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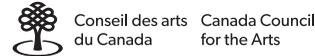
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WHERE ARE WE

Judith Albert

Dana Claxton

Nik Forrest

Katrin Freisager

curators Aaron Pollard
Chantal Molleur

September 22 – October 27, 2018

TEMPORALITY, POETRY AND RESISTANCE

Where are we hints at the place occupied within the exhibition space, evoking contemplation, flux and a degree of uncertainty—with or without a question mark. This site of inquiry includes the psychic space within and outside the frame of each work of art and the generative space between the works themselves and those who are taking them in.

The four artists in this exhibition provide a diversity of approaches to exploring fundamental questions concerning framing, narrative, still and moving pictures. Their practices span performance, figurative and abstract imagery tying the body to landscape. Brought together, their respective practices articulate common preoccupations concerning perception and a desire to both disrupt and expand the popular imaginary by drawing from avant-garde, feminist, and post-colonial vernaculars and strategies. This show literally and figuratively spills out of OBORO's exhibition spaces with an abundance of works that resonate and rebound, permeating areas beyond the habitual purview of the gallery.

Judith Albert's artistic practice concerns everyday events, art history and the traditions and places where she has lived. Her highly focused yet mobile still lives and her use of the vanishing vocabularies inscribe the frame, and in some cases the architecture of a space with the poetics of the body. Her installations link language and gesture with built environments and the natural world. There is a collision of scales between the works and often within them. Albert repeatedly superimposes one location over another: tearing a page in half to meet walking a line between land and water; a hole cut into a piece of paper to match a circle of footsteps in the snow. Albert's whimsical, ritualistic and quotidian actions loop quietly and endlessly. Whole universes are encased within small gestures. The juxtaposition of the miniature and the infinite suggests something equally playful and sinister.

Through her performances, video installations and photographs, Dana Claxton takes on the colossal task of traversing worlds, deploying and undermining the visual language of high fashion and popular culture to bridge the gap between colonial and Indigenous cosmologies, to unsettle and resist dominant narratives concerning Indigenous women. This selection of two photos and a video from Dana Claxton seems at first glance to be firmly rooted in the figurative. However these works also underline and unsettle assumptions concerning photographic veracity, truth and habitual looking. Claxton's strategy averts the language of reconciliation in favour of repositioning Indigenous perspectives from colonial periphery to cosmic center. The bridges Claxton builds recognize and trouble existing asymmetries with a combination of defiance, optimism and flirtation.

As an artist who moved from a documentary photography practice to studio-based, staged imagery, Katrin Freisager plays with the boundary between reality and fiction in her various series. Freisager takes us on a journey between experiencing and remembering,

past and future, suggestion and after-image. There is something wild and uncontrollable in this artist's photographs that belies the human desire to domesticate nature, and ultimately human nature. The selection of her images here suggests outdoor locations, landscapes and interplanetary travel, yet most of what we see was captured in the studio. While the impulse for creating these photographs emerges from memory and the artist's imaginary, the unforeseen and the uncontrollable play a major role in Freisager's process, where she deploys ink, pigments, oils, water and other elements in ever-evolving dioramas that she captures with the camera at decisive moments. Whether drawing in on familiar landscapes or reaching for unknown territory Freisager's imagery seduces and unsettles in equal measure.

Nik Forrest's practice examines and resists normativity, often turning to more abstract strategies, material processes and silences, whereby small actions take on a significance that might otherwise be overlooked. Forrest proposes a re-attunement of the senses where the viewer is invited to experience the artist's gesture beyond the lens. The result is a prismic study of light as its passage toward the camera's sensor is influenced by the imprecise movements of the human hand. In an effort to tune into frequencies that are beyond the capacity of the ear, Forrest has taken up audio recording with the use of a very low frequency (VLF) antenna. The screen is reduced to light dancing behind a window, tracking the movement of sound through space. Forrest deploys a skylight in the ceiling, perhaps hinting at their soundtrack's sources, recorded within the room, as well as on the roof above and on a mountaintop outside the city.

Each of these works interrogates place, sometimes eliciting a layered sense of location or even dislocation. Brought together, the works of Judith Albert, Dana Claxton, Katrin Freisager and Nik Forrest alter our interpretation and understanding of where we are. Nothing is linear or simple, but rather curved, complex and luminous. These four established artists open and disrupt normative concepts of space and time, bringing into question the line between reality and illusion.

Aaron Pollard
Chantal Molleur