This page: *Memory*, '22. **Opposite page:** Lapointe in her studio with *Scapegoat*, '22.

"I'M AN ARTIST. I'M A FIGHTER."

Lyne Lapointe is an evolution

Words Chris Hartman

Photography Caleb Dudley

Lyne Lapointe has always been resilient in forging her own path. When she was 12 years old, there was a little house behind her parents' big country home in Montreal. She calls it her hiding place. There, she would make her "little paintings" and then burn them in the fireplace — clearly her mother wasn't very approving of her artistic inclinations.

A recent exhibition, *Stressed World*, at The School in Kinderhook, New York, featured Lapointe's paintings of the human form, exhibited in a salon manner. Her figures represent some form of distortion, and display various objects inserted in their bodies. As she notes, it's all about how she sees the body — its transformation, its spirit, and what it reflects; in other words, how you see someone else. "We all have our own realities," she says. She then adds in witnessing the suffering of women around the world, her empathy and emotions led her to become more connected to them, and her exhibition at The School is an outgrowth of how increasingly emotionally connected Lapointe feels she is to her subjects.

These solitary, mainly female painted figures, were festooned with glass dolls' eyes, sewing pins, and children's blocks, all encased in wooden or painted frames. They are reminiscent of folk art, in which many of the objects are broken — seemingly a representation of Lapointe's own broken bodily experiences during her infirmities.

One of her works from the *Anti / Body* 2021 exhibition at the Jack Shainman Gallery in New York City, *Jeune fille avec une corde à sauter (Young girl with a skipping rope)*, reveals the rope as a loop of barbed wire. As Lapointe explains, "It's about war," and symbolic of how many people around the world are oppressed in the shadows of war. The barbed wire, she adds, represents a fence that constrains your movement and your freedom, and which renders you, in many ways, indentured.

Along with Martha Fleming, her most important collaborator (1982–1995), Lapointe created several on-site urban installations. A recurring theme was architecture as a social determinant of space. Typically, their collaborations were rooted in the politics of feminism, gay and lesbian themes, marginalization, and museum practices and were a combination of art historical references, female sexuality and desire, and botany. Their main objective with these projects was to critically analyze social politics — in such cities as Montreal, New York City and São Paulo.

As with most artists, Lapointe's work has evolved into several periods and phases, but in her case an accident, and later cancer, transformed the manner in which she approached and/or created her art. One year, when she was living in an old firehouse in Montreal, where she had her studio, a fellow artist and friend arrived in a U-Haul to store some things with Lapointe while he moved to the city. As Lapointe went into the U-Haul, a brick wall of a nearby building fell on the truck — nearly crushing her. As a consequence, she spent a year convalescing. So much for her pipeline of anticipated projects — including a big one she had planned with Fleming in Tijuana, Mexico.

Consequently, Lapointe changed her way of working. She was traumatized by the accident to where she went to a psychologist, who advised her to move to the countryside and recuperate surrounded by nature. There, little by little, she returned to working — and her new body of work, a series of paintings, drawings and collages, was called *The Blind Spot*. As she says, "A blind spot is something that's there that you don't see" and was, in a way, symbolic of her accident and convalescence over the preceding year. The following year, 2002, she had a solo show of *The Blind Spot* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Montreal.

Opposite page, left: *Young girl with a skipping rope*, '20. **Right:** *The Apple, Egg and Ginseng*, '18, and *Color Spectrum*,'18. **This page:** *Bulls Peace*, '22.

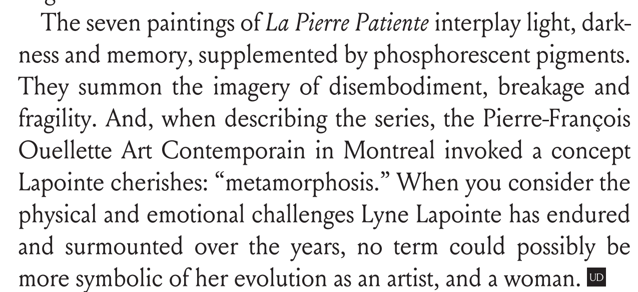
After later being treated for cancer, Lapointe realized she could no longer physically handle the large-format wood carvings she was doing at the time, and so she once again decided to change her practice. She settled on etching on glass as well as printmaking and painting. As she remarked, the through line with each of the different varieties of art she pursued following her physical challenges, "I'm an artist. And I'm a fighter. Because I was squeezed [in the U-Haul], am I going to give up my art? I found another way to do it."

These days, Lapointe continues to live in the bucolic Canadian countryside. Here, she loves to walk in nature around her home, which gives her inspiration and direction. As to her work regimen, Lapointe is in the studio seven days a week. She says she never knows what is going to happen once she starts a project. Some days, she does more research in books and on the internet; while on other days, she needs to take a walk to reflect and figure out ways to materialize her ideas.

Can art save the world? Lapointe thinks that monied interests have disproportionate power and influence throughout the

world these days and is insistent that we must come together and communicate — including artists; though she insists that people of all professions, such as doctors, scientists and even taxi drivers, can help in this way to bring about change for combatting the world's problems and their perpetrators.

In 2012, at Jack Shainman's New York City gallery, seven of her paintings, *La Pierre Patiente (The Patient Stone)*, invoked the following description of this magical stone from the Iranian-American novelist Azar Nafisi — who inspires Lapointe greatly.



"A term in Persian, 'the patient stone' ... is used in times of anxiety and turbulence. Supposedly, a person pours out all his troubles and woes into the stone. It will listen and absorb his pains and secrets, and this way he will be cured. Sometimes the stone can no longer endure its burdens and then it bursts."

The seven paintings of *La Pierre Patiente* interplay light, darkness and memory, supplemented by phosphorescent pigments. They summon the imagery of disembodiment, breakage and fragility. And, when describing the series, the Pierre-François Ouellette Art Contemporain in Montreal invoked a concept Lapointe cherishes: "metamorphosis." When you consider the physical and emotional challenges Lyne Lapointe has endured and surmounted over the years, no term could possibly be more symbolic of her evolution as an artist, and a woman. UD

Lyne Lepointe is represented by jackshainman.com / Chris Hartman is a regular contributor to UD. @book_builder / Caleb Dudley is based in Brooklyn, NY. calebjdudley.com and @caleb_dudley

This page: The living room. Lepointe on her land. **Opposite page, clockwise:** Adding the final touches to *Scapegoat*. A cabinet displaying her glass artworks, old books and things she finds in nature.

REVIEWS

Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe

By PATRICIA C. PHILLIPS

A repository of vague memories and unrelated activities, the still majestic Battery Maritime Building not only provides offices for several New York City agencies, housing for stray cats, and a berth for the Governor's Island Ferry, it serves as the site for Martha Fleming and Lyne LaPointe's month-long installation entitled *The Wilds and the Deep*.

The anxious process of describing and categorizing the past is the central theme of the installation; in response to the active but deteriorated building and the nautical and social history of the harbor location, the artists explore the complex and seldom disinterested practices of classification, and the alterability of the relic.

Fleming and LaPointe's interventions were modest, fleeting, almost ethereal; they chose to quietly exploit events rather than aggressively dominate the space. They did not battle the building with art of size and scale, instead Fleming and LaPointe scattered miscellanea collected over the years—paintings, drawings, plantings, inscriptions, small cabinets, and screens—around the site. They also incorporated relics found on the site; an old chair from the Ellis Island immigration center figured prominently in various vignettes on the second level of the building. A wrinkled, petrified rat was suspended in a halo of air framed by a cut in a green sail fastened to a wall.

The artists embraced both the building's uncompromised structural system and its infirmities caused by age and exposure. The green metal elevations facing the water are discolored and misshapen, and the artists speckled the building's surfaces with paintings, sundry objects, and a small mosaic. On the tops of rotting ferry slip pilings that extend into the harbor, they planted small gardens on one side and placed welded steel crowns and headdresses on the other. On a crumbling peninsula of pilework and boardwalk, they constructed a wooden dinosaur skeleton virtually camouflaged by the craggy surroundings. A corner cabinet on the second level of the building, was filled with natural curios—skulls, petrified brains, fossils, coral, teeth, and bone fragments. Across from the cabinets a candle-lit chandelier was suspended in front of a tall wall of branches and "leaves" from issues of *Le Petit Journal*, a Paris publication dedicated to France and Belgium's colonization of Africa. The installation functioned as an exposure of the site, a disclosure of old secrets.

The past is a presence, but getting to it is a rough voyage. Curios, relics, and specimens are the devices with which people keep memories fresh in their minds, but the act of possession inevitably deforms the vision. The delicate preciousness of the installation suggested the fragile, manipulable quality of pastness, as well as the hard fact that what is desired is often gained through oppressive force and foul pretext.

In a final, aggressive gesture, Fleming and LaPointe placed an enormous drawing of the below-deck plan of a 19th-century slave ship on the roof of the Battery Maritime Building. The simple, familiar contours of the vessel entombed a human booty—a freight of men, women, and children acquired and distributed like any other collection. The bold image was most clearly seen from adjacent corporate towers, helicopters, and low-flying planes. If we choose to show off the past—and clearly we do—then the display must include inglorious opportunism as well as fabulous relics.

—Patricia C. Phillips

Martha Fleming and Lyne LaPointe, *The Wilds and the Deep*, 1990, mixed media. Installation view.

Fred Wilson, *The Other Museum*, 1990, mixed media. Installation view.

society. Though speaking from opposite sides of the law, Pentheus / McGarrett and Manson are shown similarly utilizing language to manipulate and control.

Manson exploited the flexibility of language, as well as its fixity of meaning, depending on his needs at a given moment. The former can be seen in his choice of changeable identities – Jesus Christ, the Devil, God, Charles Milles Manson, and Charles Willis Manson. The latter is exemplified in those moments when he embraced the language of Steve Pentheus' domain, the language of the law. In the courtroom scene near the end of the performance, Manson rises to say, "I'm going to defend myself one way or another; I'd like to do it with words." Of course, the fact that this request is preceded by his claim, "I am the Devil," reveals a more confused agenda.

The foregoing features make Manson a tricky figure to represent. To look at Manson, Hitler, or Mussolini for that matter, as isolated figures is to risk the delusion that such individuals could never live again. On the other hand, to see them as periodically reborn embodiments of evil, who can easily be managed by strong enough systems of law and order is to risk a blinding reliance on the very systems such individuals tamper with in order to enhance their own power. In between lies the type of substantive questioning required – the type with which Ridge theater so brilliantly challenged their audience.

– *Kathy O'Dell*

MARTHA FLEMING AND LYNE LAPOINTE

BATTERY MARITIME BUILDING

A repository of vague memories and unrelated activities, the still majestic Battery Maritime Building not only provides offices for several New York City agencies, housing for stray cats, and a berth for the Governor's Island Ferry, it serves as the site for Martha Fleming and Lyne LaPointe's month-long installation entitled *The Wilds and the Deep*.

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– *Patricia C. Phillips*

FRED WILSON

WHITE COLUMNS

Fred Wilson's simulated ethnographic institution entitled *The Other Museum*, 1990, is dedicated to precisely that which the traditional museum excludes. An alternative to "our" museum – a repository of artifacts that correspond to official History – Wilson's installation proposes other ways of seeing, symbolized by an upside-down world map at the entrance; depending on how you look at it, north can be south; black, white; and the "other," oneself.

Wilson plays off the old-fashioned, 19th-century colonial museum, recording the white man's travels among the natives and his eventual disastrous impact on their civilizations. Groupings of old black-and-white documentary photographs by "Early Ethnographers and Other Photographers of European Descent" are juxtaposed with clusters of images by "Early Black and Native American Photographers." The white mens' photos predictably show noble savages – usually women and children, usually naked. Four Brazilian women are shot both head-on and in profile, with and without clothes, like lab specimens or criminal mug shots, and without the idealizing regard historically devoted to the white female form. When the blacks and Native Americans get behind the camera and shoot themselves, things get more interesting, and weirder. Often they depict themselves earnestly working at modern tasks such as running sewing machines, working in mines, or instructing children in new, Western-style schoolhouses, as if to disprove the stereotype of the backward "lazy native." More disturbing still is the internalization of Western values. These people project themselves back to Europeans as the latter wish to see them: a native dressed in European garb completes an oil painting of a quaint, stereotypical village scene, and a young girl in traditional peasant dress poses before a fake mountain backdrop.

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Quill&Quire

Studiolo: The Collaborative Work of Martha Fleming & Lyne Lapointe

by Martha Fleming with Lyne Lapointe and Lesley Johnstone

Studiolo is both the title of an installation recently held at the Art Gallery of Windsor and the book form of site projects by two of Canada's top artists, Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe. The pair have collaborated for the past 15 years in Montreal, Manhattan, and Sao Paulo. What Fleming and Lapointe do is scout out century-old abandoned buildings, gain permits to access and work in them, and through massive amounts of research and exploration, begin serendipitously to alter the space.

Their interventions do not recontextualize as much as breathe life into decay and ruin. A utilitarian locker room wall, for instance, is rubbed with black shoe polish, anamorphous muses are chalked onto floors, and framed images hang in empty rooms. Their projects take years to realize, and for the few lucky enough to visit them, the experience is not soon forgotten.

Studiolo provides a background, and like their interventions, the reader is held weightless in an undetermined time and place. Fleming, who authored the first half of the book, writes with such eloquence and intelligence it becomes irrelevant that she does not always mention which site she is referring to. She talks of fragmentation, the celestial and terrestrial, dirt and soot, of being lesbian and in love; all of which coagulates brilliantly into a docu-fiction that is partly discursive, partly narrative.

The second half of the book is an interview with the artists by Lesley Johnstone, director of Artextes Editions. The leap from Fleming's elusive cadence to Johnstone's academia and questions about process is startling – like a light switched on in the midst of dreaming. But this section is no less fascinating.

The book's design is reflective of the artists' sensibility, each spread a complete work of art in itself. Half-lit interior images do not read as documentation. Instead, they have the murkiness of *camera obscura* that match Fleming and Lapointe's subtle and ghostly site interventions.

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Lyne Lapointe exhibits The Pregnant Woman

ARTS SUTTON HOSTS THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST'S NEW SERIES UNTIL SEPTEMBER 18, 2022

JULY 28, 2022

The exhibition ***La femme enceinte*** by multidisciplinary artist **Lyne Lapointe**, presented at the **Arts Sutton** art centre, addresses in a metaphorical yet straightforward manner the thorny issue of the pregnant woman's body.

The recent overturning of the Roe vs. Wade decision by the U.S. Supreme Court represents, still today, the overwhelming evidence of the power of a majority of men and of religious dogmatism over women's bodies. The artist establishes a striking parallel between the fate of beaten, missing and killed women and that of animals, so many of whose species are on the verge of extinction.

> *"The exhibition addresses in a metaphorical yet straightforward manner the thorny issue of the pregnant woman's body."*

In the works in the exhibition, Lapointe has taken the iconography of an anatomical plate of the silhouette of a pregnant woman from the book Dr. Hollicks Complete Works – The Marriage Guide published in 1902 in Philadelphia, USA.

The mother-to-be in this guide has no head or feet (ni-queue-ni-head), a stark reminder of how little space women had at the time. Although society has gradually become more egalitarian thanks to the epic struggles of women over the past century, how can we not see in this recent decision of the U.S. Supreme Court a leap backwards by more than fifty years and a dangerous rapprochement with theocracies that flout women's rights?

At the same time, we are witnessing a denial of climate change by a significant portion of the American population and elected officials. The Republican right wing denies the deleterious effects of global warming on wildlife, plants, water resources and people everywhere.

Just recently, this same U.S. Supreme Court drastically limited the powers of the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel power plants.

> *"The artist has imagined a hybrid character, a woman/animal, whose body is that of a pregnant woman and whose "extremities" belong to animals."*

For this exhibition, Lyne Lapointe has imagined a hybrid character, a woman/animal, whose body is that of a pregnant woman and whose "extremities" belong to animals. This is how we discover La femme-héron, La femme-mouton, La femme-beeille, La femme-louve and several others.

The artist offers us, always with sensitivity and irony, heartbreaking and striking works of great beauty, through which she invites us to reflect on our disturbing times.

Lyne Lapointe is one of Quebec's leading artists. She began her career in the early 1980s with Martha Fleming. The duo created memorable projects until 1995 in disused spaces, including the *Museum of Science* (1984) and *La Donna Delinquenta* (1987). Fleming & Lapointe, the name of their collective, have also worked elsewhere in Canada, the United States and Latin America.

Since 1995, Lyne Lapointe pursues a prolific solo artistic practice in which she addresses issues that are always relevant, including that of the human body, which, in her eyes, is a political object. She is currently showing work at the *Jack Shainman Gallery: The School, Kinderhook, New York*, in the group exhibition *Stressed World* (June 5 – December 3, 2022).

> *"Lyne Lapointe pursues a prolific solo artistic practice in which she addresses issues that are always relevant, including that of the human body, which, in her eyes, is a political object."*

Earlier in the fall of 2021, the Roger Bellemare and Christian Lambert Galleries in Montreal devoted an exhibition to him entitled *De la soie aux poils de porc-épic*. In *La femme enceinte* it will also be a question of the body, that of the woman, the pregnant woman, and that of the animals, which still undergo the control of the man.

The idea of the domination of women and animals by man has been rooted since time immemorial. Lyne Lapointe draws a striking parallel between women who have been beaten, disappeared and killed and animals who have suffered an equally harmful fate, many of whose species are endangered.

For this serious and sometimes dark subject, the artist has created singular works of great beauty through which she leads us to reflect further on this state of affairs, with sensitivity and irony.

LA FEMME ENCEINTE, BY LYNE LAPOINTE

Opening on Sunday, July 31, 2022, from 2 to 4 pm
Sylvie Lacerte, curator

Arts Sutton Art Center
7 Academy Street, Sutton QC
450 538-2563

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Images from the series La femme enceinte, by Lyne Lapointe
Courtesy of the Arts Sutton Center

Review/Art; Visual Installations Derived From Sound and Poetry

By Roberta Smith

Dec. 15, 1989

Review/Art
Visual Installations Derived From Sound and Poetry

Three women seek new meanings in old materials.

New Job for Ex-Leader Of Academy of Design

A Sense of Line
Hirschl & Adler
"THE CARTOON AS FINE ART"
The Development of Sculptural Form
Miklos Pogany
Why a full-time national news bureau in
KANSAS CITY?
19th and 20th Century American Paintings
COE KERR
PRIVATE DEALER SEEKS
JACQUES BEAUDAN FINE ART
Dorothea Rockburne
André Emmerich Gallery
Beverly Pepper
André Emmerich Gallery
NOBU FUKUI
MARISA DEL RE GALLERY
MARK ALSTERLIND
CAMILLE REVEL
JUNE KELLY GALLERY
ALAN SIEGEL
NANCY HOFFMAN GALLERY
RAPHAEL SOYER
FORUM GALLERY
FLOOD SALE
LAST WEEK
RONIN GALLERY
ROBERT M. KULICKE
DAVIS & LANGDALE
PHYLLIS MARK
SOHO20

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Whether by chance or design, the two main exhibitions at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in SoHo play off each other in unexpected ways, forming a whole greater than the sum of its parts. These shows say a lot about the present moment in art, especially the quest for new meanings in old materials and images.

Displayed in the large front gallery are six new paintings collectively titled ''The Appearance of Sound,'' by Annette Lemieux, an artist known for her restrained mixings of language with found objects or photographs. These new Lemieux works are large canvases, each printed with a photograph from a bygone era - usually the 1940's - depicting some sort of sound. In each case the image has been suggestively extended with the addition of an object, some scraps of collage or a series of painted letters or words. In ''Initial Sounds,'' for example, a glamorous publicity shot of Edgar Bergen and his dummy Charlie McCarthy is painted over with large capital letters that spell out the basic vowel sounds, the tools of the ventriloquist's magical powers.

In the two back galleries is an elaborate installation piece by Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe, two Canadian artists who have worked together since 1983 and who, until now, have executed their site-specific works in abandoned public buildings. This is their first exhibition in a museum.

Titled ''Eat Me/Drink Me/Love Me'' (the words come from ''The Goblin Market,'' a poem by the 19th-century English poet Christina Rossetti), the installation is approached through an old-fashioned screen door. Once inside, the viewer encounters a portrait of Rossetti paired with one of Emily Dickinson, an odd wood bench with mismatched parts and a series of large, pieced-together collage-drawings. An ambiance of delicately arranged decay pervades; the experience is like stepping into an old house where a slightly deranged naturalist and an unbalanced art historian have been working together, in secret, for years.

All the collage-drawings incorporate old paper, frames and wood paneling, dried flowers and twigs, countless drawings of insects and, on occasion, small dried animals, animal skulls or bones. The work's climax, seen in the museum's final gallery, is an elaborate wood floor that creates a shifting encyclopedic universe

underfoot. It is painted with excerpts from a Dickinson poem and images of animals and galaxies, and it is inset with pebbles, fossils and the skeletons of sea creatures.

In many ways these shows could not be more different. Where Ms. Lemieux is stringent and almost puritanical, eking elliptical meanings out of the barest of means, Ms. Fleming and Ms. Lapointe are extravagant, even a little decadent. Where Ms. Lemieux's efforts center on generic photographs suggestive of those produced by the communications industry, Ms. Fleming and Ms. Lapointe present erratic handmade catalogues of the natural world fraught with intimations of Darwinian evolution, Victorian repression and secret passions. But in another sense the two shows are simply different sides of the same coin, for they outline some of the problems inherent in the incessant recycling that is so dominant in today's art.

Neither of these shows is fully satisfactory. In fact, they could be said to leave the viewer between a rock and a hard place. In front of the Fleming-Lapointe works, one wants less sentimentality, less reliance on the seductive look of fatigued, timeworn materials and natural forms. One wants to see a bid for visual originality. For New Yorkers already weary of the macabre neo-Victorian effects of the Starn Twins and sundry other artists, these works may quickly wear thin despite their undeniable beauty.

In one work, a large piece of twisted bark is pinioned to an open frame like a martyred saint. In another, a section of patterned paper that gradually comes to suggest the long gown of a seated woman is topped off with the lower jaw of a primate. Elsewhere, a rendering of Ingres's iconic Turkish bather, her back turned, has been given an enormous rib cage made of real bones. It is connected to a second collage, a drawing of a large wolf that seems about to prey upon her. These are dramatic visual juxtapositions, but they are also steeped in the look of yesteryear and fraught with meanings that remain unclear.

Reading the exhibition's wall text and learning that the Rossetti poem deals with the taboos against female sensuality, one begins to grasp more fully the artists' feminist slant. But this information does little to improve the work's conservative appearance.

In a sense Ms. Lemieux errs in the opposite direction. Her Minimalistic approach seems intended to play down the built-in nostalgia of her images. In front of her pieces, one wants less dryness and discretion, more visual incident, more manipulation of materials. Here, meaning is so easy to get at that it sometimes borders on the obvious.

''Decline,'' for example, is a large, probably 19th-century image of a thundering waterfall. (Think of Carleton E. Watkins at Yosemite.) On the floor in front of it stretches 12 feet of plush blue carpet - a sound-deadening 20th-century product that stands in stark contrast to the unbridled natural majesty of the towering falls.

Nonetheless, Ms. Lemieux's stronger and more complex works can reverberate in the mind like visual tuning forks. ''Stampede,'' a painting that presents an endless line of uniformed, goose-stepping soldiers' legs, has leaning against it a wooden door that those legs, in times past, might easily have kicked in. On the door in thin, delicate script, Ms. Lemieux lists animal groupings, some of which suddenly sound quite sinister: an army of ants, a deceit of lapwings, a siege of heron, a murder of crows, a crash of rhinoceros. A band of men, a sea of faces are the final entries on the list.

In terms of subject matter, both of these exhibitions are provocative, especially in the way they wrestle with issues of power. Yet on a visual level, both shows force the viewer to ask what was inherent in these bits of memorabilia and trivia and what these artists have added. Too often the answer is, simply, not enough.

''Annette Lemieux: The Appearance of Sound'' and ''Eat Me/Drink Me/Love Me,'' an installation by Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe, will remain at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, 583 Broadway, near Houston Street, through Feb. 4. David Carrino Tony Shafrazi Gallery 163 Mercer Street Through Dec. 22

David Carrino might be said to operate in the gap between the two New Museum shows reviewed above. His visual sources are mostly 19th-century and English; his treatment of them is Minimalist, even abstract.

For his paintings, Mr. Carrino copies original autograph letters and manuscripts by famous writers. Letters, lecture notes and manuscripts by Mary Shelley, Oscar Wilde, Joseph Conrad and Ralph Waldo Emerson are among those purloined for the paintings in this show. The artist then rewrites these copies at a larger scale, onto pieces of paper that he collages in layers and in different directions (upside down, right side up, sideways) onto canvas.

The results of this bizarre method are a series of pale gray surfaces covered with wafting strokes and largely illegible words that are suggestive of magnified water-stained manuscripts. Mixing signs of the writer's touch with the artist's own, these works question originality while honoring the individual hand. They confirm also the particularity and spirit conveyed by penned script, even in fragmented form, in the days before typewriters and computers. On the debit side, the paintings are visually monotonous, overly refined and infused with a palpable necrophilia - all weaknesses in which Mr. Carrino will find a lot of company in today's art world.

A version of this article appears in print on , Section C, Page 38 of the National edition with the headline: Review/Art; Visual Installations Derived From Sound and Poetry

REVIEWS MONTREAL

Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe, *La Donna Delinquenta*

Corona Theatre

By Francine Dagenais

Lyne Lapointe and Martha Fleming have based their reputation on "excavating" derelict buildings and creating installations from and within them. Their sort of restoration does not aim at erasing the traces of time as much as displaying and exploring them. Each deserted building serves as a metaphor for the abandonment and ghettoization of the neighborhood in which it is located.

For their latest project they cleared away the accumulation of 20 years of filth and refuse from the interior of the Corona Theatre, revealing a post-Edwardian vaudeville house replete with elaborate moldings, trompe l'oeil decorations, and wreaths of painted flowers peeling from the ceiling. It is in this setting of obsolescence that Fleming and Lapointe created and presented their own theater piece on the discourse of representation, *La Donna Delinquenta* (The female offender, 1987). (The title is taken from a 19th-century criminology textbook.)
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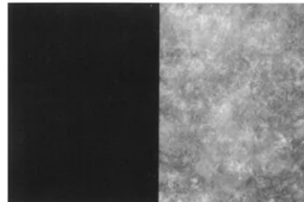
The dramatization was fragmented, split between silent performers and various "texts" conveyed over loudspeakers by intermediaries (the recorded vocal music, a recited poem). The sung or spoken words were accompanied by (and sometimes contradicted by) the gestures of the performers. Fleming played a traditional outcast figure, dressed in the same prisoner's costume pictured in the drop curtain. She crisscrossed the stage while the despairing words and music of Mahler's song (in the original German) echoed throughout the theater, and at the end of the scene climbed willingly into her coffin. This antiheroine personifies the criminal as a manifestation of social strife, which she can only escape through death. Lapointe acted out another recorded lament (a composite of Verdi, Offenbach, etc.), but the action took place in the orchestra pit rather than on the stage, thwarting the audience's identification with the protagonist. The invisible actress, the exaggerated theatrical effects, the gothic iconography of decay and dissolution—all of these contributed to a Brechtian distancing, a suspension of seduction rather than of disbelief.

Like Brecht, Fleming and Lapointe choose oppression as the privileged position from which to view a reality shaped by our dominant ideology. A negative image of our society, seen from the fringe, *La Donna Delinquenta* questioned our habits of perception, our acceptance of history, and our avid dehumanizing appetite for the new.

—Francine Dagenais



James Morris, *INSIDE: View from His Window: Painting for Joseph Niépce*, 1987, oil and acrylic on canvas, 8'6" × 14'11½".

Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe, *La Donna Delinquenta* (The female offender), 1987. Performance view showing Martha Fleming.

struction of Michel Foucault's famous 1973 essay on Magritte's original painting, or a simple blurring of distinctions between object and image, painting and criticism, appropriation and reappropriation. By reducing everything to oblique language systems that slip and slide against each other, French seems to be saying that all interpretation is equally valid and erroneous.

Because he so obviously delights in rhetorical manipulation, French ultimately comes across as a visual sophist, a Protagoras of representational painting. In his work, hermeneutics has little to do with its traditional role as a search for origins and truth, instead existing solely for intellectual and sensual pleasure. Here, language is shamelessly manipulated to form an endless interplay of revealed and concealed signs, and the audience, ridden of its anxieties, participates in the game, smiling benignly.

—COLIN GARDNER

James Morris

Saxon-Lee Gallery

James Morris calls his paintings "American History Sublime," advocating what he calls a "cynically optimistic" view in which doubt and reason grapple together, with at least some hope of transcendence. Morris' early combinations of found images and narrative text were heavily influenced by the Art & Language group. However, these initial experiments quickly evolved during the mid '80s into more ambiguous multiple-panel formats in which contradictory systems of visual language played out a form of stalemate, an uneasy duality between the idea of the sublime and the inevitable elusiveness of its realization. The same concerns underlie Morris' latest paintings. But for the fact that all the light has been sucked out of them, these dark, sometimes indecipherable vistas might conjure up Corot's fuzzy, poeticized landscapes or Caspar David Friedrich's 19th-century Romantic treatises. The landscape, in the past a metaphor for life force, god, or spiritual salve, is relocated to a conceptual role "as propaganda for what things could or should be," as Morris puts it in his artist's statement.

Deconstructing the rhetoric of painting, Morris alludes to photographic processes, color cue cards, and the retinal effects of impastoed color in much the same way as Gerhard Richter. *INSIDE: View from His Window: Painting for Joseph Niepce*, 1987, for example, refers to the historic first photograph made by Niepce in 1826. Morris has abstracted this stark contrast in dark and light, the shadowy wall of the photographer's studio framing the bright landscape beyond, into a simple diptych. The left half reduces the interior to a brown color-field painting while the right half muddies the exterior into an impressionist "landscape," a mottled expanse of blues and greens. The photograph has thus been absorbed by the language of painting, then reasserted via the similarity of Morris' diptych to a grainy photographic enlargement with an accompanying color swatch. Morris seems to be saying that any remaining "aura" left to either painterly or mechanical reproduction is dependent on the intercession of history, language, and process.

Such dislocation is further exacerbated by Morris' constant references to popular culture. A deeply hued, almost heroic rendition of a Romantic scene is titled *Art History—World History (Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues)*, 1987, while a small vignette from the same year, grandiosely named *The World as an Image of God*, is quickly deflated with the subtitle *(How Does It Feel to Be Just Like a Rolling Stone)*. By injecting Bob Dylan's lyrics into the painterly sublime, Morris is delineating all painting as a manifestation of popular culture. Landscape painting becomes yet one more link in a complex chain of arbitrary visual metaphors. It would be a mistake, however, to dismiss Morris' works as mere deconstructive tools. They assert themselves as autonomous images in their own right, creating the sense of a momentary if fallen sublime through a highly seductive, sensuous lyricism. Morris' work remains as cynically optimistic as ever.

—CG

Montreal

Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe, *La Donna Delinquenta*

Corona Theatre

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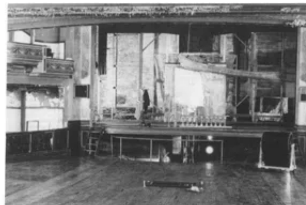
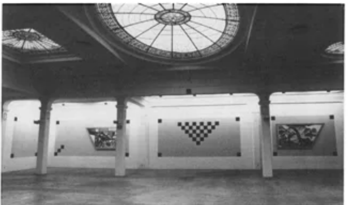


Martha Fleming and Lyne Lapointe, *La Donna Delinquenta* (The female offender), 1987.



Chérif and Silvie Defraoui, *La Querelle des images* (Quarrel of images), 1987, mixed media. Installation view.

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—FRANCINE DAGENAIS

Barcelona

Chérif and Silvie Defraoui

Galería Metrónom

Swiss artists Chérif and Silvie Defraoui, well-known in central Europe for both their artistic and pedagogical work, have long exerted a strong influence on the more radical intellectual circles of Barcelona. Their creative vigor is based on a tendency toward heterodoxy and irony, as well as an eclectic approach free from doctrinaire stylistic restraints. The exhibition/installation here, entitled *La Querelle des images* (Quarrel of images, 1986)—originally mounted last year in Toulouse—focused on a celebration of the image, reconsidered and redefined.

Combining a rigorous but playful geometry with cartoonlike images, these mixed-media wall-paintings/assemblages explore the relationships between object and image, symmetry and imbalance, presence and absence. The Defraouis set up a counterpoint among the works and within each work, through the juxtaposition and superimposition of different kinds of shapes and images. In installing the works here they also utilized the configuration of the gallery, with its walls articulated by pilasters into a series of long rectangular panels, by centering each work within the "frame" established by each panel. In addition, the rectangular arches formed by an arcade of columns acted as a set of outer "frames."

Several of the works consist only of a gray rectangle, almost 8 feet high and as much as 19 feet long, with a small black square in each corner, painted in acrylic directly on the wall. In other works, this black-cornered gray rectangle serves as the background for a representational scene painted on canvas and framed in wood, all of trapezoidal shape (with one diagonal side), about 5 feet high, and mounted off-center within the gray rectangle. These resemble scenes from adventure comics that have been altered with surrealistic touches (a bather floating in the air, a pair of elephants on platforms among a group of dinosaurs) and punctuated by geometric interventions (a cubistic grid, random circles). The Defraouis contrast these inscrutable, asymmetrically placed scenes with the purely intellectual play of the symmetrical black squares (and then set up a further contrast between the invariable corner squares and the various checkered patterns).

The gallery space acted as a perceptual envelope, in which a rich nexus of relationships was established through the architecture itself, a clever use of scale, and the development of thematic similarities and oppositions. By using this combination of strategies, the Defraouis confront us with two ways of knowledge—through "rational" mathematical order, and through "irrational," evocative pictorial forms. By juxtaposing and integrating these approaches, they try to give new life to our familiar world of images, to propose a new way of perceiving and feeling. They encourage us to use different ways of interpreting objects and phenomena in each new encounter, without any permanent referential structures—in effect, to rely on poetic memory.

—GLORIA MOURE

Translated from the Spanish by Hanna Hannah

Rome

Guillaume Bijl

Sala 1

In light of the conspicuous number of art exhibitions these days that involve artificial displays and readymades, one cannot help but be happily surprised by the honest correctness of the Belgian artist Guillaume Bijl. He creates installations, which he calls "*pièces composées*" ("compositions"); to date, he has made 26 of them, from the "driving school" installation of the Ruimte Z in Antwerp in 1979 to this recent installation of terra-cottas in Rome. These are dramatic constructions that present no theory, idea, concept, image, or vision of the world—that is, no logical or formal discourse—but present themselves for what they are: unsettling, out-of-place gods.

If René Magritte's alien spirit and Marcel Broodthaers' love of small signs constitute Bijl's *éducation (sentimentale)*, there is also a longer Belgian national tradition, from Jan van Eyck to Hergé (the creator of Tintin and of the *ligne claire* of Belgian comics), that informs his work. Bijl shares their curious interest in motifs and their passion for exactness, and has the same sharp, clear vision for details. In his installations, which often evoke the interior decoration of middle-class homes, objects are disposed according to their usual everyday relationships. But Bijl is not in-

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REVIEWS MONTRÉAL

Geneviève Cadieux, Landon Mackenzie and Lyne Lapointe

Galerie France Morin

By Martha Fleming

In this exhibition, the evidence that Geneviève Cadieux, Landon Mackenzie, and Lyne Lapointe gave of the community in which they work and show was strong and comprehensive. The cultural specificity of Montreal—a city in relative isolation from the comparatively uniform sheen of what lies west of it in Canada—makes for heady fare.

Of the series of "Illusions" that made up Cadieux's show, *Illusion No. 5* is the most successful. Each "Illusion" consists of a number of large Plexiglas sheets bearing life-size photographic images of a woman in a leotard. Their surfaces abraded and then treated with dark blues and blacks, the panes are placed in a row and adorned with neon rods—some behind them, some in front, and some, as in *Illusion No. 5*, fastened to their surfaces. Although in all the pieces the slender line between "body as gesture" and "body as carrier of gesture" is inadequately defined, *Illusion No. 5* has a cinematic quality which is not dependent on the movement of the photographed body. The still rectitude of the standing figures and of the vertical bars of neon attached to each panel reduces kinesis to a delicate state of implication by situation. Photograph and bar are placed differently in each of the four panels; the similarity and relativity of light and body shimmer against each other in their underlined sequentiality. There's nothing like potential movement for a close shave with discreet eroticism, and it is this that lets Cadieux off the problematic hook that dangles menacingly between any camera and the female form.

The I'm-not-okay, you're-not-okay-ness of the other two studies, both of bodies in contortion, is too literal. Unfortunately, states of mind cannot be evidenced by the mere physical presentation of the person undergoing them. *Illusion No. 5* is the only work here that manages to evade a reduction to a figure/ground relationship, and consequently it holds together its elements, its images, panels, and lights––elements which in the other pieces are divided and conquered by the loaded representation of the body of a woman.

Landon Mackenzie's "Lost River Series" of paintings, of a river in northern British Columbia, also follows a sequential pattern. Within the paintings there is affectionate allusion and homage to the kind of earlier Canadian landscape painting that tended to cut off its awe just to spite its realism. Mackenzie's paintings are not landscapes, however; they are more like mystery plays unfolding on a tundra. The planes of the large dark canvases often seem to include aerial views and horizon lines at the same time. The forms are generalized—animals drinking at water's edge could be dogs or bears—but their relations are oddly specific: the pool from which they drink becomes a lake when seen in scale with the mountain forms that surround it. There is a topsoilness to the work—things are hidden in the land, hidden in water. The cave-drawing animals, unmanageable beasts, are some of them wounded, some of them trapped, most of them unconscious of being observed, and impossibly human in the animism lent to them by Mackenzie's representation.

The most outstanding individual work here was a large sculpture, one of the three untitled pieces that comprised Lapointe’s exhibition. Three wooden tripods, oversized and culled from some turn-of-the-century land speculator’s kit, stand in awesome defense of a tarpaulin which hangs behind them. The tarp is laden with phosphorescent pigment, three thick marks of which are mnemonic of huts, with a gestural curl of smoke emitting from each. These dolmenlike, generalized dwellings appear again as luminescent talismans, one on each of three small slate plaques cradled in the crotches of the looming tripods. The tripods themselves are reminiscent of Viollet Le Duc’s speculative drawings of the original human shelter—three trees lashed together at their summit.

The gallery is in darkness; an intermittent and silent light flashes at the foot of the tripods, illuminating the tarp. This light is retained by the phosphorescent pigment, as if the piece were memory itself. The viewer becomes spectator to the specter of the piece as it is veiled and illuminated. The little houses become charms for each other, conspiring to create around the piece itself the atmosphere of the frail and temporary clemency of dwelling and its implied body.

The need for shelter is the fall from grace from the union of mind and body. We are implicated in the piece at the moment of the creation of memory, at the moment of the recognition of mind as separate from body and capable of arresting the continuum to which the body is infinitely vulnerable. Lapointe’s sanctuaries name this recognition, bringing us vertiginously to its origin, and it is with tribal memory that we attend each flash of light before the piece.

—Martha Fleming

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