

The Space in which You Still Exist

Andréanne Godin

April 9 – May 14, 2022

In this exhibition, Andréanne Godin is inspired by foundational childhood experiences in the reassuring and mysterious Abitibi forest that bordered her family home. Carried by imagination, she revisits the nature that became the theatre of her memories. Among other aspects, these memories are filled with successive disappearances, those of loved ones or sections of landscape ruined by the shameless expansion of mining, clearcutting, and urban sprawl. These reminiscences are intertwined and expressed without exception in fragmented representations of forests that are staggering to the bodies and eyes perceiving them.

Following *As Blue as Our Time and I Swear, I Could Not Reconcile the Presence of You*,¹ *The Space in which You Still Exist* is presented as the third installment in a trajectory tacitly marked by mourning. Although specific to the artist, these losses have universal resonance in a context where the instability brought about by the climate crisis, the pandemic, and the war shapes our present, as well as our future, in disturbing ways. Despite the indiscernible aspect of the wintry landscape, the installation at OBORO provides a soothing balm.

Through rubbed pigments animated by a subtle light design, the artist presents a mysterious landscape with ambiguous spaces that is somewhat in line with Ozias Leduc (1864–1955) whose *L'heure mauve* [Mauve Twilight] (1921) becomes spiritual and symbolic with its oak adorned by a unique light. Without calling herself a painter, Godin is inspired by the modern tradition, which advocated the fragmentation of the touch in order to intensify contrasting colours. Here she chooses an unusual dichromatic palette of Prussian blue and Pyrrole red. The colours rival and attract each other under the changing light effects that optics coldly connects to the process of additive and subtractive colour synthesis, an art mastered by light designer Karine Gauthier, a childhood friend with whom the artist reconnected.

It is precisely into the affectivity of friendships, romantic relationships, and encounters that the moving imagery of the snowy landscape transports us, as though by a magic released right before our eyes. A stream flows beneath the bulging carpet of snow while tree branches form arabesques; their lines bend with tension, evoking the hidden force of this landscape affected a priori by desolation.

1. The installation *As Blue as Our Time*, for which I was the curator, was presented at AxeNéo7 from March 10 to May 15, 2021. The exhibition *I Swear, I Could Not Reconcile the Presence of You* was presented at Galerie Nicolas Robert, which represents the artist, from September 11 to October 17, 2020.

Rooted or beheaded in the artist's representations, bare deciduous trees attest to the environments they occupy. They are neither exclusive to the land nor to the sky. As Emanuele Coccia puts forward in his "theory of the root," plants have double, hybrid, and "anatomically geminated" bodies. He writes that "plants have made life a perpetual devotion to the sky, to what takes place in the sky, and all this while being firmly rooted in the Earth. This means that, thanks to the plants, life is no longer a purely chemical fact but especially an *astrological one*."²

According to the philosopher's reasoning, Earth becomes an "astral space," thus calling into question the traditional assimilation of the root to the house, to the inhabitable. "Every dwelling tends to become uninhabitable, to be *sky* and not a house."³ The idea of establishing oneself permanently in a place, on our planet, gives way. The crossing, the passage, even the mixture are better able to evoke, still in line with Coccia, the contingency, to use the term loosely, of our presence in the world, the limits of which are not the celestial body of Earth.

We have already seen in Godin's work the conjunction of earth and sky, the affiliation with *sky roots*.⁴ The horizons of the installation at OBORO offer a captivating declination with their aurora borealis effects, a true feast for the senses. The sparkle-studded dark night becomes a phantasmagoria that bears revisiting over and over. The place is a lasting sanctuary in the surrounding fog, just like the birch trees that keep standing upright despite everything and in which life continues to throb.

Marie-Ève Charron

Translation: Oana Avasilichioaei

2. Emanuele Coccia, *The Life of Plants*, trans. Dylan J. Montanari (Cambridge and Medford: Polity Press, 2019), 94.

3. Coccia, *The Life of Plants*, 95.

4. *Ciels racines* [Sky Roots] is the title of a group exhibition concocted by artist-curator Anne-Marie Proulx, which included a work by Andréanne Godin among work by 11 other female artists and was presented at Arprim from January 21 to February 26, 2022.