

Vikky Alexander, Nordic Rock. Darling Foundry, Montreal. February 27–August 29, 2020

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Numéro 116, hiver 2021

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/95200ac>

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Éditeur(s)

Les Productions Ciel variable

ISSN

1711-7682 (imprimé)

1923-8932 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Campbell, J. (2021). Compte rendu de [Vikky Alexander, Nordic Rock. Darling Foundry, Montreal. February 27–August 29, 2020]. *Ciel variable*, (116), 84–84.

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Dichroic Chair & Table, 2020

Vikky Alexander's *Nordic Rock* is a rare extravaganza of the literal and the metaphorical, the real and the surreal. It provokes a counterpoint to and reappraisal of the massive scale of the imposing Darling Foundry Main Hall in which it is installed, while working seamlessly within it. The furniture in this subversive and repletely idealized showroom of an exhibition is the fitting sequel to Alexander's *Extreme Beauty* retrospective in 2019 at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

The large exhibition hall, despite its imposing scale and impressive bulk, provides the perfect setting for Alexander's stylized, non-utilitarian design furniture, including a bed, a chair, a night table, and so forth. Made of dichroic glass, an iridescent material that reflects light in a remarkably wide spectrum of colours that makes it attractive to both artists and architects, these consummately fragile constructs are presented on custom-made pedestals that effectively increase their allure, as if they were museological specimens in leisure space.¹ They are bracketed on the near and far wall planes by vinyl collages of landscapes and photographed texture, made up of images harvested from magazines, exterior landscapes, close-ups of textures, and sundry simulations of organic or vegetal matter, that unite all the tableaux in mortise-and-tenon fashion.

Alexander's hard-edged architecture of desire coalesces in the oasis of dichroic glass like a subversive changeling that whispers to us in the most

the merchants at Roche-Bobois never dreamt of. Or say, rather, that J. G. Ballard's *Crystal World* has taken up residence at the Foundry, terraforming the space into an exotic and other-worldly domain of mirrored glass. As our eyes move across the shimmering, transparent surfaces, it is clear that more than a single station point in space is necessary, and so our long circuit begins. It is difficult not to interpret these surfaces as pure utopian signifiers. We project in and through them as though through a waterfall of crystallized pure water.

The Main Hall at the Foundry has always presented a wonderful challenge to artists, as two compelling recent shows of the work of John Heward and David Armstrong-Six made clear. Alexander has now met that challenge with brilliance and brio. She undermines the harsh and formidable architecture of the Foundry with delicacy and restraint, while offering further proofs of a critique of consumerism, drawing attention to the idealization of nature by the marketing mavens in real estate and interior design.

Alexander is a noted post-conceptual artist, a contemporary of Richard Prince,

Alexander examined the commodification of sex and, later, the commodification of nature. She has employed mirrors in much of her work, and that is the case once again here, offering potent projection zones into this idealized space.

Like a *Twin Peaks*-like Black Lodge retail showroom, *Nordic Rock* presents a condo inside a castle in the air, defying gravity and uplifting spirits.² The glass furnishings further remind us of the room into which Dave Bowman is transported in Kubrick's 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. It's worth noting that Alexander's iridescent glass furniture also looks back to her own prophetic work titled *Glass Chair and Table* (1990).

At the Darling Foundry, Alexander has imported hugely compelling stage sets from the end of Time.

¹ Dichroic glass is glass that displays two different colours by undergoing a colour change in certain lighting conditions. The corporate headquarters of Amazon in Seattle, Washington, is festooned with acres of dichroic glass on the exterior of its high-rise building, reflecting light into rainbows of hues that are contingent upon the time of the day. ² In David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, The Black Lodge is home to the Red Room, featuring stark imagery of red drapes, Roman marbles, and zigzagging floor tiles, that becomes a prison for Agent Dale Cooper.



Nordic Rock, exhibition view, Fonderie Darling, 2020, photos: Maxime Boisvert

seductive of voices of other times, other days. One can't lie down on the bed or sit at the table – the glass has the appearance of being too delicate for that. But one can imagine, after all, and the pieces entice fancy while holding one's gaze rapt with spouting rainbows.

This furniture offers the viewer imaginative "placement" in ways that

Sherrie Levine, and James Welling, who were also active in New York in the early 1980s, and a prominent member of the Pictures Generation. She is also a leading exponent of the Vancouver School. Her lifework involves an investigation of the culture of consumerism and luxury, identifying an immanent tension between nature and culture. In the 1980s,

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