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Michael Maranda : Decoy
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eight-minute soundtrack, performed by Ellen Moffat and poet Steven Ross Smith, constructs for the viewer a narrative path that guides her into a specific experience. A particular spatial and temporal involvement are indeed required in following the poem, from root-ending to root-ending, to its chronological conclusion where deconstructed language reform into Brünn’s utopian message. This time-based strategy is deployed as a means to re-enact the politics of necessity in the building of a desirable society. Viewers make individual steps to discover the poem and the space it resides in. But as the looped recording guides the viewer according to a sequential path, different viewers find themselves choosing to make similar steps.

Moffat’s notion of community in the context of a desirable society is broad and flexible. Her community is one of engaged artists, active viewers and thinkers and responsible citizens, wherever they may reside. While she expresses herself in English, she also brings in the universal language of the body in the elemental utterances of the breath and the blow. In this layering of sound, light, text and objects, language is deconstructed into primary units to allow the viewer to understand how imperfect and imprecise it is; the temporary incompetence of language relocates communication. Moffat testifies: “my goal is to exceed the specificity of the local, suggesting resonances and associations rather than uniqueness.” Here, both the langue (as a cultural/linguistic system anchoring concepts) and parole (with its common sounds and inconsistencies) are mediated through spatialized technology. Yet parole takes over from langue and permits the reframing of values away from established structures. In other words, the acoustic image produced for the gallery by Moffat makes the political/utopian potential of parole visible. Is this what could be called radical poetry?

The term radical most often refers to progressive politics. And there are, in fact, historical links between the avant-garde forms of early-twentieth century sound poetry and the politics of change. But the term radical also defines the root. The importance of this visual metaphor in Blow cannot be understated. Indeed, while the root maintains a resilient link to its point of origin, its purpose is also to always grow outwards and in various directions, seeking nutrients. In this sense, the scheme exhibited here does not represent a suggestion of return towards modernist teleological ideals. It does not imply going back in time to invoke utopian social models based on the critique of nation states or economies that simply no longer exist. Yet, the utopian composition put on display allows the viewer to take steps meandering up the root system to the core of social ideals in order to better project outwards contemporary social desires.

This radicality is deconstructive. In Blow, formal modes of language are no longer contained in a single medium. They complete each other, perhaps even competing for the viewer’s attention and inviting her to walk through the space, decoding, but also adding—through the language of her own body—another layer of significance. Blow allows a multi-sensory system for thinking utopia to take shape, as well as portraying the workings of utopian thought as a potential producer of sustainable systems.

Is it possible, or even desirable to revive the languages of utopia? What Moffat suggests is that bringing back utopian vocabularies to criticize the state of our current society opens up new possibilities for conceiving ideals. Allowing language to be free, that is allowing citizens to think outside of established systems, may lead to potential steps taken towards a desirable society.

In the gallery, two beautifully constructed harpsichords stand on their elegant legs, silent, waiting for hands to bring them to life. Suddenly, haltingly, one hears the Aria from the Goldberg Variations, for hands to bring them to life. A person or thing that lures into their elegant legs, silent, waiting to invoke utopian social models based on the critique of nation states or economies that simply no longer exist. Yet, the utopian composition put on display allows the viewer to take steps meandering up the root system to the core of social ideals in order to better project outwards contemporary social desires.

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Michael Maranda

In the gallery, two beautifully constructed harpsichords stand on their elegant legs, silent, waiting for hands to bring them to life. Suddenly, haltingly, one hears the Aria from the Goldberg Variations, played on the harpsichord but not on the ones we see. Nearing the instruments one realizes that one could not in fact play on them as they are flawed in numerous minute ways. Painstakenly constructed and beautiful, they are nonetheless dysfunctional. Decoy: A person or thing that lures into danger, deception, or a similar trap. Maranda’s previous work often rendered itself opaque. On 1,540 different drawings the artist wrote the word Aufhebung using various different grades of pencils, three per drawing, and never in the same combination. The word was written several thousand times per page so that all one was left with was a series of works marked heavily in lead, the word itself illegible. This is at once a loss of confidence in the ideas of the Enlightenment and a laudatory striving towards resolution, however futile. Aufhebung refers to Hegel’s “successful resolution of the didactic.” The drawings were pinned so that they would flutter when the viewer passed them, underlining how fragile this resolution really is. Taken outside of the Hegelian construct, the German word also means rescinding, annulment, or reversal. To understand the peace in these complex terms the viewer must then be aware of this philosophical debate, language, and history. On the other hand, since the word itself, repeated so often, is unintelligible, the work is reduced to a purely visual piece. Here, in essence, art literally obliterates didactic theory in favour of visual practice.

On the walls accompanying the harpsichords are hand-drawn music scores of the Aria. They stand in for the less than perfect acoustics that sound through the gallery, sufficiently representing the Goldberg Variations, which are familiar to most. The instruments, too, stand in for ones better executed and fully functional. Within this context these latter are unnecessary. The idea has been made visible and therefore the concept has become art. It would be redundant, even gimmicky, to create instruments that were professional in their rendering of the utilitarian thing they were meant to be.

In an attempt to address drawing, Maranda spent months making ink by grinding and mixing paste and filling a variety of glass containers with the resulpts. The idea was that by paring the work down to its essential materials, ink, the drawing itself was no longer necessary. Continuing with his insistence on making words images, as in the Aufhebung piece, Maranda made the material, the idea, the image. This concept can be seen in some of the artist’s other work, like his retyping of all three Kantian critiques but omitting all but the grammatical signs, like commas, quotations, and periods. Maranda claims with a smile that he is trying to “get people to stop reading,” and yet this incredibly arduous task of recording punctua-

Des premières murales des années 1960 aux assemblages récents, l'exposition Maurice Savoie. Un parcours alchimique permet d'accéder à l'univers de l'un des plus importants céramistes québécois. Le catalogue — première monographie consacrée à Maurice Savoie, signée Lisanne Nadeau, commissaire de l'exposition — fait honneur à l'œuvre de ce « créateur délinquant », pour reprendre l'expression de l'auteure. La publication — impeccable — prend en effet le relais de l'exposition par-delà la présentation éphémère des œuvres et peut être envisagée dorénavant comme une référence sur le travail de Maurice Savoie. Son œuvre est ainsi abordé dans une perspective historique double de récits biographiques, d'analyses des sources et des productions, ainsi que de la réception de l'œuvre par le public et les critiques.

La monographie est structurée en deux parties. La première, intitulée « Un parcours alchimique », présente les œuvres de l'artiste par ordre de création, de 1956 à 2004. Chaque œuvre est illustrée par une photographie et un texte explicatif, qui évoquent la technique de réalisation, les matériaux utilisés et les influences artistiques. Les essais de Lisanne Nadeau sont suivis de réflexions de chercheurs et d'artistes contemporains, qui approfondissent l'interprétation des œuvres.

La deuxième partie, intitulée « L'étude participe ainsi à la connaissance du céramiste qui aime se qualifier de sculpteur, comme une forme d'expression de lui-même, de ses pensées et de ses émotions. », propose une confrontation entre la production de l'artiste et la pratique du médium. L'étude des œuvres est accompagnée de discussions sur les influences culturelles, les influences artistiques et les résonances symboliques. Des interviews avec l'artiste et des témoignages de ses contemporains enrichissent la compréhension de son travail et de son parcours.

En conclusion, Maurice Savoie. Un parcours alchimique est une publication riche et complète qui offre une perspective enrichissante sur l'œuvre de l'artiste Maurice Savoie. Elle est un véritable voyage dans l'univers de son travail et de son univers artistique, une occasion de découvrir les richesses de son art et de comprendre l'importance de son contribution à la culture québécoise contemporaine.