

ici présente time being

Sherri Hay

curator Stephen Lawson

November 10 – December 15, 2018

What is one referring to when evoking *the sentient object*? To understand this we must first look at the basic construction of this phrase, in which the Latin *sentire* (to feel, to realise) is applied to an object, thus giving it the ability to perceive and to be aware. This strategic use of language induces a repositioning of ourselves in the natural order, and reconstructs the classification of living things to include the material world. As sites whereby the metaphysical quality of all things can be considered, exhibitions can act as provocations for spectators to experience embodied moments of respect and care in their relationships to objects.

*When you look at the flower, the flower looks at you,
you have already become a flower.*

Yumi Fujitani

Contemporary societies have entered into vigorous debates concerning the sentience of animals and how this can inform the production of food (as well as how animals are treated in the process), however these notions have yet to be extended to the welfare of objects. Objects are seen as tools to carry out human desires and actions, and are subsequently only seen as the sum of their parts, to be used, at times completely consumed. But objects are made of diverse elements interacting with each other on a cellular level. At the microscopic view they are continually in motion, and within the field of quantum physics their fundamental particles are thought to have distinct resonances or harmonics.

When considering objects as sentient, it is difficult to know how this construct can be actively employed. One cannot simply think an object to be sentient, nor believe it to be so, to make it such. To do so only reaffirms structures whereby the human dominates and decides the object's role; it never allows for the object to become an active and engaged subject, nor for it to surprise or take the lead in the exchange. An exhibition then becomes a vibrant territory in which to set up dynamic and fluctuating interactions between subjects and objects, to challenge the unidirectional gaze that determines the value and meaning of the object. It demands that an experience be offered to unsettle the relationship and to question who—or what—exactly is directing the encounter. This exhibition seeks to eschew notions of display and open itself up to the potent zone of performance wherein notions of the "live" and the "now" can be embodied and experienced.

Ici présente : time being features the artist Sherri Hay and a regularly changing troupe of sculptures. Hay is well known for her installation work that often combines an ethereal and poetic aesthetic in combination with monstrous figures and delicate designs. Like a great science fiction novel, she plays with familiar landscapes that have been disturbed by the addition of the uncanny and the preternatural. Hints of magical narratives are embedded in many of her

*I must let my senses wander as my thought,
My eyes see without looking..
Go not to the object; let it come to you.*

Henry Thoreau – *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau*

creations, along with pointed political and cultural criticisms. A recursive gaze is demanded of the spectator with her work, an oscillation between the macro and the micro that is literally and figuratively built into the pieces that she makes. A continual displacement of one's own body in time in space is elicited as one navigates Hay's sculptures and installations, bringing into relief the fleeting nature of the present, a reflection on being simultaneously in and out of time.

With this exhibition Sherri Hay positions herself as the catalyst or instigator of the artworks. The assembled objects are the performers that realise the actions that materialise the encounter with spectators. In performance terminology, she is proposing the artist act as choreographer, and the objects, dancers. This exhibition will never be static or remain solely a collection of objects since Hay will be in residence through its duration. Every day she will propose new choreographies that will result in kinetic sculptures searching for a final destination. It is hoped that this uncertainty and the ever-evolving habitation of the space will invite publics to consider an alternate form of exhibition where the ephemeral opens up the potential for unexpected and sympathetic encounters.

Central to this exhibition/performance is an invitation for you, the public, to step *into* time, to become present by actively watching, listening, imagining, and submitting to the actions as they unfold, to embrace your own (corpo)reality while at the same time being conscious of dislocating yourself as the governing surveillance and energy in the space. As the works will move extremely slowly (some over a period of hours), they will allow for a disruption of the chrononormative structures that rule our daily lives. This encounter is a proposition to treat the present as complete, a place to open oneself up to a sense and sensibility that detours towards a reflexive responsiveness, a sensual queering of the now.

Stephen Lawson