

ReConstitutions, DHC - Art, Montréal, 22 février - 25 mai 2008

Jean-François Bélisle

Numéro 79, été 2008

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/19487ac>

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Éditeur(s)

Les Productions Ciel variable

ISSN

1711-7682 (imprimé)

1923-8932 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Bélisle, J.-F. (2008). Compte rendu de [*ReConstitutions*, DHC - Art, Montréal, 22 février - 25 mai 2008]. *Ciel variable*, (79), 54–55.

reminiscent of abstract paintings such as Malevich's *Black Square*, acknowledge the cinematic heritage of crafting scenes together by hand, as well as calling to mind its forerunners in early photographic history, such as contact printing with glass plates.

The pair of reversed images titled *Hoping the Light Will Save Us 1* (2008) celebrates photography's ability to make the implausible – balancing a meteor rock on the back of your hand – entirely believable, through the use of stop action. In a parallel diptych, *Hoping the Light Will Save Us 2* (2008), an extreme close-up pairing of inverted eyes stare blankly out into the room. In both sets of photographs, a sickly green glow illuminates the subject's flesh, calling to mind the narrative convention in graphic novels of the hero's transformation sequence. The light, proposed in the titles as a kind of salvation, inevitably comes with a price – superheroes must ultimately hide their powers and they rarely reveal their true selves without suffering the consequences.

Le *grand jour* takes square aim at the history, conceits, and tenets of storytelling in film and photography, while offering commentary on the construction of the lived environment and the everyday. Filtered through the lens of an analytical rewind, Grandmaison's perceptions offer exciting promises of what lies ahead in his burgeoning career.



Galerie René Blouin,
1 March – 12 April 2008

In Michelangelo Antonioni's iconic 1966 film *Blowup*, a photographer thinks that he has captured the evidence of a murder. He obsessively makes enlargement after enlargement, hoping to piece together what might have transpired. The magnified image serves as a metaphor for perception and reality; things change as they viewed and reviewed.

With five new works presented at Galerie René Blouin, Pascal Grandmaison offers the viewer his own series of "blowups." The four pairings in the main gallery individually and collectively function as meditations on the sum of the parts of photography and cinema – lenses, views, flashes, and paper – and on the inherent complexities of references and signification.

The dates figuring in the titles of *Background I: 1912–2007* and *Background II 1912–2007* (2008) acknowledge Antonioni's lifespan; the extreme close-ups of crumpled

Background I: 1912–2007, 2008
Digital chromogenic print mounted on plexiglas
142,2 x 224,8 cm
All images courtesy of Galerie René Blouin, Montreal

paper refer to his use of the *dead time*, a cinematic trope in which the viewer's attention is drawn to the evidence of an action that occurred outside of the narrative space. It is this aftermath that creates dramatic tension, as the viewer must infer the event rather than watch it revealed.

In a small space adjacent to the main room, Grandmaison's piece titled *Increasingly Empty Forms 1928–1999* (2008), composed of twelve digital chromogenic prints mounted on Plexiglas, alludes to the life and work of another filmmaker, Stanley Kubrick. Like Antonioni's films, Kubrick's work bears hallmarks of his signature: extreme close-ups generating dramatic tension. For his part, Grandmaison uses the close-ups of Kubrick's biography to stress that images can't tell the whole story. They do, however, exert their hold on to the viewer by teasing out arresting moments for contemplation that become impossible to shake out of the imagination.

Johanna Mizgala is a curator and critic based in Ottawa. Her current research include the use of nineteenth-century processes by contemporary photographers.

ReConstitutions

DHC – Art, Montréal,
22 février – 25 mai 2008

Nos souvenirs sont souvent peuplés d'un mélange d'images fictives et d'images de la réalité. L'omniprésence des images médiatiques dans notre société du XXI^e siècle assure à ces dernières une place de choix dans notre mémoire collective. Il n'est pas rare que l'on croise une personnalité dans la rue et qu'on la salue en pensant qu'il s'agit d'une vieille connaissance. Après un instant on réalise que notre unique lien avec cette personne est unidirectionnel et passe par l'intermédiaire du petit ou du grand écran. Par l'hypermédiatisation du monde, la frontière entre mémoire individuelle et mémoire collective devient perméable. La récente exposition de John Zeppetelli à la fondation DHC-Art explore différentes facettes de cette médiatisation de la mémoire collective.

Intitulée *ReConstitutions*, cette exposition réunit neuf œuvres d'artistes reconnus internationalement qui, ensemble, abordent l'idée de la reconstitution d'images déjà médiatisées sous de très nombreux angles. Il y a d'abord *Here and Elsewhere*, œuvre vidéo de Kerry Tribe qui présente en diptych une entrevue à caractère philosophique avec une jeune fille précoce. Inspirée d'une série télévisuelle de Jean-Luc Godard et Anne-Marie Miéville de 1978, l'œuvre s'articule autour de la

juxtaposition de deux images vidéo et de l'incorporation de lents plans panoramiques de villes européennes. L'espace unique de l'entretien est ainsi dédoublé et le temps s'y écoule dans une atmosphère poétique. Au sein de *ReConstitutions*, cette œuvre ralentit la déambulation des visiteurs et engendre un questionnement sur l'origine de leurs convictions, qu'elles soient collectives ou non.

Aux étages inférieurs sont exposées différentes œuvres de l'artiste canadienne Nancy Davenport. *Workers (leaving the factory, 2007)* est une fresque vidéo qui relie des travailleurs européens et leurs sous-traitants chinois. La caméra effectue un long déplacement horizontal et saisit une multitude d'ouvriers qui semblent figés dans leur environnement de travail. Ces images, présentées dans une séquence ralentie, alternent avec une animation sommairement produite d'une fusée qui tourne autour d'une planète et que l'on dirait sortie de l'imaginaire du célèbre bédéiste Hergé. La fusée tourne en accéléré dans l'espace alors que le temps semble s'être arrêté sur Terre. Cette œuvre est inspirée de deux films, l'un des frères Lumière (*La sortie des usines Lumière, 1894*) et l'autre de Georges Méliès (*Le voyage dans la lune, 1902*), mais la singulière combinaison des images agencées par Davenport crée une brèche temporelle énorme entre ces œuvres qui sont à l'origine du cinéma et les images des travailleurs. Elle expose ainsi les ramifications internationales du système économique actuel de la société occidentale.



Nancy Davenport, *Workers (leaving the factory)*, 2007, Installation DVD à écrans multiples, 4 min 32 sec

Dans l'annexe de la fondation, une salle fortement illuminée par les pièces qui y sont exposées héberge douze projections qui constituent *Deep Play* (2007) de Harun Farocki. Cette œuvre s'intéresse à la finale de la Coupe du monde de football de 2006. L'artiste allemand y a regroupé une quantité impressionnante de bandes vidéo et d'animations, toutes produites par des réseaux de télévision pour la présentation de ce match. Ces projections vidéo transforment l'espace d'exposition en centre de commande aux allures militaires, où le temps semble tout à la fois ralenti, avancé, arrêté, prévu à l'avance ou reculé, selon les besoins des médias. Il en émerge une certaine confusion et un choc face au traitement des images qu'opèrent les médias. Force est de constater ici que l'action des médias transforme considérablement le message. Ce même message qui est absorbé tant par la mémoire collective que par les mémoires individuelles.

La dernière œuvre présentée dans l'annexe de DHC est la composition filmique

complexe de Stan Douglas intitulée *Inconsolable Memories* (2005). Construite sous forme de boucles vidéo et audio doubles présentées en alternances irrégulières, l'œuvre génère des permutations sans cesse renouvelées. Le récit s'inspire de l'exode cubain de 1962 présenté dans le film *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* (1968), mais la production de l'artiste canadien déplace le cadre temporel vers les années 1980. Cette œuvre intervertit constamment le passé et le présent afin de produire une infinité de récits. Toute notion du temps est rapidement abandonnée au profit d'une conception émotionnelle du présent. Cette vision demeure intentionnellement cahoteuse, comme l'est toute tentative de séparer entièrement et clairement ce qui est ancré dans le réel de ce qui est fictionnel.

Avec *ReConstitutions*, Zeppetelli s'attaque à un sujet tout aussi riche que complexe. Il explore de façon intéressante le rôle des médias dans la construction simultanée de notre mémoire collective et des mémoires



Kerry Tribe, *Here and Elsewhere*, 2002, Double projection DVD synchronisée, avec son, 10 min 30 sec
Images reproduites avec la permission de DHC-Art

individuelles. Ces reconstitutions sont d'autant plus fascinantes qu'elles rendent visibles des déplacements temporels importants. Chaque nouvelle re-médiation des sujets ouvre une brèche entre ce qui était, ce qui fut et ce qui est. On se retrouve donc à scruter un passé composé, notre passé, d'un point de vue contemporain. Quelle forme ce présent prendra-t-il dans notre mémoire collective de demain?

Jean-François Bélisle est commissaire et critique indépendant. Il est titulaire d'un baccalauréat ainsi que d'une maîtrise en histoire de l'art de l'Université Concordia.

Made in Tehran – Six Women's Views

Cicero Galerie for Political Photography, Berlin, Germany
November 20, 2007 – January 18, 2008

The interest in the exhibition *Made in Tehran: Six Women's Views* was immense. This is not surprising with photography by artists who call themselves "the children of the [Islamic] Revolution." They are the next generation, after Shirin Neshat, and work in Iran, articulating urban life as they know and live it – in photo series. I was struck by their youth when I met three of the women in Berlin, and I wondered what makes their art so strikingly mature.

I asked Mehraneh Atashi how she was able to enter a traditional masculine powerhouse, the *Zourkhaneh*, where Persian heroes and clerics are venerated, combined with physical workouts and Sufi dances, for ecstatic experience. "I persisted, even after repeated rejections, until I got permission," she said. "We have to fight hard to achieve our goals." Clearly, persistence to claim a feminine space in a patriarchal society drives these women's art. But so does the desire to attract Western viewers and collectors. Their exhibition history outside Iran is impressive; not so at home. Atashi brought into the *Zourkhaneh* a large framed mirror beside her analogue camera and photographed the men's reflections, and with them her own. The resulting *Bodyless: Selfportraits* (2005) are an attempt to break what Pierre Bourdieu called the *habitus*, those embodied rituals by which a given culture sustains belief in its own obviousness, its ideology. The men, interestingly, allowed entry only after the artist explained that she would not photograph them, but their mirror image. Once she was wrapped in a long black scarf, nothing stood in her way.

"The headscarf worn in public by Iranian women should not be understood as a separation device," argued the German-based Iran scholar Katajun Amirpur during a panel discussion at Cicero Galerie, nor is the chador a symbol of oppression. This black dress, worn by the dancer in Shadi Ghadirian's eight digital photos *ctrl+alt+delete* (2006), is delightfully adorned with computer screen icons. The icons change in each photograph,



Shadi Ghadirian, *ctrl+alt+delete*, 2006, C-print,
Courtesy of Cicero Galerie (Berlin).

becoming a dancing partner in one, where they are held in tight embrace, and building a ladder in the next. Their artistic usage is an iconic attempt to emphasize the artist's online connectedness. Equally, they function as ideograms, rhetorical substitutions for a female voice, muted here, but clearly heard and understood. Michael Wamposzyc, who visited Tehran last summer, said that online exposure is very important since few exhibition venues are open to non-traditional art; however, access to YouTube is blocked. Importantly, Ghadirian manages the first Iranian website for photography www.fanoosphoto.com.

Photography is currently the preferred medium by artists in Iran. Ghazaleh Hedayat's *Peephole* (2006) photographs critique the activity of the Islamic watch committee, omnipresent in cities, ready to blame and punish when the public feminine dress code and other laws are chal-



Mehraneh Atashi, *Bodyless I*, 2004, Digital print, 50 x 70 cm
Courtesy Cicero Galerie (Berlin) and Silk Road Gallery

lenged. Perhaps to avoid their wrath, Hedayat photographed her own passport – fingerprint, script, parts of her scarf-wrapped face, and her apartments' interior – to make us see just as the spy would see with one eye pressed to the keyhole. With a 35 mm camera, she created engaging black-and-white close-ups that blur subject and object and are of a size related to the radius seen by the spy.

Similarly, Hamila Vakili uses pictures of herself, but they are secondary to a process of digital montage. *Untitled* (2006) combines her passport photo and other body fragments placed against an old, crumbling stone wall that is loaded with symbolic potential.

In a genealogical pursuit, Gohar Dashti rephotographed family photos taken in the 1960s and 1970s, and presented them in the *Khanevadegi Ziyarati* series (relating to family and pilgrimage, 2006). They provide glimpses into a pre-revolutionary Iran, its customs and dress, unknown to the artist. Remarkable in the older photographs is the handwriting on the front to describe, locate, and date. One, which Dashti reproduced, is of a woman; the script reads (in translation): *Pregnant with Effat*, 1962.

Contrasting with these black-and-white images of the past, Newsha Tavakolian's poster-sized *Untitled* (2007) photographs focus on contemporary life, framed as if in passing, like news items. They take us into city streets to see women with blond-dyed hair and heavy make-up, their headscarves about to fall off, walls covered with pictures of martyrs who fought against Iraq, women in a café filled with cigarette smoke, Shirin Ebadi returning with her Nobel Peace Prize, and a child bride in her wedding gown. This beautiful but sad picture reminds us that girls are married at a young age in Iran, particularly in rural areas. Although the marriage age has been legally raised from nine to thirteen, said Amirpur, who spoke of the emancipatory effects of the Revolution, including an increase in literacy. Iranian women, she insisted, are self-aware and proud. This was conveyed in the Berlin exhibition, in which densely inscribed visual fields expressed more than words can say about the artists' intentions.

Maria Zimmermann Brendel holds a Ph.D. from McGill University and works as an art critic in Berlin.