

STACEY DEWOLFE in Montreal 02/01/11

Shary Boyle at Galerie de l'UQAM | Three Conceptual Tattoos at La Centrale | Greg Staats at Articule | Eric Cardinal & Jocelyn Philibert at Galerie SAS | Annie Briard at Joyce Yahouda
posted by Stacey DeWolfe - January 31st, 2011.

There are so many things to say about **Shary Boyle's** *Flesh and Blood* at **Galerie de l'UQAM** that it is difficult to know where to start. The show had its premiere at the AGO last fall, but it was actually UQAM curator **Louise Déry** who originally approached Boyle about mounting the touring exhibition, and her respect for Boyle's practice is as tangible a presence as the work itself. For here is an example of a perfectly installed show. The windowless gallery leaves little to distract you from the work, but what really draws your attention upon entering the space is the quality and design of the lighting and how well it serves to illuminate the work.



Shary Boyle, *The Lute Player*, 2010, porcelain, enamel, glaze (courtesy the artist and Jessica Bradley Art + Projects, photo: Rafael Goldchain)

And then there is the work itself: thematically dense, politically charged, astonishingly beautiful and, at times (sometimes at the same time), profoundly disturbing. For Boyle, the political emerges not only in the subject matter but in the actual labour of creating the work, of reconnecting us to the hand. What resonates for many people, especially when confronted by the immensity of Boyle's work in porcelain, is the hand, the mastery of the medium, but my visit to the gallery was made meaningful by the feeling in the space, a feeling that emerges from the relationship between the pieces in the show, from the sense that you have become part of a community, and from the respect with which Boyle has created these characters and sent them out into the world.



Vincent Chevalier, *Blank Hanky, Bottom Right*

The human body takes center stage at **La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse** this Thursday, when artists **Michelle Lacombe**, **Vincent Chevalier**, and **Sheena Hoszko** discuss their contributions to the joint project *Line, Image, Text: Three Conceptual Tattoos*. I have long associated the art of body modification with more spectacle-based practices (Orlan and Stelarc come immediately to mind) and so, when speaking with two of the artists about their upcoming talk, was struck by the intimate nature of their respective practices. Chevalier's *Blank Hanky, Bottom Right*—a line drawing of a hanky in a jeans pocket that has been tattooed on the artist's right buttock—has different readings depending on the audience. In a public forum, it speaks to his dedication to the queer community's history of public sex, while in a more intimate arena, becomes an object of play and negotiation. Lacombe's project, which is a collaboration with the tattoo artist **Emilie Roby**, plays with representations of the female body. Here, the artist chose Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* as an originary text, deconstructed the image, reducing it to seven lines, and then tattooed those lines onto her body. In doing so, she used her body to illustrate this break from the body, creating new discursive spaces in every moment that the lines are revealed.

There is something wonderfully mesmerizing about the video loop that sits at the heart of **Greg Staats'** *Condolences*. I use the word "heart" intentionally, for the video, with its pulsing light, its indecipherable forms (something amoebic, or cellular, like a baby in a womb or a hand pushing against the walls of a balloon) and its slow chanting voices engages on an emotional level long before one has been able to make intellectual sense of the work or its surroundings. The series of photographs that accompany the video and that greet visitors when they first walk into **Articule** are not easy to read on first glance, the depth of their story is not immediately felt. They are the archival works that support the conceptual, the physical reminders of a Mohawk culture now lost. And it the sadness caused by this absence that becomes manifest in that pulsing heart.



Éric Cardinal, *Fungus no. 1*, 2010, India ink and pencil

There are two new shows up at **Galerie SAS**, though other than sharing a physical space, the sculptures and drawings in **Éric Cardinal's** *Histoires Improbable* have no aesthetic or thematic link to the series of photographs by Jocelyn Philibert in the adjacent gallery. For me, Cardinal's project is more amusing than profound, using collage to play with ideas of representation and interpretation. The artist has taken the decapitated heads of a number of beloved Disney figures and used them to create a series of Escher-esque mazes. A group of sculptures constructed from some sort of extra-strength polymer has a wonderfully gummy look and casts the same thematics in an array of industrial hues: drab yellow and dirty turquoise.



Annie Briard, video still from *Leaving Ground*, 2010 (courtesy the artist and Joyce Yahouda Gallery)

Upstairs at **Joyce Yahouda**, **Annie Briard's** video installation *The Space in Between* is a lovely and lovingly hand-crafted animated film whose central character, a lonely woman in a simply-adorned room, captures her tears in a big red bowl and uses them to create a magical world full of mythical creatures. In a way, Briard's work takes me back to Boyle's, for here, what resonates most is the hand, present in the installation's inclusion of props and sets from the making of the film, and present in the small movements and gestures that tell the character's story.



Stacey DeWolfe is a freelance writer and filmmaker living in Montreal. She has written for C Magazine and is the arts writer for the Montreal Mirror. She is the author of *Sound Affects: Sado-Masochism and Sensation in Lars von Trier's Breaking the Waves and *Dancer in the Dark**. She is also one of Akimblog's Montreal correspondents.

Galerie de l'UQAM: <http://www.galerie.uqam.ca/>

Shary Boyle: *Flesh and Blood* continues until February 12.

La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse: <http://www.lacentrale.org/>

Line, Image, Text: *Three Conceptual Tattoos* takes place on February 3 at 7pm.

Article: <http://www.articule.org/>

Greg Staats: *Condolences* continues until February 20.

Galerie SAS: <http://www.galeriesas.com/>

Éric Cardinal: *Histoires Improbables* continues until March 5.

Joyce Yahouda: <http://www.joyceyahoudagallery.com/>

Annie Briard: *The Space in Between* continues until February 12.