
James D. Campbell
et image de la nuit opaque. Le dialogue qui s'institue entre la sphère sombre et l'à-plat frontal de l'image éclatante évoque certes la dualité fondamentale de l'homme, fait de nature mais que la cul-
ture fait tenir. Il offre aussi une autre mé-tamorphose à la poussée de la vie représ-
sentée: celle qui inscrit l'œil lui-même dans son propre reflet. Comme si l'objectif était l'image qu'il assemble, comme si le regard était l'objet qui s'offre à sa visée et l'homme cette nature qui le fait surgir au monde. Comme si, en fin de compte, un va-et-vient qu'une autre époque aurait dit dialectique ravait le «je» au «il». Comme si le réel se tordait tel un ruban de Möbius où une topologie fantastique condamne la condition humaine à se sentir à la fois in-
cluse et étrangère.

Ces incessantes recompositions qui frap-
pent l'image et jusqu'à son principe même sont ici relancées dans la publication qui double l'exposition. Le centre Sagamie a en effet créé récemment Sagamie Éditions d'art dont le but est d'augmenter sensi-
blement la diffusion du travail des artistes tout en suscitant le développement de contenus critiques et théoriques.« Signé Jean-François Caron et intitulé «La face cachée du réel: désordre de l'ombre et de la lumière», le texte qui ponte l'œuvre de Jocelyn Philibert augure fort bien, par sa dimension poétique et l'intelligence de

Bozic's latest series, The Dating Port-
folio, elicits easy, involuntary smiles but
poses a serious question or two that leave the viewer in an interrogatory frame of mind. Bozic appears in each of these medium-to-large-scale photographs in the company of a plastic (clothed) male model or window-display mannequin who plays expressionless "straight (or straw) man" to Bozic's extensive repertoire of alternately adoring, quizzically blissful, expectant, and alluring expressions.

Bozic's razor-sharp wit underscores not
only her blissful smiles but our own more
rueful ones. She seems to be exploring the "perfect man" stereotype that women al-
legedly have their antennae out for in the
guide of Carl, a lifeless dummy who is sup-
posedly as attentive as he is affluent.
Bozic's "stage-sets" are well chosen and
appealingly framed: the yacht, the private
jet, and so on. Bozic poses herself and the
ubiquitous Carl in a variety of these roman-
ticized tableaux as participants in a "true
love" idyll, such as Carl takes me to the nicest
places (2005). We made a toast, here's to us
(2005), and He let me pick the movie (2005).
But it is, as she further shows, a rather hol-
low idyll, indeed.

Bozic says, "Carl is the perfect man... He's
young, he's tall, he's fit, he's successful, he's
romantic, he's attentive. Carl's girlfriend is
in bliss. There's nothing wrong with him ex-
cept he's fake, but she doesn't quite see
that because she's blinded by her love."21
Perhaps Bozic is playing a highly contempo-
rary riff on anthropologist Margaret
Mead's suggestion that women should
have three husbands during their lifetimes:
one for young sex, one for raising children,
and one for companionship later in life. Of
course, Bozic, in these works with their
overtly romantic idylls, clearly addresses
the first-stage category of husband.

One could argue that (and Bozic makes
the same point in a more subversive way),
men who are "too good to be true"—that
is, men rife with an abundance of looks,
wealth, and status—are much less appeal-
ing to women than are those with average
jobs and still attractive looks. Of course,
there is the ongoing problem that crops up
in life that only the most brilliant asocial
cynic evades: love can and does blind one
to the truth. Bozic lures us into her subver-
sive narratives through laughter but seems
to end up asking, by extension, should
women shun Mr. Perfect in favour of Mr.
Rather Less than Perfect?

Researchers found that "highly attractive
men of medium status" scored much better
with women than "highly attractive men
of high status" in a survey asking women to
rate the success of long-term relationships.
The study indicates that one very likely rea-
son for this is that is the belief that the so-
called Mr. Perfect is more prone to
infidelity. Or is it an unconscious recogni-
tion that Mr. Perfect might register with
the unconscious of other women as well, as a

Mr. Perfect for all, and thus represents a
certain risk? The flipside of this is a certain
residual desire that sometimes cannot be
denied. As Katie Apsey wrote, "Even while
we laugh at the absurdity of Carl and his girl-
friend, deep down, a part of us still desires
the fantasy we see in the superficial image."22
The Dating Portfolio is highly topical, and
our own inadvertent smiles cover up a
rather painful dental (or, better, trepan-
ning) op on Bozic's part (with mirth the only
anaesthetic) for both women and men. Her
feigned expressions hide private lack and
hint at the price exacted by the personal
masquerade. She stands alongside con-
temporary Canadian photo artists such as
Diana Thorneycroft and Jennifer Long in the
integrity and vertical depth of her critique.

Susan Bozic
The Dating Portfolio,
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Sémioticien et écrivain, Jean-Pierre Vidal est professeur émérite de l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi.
Martha Langford


The experience of reading the latest book by Martha Langford is strangely medieval; it’s a Cappelansian compendium, an Ars Memoriae Contemporaria Photographia. Beckett is found on a single page with philosopher Avishai Margalit and St. Augustine; Benjamin, Penelope, and Proust in the same sentence. Drawing from literature, art history and criticism, philosophy, psychology, and more, Langford presents us with a schema for a game—viewing photography, as it relates to Memory, in terms of three relational symbols whose powers to influence the quality and type of memories vie with and complete each other.

Langford “translates” contemporary photography: scissors, “the joust between remembering and forgetting”; paper, the “meeting ground between memory and history”; stone, “the relationship between memory and history.” “And this game of paper, stone, scissors, may be the Canadian way.” If anyone has the right to judge the Canadian way, it’s Langford, but while her qualified observations are certainly worth saying once, they are not easily read, however articulately, a hundred times. After all, the relationship between photography and public and private memory, between consciousness and history, has been the primary critical leitmotif in cultural analysis for as long as photography had been around.

Snapshots of a score of Canadian photographers are displayed surrounded by a plethora of analogy, quotation, and metaphor. The overall effect can be overwhelming, and the drama with which taxonomies are stated, her revelations and epiphanies stacked, describes a metaphor whereby photography, as a step-child of Memory, must play out its destiny as an art-form. Still, one reads on in order to encounter more of the compelling work that Langford has been known for showcasing in her long career as a scholar and curator.

The main photographers to whom Langford refers throughout the text are represented with several exemplars. They are all fascinating, and a primary pleasure of the book. After many pages in which she describes journeys that “begin in one place, and end up in another,” she proposes the function of her analogy: “It could be argued that every work of art offers the opportunity for empathetic, improvisational interpretation, and no one would disagree. This book wants to raise those possibilities at every turn. At the same time, there are artists who, consciously or unconsciously, leave more room for spectatorial action...” (italics mine). What is done “unconsciously” by an artist is perhaps the least palatable aspect of imposing on artists constructs by which to view their work. Fortunately, Langford mostly sticks to learned anecdotes, fact-filled encapsulated descriptions, and on page 190 we are still reading explanations of the “metonymic” game.

Photography’s mnemonic forms and concepts are put under a prism; a chapter on album works talks about “collection,” “memoir,” and “travelogue.” Dialogue from the classic film My Man Godfrey frames the chapter “A Forgotten Man,” and Langford is not above mentioning tea-soaked ma­ delines more than once.

“Remembering and forgetting” are the property of individual and collective memories; the criteria by which we choose what to keep and what to lose depends on both subject and subjectivity. What remains is History, which becomes histories of the “fugitive acts” of memory, the legacies of the past for generations who will again choose whether to remember or to consign to oblivion. She concludes with an apt pronouncement and a somewhat disingenuous question: “An art of memory is a system for encoding knowledge in signs that make it retrievable. Can that concept be translated to photography...? I believe that she has created the memory-palace in these three, albeit crowded, rooms.

It is a beautifully printed edition, the reproductions vivid and repaying close inspection, the notes, bibliography, and index thorough, if one has a tendency to name-check. Among others, we meet photographers Hamish Buchanan, Diana Thorneycroft, and Donigan Cumming in the first part, scissors; Barbara Petkey, Jin-me Yoon, and Michael Snow in Paper, and Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge, Robert Houle, and Robert Minden in Stone; would they approve of their assigned categories? Answer Langford’s question in the affirmative? It makes no difference to this book, which is something of a relief. As the author herself states, this book is here to raise opportunities for art, at every possible turn.

Niki Lambros is a theologian and writer of philosophical and literary criticism who recently returned to North America from twenty years abroad, mainly in Europe and Asia.