

Le septième pétale d'une tulipe-monstre

Ray Cronin

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Figures are blurred and images fade in and out of view. Renderings of disembodied geological formations drift across the frame. The overall effect is meditative and somewhat dreamlike. Familiar scenes of extraction become unfamiliar and strange.

Sohrabi presents a fundamental paradox of contemporary image making: photography is materially and representationally implicated within damaging systems. As Sohrabi demonstrates, however, it is also a powerful tool for re-engaging complex histories. *Extraction Out of the Frame* implies that the photographs cannot be separated from the violent worlds they emerge from and perpetuate. While playing with “extraction” as a visual device, Sohrabi extricates aspects of the images, recombining and reframing the raw material to build an anti-colonial counter-archive. The extractive gaze of BP becomes absorbed into an anti-extractive framework through this visual method of collapsing images. The dissonance between the archive and lived experiences

of extraction is made explicit. Sifting through the wreckage of BP’s extractive legacy, Sohrabi finds the raw materials to tell a different story, in which, perhaps, we find the seeds for another possible way of seeing. Sohrabi’s exhibition makes a powerful case for art as a critical site of anti-extractive worldmaking.

Siobhan Angus teaches media studies and the environmental humanities at Carleton University. Her research has been published in *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art*, *Radical History Review*, *Capitalism and the Camera* (Verso, 2021) and *October*. Her book, *Camera Geologica: An Elemental History of Photography*, is forthcoming from Duke University Press in 2024.

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Ray Cronin

GALERIE D’ART LOUISE-ET-REUBEN-COHEN

MONCTON

JANUARY 25 –

MARCH 26, 2023

Le septième pétale d’une tulipe-monstre is an exhibition that envelops its viewer. Featuring the work of Caroline Boileau, Mimi Haddam, Ikumagialiit, Helena Martin Franco, Dominique Rey and Winnie Truong, the show demands much in terms of our attention, thought and willingness to forgo preconceived ideas; however, it delivers an experience that such cooperation only enriches. Experiencing the exhibition is an exercise in active looking. The delicate watercolour cut-outs of Truong are displayed at floor level as one enters the space; like weeds they sprout from the cracks between wall and floor. It is a surprise, and this eccentricity sets the tone for the show’s display methodology. The works are presented at varying heights, undulating across walls, or on various plinths and platforms that are all at divergent heights. This demands a constant bob and weave from the viewer, as one travels curator Elise Anne LaPlante’s choreographed path from work to work, bending, craning, peering closely and stepping back for a larger view. It takes time and effort to determine where one work stops and another begins, a calculated effect the curator reveals when she eschews the wall labels and relies instead on a handout map that acts as a guide to the exhibition.

Primarily comprised of drawings, photographs, poetry and video, the exhibition more than lives up to the curator’s contention in the catalogue: that, “to perceive the different textures of the body is to open oneself to perspectives and experiences untainted by the mechanisms of domination and the primacy of reason.” Indeed, reason knows no primacy in *Le septième pétale d’une tulipe-monstre*.

Collage and découpage, both as technique and compositional strategy, recur throughout the works in the exhibition. Boileau, Martin Franco and Truong all use delicate watercolours to depict mutation and transformation, often employing animation or sound to further immerse the viewer in their meditations on the mutability of identity, and the richness that can be gleaned from openness to states too easily dismissed as fantasy. In a series of staged photographs, Rey explores the blurred distance between mother and child in pregnancy and birth, the corporeal merger and separation that defines so much of the imaginative and emotional world of humans. Martin Franco’s photographs and drawings imagine human/animal transformations, as in *Étude pour habiller une femme éléphant* (2022). Ikumagialiit (a collective made up of Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory, Cris Derksen, Jamie Griffiths and Christine Tootoo) presents the video *AATOOQ (Full of Blood)* (2021), a remarkable work that manifests a vision of the world as inextricably linked, through blood and water, to the female and to the feminine imaginary, a world danced and sung into being. Meandering throughout the exhibition, like an eccentric seam is the poetry of Haddam, drawing us along from work to work. Sculptural in the inventiveness of their display, each section of poetry inhabits the wall differently, asking the reader to perform their own dance as they crane and peer to read the texts.

The subject of this exhibition is the body, specifically as women live, dream and imagine the human body. Themes of transformation and mutability, of resistance and support, of freedom and constraint, inform



the works in this show, seeping across the boundaries between individual pieces, between artists and curator, between exhibition and viewer. An ideal of the Romantic era was the *gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art, which would envelop its perceivers in a multi-sensorial experience, using as many art forms as possible. Richard Wagner’s operatic spectacles at Bayreuth were the epitome of this aspirational art form, and versions continue to this day. Film, of course, often aspires to this totalization effect, especially in the blockbuster format. Such experiences aren’t synesthetic, in that they do not confuse the senses, but they tend to engage multiple senses at once; at least two, in sight and hearing, and often smell and touch as well. In bringing together the works that comprise *Le septième pétale d’une tulipe-monstre*, LaPlante suggests such a “total artwork,” not as the all-powerful creator that Wagner purported it to be, but as a trusted guide. There is a constant sense of discovery evoked when navigating this exhibition, and one can’t help but feel that the curator shares our sense of wonder at the rich and strange fabric of this project.

In Western tradition, we are taught that humans have five senses, the familiar sight, touch, hearing, taste and smell. But science (and many non-Western forms of knowledge) recognizes there are more. Proprioception and equilibrioception, for instance, are senses that pertain to internal bodily experience, rather than to external stimulants.

Above: Caroline Boileau, Helena Martin Franco, Mimi Haddam and Winnie Truong. Below: Winnie Truong, Helena Martin Franco and Dominique Rey. *Le septième pétale d’une tulipe-monstre*, 2023. Partial views of the exhibition. Courtesy of Galerie d’art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen. Photos: Mathieu Léger.



Proprioception is the body's sense of the body itself, the sense that lets us clap hands with our eyes closed, or unerringly grasp the lobe of our ear. It is this sense that unifies our body from a disparate collection of parts and sensations into, well, into whatever it is our body is to ourselves. Equilibrioception is our sense of up and down, of gravity. This vestibular sense allows us to move in space. It orients us. In the visual arts, as the label telegraphs, sight is dominant. Sculpture and installation rely heavily on proprioception and equilibrioception though, as much as video can use hearing as a component of its sensory array. And it is our senses of proprioception and equilibrioception that *Le septième pétale d'une tulipe-monstre*, as a collective entity, targets. It succeeds, and in so doing it destabilizes the dominance of reason, and opens new avenues for bodily awareness.

Scientifically there may be but seven senses, but I would argue that there are at least eight, for surely the imagination, too, is a sense, albeit perhaps only poetically. What *Le septième pétale d'une tulipe-monstre* demonstrates, however, is how weak that "perhaps only" is, and how much our imaginative responses to the world shape our perceptions.

Imagination informs attention, and it is attention that informs our perceptions. "We must," LaPlante writes in her catalogue essay, "be more attentive, deeply attentive to both our senses, and to that which can be sensed." Indeed, and in the works of Boileau, Haddam, Ikumagaliit, Martin Franco, Rey and Truong, we are led through a series of fantastic and convincing worlds enlivened by that attention.

Ray Cronin is a writer, curator and editor in Elmsdale, Nova Scotia, which is in Mi'kma'ki and the District of Sipekne'katik, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. He is the author of thirteen books of non-fiction, including *Alan Syliboy: Culture is Our Medicine*, *Colleen Wolstenholme: Complications*, and the forthcoming *Halifax Art & Artists: An Illustrated History*. He is Editor-in-Chief of *Billie: Visual Culture Atlantic* and the founding curator of the Sobeys Art Award.

Vaciar la Categoría

Aude Sirey du Buc de Ferret

MUSEO DE ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO DE PANAMÁ

2 FÉVRIER 2023 -
7 MAI 2023

Vaciar la Categoría est une exposition collective de quatorze artistes latino-américaines présentée au Musée d'art contemporain de Panama situé dans l'ancienne zone du canal. L'institution a d'abord travaillé avec Panama Fem Art Coalition, une association d'artistes panaméennes, en lançant un appel à projets à l'intérieur du pays. Deux autres collectifs féminins se sont rapidement joints à cette initiative, CASA MA du Costa Rica et La Revuelta du Guatemala, lui donnant alors une véritable dimension centraméricaine. La commissaire Maria Juracán, activiste et membre du regroupement guatémaltèque, n'a donné aucune thématique au projet. Il en résulte une exposition intimiste aux supports et aux sujets variés dont il émane pourtant une volonté mutuelle de déconstruire les discours conventionnels sur l'art féminin; une manière également de promouvoir les désirs partagés des créatrices de repousser les frontières des invisibilités dont les femmes sont victimes.

C'est ainsi que les artistes invitent le public à «vider la catégorie» (*Vaciar la Categoría*), des classifications édictées au 19^e siècle afin de faciliter l'étude de thèmes aussi vastes que ceux des sciences, des êtres vivants, des connaissances humaines et bien sûr de l'art. Cette exposition bat en brèche tous les stéréotypes établis par une histoire de l'art traditionnellement patriarcale et en propose une réécriture dans



laquelle ces artistes célèbrent, selon la commissaire, leur autonomie et leurs diversités de nature sociale, raciale, sexuelle, culturelle ou religieuse. Leurs voix sont portées par une multiplicité de médiums qui rassemble peintures, collages, dessins, photographies, sculptures, installations et vidéos. Pour Juracán, il est nécessaire de souligner que même si, en tant qu'artistes, elles ne partagent pas forcément les mêmes convictions sociales et politiques, et qu'elles n'ont pas suivi les mêmes chemins, elles s'unissent dans leur sororité, se protégeant mutuellement pour reconquérir leurs territoires, à commencer par leur propre corps, dans des pays traditionnellement machistes. Les œuvres exposées traitent de maternité, de mémoires, d'origines, de résilience, de territoires et de migrations; des thèmes qui toucheront chacun et chacune selon son propre vécu.