

Settled in at my desk, my child off to bed, my belly full of supper, I'm finally ready to put pen to paper, or rather fingers to keys, in an attempt to consolidate into words the sleight of hand, stream of consciousness and somewhat otherworldliness that is Elisabeth Belliveau's exhibition *The Scent of Full Moon - Studies for Pure Movement*. I stall, bewitched by my open document, fingers still lingering, yet motionless, over the keys. How are these words my own? Although the physical sensation of typing still remains on the pads of my fingers, they don't seem to have come from me, as they don't represent what I truly wish to say about this body of work. In an act of semi-rebellion, or perhaps only of procrastination, I hit the delete key, over and over, until the lonely typed-out sentence disappears, one letter at a time. Instead of starting it over, I decide to type out a different one, this time in my search bar: "How to Grow and Care for Night-Blooming Jasmine."

In a matter of minutes, I learn that night-blooming jasmine or *Cestrum nocturnum* is a fast-growing shrub from the Solanaceae family. This family of plants also includes potatoes and tomatoes. Its name is a hoax, as it is not a true jasmine. However, it bears this name well, as at nightfall, its greenish-white or yellow flowers emit an intoxicating jasmine-like fragrance that is most attractive to pollinators. I also learn that *Cestrum nocturnum* is considered an invasive plant and that its berries, unlike tomatoes or potatoes, are toxic to animals, including those of the human form.

The title of this exhibition is drawn from the writings of Clarice Lispector, a Ukrainian-born Brazilian novelist and short story writer that I am sad to say I knew nothing about before researching the references and themes behind Belliveau's work more thoroughly. In 1967, the *Jornal do Brasil* asked Lispector to write a weekly column about any topic of her choosing. On April 3rd, 1971, her article titled *De natura Florum* was written in the form of a dictionary outlining her own definitions of various plants and their anatomies. The 20th of a total of 24 entries was for night-blooming jasmine:

Has the scent of the full moon. It is phantasmagorical and a little frightening—it only comes out at night, with its intoxicating smell, mysterious, silent. It belongs also to deserted street corners and darkness, to the gardens of houses with their lights turned off and their shutters closed. It is dangerous.

Through its offbeat, still life inspired amalgamations of inanimate objects (such as plastic bottles, balloons, glass vessels and various types of string and ribbon), organic matter (mostly plants and flowers), along with 3D printed or cast replicas of food resembling fruits and other edibles, sometimes very convincingly, other times more obviously fake, this exhibition speaks of life and what nourishes us, as well as of decay, namely what's left behind. In particular, the work underlines that the living and the perishing can only coexist, as they continuously manifest themselves in different forms, narratives,

The Scent of Full Moon - Studies for Pure Movement

Elisabeth Belliveau

Curator: Alisa Arsenault

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and patterns. The works in this exhibition are disruptors of more traditional and linear definitions of time and space. Belliveau's compositions are whimsical, yet eerie. They're as intoxicating, phantasmagorical and invasive in their activation through the use of stop-motion animation as night-blooming jasmine is for the pollinator and the gardener. As a viewer, I oscillate between a sense of voyeurism and the feeling that I'm observing movements taking place within my own body, thereby returning me to the embodiment and fullness I felt during my pregnancy, and simultaneously to the total emptiness and loneliness I endured at the start of my post-partum journey. This is just one human experience evoked to me through the close watching of these animations. In contemplating these works, I'm also attentive to other bodily memories of the past, present and possibly even the future. Each image is imbued with cyclical yet transitory moments that refer to each other, as well as to the sculptural objects arranged in the gallery, as if all are engaged in a process of self-archiving. This makes me all the more conscious of the existence of my tangible body and the physical space that it occupies, in addition to the energetic space occupied by my person, which also has the capacity to entangle itself in the space of others.

Belliveau's still lifes are anything but still, as they are animated not only through the use of stop motion, but also lenticular prints, created by overlaying four still images with lenticular lenses. In this, they are as transgressive as the 17th-century paintings that have also inspired them. Clara Peeters was a Flemish

still life painter who worked professionally despite the many restrictions imposed upon women during that era. By reviving shapes and compositions found within this painter's works in her own sculptural practice, Belliveau further distorts time and space as she seemingly creates passageways between epochs. These corridors allow for a more expansive interpretation of what is matter, of what is time, and what is an archive. In a sort of creative osmosis, Belliveau reaches through Peeters' canvases and Lispector's pages to bring forth, to this side of the membrane, the visual elements, words, and stories that must be revisited and have an interest in coexisting in present day.

A grouping of four lenticular prints seems different from other imagery in this exhibition as they represent fragments of glacial erratics, monuments of rock as opposed to small objects of organic or other matter that would be easier for a human hand to manipulate, and thus animate. A glacial erratic is a deposited rock that differs from the native rocks within the same area, as it was transported to its resting place by glacial movement. It is erratic in that it differs from the other rock formations. Its presence in that specific location is unpredictable, inconsistent and uneven: as was Clarice's, as was Clara's. It's a rock that has transgressed the social, political and geographical norms of rocks. To arrive in its current setting, its heavy, dense body had to be activated by the motion of another. Compelled by the desire to make hard-to-perceive movement visible, Belliveau uses lenticular prints that rely on the viewer walking through space to create motion within the image. A chain reaction that connects us

more deeply to the passage of time and the unstoppable force of our natural environment. To be moved, one must move another, who must move another, and so on.

The following morning, with my child off to daycare, my belly full of breakfast, coffee in hand, I step outside for a few moments to wander through the garden. Weeds have taken over most of the garden beds as the busyness of fall has already settled in, giving me less time to linger outside. I unearth the dandelions, crabgrass and thistle plants that now outnumber what I had purposely planted in the spring. They'll be back, I think to myself, unsure as to why I'm so eager to remove them in the first place, as it now seems like wasted energy. Out of the corner of my eye, I spot a few pieces of garbage on our property a metre or so away, a candy wrapper and a bottle, most likely left behind by a passerby and then perhaps relocated by the wind. Suddenly, I feel as though I've been physically inserted into one of Belliveau's still lifes, and it's, of course, anything but still as the subtle day-to-day movements of others happens all around me. It is, however, a little bit frightening in its solitude, but mostly in its brimming possibilities of life and decay.

- Alisa Arsenault, Curator