenance à la catégorie des artistes. C'est la conséquence inévitable du prestige dont celle-ci bénéficie, et qui n'a cessé de s'amplifier depuis le début du XIX^e siècle. Mais vouloir être un artiste n'est pas forcément le gage qu'on est un bon artiste – si même cela ne favorise pas des comportements mimétiques, tendant à faire ce qu'il faut pour se couler dans les représentations actuelles de l'artiste, au rebours de quêtes plus personnelles. Plutôt, donc, que de vouloir à tout prix être artiste, il me semble préférable de concentrer ses efforts sur la volonté de faire œuvre. Mais peut-être est-ce là une conception de l'art déjà datée, c'est-à-dire trop « moderne » pour être vraiment « contemporaine » ?

ENTRETIEN DIRIGÉ PAR ÉRIC CHENET, EN FÉVRIER 2008

ÊTRE/TO BE

This special issue—*Être/To Be*—is the result of an exciting, rich and harmonious collaboration between Isabelle Lelarge and I; it is the result of our mutual interest in issues of identities.¹ Indeed, it was impossible to reflect on the idea of identity—to see how it takes shape, how it is constructed or claimed—without also considering the essentialist connotation it often carries.

The ultimate source of philosophical questions, the concept of Being, generates many views and interpretations. In Antiquity, the notion of Being was generally questioned in relation to ideas of permanency, immanence and transcendence; in our time, Being is seldom explained through its foundations or by the origin of existence, let alone by deduction from some general essence *a priori*. Plato would imagine Being as immutable identity, whereas in the 20th century it would be considered in a more empirical way. Facing chaos, degeneration and the absurdity of existence, Being gets vulnerable and loses its majesty. It's the end of pure reason, of absolute rational Being. This scenario shifts under the emergence of another concept, obviously more appropriate in a context of irrationality: indetermination.

"Where are we in our pursuit of truth and identity?" asks Luc Courchesne, for whom, unlike Jean-Jacques Rousseau, nature can no longer provide an answer. Moreover, if Being isn't the core of our universe anymore, does its position require indeterminate coordinates? Nevertheless, for several artists in this issue, just as for Courchesne, the environmental context represents a strong influence for identity. For example, Claude Lévêque presents us with a series of images that paint a rather dark portrait of suburbia, a commercial zone offering many conveniences, but which leaves humanity out of its scope. As for Julie Faubert, she is interested in the architecture of cloisters, with their capacity to preserve identity from any disturbance. The associates of *Mousse Architecture de paysage* try as much as possible to avoid being passively subjected to the places we live in, rather attempting to endow them with new community identity.

But the question of Being isn't limited to an environmental relationship. Julianne Rose is more interested in the manner in which the identity is constructed, and how media and advertisement influence our personal choices and desires. Her reflection gives rise to hybrid beings—half-women, half-dolls—and it questions the way we perceive ourselves. Michel Goulet also attempts to reveal the artificial and codified nature of existence. His multitudes of little pennants are as many signs reminding us that the subjective decision capacity is always relative, fundamentally related to the social apparatus in which we thrive. Also conceptual but more lyrical, Irène F. Whittome's project leads us to think about the immutability of identity: apparently as solid as a rock, but in reality unstable, uncertain and indeterminable. Just as the connection between environmental context and identity is a core concern for artists, the relation to others creates a lot of interest: Elise Mougin invites her subjects to project a negative image of themselves. Finally, the indetermination of identity reaches a climax in the work of some other artists: bizarre genetic breeding—whether done with software (Dalia Chauveau) or with a simple photographic collage (Andréa Szilasi)—give birth to beings directly supernatural, whose identity are beyond control.

Identity tends increasingly to be indeterminate, uncertain and contingent. For this reason, we have invited many artists to share their exceptionally original visions of the versatility of the identity process. Far from being comprehensive in the treatment of this current topic, we hope that this issue of *ETC* will bring pleasure as well as reflection to the reader.

Éric Chenet

Art critic and historian, **Éric Chenet** holds a degree from the Université de Montréal. He is interested in, among other topics, the contemporary forms of creation that question the conventions of construction and explore new types of habitation and space occupation. His research also focuses on the use of comic effects in current artistic practices. Éric Chenet has published essays distributed by the centre des arts actuels Skol and by the Musée national des Beaux-arts du Québec. He has recently collaborated on a critical work concerning the last twenty years in Canadian contemporary creation (*Deux relèves: ETC 1987-2007*). He works as an assistant editor for *ETC* art magazine.

Note

¹ "Identités/Identities", *ETC*, No. 81 (March-April-May 2008).

A MATTER OF IDENTITIES: INTERVIEW WITH NATHALIE HEINICH

Éric Chenet: *You have paid particular attention to the construction process of the modern artist figure. In your books—La gloire de Van Gogh: Essai d'anthropologie de l'admiration (Paris, Minuit, 1991)[The Glory of Van Gogh: An Anthropology of Admiration, Princeton University Press, 2004]; Du peintre à l'artiste: Artisans et académiciens à l'âge classique (Paris, Minuit, 1993); and more recently, Être écrivain: Création et identité (Paris, La Découverte, 2000)—you investigate the issue of a "singularity system" ("régime de singularité"). How did you become interested in this topic?*

Nathalie Heinich: Concerning the emergence of a modern conception of the artist, I began by writing a thesis—under the supervision of Pierre Bourdieu—about the development of French painting in the 17th century. I did so partly through a series of intellectual incidences, but mostly because I was determined, then, to demonstrate how "socially constructed," arbitrary and unnatural the figure of the artist is, and how it is also much idealized today. I put this expression in quotes, because for me it represents a style of critical theory—a theory that is naively naturalistic, (as if any human phenomenon would be necessary if natural), whereas it is peculiar to man to be, not natural but social, that is: historical, changing, contextual... This is a theory with which I had difficulty breaking, and meanwhile I have distanced myself from Bourdieu's theories and from his prescriptive and critical obsessions—I explain all of this in my last book, *Pourquoi Bourdieu* (Gallimard, 2007), as well as in a collection of interviews, *La Sociologie à l'épreuve de l'art* (Aux lieux d'être, 2006 and 2007). That said, this ignited my interest in artist status, an issue which seems to have been left widely unexplored

in the sociology of the arts, where artworks, audiences and institutions are rather greatly considered. This is a fascinating and very current topic, as long as it is approached with intellectual curiosity, and not with the intention to settle ideological scores as happens too often today when it comes to art.

As for the "singularity system" issue, it should not be limited to the artist status, since many things in our societies depend on such reflection about systems qualifying beings, whether through singularity, originality, uniqueness or through its opposite, that is, community, numbers, and standard, all particular to a "community system." I introduced this issue in my first book, *La Gloire de Van Gogh* [*The Glory of Van Gogh*], because it was necessary to create the appropriate conceptual resources in order to understand the "axiological" operations (values related) through which we progressed from disqualification, or even from the invisibility of a given artwork or person (because of their singularity), to a qualification, a valorization or even an over-exposition of that same artwork or person. This transformation with its modalities is the subject of this book. And it is through this field of study that I have tried to broaden the question, in order to include the status of artworks and "persons-objects" in general, various personalities, situations, actions, and more generally, everything that can be evaluated.

In writing *L'Élite artiste* (a synthesis of more than 20 years of historical research on the artist's status), I more fully realized—and tried to demonstrate—how this "singularity system" applies not only to artists, even if they are a fine example of it. I also wanted to illustrate that the issue of the artist's identity is so decisive in understanding how democratic societies work today, with their repeated attempts to harmonize important but antinomic democratic values such as the pursuit of excellence, the longing for equality and the respect of meritocracy.

E. C.: Do you think that, more than any social category sharing a collective identity, the artists in the 19th century played an important role in the self-definition process of the individual, as well as of society?

N. H.: For me, the idea of an individual's self-definition with a self-sufficiency from society is a product of pure imagination, even if there has been a real tendency to valorize individuals over collectivities (this was the case during the last generation at least), and marginality over social integration (it's only a shift on the "individualism/holism" axis as defined by Louis Dumont). No individual is ever "self-defined" because we're all subjected to language, to the gaze of others (Todorov), to "institutions of meaning" (Descombes)—and fortunately so, because who would like to be a "wild child" or some Robinson on an island, but without any objects salvaged from the shipwreck, without any sense of time, without Man Friday? It is the *homo clausus* illusion, well-dismantled by Norbert Elias, who showed it was nothing but the projection of personal experience onto the whole society, an illusion thus pre-sociological, even if some sociologists still believe in it, or worse, promote it. The only observable reality is that today a certain "autonomization" of the individual, mostly in regard to the family unit, is valorized (and not experienced). And this valorization is often based on the image of a "king-artist" (like the term "king-child" in pediatrics) who would create things alone, would invent unheard expressions all by himself, who wouldn't feed off any tradition, would self-define with regard to no artist—be it through imitation or through distinction.

As a sociologist of the arts—preoccupied not only with real experience, but also with representations, imaginary or symbolic—I'm not interested so much in dismantling this illusion as I am in understanding its machinery: I want to show the types of values to which it connects, to show its functions within our collective imagination. This is what I have tried to do in my books *L'Élite artiste* and *Être écrivain*, by making the historical reasons behind the setting of a "singularity system" in Romanticism explicit, and by trying to identify some of the consequences.

E. C.: Indeed, invention and self-definition of the individual are products of pure imagination, if not of the delusion of omnipotence. And this longing for self-redefinition at any cost seems to enjoy considerable growth within our current techno-scientific world: life engineering, genetics, cloning, biotechnologies, and even digital processing of images are, for those who use them, a way of self-reinvention. Paradoxically, I think that we no longer face a quest for identity of an essentialist kind. Rather, we face the assertion of possible selves, as if many individuals could coexist within the same identity.

N. H.: I'm not so sure whether current biological research, with its research groups, budgets, equipment, ethical committees, and accreditation procedures, has anything to do with the "individual": nothing could be more collective, more submitted to conventions, to statistics, etc. and luckily because this is how science progresses! Of course, on an individual level, human cloning can seem like a new possibility for the identical reproduction fantasy. As for myself, I hope that we won't go further than the fantasy stage, since I don't see how humanity could benefit from the denial of Others, through the reproduction of everyone's self—something so typical of a childish omnipotence fantasy. Michel Houellebecq depicted its bleak consequences in his last novel, *La Possibilité d'une île* [*The Possibility of an Island*]. As for the

digital processing of images, it is indeed something that challenges the stability of one's self-image (it is but a tiny dimension of individual identity), but because the same technology is used at the same moment by millions of people, it does so on a large-scale basis. Then again, individuals in front of their computers can cultivate a fantasy about their authority using their own image—but with which consequences, practical effects, modes of temporal stabilization? We don't know, and I'm not sure if an effective and real change is there to be found. People can play with the multiplication of their own self-images: still, we only possess a single ID, with one name and one image. Fortunately, because otherwise schizophrenia would soon manifest itself!

E. C.: The 20th century has seen the emergence of a current of thought—from Duchamps' readymades to Barthes' essay "The Death of the Author" to Foucault's view of the unimportance of the author—that drastically increases the importance given to the viewer in the artwork's production of meaning. From this perspective, the viewer's role becomes essential, to the detriment of the artist who is reduced to a passive and latent function at best. Under these conditions, do you think that a "singularity system" is still a necessary criterion in the identity construction of contemporary artists?

N. H.: I think we ought to differentiate things better. What relates to the way the artworld effectively works doesn't necessarily have anything to do with the concepts of a few philosophers, whose impact on the reality of experience is often overestimated (because we seldom try to observe this very reality, since we don't consider it to be as interesting as the production of concepts). In Duchamp's case, it's an exceptionally intelligent undertaking aimed at moving the artworld's borders, so as to make explicit the operations through which it integrates an artwork. This is not only thanks to the work of the artist or to the gaze of the viewer (on which Duchamp indeed insisted: "It is the viewers who make the painting."), but more importantly thanks to the action of Art's middlemen, whom Duchamp did mobilize with a remarkable dexterity—a process that sociologists would later describe (cf. the third part of my book *Le Triple jeu de l'art contemporain*). This move ultimately has something to do with the "singularity system," because it can't operate without a prior valorization of originality, novelty and innovation. And for many art world participants, this was largely identified with the figure of Duchamp, considered—and rightly so—as its most talented forerunner. In this sense, contemporary artists are far off the "Death of the Author" topic, as it was put forward in the sixties by Barthes and Foucault: they are still and even more fascinated by the omnipotent author, capable of indefinitely pushing back Art's frontiers, imposing their own singularity on everyone. I would readily say that the most naive of them—those who probably won't make a real career—believe that they are the only ones playing this game, whereas the most talented of them know that there are at least three players in the game (artists, viewers, and middlemen), and most of all, they know that the important thing is not to show that you know the rules, but rather to use the game surface to produce universality, rather than singularity. Then it gets harder!

As for the commonplace of the "Death of the Author," which was formerly paradoxical, it needs to be put back into its proper context. At that time, Barthes had something against the academic focus on biographism and writer psychology. The fact that this purely academic stand (at the time rather anti-academic) could have been considered a real symptom says a lot about the self-isolation of the intellectual circle, with its inability to connect with its environment. But I can't help but admire the work accomplished by Foucault in his famous paper "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" ["What is an author?"], because it is a remarkable performance of definition, presenting the functions assigned to the figure of the artist in our societies. Unfortunately, Foucault's readers and admirers seldom share the intelligence of their idol (this said, idolatry is not usually characterized by intelligence).

E. C.: Your comment on the artists who are likely to produce "universality" is very heuristic. Which present creators do you think are now turning to such a practice? How do their productions bring the artistic identity we have known since Romanticism into question?

N. H.: The pursuit of universality doesn't relate to an effective creation or to a particular artistic practice: it is a value that either materializes or not. The modern idealization of art inevitably brings about what sociologists nowadays call a "rise in generality" (*montée en généralité*): the need to affect many people, and not only the artist and their peers, by playing on widely-shared affects. The problem with this "rise in generality"—intrinsic to any valorization process—is that it's contrary to the "rise in singularity" that has played a fundamental role in art since Romanticism, which I have tried to demonstrate. More precisely, the "rise in generality" is the form of greatness peculiar to what I call "community system" (*régime de communauté*), while the "rise in singularity" is the greatness peculiar to a "singularity system." Interestingly, in order to turn any singularity into a value, it has to be objectified through critics, institutions, prizes, etc., and therefore has to create a "rise in objectivity" that is nevertheless contrary to the very properties of singularity: subjectivity, unpredictability, irreducibility, and the fact that it is unsubstitutable. Under these conditions, artists considered

"great" must prove they are not only singular (original, innovative, extraordinary), but also universal (concerning emotions, affects, and representations that are common to their time, and even to all of humanity), in order to have the value acknowledged as "objective." In this sense, the pursuit of universality doesn't call into question the image of the artist as it was built since Romanticism: it is embedded in it, because the artist's singularity is inseparable from its capacity to embody the Ideal of Universality—if the artist is to reach true everlasting greatness.

How does that apply to contemporary art? I think that the artists who only turn toward singularity—with transgression of art's boundaries, critical aims, and the self-referential nature of artworks that have meaning only in regards to art history—have little chance to be considered as reaching a form of universality and therefore as being great or likely to go down in history. But then again, there are a few artists who don't content themselves with showing that they know the rules of the contemporary art game by not taking anything literally, by making nods and allusions, by distancing themselves: rather, they take the risks of literality, of seriousness, of a deep sensory or emotional experience. They are those who will go beyond trends, down in history. But don't ask me for names: I'm not an art critic.

E. C.: *A society made up of individuals free from any identity claims, of beings that wouldn't be submitted anymore to categories (races, nationalities, religions, or even genetic inheritance), singular beings, but without identities, like Giorgio Agamben puts it in The Coming Community—is such a society possible?*

N.H.: I certainly hope not. We would be like formless monads, without attachments and bonds, with neither a "handle" on the world nor a "handle" for others to reach us—and probably emotionless. What seems desirable on the other hand is that having an identity—fundamental to human existence—wouldn't necessarily go with "identity claims" (that are nevertheless citizenship degree zero), and that an individual would never be treated according to its original properties (sex, race, ethnicity, nationality). But this is a political struggle, not a philosophical utopia or an individual fantasy!

E. C.: *Finally, just as you have thoughts on the issue of authors' identity, could you specify under which conditions a subject could say "I'm an artist"?*

N. H.: I have shown in *Être écrivain* that this claim requires, first, to be able to perceive oneself as an artist (which isn't self-evident, for this sentiment is not conferred by a diploma or any specific training); second, one has to be designated so by others, or by the proper institutions (this in turn requires much complex work, through a given number of tests and ordeals: production of convincing artworks, shows, make-up of an appropriate CV, etc.); third, with the help of this inner sentiment coated with external recognition, one has to be able to authorize oneself and to represent oneself as an artist to others (eventually through the adoption of a posture or of an appropriate "habitus"). Self-perception, representation, designation: those are the three "stages" of identity—sometimes coherent, sometimes discordant. In this latter case, an identity crisis occurs, a crisis to which creators are very vulnerable because of the indeterminateness intrinsic in their activity—particularly the indeterminateness marking the boundary between amateurism and professionalism.

It strikes me that the access to an artist identity constitutes, for some, the singular aim of creative activity, which in turn becomes not an end but a means to belong to the artist kind. This is an inevitable consequence of the prestige surrounding such an activity, a prestige that has consistently grown since the beginning of the 19th century. However, the claim of being an artist doesn't necessarily produce a good artist—moreover, this could favour mimetic behaviors: a tendency to do whatever it takes to fit the mould of the contemporary artist, sometimes at the expense of more personal views. Thus, it seems to me more appropriate to concentrate on the will to produce artworks, rather than to try to be an artist at all costs. But then, maybe this is a conception of art already dated, that is to say too "modern" to be really "contemporary"?

Interview: Éric Chenet
Translation: Patrick Poulin

CLAUDE LÉVÊQUE LEVER DE RIDEAU

Le rideau s'est levé sur un étrange jeune homme, qu'on aurait dit arrivé directement de la rue d'en face sur la piste d'un faux music-hall.

Assis sur des gradins, bloqués de familles stables, je pensais aux choses qui venaient de m'arriver, quand surgit ce type jonglant avec une bobine roulante rouge qu'il promenait sur son corps à l'aide d'un fil à rebondissements contraires. Être là, ou peut-être même nulle part. Voir sans être vu ni détecté.

Je lève les yeux au-dessus des applaudissements, là où les câbles de rappel font état de déploiements invalidants. Les facéties clownesques

idiotes d'une gamine créent l'hilarité crispée. Le jeune homme réapparaît, comme une icône de mode, pour contredire le jeu stupide de l'artiste d'un soir.

Vrai ou faux-sembant, je ne cherche pas à comprendre. Je divague sur le parking, en appel de rien. Même les tirs groupés sur écrans vidéo alarmants me rendent inerte.

Aucune cause d'émotion ne m'anime ici. Les lignes d'éclairage futile qui défilent dans la nuit sont suffisamment hypnotiques pour me faire pleurer sans raison.

On m'a conduit dans ce labyrinthe de l'émerveillement, le regard aveuglé.

Interdiction de voir les herbes mouvantes perlées de rosées.

Derrière le rideau, dans un autre monde, une fanfare proche résonnerait, assourdie par une muraille de végétation. On s'observerait, toi dans la pénombre du couloir, moi dans l'interstice de la porte entrebâillée. Cette musique enjouée de tradition régionale aurait certainement un arrière-goût d'haleine menaçante.

On se protégerait l'un l'autre sans dire rien. Notre silence mutique ne délivrerait jamais le secret qui nous fait nous confondre sans attirer l'attention.

Nous n'offririons au regard des autres que des particules de poussière étincelantes.

Comme des diamants volatiles qui se percutent et s'écartent.

Claude Lévêque

CLAUDE LÉVÊQUE RAISING THE CURTAIN

The curtain rose showing a curious young man, who looked like he had been put—straight from the street—on to the stage of a fake music hall.

As I sat in the stands, jammed with stable families, I was thinking about the things that had just happened to me, when suddenly this guy came in juggling with a red, rolling reel that he was passing over his body using a reverse rebound thread. To be there, or nowhere. To see without being seen, or detected. I raise my eyes above the applause, just where return cables show crippling maneuvers. The idiotic and clownish pranks of a kid create tense mirth. The young man reappears like a fashion model, to contradict the stupid game of the momentary artist.

Real pretense or not, I don't want to know. I ramble in the parking lot, calling for nothing. Not even the grouped fire on the alarm screens can move me.

No source of emotion moves me here. The futile strings of lighting that run in the night are mesmerizing enough to make me cry without reason.

Someone led me to this wonder maze with my gaze blinded.

To see the shifting grass wet with dew: forbidden.

Behind the curtain, in another world, a nearby fanfare would resonate, muffled by a wall of greenery. We would behold each other, you in the darkened corridor, and me in the half-open door. The upbeat and folkloric music would surely have an aftertaste of ominous breath. We would protect each other silently. Never would our mute silence reveal the secret that makes us merge without drawing attention.

All we would allow to be seen of us would be shiny particles of dust. Like volatile diamonds crashing together.

Claude Lévêque

LUC COURCHESNE TERRAINS D'APPARITION

En regardant en lui-même pour trouver son essence et sa vérité, Jean-Jacques Rousseau inaugurait, au XVIII^e siècle, l'identité moderne. C'est dans un contact intime avec la Nature qu'il trouvait la force de résister à la raison pure en vue de faire apparaître son être sensible. Quel lien peut-on tisser entre cette conquête identitaire, qui place le sujet au centre de sa réalité subjective, et le dessin du glacier de Buet (1767) par son contemporain Horace Benedict de Saussure, où, comme dans les photographies présentées ici, l'observateur est placé au centre du paysage ? Où en sommes-nous, près de trois siècles après *Les Confessions*, dans notre quête de vérité et d'identité ?

La Nature qui inspirait tant Rousseau menace aujourd'hui de se dérégler. Le sujet sensible qu'il a mis au monde est désormais instrumentalisé par une cybernétique de plus en plus invasive, et sa vérité subjective passablement mise à l'épreuve au sein de nos sociétés polymorphes où s'affrontent des droits individuels et collectifs. De nouvelles modalités de communication, qui représentent autant de terrains d'apparition inédits, ont fait surgir nos « identités » multiples ainsi que la notion nouvelle d'intersubjectivité. Le corps lui-

même est devenu un laboratoire sur la naissance, la vie et la mort. Le monde a changé. Où donc chercher, aujourd'hui, la vérité fondatrice de l'identité ?

La photographie de gauche a été prise lors d'une excursion à l'île Saint-Pierre en 2004, soit 239 ans après que Jean-Jacques Rousseau y eut séjourné. La photographie de droite montre, depuis l'intérieur du Panoscope, une scène de l'œuvre interactive *T'es où ?*, réalisée en 2005.

Luc Courchesne, mars 2008

Note

1 Le terrain d'apparition a été défini par Berthet comme l'influence du contexte dans la caractérisation des êtres sociaux. Frédéric Berthet, « Éléments de conversation, Théorie de la mondanité », in *Communications*, n° 30, p. 147.

LUC COURCHESNE FIELDS OF APPEARANCE

Jean-Jacques Rousseau initiated the concept of modern identity in the 18th century, by looking within himself for truth and essence. Through intimate contact with nature, he found the strength to resist pure reason in order to manifest his own sensory self. What link can we forge between this conquest of identity—making the subject the core of a subjective identity—and Horace Benedict de Saussure's drawing of Mont Buet, in which, just as in the pictures presented here, the observer is at the center of a landscape? Where are we in our pursuit for truth and identity, three centuries after Rousseau's *Confessions*? The nature that inspired Rousseau is now on the brink of destruction. The sensory subject is now reified and used by an increasingly pervasive cybernetic, and its subjective reality is enduring great stress within our polymorphic societies, under the clash of individual and collective rights. New means of communication—as many new “fields of appearance”¹—have created our multiple “identities” as well as the notion of inter-subjectivity. The human body itself has turned into a laboratory for birth, life and death. The world has changed. Where can we seek the founding truth of identity today?

Photograph at left was taken during an excursion to Saint-Pierre Island in 2004, 239 years after Jean-Jacques Rousseau visited it. Photograph at right was taken from inside the Panoscope, and shows a moment of *T'es où ?* an interactive work created in 2005.

Luc Courchesne, March 2008

1 A “Field of Appearance” (*Terrain d'apparition*) is defined by Frédéric Berthet as the influence of a context in the characterization of social beings. Frédéric Berthet, « Éléments de conversation, Théorie de la mondanité », in *Communications*, No. 30, p. 147.

IRÈNE F. WHITTOME ET MADELEINE GAGNON IDENTITÉS QU'EST-CE QUE L'IDENTITÉ ?

C'est la pluralité liée à la singularité. « Qu'est-ce que l'éternité ? disait Rimbaud, c'est la mer liée au soleil ». Ainsi, nous, longtemps dans le temps plus tard, ne savons pas encore nous dépatouiller ni avec les secrets de l'au-delà ni avec les mystères entourant qui nous sommes. Il a aussi écrit, le jeune homme, mais il avait une tête de vieux sage, c'est pourquoi il n'a pas écrit de longues années, c'est pourquoi il est mort avant d'être vieillard : JE EST UN AUTRE. Il l'a dit au singulier et pourtant, cette singularité est plurielle. Il n'a pas dit NOUS SOMMES, c'eût été la simple pluralité. Non, il a écrit le singulier dans le pluriel, Je est un Autre, c'est tout un. Voilà.

Ainsi pour l'identité. Chacun est fait de l'un et du multiple. Chacun est imbibé dans l'autre. Imbibé, métissé, tissé avec, pollué, rempli à ras bord de conscience et d'inconscience de tous ceux-là, celles-là côtoyés tout au long d'une histoire, qu'ils-elles viennent d'un passé révolu, ça peut remonter à des générations, ou d'un pays lointain jamais foulé-vu, de l'autre bord d'un océan jamais traversé.

Chacun tout seul, toute seule est libre d'être l'autre et d'être soi, d'être soi de l'autre, d'être l'autre dans soi. Ma carte d'identité dit une chose et cache toutes les autres. Ma carte d'identité dit *toi tu es ce je* et elle camouffle tout le reste *les autres m'habitent*, l'autre coule dans mon sang, dans mes veines, mon sang est de l'autre aussi, il y a un fleuve planétaire qui circule dedans, il file entre des récifs, il éclate au-dessus des massifs de coraux, il trace des filets de débris rapportés de tous les continents, la nuit on l'entend quand tout s'est tu, poissons et oiseaux, il poursuit sa route, ses routes sinueuses, je peux raconter son histoire en poésie seulement, ou en musique, ou en algèbre, et parfois, face à l'immensité multiple du JE, je me tais. Et quand les douaniers demandent ma carte, je n'ai ni perdu ma

boussole ni le nord ni mon sextant ni tous mes instruments, mais je sais sans répondre l'Autre de moi et les identités multiples qui me guident. L'identité ? C'est la terre liée au soleil. Et tous les continents remplis d'humains qui se promènent partout, de nuit comme de jour. Dans les forêts comme sur les eaux. Sur les chemins de terre ou dans les villes.

Madeleine Gagnon

IRÈNE F. WHITTOME AND MADELEINE GAGNON IDENTITIES WHAT IS IDENTITY?

It's plurality in relation to singularity. “What is Eternity?” said Rimbaud. “It is the Sea bound to the Sun.” And so, long after these lines, we still can't manage either the secrets of the beyond or the mysteries about who we are. The young man—but he had the head of an old wise man, this is why he didn't write long, this is why he died before getting old—also wrote this: “*I is another.*” He said this in the singular, yet this singularity is plural. He didn't say “*We are.*”—that would have been simple plurality. No, he inscribed singularity in plurality: I is another, it's all one. That's all.

The same goes for identity. Everyone is constituted by the One and the Multiple. Everyone is soaked with Alterity. Soaked, crossbred, interwoven, polluted, filled to the brim with consciousness and unconsciousness in regard to those with whom we mix with in the course of a narrative, be they from a distant past—even for generations—or from a distant land never trodden, from the other side of an ocean never crossed.

Everyone for oneself is free to be oneself or the other, to be oneself in the other, to be the other in oneself. My identity card says one thing while concealing many. My identity card says *You are this I*, it hides everything else. *The Others live within me*, the other flows in my bloodstream, my veins, my blood is also Alterity, a planetary river circulates in there, it rolls between reefs, it bursts above coral reefs, it traces wisps of waste from every continent, at night you can hear it when everything—fishes, birds—lay mute, it carries on meandering, I can only tell its story through poetry or music or algebra, and sometimes when facing I's multiple immensity, I hush myself.

And when the customs officers ask for an ID, I haven't lost either my compass, nor the North, nor any of my equipment, but I know secretly the Alterity of me, all the ever-guiding multiple identities. Identity? It's the Earth bound to the Sun. And all the continents filled with humans walking everywhere, night and day. In forests or on water. On dirt paths or in cities.

Madeleine Gagnon

ÉLISE MOUGIN POURRIEZ-VOUS, S'IL VOUS PLAÎT, FAIRE QUELQUE CHOSE D'EXTRAORDINAIRE POUR MA PHOTO ?

Quelques mots sur la démarche (juste pour vous renseigner) : mon travail se préoccupe en général des processus de résistance à la banalité. Lors d'un workshop en Pologne avec Pawel Althamer, je suis allée dans les maisons et les fermes de Plochocinek demander aux habitants s'ils accepteraient de faire quelque chose d'extraordinaire pour ma photo. Une représentation de soi en négatif en quelque sorte.

Lors des rencontres individuelles, j'ai été très chaleureusement accueillie. Après quelques confidences autour d'un gâteau de Pâques, les timidités se sont vite débridées. Si les réponses ont été variées et parfois surprenantes, les photographies n'en sont évidemment pas pour autant extraordinaires. Leur processus vient raconter un peu des fantasmes de chacun et la difficulté de s'échapper de l'ordinaire.

Cette série de douze portraits est aussi un questionnement sur la relation de l'artiste contemporain au divertissement.

Élise Mougin

ÉLISE MOUGIN COULD YOU PLEASE DO SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR MY PHOTOGRAPH?

Some words on my approach: my work usually focuses on attempts to resist triviality. During a workshop in Poland with Pawel Althamer, I went to houses and farms of Plochocinek to ask its inhabitants if they wouldn't do anything special for my photograph—in a way, a self-representation in negative.

During individual meetings, I was warmly greeted. After a few shared

confidences around an Easter cake, people quickly loosened up. If responses were diverse and at times surprising, the photographs shot weren't very interesting. But the very process of photographing told a little about the inhabitants' fantasies and of their difficulties in escaping triviality. Also, this series of twelve portraits questions the relationship between contemporary art and entertainment.

Élise Mouglin

ANDRÉA SZILASI

Portraits est une série de collages réalisés en découpant et en combinant des portraits provenant de livres et de magazines usagés. Il s'agit d'une tentative de montrer ce qui se trouve à l'intérieur de la tête, contrairement à son apparence extérieure. Autrement dit, j'ai remanié diverses photographies de têtes pour créer des portraits d'émotions plutôt que d'individus. J'ai souvent pensé que si un portrait pouvait révéler ce que nous ressentons intérieurement, ce ne serait pas nécessairement en montrant une tête dans cette disposition simple et symétrique qui inclut deux yeux, deux oreilles, un nez et une bouche. Le portrait pourrait certainement être, à l'occasion, un fouillis désorganisé, fragmenté et stratifié, un mélange de traits sombres et clairs qui reflètent une pensée nette et méthodique aussi bien que la vie mouvante et insaisissable de la conscience.

Andréa Szilasi

ANDRÉA SZILASI

Portraits is a series of collages made with cut and pasted portraits from used books and magazines. The idea is to show what is inside the head, contrary to its external appearance. In other words, I have modified several head photographs to create portraits, not of individuals, but of emotions. I have thought many times that if a portrait was to reveal what we feel inwardly, it wouldn't necessarily show a head in a symmetrical and simple position, with two eyes, two ears, a nose and a mouth. At times, a portrait could certainly be a disorganized, fragmented and stratified jumble; a mix of clear and dark lines and features which reflects a clear and methodical intelligence, and the moving and elusive life of consciousness.

Andréa Szilasi

KARILEE FUGLEM

Putting identity into words requires grasping slippery ideas about belonging long enough to sew them together with a lot of hyphens. Hard enough in one language, *et plus compliqué en deux, où on commence avec un air de compétence* which completely unravels after a few phrases into incomprehension. But at this point, beautiful confusion becomes a sub-nationality all its own, the State of Being at a Loss. My adopted home, best described wordlessly. Consider this photo of deepest space, or my back, reversed. It is the place where I am continually connected to all that is unknown to me, so I can never claim to be fully this, and not that.

K. Fuglem, January 2008

KARILEE FUGLEM

Pour mettre en mots l'identité, il faut pouvoir saisir des idées fuyantes concernant l'appartenance, et les retenir pendant suffisamment de temps pour parvenir à les coudre ensemble en utilisant de nombreux traits d'union. Voilà qui est déjà assez difficile dans une seule langue, *et plus compliqué en deux, où on commence avec un air de compétence* qui s'effiloche vite après quelques phrases qui nous mènent directement à l'incompréhension. Une fois là, la belle confusion se transforme d'elle-même en sous-nationalité, à savoir l'État d'être déconcerté. Ma maison d'adoption, qui se décrit au mieux sans mots. Vous pouvez voir cette photo comme l'espace le plus reculé, ou comme mon dos inversé. Il s'agit de l'endroit où je suis constamment reliée à tout ce qui m'est inconnu, de telle sorte que je ne peux jamais prétendre être tout à fait ceci, mais non pas cela.

K. Fuglem, janvier 2008

DALIA CHAUVEAU
WWW.AGENCEDECLONAGE.COM

Portrait 1

Dalia Chauveau, *Portrait commémoratif du Clone DLX-081v3 (Mélodie)* – Géniteur d'origine : Marie-Christine Champagne. Procédés mixtes, 2007.

Nous honorons la mémoire de ce clone qui a servi son géniteur jusqu'à la fin. Malheureusement, ce clone a été reconfiguré de façon irresponsable. Des attributs incompatibles avec le patrimoine génétique du clone d'origine ont donné lieu à des anomalies psychologiques et à l'apparition de schizophrénie chez ce clone. Après de nombreuses tentatives de suicide et de nombreuses interventions médicales et de thérapies coûteuses, il a été décidé d'assister ce clone dans sa volonté de mettre fin à ses jours.

Portrait 2

Dalia Chauveau, *Portrait commémoratif du Clone DLX-068v5* – Géniteur d'origine : Simon Fleury. Procédés mixtes, 2007.

Nous honorons la mémoire de ce clone qui a servi son géniteur jusqu'à la fin. Ce clone a sauvé la vie de son géniteur à plusieurs reprises. Malheureusement, le géniteur était gravement malade et il ne possédait qu'un clone fonction biologique. Le clone a subi plusieurs transplantations d'organes et de transfusions sanguines, et a fini par succomber. www.agencedeclonage.com

La première version de l'agence de clonage fictive a été créée en 1999. Depuis, elle a pris plusieurs formes : performance, installation interactive et comptoir virtuel sur le Web. Par le biais de cette agence fictive, il est possible de commander un clone, qui est ensuite livré sous la forme d'une page Web personnalisée. Chacun peut, selon son gré, créer son alter ego, une œuvre à son image ou à l'image de ses désirs. À la fois critique sociale et réflexion sur l'art, cette composante de l'œuvre s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'esthétique relationnelle : parfois intervention Web, parfois exposition du kiosque de clonage ou encore, performance au comptoir de clonage. Ces actions artistiques ponctuelles donnent lieu à la création d'œuvres virtuelles et réelles. Les désirs et les commandes deviennent les matériaux de l'artiste. Les œuvres exposées témoignent de l'expérience vécue par le spectateur/participant lors de son contact avec elles. Le portrait/témoignage manipulé du spectateur/participant représente ses désirs et son idéal.

Depuis 2002, plus de 3 000 personnes ont visité le site Web de l'agence de clonage et plus de 500 commandes ont été passées. Plus d'une centaine de commandes ont été réalisées sous forme de pages Web, et certaines ont été réalisées sous forme d'artefacts. Ces artefacts se sont matérialisés sous plusieurs formes : des fiches de clonage en attente d'approbation, des prototypes officiels, des plaques commémoratives et dernièrement, des portraits commémoratifs. Ces œuvres évoquent à la fois la peinture, les masques mortuaires, les rayons X, les spectres, la monstruosité et la défiguration. L'aspect ludique de l'agence de clonage contraste avec l'apparence tragique des clones. Ces œuvres questionnent nos utopies et nos désirs, qui parfois, par le biais de leur matérialisation, deviennent autre chose que ce que nous avions imaginé ou souhaité. Parfois même, ils nous échappent pour vivre leur propre vie et pour engendrer à leur tour des situations ou des actions imprévues.

Dalia Chauveau

DALIA CHAUVEAU
WWW.AGENCEDECLONAGE.COM

Portrait 1

Dalia Chauveau, *Portrait commémoratif du Clone DLX-081v3 (Mélodie)* – (Commemorative portrait of Clone DLX-081v3) — Genetic sire: Marie-Christine Champagne. Mixed media, 2007.

Herein, we honour the memory of a clone who has dutifully served his sire until the end. Unfortunately, this clone has been irresponsibly reconfigured. Psychological abnormalities and schizophrenia were induced through a number of incompatibilities with the clone's genetic inheritance. After many suicide attempts, medical operations and expensive treatments, the decision has been made to help the clone self-terminate.

Portrait 2

Dalia Chauveau, *Portrait commémoratif du Clone DLX-068v5 (Commemorative portrait of Clone DLX-068v5)* — Genetic sire: Simon Fleury. Mixed media, 2007.

Herein, we honour the memory of a clone who has dutifully served his sire until the end. Many times, this clone saved his sire's life. Unfortunately, the sire was severely ill and he owned only one biological function clone. The clone went through many organ transplants and blood transfusions, and died.

www.agencedeclonage.com

The first version of the fictitious cloning agency was created in 1999. It has since been presented in different formats: performance, inter-

active installation and virtual office on the web. It is possible to order a clone through the agency, which is then delivered in the form of a customized webpage. Anybody is able to create an alter ego, a work in his own image or desire. Both critical of society and thoughtful of aesthetics, these works function as relational art, whether in web interventions, in shows presenting the agency's actual stall or in performances at a cloning counter. These specific artistic acts give rise to the creation of real and virtual works. Desires and orders turn into artistic material. The works presented show the interactions experienced by the viewer/participant, and the processed portrait/witness of the viewer/participant represents his desires and aspirations. Approximately 3000 people have visited the agency's website since 2002, and more than 500 orders have been made. Over 100 orders have been filled in a webpage format, and some have been done in artifacts. These artifacts have taken many forms, such as cloning files waiting for approval, official prototypes, commemorative plates, and more recently, commemorative portraits. These works evoke death masks, X-rays, monstrosity and disfigurement. The playful character of the agency contrasts with the tragic appearance of the clones. These works question our utopias and desires, which at times, in the process of their fulfillment, bring about unexpected results—they sometimes escape us to live their own lives and create new situations and unpredictable actions.

Dalia Chauveau

JULIE FAUBERT LE TOUR/LES IMAGES S'ABSENTENT LES IMAGES S'ENTENDENT

Durant plusieurs mois, j'ai rencontré des religieuses cloîtrées issues de différentes communautés contemplatives. J'étais fascinée par la quasi-absence d'images du monde où elles vivent. Par ces mêmes murs, ces mêmes décors qu'elles habitent depuis tant d'années. Par tout ce qu'elles sont et que je ne suis pas. Par nos différences évidentes et nos ressemblances profondes. Mon installation sonore questionne l'espace – chaotique, invisible – qui s'est tramé entre nous et qui se trame inévitablement entre deux inconnus qui s'apprivoisent : ce qui d'elles ou de moi a traversé les frontières de nos mondes respectifs. Le cloître cultive le mythe d'une identité préservée, voire immuable. Mêmes habits, mêmes objets, mêmes cellules, mêmes gestes, on y efface – superficiellement du moins – la trace individuelle, les goûts, les préférences. Au sein de ce monde parallèle, le tour tient le rôle de filtre ou, mieux, de tampon face à l'autre; intrinsèquement lié à l'architecture claustrale, ce baril de bois aux dimensions variables permet aux objets de transiter entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur du cloître sans qu'il y ait le moindre contact physique¹. Dans l'installation, un tour surdimensionné invite cette fois les visiteurs à pivoter avec lui. C'est là, dans la pénombre, que 5 haut-parleurs/objets (coffre, tiroir, boîte à manivelle) se devinent sur la paroi du cylindre. S'y mêlent les voix des femmes rencontrées et des notes sonores de rencontres que j'ai recueillies durant plusieurs mois. Déclenchées par la rotation du tour, des centaines de courts fragments sonores vont et viennent à travers le cylindre obscur. Cette spatialisation, précisément adaptée à la circularité de l'espace, constitue un des éléments essentiels de l'installation : les différents niveaux de l'échange (entrevues, lecture de notes, récit de rencontres, commentaires, etc.) se superposent, se répètent, s'entrechoquent aléatoirement dans l'espace, et ce, jusqu'au vertige. Le tour devient un incubateur de rencontres, un lieu où se brouillent les cartes de l'autre.

Julie Faubert

Présenté à la Maison de la culture Côte-des-Neiges en janvier 2006.

Note

¹ En 2006, le tour était encore en fonction dans certains monastères québécois.

JULIE FAUBERT LE TOUR/LES IMAGES S'ABSENTENT LES IMAGES S'ENTENDENT (TURNTABLE/IMAGES VANISH, IMAGES GET HEARD)

During the course of several months, I have met with cloistered nuns from different contemplative communities. I was fascinated by the near absence of images from the world in which they live; by the monotonous walls, ever the same scenery they have been living in for years; by all that they are and that I am not; by our obvious differences and profound resemblances. My sound installation probes the chaotic and invisible space that weaved between and through us, the kind of space that emerges when strangers meet. What has emerged out of our respective worlds?

A cloister keeps alive the myth of a preserved—or unchanging—identity. Identical clothes, identical objects, identical cells and identical

gestures: individuality, personal tastes and preferences are expunged (at least on the surface). In this parallel universe, the turntable or wheel functions as a screen, or as a seal. Intrinsic to cloistral architecture, this wooden drum of various sizes allows passage of objects from inside or outside of the cloister without any physical contact occurring¹. In the installation, an oversized turntable invites the visitors to revolve with it. There, in the dark, 5 speakers/objects (chest, drawer, music box) can be made out on the drum's surface. Sounds and voices of the women I've met during many months merge with it. Activated by the turntable's rotation, hundreds of short sound fragments resonate in the dark drum. This spatialization is exactly fitted for the circularity of the space, and it constitutes an essential element of the installation. Different aspects of the exchange (interviews, note reading, interview accounts, commentaries, etc.) are superimposed, repeated and knocked together in a swirling vertigo. The turntable becomes an incubator for meetings, a place where images of the other blur.

Julie Faubert

Presented at la Maison de la culture Côte-des-Neiges, January 2006.

Note

¹ In 2006, the wheel was still utilized in some monasteries in Quebec.

JULIANNE ROSE

Mes images concernent invariablement la question de l'identité, et plus particulièrement la jonction inconfortable entre les identités naturelles et fabriquées.

La série *Flesh And Plastic* (2005-2007) explore la marchandisation des enfants dans le cadre de la publicité pour adultes, où l'enfant joue le double rôle d'un consommateur d'objets et d'un enfant objet.

Autoportrait chantant – The World Survival Tour (1996-2006) est un commentaire cinglant sur l'industrie de la beauté, qui offre un parallèle éclairant entre l'être humain et la poupée fabriquée. L'expérience personnelle de l'événement « Australia's Face of The Year 1985 » est rapportée en images, son et lumière, sous forme d'une caisse de transport de musicien installée sur un trépied. Lorsque le spectateur appuie sur le mamelon droit de l'image centrale, l'installation s'anime pour diffuser un karaoké de la chanson « I Will Survive ». Cette installation traite de la représentation du corps dans notre société de consommation, ainsi que de la confusion qui existe entre les valeurs et l'identité qui sont propres à l'être humain et celles qui sont plutôt d'ordre objectif.

Une ambiguïté semblable se retrouve si on considère les projections personnelles de l'identité par rapport à l'identité réelle. Cette question a donné lieu à un nouveau projet, comprenant une série de « Portraits chics » qui sont un prolongement du projet *Armed Response*, qui a vu le jour en 2006.

Qu'est-ce qui se dissimule derrière la représentation visuelle ?

Quels visages sont omniprésents dans la publicité, les campagnes promotionnelles, la vente et les diktats qui règlent nos goûts, nos choix et nos désirs ?

Il est possible de brouiller les sens au moyen d'une stimulation constante. La perception de l'identité de l'être humain peut être manipulée et masquée au moyen des actions précises et complexes d'un système avancé de mercatique.

Ce procédé d'« aseptisation » d'une image efface inmanquablement les traces de la souffrance possible, de l'erreur, des injustices et autres réalités comparables qui pourraient affecter le sujet original. Ce faisant, la conscience initiale de la beauté et de l'esthétique s'accompagne graduellement d'une sensation profonde et troublante, un questionnement lié à la perception personnelle de l'identité.

Julianne Rose

16 octobre – 15 novembre 2008, Galerie 13 Jeanette Mariani,

36 rue du Mont Thabor 75001 Paris.

JULIANNE ROSE

My imagery deals constantly with the issue of identity and specifically with the uncomfortable intersection between natural and manufactured identities.

The series *Flesh And Plastic* (2005-2007) explores the commoditisation of children in the service of adult-driven advertising, the paradoxical relationship of the child as both a consumer of objects and a child-object.

Autoportrait chantant – The World Survival Tour (1996-2006) is a cutting commentary on the beauty industry, a pertinent parallel between the human and manufactured doll. Personal experience as "Australia's Face of The Year 1985" is related through image, sound and lights in the form of a musician's fly-case on a tripod. When the spectator presses the right nipple of the central image, the installation lights up to a karaoke of "I Will Survive". This installation precisely demon-

strates the subject of corporal representation in our consumer society and the conflictual issue of confusion between human and objective values and identities.

A similarly disturbing ambiguity between personal projection and real identity, stems once again in a new project which incorporates a series of "Portraits chics" extended from the project *Armed Response*, initiated in 2006.

What is behind visual representation?

Who are the omnipresent faces advertising, promoting, selling and dictating our tastes, choices and desires?

Through insistent stimulation, all senses can be perturbed. Perception of human identity can be manipulated and masked through precise and intricately evolved consumer marketing systems.

This process of "aseptisation" of an image inevitably erases traces of all possible suffering, error, injustice and other such realities related to the original subject. However an initial awareness of beauty and aesthetics is gradually accompanied by a deeper, unsettling sensation, questioning the boundaries related to one's own personal perception of identity.

Julianne Rose

October 16 — November 15, 2008, Galerie 13 Jeanette Mariani,
36 rue du Mont Thabor 75001 Paris.

CYNTHIA GIRARD THERE IS AN INSECT

There is an insect
There is an insect
On a branch
The branch is in my head

Yes it is in my head
I drilled a hole
In my skull and I inserted the branch
A beetle came and walked through my skull
On the branch
The beetle is sad and crying and
Her tears fill a pond in my brain
In the grey jelly of my brain there is now
A pond with goldfishes and waterlilies

They swim
The water is salty
They swim through the beetle's tears
The goldfishes are my dreams

My dreams swim through the tears
Overhead there is a branch
A beetle is on the branch
The beetle is sad and dark black

I ask the beetle:
Who are you and why are you sad?
She says:
I am the wind and the tower
I am the fortress and the armor
I am your doctor.

My doctor is sad

She is like a beetle in tears
Her glasses are black and shiny
I can't see her eyes
She has no eyes
She doesn't see how ugly I am

I am a monster
My head is like a pottery jar
My neck is too weak
And my head swings like a bell

But I don't go to church
I go to see my doctor
She is a beetle in tears
And in my brain
I drilled a hole
In my skull
She came in
Through the leafless branch
She cried
It made a pond in the grey jelly of my brain
When the pond was big enough
She dove in
My doctor the beetle
And she made love to my dreams: the goldfishes
And she rested on the waterlilies

My doctor is black and shiny
I want to make love to her
But there is a spider in my brain
Her name is: Mother

She hides
High above the branches
She is hairy and she has too many legs
She is the guardian of the grey matter

She swings frantically on her web

The black and sad beetle is happy
She swims freely in the pond of tears
In my head she makes love to the waterlilies
High above there is a window
Lights peak through my skull
And illuminate the grey jelly landscape with the pond

We are at night there is a full moon
The insect with eight legs
My Mother the spider
She climbs down her web to the pond

And she eats all the goldfishes
With her long hairy legs she strangles them
And devours the little red and scaly bodies

There is a beetle and a spider in my head
The beetle is the spider and the leafless twig is the web
The glasses are my eyes
I can't see through because there is a hole in my head
It is not dark enough
I shut the hole
I barricade it with nails and blood

Now I can see outside
Outside there is a pond
And eight hairy legs
The legs walk alone
Without a body
They carry something
It is like a coffin
Dark and shiny

My head is a bell
Too weak is my neck
The wind is strong
And the pottery jar with two eyes and a mouth
Falls on the floor
The grey matter is spilled out on the floor

I am a river I am a pond
Mirroring eight legs and a spider.

CYNTHIA GIRARD IL Y A UN INSECTE

Il y a un insecte
Il y a un insecte
Sur une branche
La branche est dans ma tête

Oui, il est dans ma tête
J'ai creusé un trou
Dans ma tête et j'y ai inséré la branche
Un scarabée a pénétré à l'intérieur de mon crâne où il a marché
Sur la branche
Le scarabée est triste, il pleure
Et ses larmes forment une mare dans mon cerveau
Au milieu de la gelée grise de mon cerveau, il y a maintenant
Un étang avec des poissons rouges et des nénuphars

Ils nagent
L'eau est salée
Ils nagent au milieu des larmes du scarabée
Les poissons rouges sont mes rêves

Mes rêves nagent au milieu des larmes
Au-dessus il y a une tête
Un scarabée se trouve sur la branche
Le scarabée est triste et d'un noir profond

Je demande au scarabée :
Qui es-tu et pourquoi es-tu triste ?
Il répond :

Je suis le vent ainsi que la tour
Je suis la forteresse ainsi que l'armure
Je suis ton docteur

Mon docteur est triste

Il est comme un scarabée en larmes
Ses lunettes sont noires et luisantes
Je ne peux voir ses yeux
Il n'en a pas
Il ne voit pas à quel point je suis laide

Je suis un monstre
Ma tête est comme une jarre de poterie
Mon cou est trop faible
Et ma tête se balance comme une cloche

Mais je ne vais pas à l'église
Je vais voir mon docteur
Qui est un scarabée en larmes
Et dans ma tête
J'ai creusé un trou
Dans mon crâne
Il est venu
Se déplaçant sur la branche dépourvue de feuilles
Il a pleuré
Ses larmes ont formé un étang dans la gelée grise de mon cer-
veau
Lorsque l'étang fut assez grand
Il y a plongé
Mon docteur le scarabée
Et il a fait l'amour à mes rêves : les poissons rouges
Puis il s'est reposé sur les nénuphars

Mon docteur est noir et luisant
Je désire lui faire l'amour
Mais il y a une araignée dans mon cerveau
Son nom est : Maman

Elle se dissimule
Bien au-dessus des branches
Elle est velue et a trop de jambes
C'est la gardienne de la matière grise

Elle se balance frénétiquement sur sa toile

Le scarabée noir et triste est heureux
Il nage librement dans l'étang de larmes
Dans ma tête, il fait l'amour aux nénuphars
Tout en haut se trouve une fenêtre
La lumière pénètre dans mon cerveau
Elle illumine la gelée grise et le paysage comprenant l'étang

La nuit est tombée et c'est la pleine lune
L'insecte avec ses huit jambes
Ma mère l'araignée
Elle descend de sa toile et se dirige vers l'étang

Où elle mange tous les poissons rouges
Elle les étrangle avec ses longues jambes velues
Puis elle dévore les petits corps rouges écailleux

Dans ma tête il y a un scarabée et une araignée
Le scarabée est l'araignée et la branche sans feuilles est sa
toile
Les lunettes sont mes yeux
Je ne peux voir à travers car il y a un trou dans ma tête
Il ne fait pas assez noir
Je ferme le trou
Je le cèle avec mes ongles et mon sang

Maintenant, je peux voir à l'extérieur
À l'extérieur il y a un étang
Ainsi que huit jambes velues
Les jambes marchent toutes seules
En l'absence de corps
Elles transportent quelque chose
On dirait un cercueil
Noir et luisant

Ma tête est une cloche
Mon cou est trop faible
Le vent est fort
La jarre de poterie avec deux yeux et une bouche
Tombe sur le plancher
La matière grise est répandue sur le plancher

Je suis une rivière, je suis un étang
Qui réfléchit huit jambes et une araignée.

Cynthia Girard

MOUSSE ARCHITECTURE DE PAYSAGE REPRISAGE – LES FIBRES D'UN QUARTIER Rassemblées

L'installation *Reprisage – les fibres d'un quartier rassemblées* – a été pré-
sentée dans le cadre de l'évènement *Cohabitation, commune mesure ?*
Au centre d'artistes Axenéo 7 à Gatineau, en 2004. Cet évènement
visait à explorer l'espace vacant dans la ville et c'est dans un espace
vacant adjacent au centre d'artistes que l'installation a été montée le
temps d'un été. Il s'agissait d'une sphère de métal sur laquelle étaient
accrochés des bas de laine des gens du quartier.

Le projet visait à redonner une certaine identité au lieu vacant où
nous devions intervenir en utilisant des objets appartenant à ceux
qui vivent autour de cet espace. Le but étant de créer un espace qui
porte la trace des gens de la communauté et de reprendre ce trou que
forme l'espace vacant dans la trame du quartier.

Le choix du bas de laine a été fait en référence à l'ancienne activité du
bâtiment où se trouve le centre d'artistes. Celui-ci abritait autrefois
une filature de bas de laine. Nous aimions l'idée de faire référence à
cette ancienne activité qui rassemblait et faisait vivre autrefois les
travailleurs du quartier. Nous voulions également exposer ce vête-
ment afin que les passants puissent reconnaître leurs bas lors de
leur passage sur le site. Nous avons récolté les bas par le biais d'une
activité menée en collaboration avec des élèves de la polyvalente la
plus proche. Cette activité visait à expliquer le projet et à discuter
du site avec les élèves. Des photos du site étaient présentées aux
étudiants, qui devaient essayer de reconnaître l'endroit et nous dire
s'ils fréquentaient le lieu et de quelle façon. Une boîte était ensuite
installée dans chacune des classes pour rassembler les bas de laine
des élèves et de leur famille. Quelques semaines plus tard, les bas ont
été récoltés et chaque élève reçut une nouvelle paire de bas de laine
en échange de son ancienne avec une invitation à visiter l'installation
au cours de l'été.

Nous avons ensuite rassemblé les bas de laine sur une structure d'acier
ayant une forme ronde rappelant la pelote de laine. Le visiteur pouvait
y entrer et marcher sur un plancher de laine brute.

Charlotte Gaudette

Conception de l'installation par Charlotte Gaudette et Emmanuelle Tittley, avec l'aide
de Benjamin Motte (assistance et dessins) et d'Étienne Grégoire (travail du métal).
Présentée à Axenéo 7, du 6 juin au 8 août 2004.

MOUSSE ARCHITECTURE DE PAYSAGE REPRISAGE — LES FIBRES D'UN QUARTIER RASSEMBLÉES (DARNING THE NEIGHBORHOOD)

The installation *Reprisage — les fibres d'un quartier rassemblées* was
shown during the event *Cohabitation, commune mesure ?*, presented
at the artist-run centre Axenéo 7 in Gatineau, in 2004. This event was
aimed at exploring the unoccupied lots and places in the city, and so
Reprisage was shown for the whole summer in an unoccupied lot next
to Axenéo. It consisted of a metal sphere on which hung wool socks,
gathered from members of the entire neighborhood.

This project was intended to give some identity to the unoccupied
lot we were to work on, using objects from the people living around
it. Our objective was to create a place that would bear a relation to
the local community and to "darn" this neighborhood from the hole
of an unoccupied lot.

We chose wool socks with regard to the former industrial activity
of the building that is now hosting Axenéo, that is, spinning wool
socks. The perspective of referring to an activity that once fed and
gathered local workers appealed to us. Also, we wanted to show this
specific type of garment so that passers-by could recognize their
own socks upon entering the site. We collected the socks through an
activity held in collaboration with the students of a local high school
(polyvalente). Photographs of the site were shown to the students,
and they needed to recognize the place and tell us if they were going
to that place in any way. Then a box was placed in each classroom to
collect the socks of the students and their families. A few weeks later,
the socks were collected and each student received a new pair with
an invitation to visit the installation during the summer.

We then attached the wool socks on a spherical steel structure—
calling to mind a ball of wool. Visitors could enter and walk on a floor
of raw wool.

Charlotte Gaudette

Installation designed by Charlotte Gaudette and Emmanuelle Tittley, with the assistance of
Benjamin Motte (general assistance and drafts) and Étienne Grégoire (metalworking).
Presented at Axenéo 7, June 6 — August 8, 2004.