

**Joan Scaglione & Max Liboiron. *The Natural and the Manufactured***  
*Towards An Archaeology of Desire*

John K. Grande

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[See table of contents](#)

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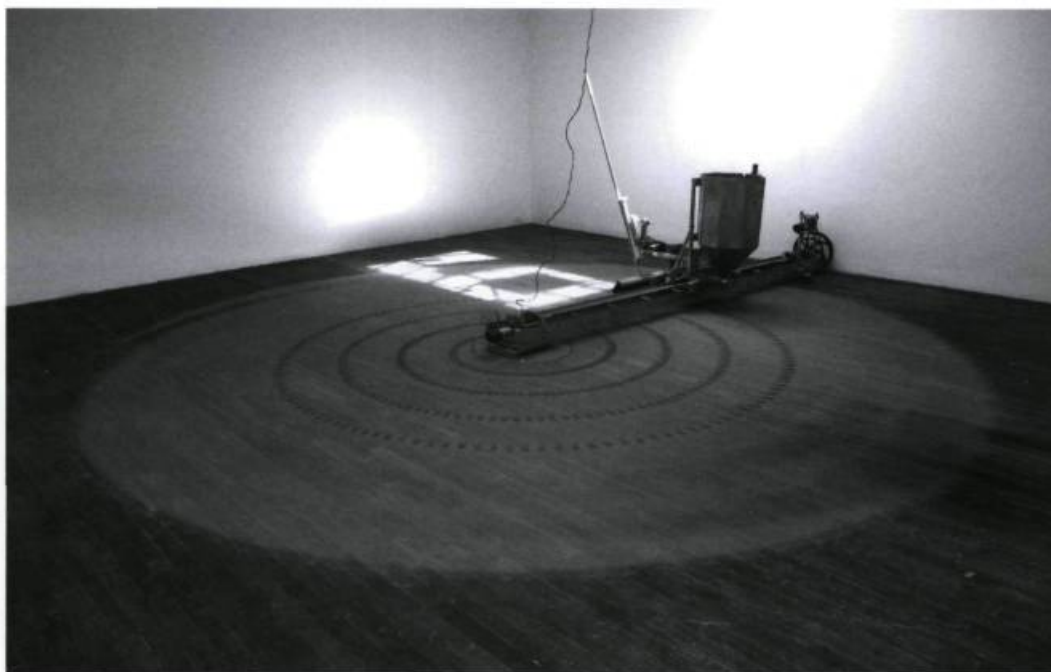
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lumière du soleil. Soigneusement disposées au sein des assemblages, toutes les composantes électroniques et mécaniques font partie du design.

Dans la grande salle, *Leak to Lower Lazy Levitating Load* et sa version prototype interrogent la gravité et l'apesanteur basées sur un système de balancier et de transfert du poids de l'eau qui se déplace sporadiquement et graduellement selon un cycle fluctuant entre une journée et une semaine. Cette première machine comporte un baril noir de métal et dix bouteilles d'eau de dix-huit litres, suspendus au plafond par des câbles tendus, qui s'élèvent à près d'un mètre du sol et s'abaissent.

Occupant également la galerie principale, *Manual* dessine avec élégance une spirale de sable sur le plancher, suivi par l'action d'un balai qui rassemble les grains dans un seul ensemble. Une boucle prend approximativement une heure à s'exécuter. La machine qui remplace le travail servile est l'un des thèmes convoqués.

La petite salle immerge le visiteur dans un espace sonore. *Stepper Motor Choir*, seule œuvre de l'exposition qui unit les domaines du visuel et du sonore, regroupe douze sculptures disposées en cercle. Selon un mode aléatoire, ce cœur propose une polyphonie sans cesse renouvelée. Chaque sculpture diffuse un son de grésillement issu de la vibration des moteurs en rotation, amplifiée par une plaque de verre qui représente un élément structurel de chaque sculpture. La couleur sonore, comprenant en autres la hauteur du timbre, varie en fonction de la vitesse de rotation.



Peter FLEMMING,  
*Lambinatronique*  
[Lazimode], 2008. Détail.  
Photo : P. Litherland.

Cette salle, où le sonore se conjugue avec le silence des autres installations, met en scène un environnement qui s'apparente à la réflexion du sculpteur allemand Rolf Julius. Dans *Room of Stillness*<sup>6</sup>, ce dernier a élaboré un modèle conceptuel d'espace en aménageant des zones de tranquillité pouvant aider à calmer le monde.

Les machines de Peter Flemming amènent le spectateur dans des ambiances de calme flottant, le plongent dans des espaces-temps suspendus et relatifs qui remontent à une ère industrielle peu avancée. Elles prennent le temps de suivre le rythme de la nature, à l'image de celui appartenant au monde rural et artisanal, ce qui implique de la part du spectateur d'adopter une sensibilité très fine. Et

pour réussir, il lui faudra repousser plusieurs sollicitations de notre monde *archi-rapide*<sup>7</sup>. ←

Peter Flemming, *Lambinatronique*  
[Lazimode]  
Centre d'art Oboro, Montréal  
24 mai – 21 juin 2008

Esther BOURDAGES œuvre dans le milieu des arts visuels à titre d'auteure et de commissaire. Détentrice d'une maîtrise en histoire de l'art de l'Université de Montréal portant sur le sculpteur suisse Jean Tinguely, elle poursuit des recherches sur l'installation multimédia, l'art *in situ*, l'intervention urbaine, l'art sonore et les musiques exploratoires. Elle collabore depuis de nombreuses années avec Quartier éphémère, centre d'arts visuels. Elle vit et travaille principalement à Montréal.

#### NOTES

1. Tinguely: une magie plus forte que la mort, Musée national d'art moderne.

Centre Pompidou, catalogue d'exposition, Paris, 8 décembre 1988 - 27 mars 1989.

2. Rolf Julius, « Site of Sound of Architecture & the Ear », *Rooms of Stillness*, Errant Bodies Press, Los Angeles, 1999, p. 267.
3. Peter Sloterdijk, « Écumes : sphérologie plurielle », vol. 3 de *Sphères*, trad. de l'allemand par Olivier Mannoni, Paris, Maren Sell, 2005.
4. Inspiré de Norman T. White, texte pour l'exposition « Manual », Koffler Gallery, Toronto, mai-juin 2006.
5. Rosalind Krauss, *Passages : une histoire de la sculpture de Rodin à Smithson*, p. 233.
6. Rolf Julius, *ibid.*, p. 57-58.
7. Inspiré du sociologue Georges Friedmann.

## Joan SCAGLIONE & Max LIBOIRON *The Natural and the Manufactured: Towards An Archaeology of Desire*

John K. GRANDE

As part of an ongoing residency and exhibition project organized by the Odd Gallery and KJAC's Artist in Residence program for 2008, *The Natural & The Manufactured* presented installations by New York-based Max Liboiron and Regina, Saskatchewan artist Joan Scaglione.

The intent of *The Natural & The Manufactured* is to engage artists and the public to re-examine mainstream cultural and economic values our society imposes on the environment, as well as to look into political, social,

economic and aesthetic agendas and strategies that provide alternatives as we seek to re-interpret our landscape and social infrastructures for the 21st century.

Max Liboiron's *Abundance* takes the form of a miniature diorama of the Dawson City area, a series of four sculptures, a small grid of photographs and a pamphlet published to document the history of garbage disposal in the town. The three-dimensional works are constructed entirely of local refuse, while the photographs offer an almost extraterrestrial close-up view of the garbage

itself. A key element of the installation is that all components of the diorama are free to be taken away by members of the viewing public, each piece stamped "Made with authentic Dawson City raw materials."

The entire set is a scenario scaled to something resembling an HO-scale train set, but the items and elements include horseshoes, books, rusty tin can lids that become islands with miniature minimal landscape forms on them, and wooden landforms that carry a Zen-like topiary quality. A flotilla of plastic bottle caps weaves through the installation as an undulating representation of the Klondike and Yukon rivers. Trees have been

fashioned from the branches of a discarded artificial Christmas tree; dozens of scavenger birds—ravens and seagulls—hang from the ceiling, their text-ridden, dyed newspaper bodies animating the space. These intimate assemblages become representations of a landscape, once mythologized by the writers Robert W. Service and Jack London in the Goldrush days of the late 1890s as quintessentially Northern.

Liboiron's installation cum landscape captures a very early historic example of mass human intervention and permanent environmental alteration in a so-called wilderness. A massive amount of human energy

Joan SCAGLIONE,  
*Earth Bed Tells*, 2008.  
Photo courtesy of the  
artist.

was expended as mining operations took hold of this part of Canada's Yukon. Liboiron's mock miniature diorama suggests landfills are an ever-expanding proposition that will extend far into the future. These are trash zones, but they equally exist at Dawson in the extensive placer tailings that extend over kilometres, carrying with them a history of mining and intervention. As gallery visitors began taking parts of the installation home with them, enacting Liboiron's posted message, "Please help yourself," the work thinned out, became disassembled, symbolically revaluing the refuse as art. *Abundance* raises a number of questions about the nature of shopping, of acquisition, or value and non-value. As reconfigured art, trash is perceived differently than it was; in the eyes of the beholder it has a new value.

Joan Scaglione eventually set upon a site by the Moosehide Slide in the north end of Dawson City to develop her *Earth Bed Tells* installation outdoors adjacent to the old Hope-well Landslide site. The topographies are irregular here, once used as a gravel pit and later reconfigured and stabilized due to the presence of asbestos in the serpentine rock; the place has a view of the Yukon River and downstream you can see the Moosehide and the Sisters Island (where the Sisters of St Anne and the Oblates once had a retreat house). Scaglione's installation literally



assembles seven earth beds out of found wood from the Quigley Dump. The earth bed metaphor of this outdoor installation set on a hillside expresses what Scaglione calls "a place where our dream self meets with our waking self. The bed offers us a place where dreams transport us into an interior wilderness where our primal instincts are stirred." Scaglione's most recent Dawson City piece also references the instability of nature with its placement of chaotic, sometimes heavy elements in the earth beds. Each of these "beds," made from old boardwalk timbers was filled with natural and man-made contents. A huge boulder

projects out of one of them, a tangled willow-brush construct weaves its way around and out of another and aged metal fragments sit in another. These earth beds carry a memory of place and of earlier presences on this site, where tents of the seasonal miners and workers used to stand in the Goldrush days of 1898. The site of the Father Judge (the Saint of Dawson City) hospital, the first in Dawson City once stood near Scaglione's installation. A prominent figure in the early days of Klondike life, administering to the gold miners during one of the city's most severe cholera and typhoid outbreaks, Father Judge eventually succumbed to the epidemic himself.

Interestingly, the first Dawson City garbage dump used by miners, prospectors and settlers is also close to this site, and some of the original hospital beds are themselves in this landscape of refuse from over a century ago.

Joan Scaglione's *Earth Bed Tells* has a solemn, almost brooding presence. Some of the bed structures seem to be migrating, moving over the landscape as if they were alive. These "beds" look restless, never truly settled and have a haunting quality, like ghostly memories. Laden with volumes of earth, soil and rock, and jumbled refuse from the dump, these beds give us a sense it is the earth itself, finally, that is the patient or persona inhabiting the work. Humans seem secondary to it all. Scaglione's *Earth Bed Tells* suggests that our own place in nature, of which we are a part, is impermanent. The ephemeral takes over, and nature can be chaotic. It is as if the earth Beds are floating, memories of another time, on this surface of land. Scaglione challenges our rational cultural dominance over nature. These earth beds suggests that nature takes its course and art adapts to nature's course, while our presence is there, it is temporary, mysterious, as fleeting as light at dusk! ←

Joan Scaglione & Max Liboiron  
*The Natural and the Manufactured:  
Towards An Archaeology of Desire*  
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John GRANDE's most recent publications include *Art Nature Dialogues* (SUNY Press, New York, 2004), *Dialogues in Diversity: Art from Marginal to Mainstream* (Pari Publishing, Italy, 2007), and *Art Allsorts: Writing on Art & Artists* (2008 available at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)) His website is [www.grandescritique.com](http://www.grandescritique.com)

Max LIBOIRON,  
*Abundance*, 2008.  
Detail. Photo courtesy  
of the artist.

