

Raymond Boisjoly

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Number 115, Winter 2017

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/84395ac>

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Publisher(s)

Le Centre de diffusion 3D

ISSN

0821-9222 (print)

1923-2551 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Burnham, C. (2017). Review of [Raymond Boisjoly]. *Espace*, (115), 87–88.

Bien que stoïque à l'écran, l'infirmière relate sa vie professionnelle, étroitement imbriquée à celle de l'hôpital, sur une bande sonore diffusée dans l'espace de la galerie. Son monologue introspectif dresse un portrait à échelle humaine d'une institution qui se veut, par vocation, plus grande que nature.

La prégnance de la lumière, au cœur des préoccupations plastiques de Pocreau depuis ses débuts, est ici travaillée dans sa matérialité; 772 ampoules incandescentes constituent le corps de l'installation *La lumière/ le temps*. Issues, pour la plupart, d'anciennes chambres de Saint-Luc et suggérant le nombre de celles prévues au nouveau CHUM, ces ampoules, dont l'éclat est rythmé aléatoirement par un système électronique, témoignent d'une présence tacite. Empreintes du passé, et présages de l'avenir, ces ampoules témoignent en effet, de manière hautement poétique, de ces milliers de vies ayant transité par le centre hospitalier et de celles à naître. Quoique littérale, la fragilité des globes de verre posés au sol conjuguée à l'obsolescence irrévocable de ces lumières artificielles participe à faire de cette pièce une allégorie réussie de la vie et du trépas.

Se jouant de la forme et du fonds, *Patrimoines* nous instruit enfin de cet autre lieu de recueillement et de déférence qu'est la galerie elle-même, à son tour mise en abyme par son contexte universitaire. Y intégrer en annexe le projet Musée-école, organisé dans le cadre de la maîtrise en muséologie de l'UQAM, s'avère ainsi à la fois pertinent et lucide. Constitué de paperasses, de commentaires, d'extraits audio ou d'objets de tout acabit provenant de divers hôpitaux montréalais, dont Saint-Luc, ce laboratoire d'étude à saveur archéologique participe à la construction d'un récit performatif autour du patrimoine matériel hospitalier. Toujours fragmentaire, notre mémoire patrimoniale est ainsi l'enfant bâtard d'un héritage commun et multiple, assemblage de récits où chacun est invité à *faire histoire*.

Doctorante en histoire de l'art à l'Université du Québec à Montréal, Anne-Marie Dubois est essayiste et critique d'art. Elle a enseigné le cours *Représentations et histoire de l'art des femmes* au Musée de Joliette. Ses recherches portent principalement sur le statut de l'objet dans les pratiques installatives et sculpturales contemporaines et de leur agentivité dans le contexte néolibéral actuel.

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CATRIONA JEFFRIES GALLERY

VANCOUVER

16 SEPTEMBER –

29 OCTOBER, 2016

Raymond Boisjoly's new exhibition is introduced with a banner hanging outside Catriona Jeffries' alleyway entrance. The banner reads: "AN ONGOING MODIFICATION TO PROCESSES OF TEMPORAL RECKONING." Waves of visual distortion from individual letters render the bottom half of the plastic banner a black and white abstraction, bound by glitchy bitmap noise.

This "noise in the system" suggests the method at work in the present show. Seven large vinyl banners, now glued to the gallery wall, contain distorted scans from the Chris Marker-Alain Resnais 1953 film *Les statues meurent aussi* (Statues also die), in which they sharply critique the relegation of African sculpture to museum display. Boisjoly's method is familiar to those who have seen his *Buffy Sainte-Marie (Illuminations: 1969/2013)* and *(An) Other Echoes* (2013). Boisjoly plays a film on a smartphone on a flatbed scanner. He then manipulates the image, perhaps to mute the tonality, as in *(An) Other Echoes*, which featured Kent Lewis' *The Exiles* and which may, in its obscure visual quality, recall Boisjoly's *The Writing Lesson* (2011), sun-bleached texts on black construction paper. Or the image may pop into RGBY striation—an effect of the video playing for a static scanner—as in *Buffy*, and the works in this exhibition.

But to understand the implications of Boisjoly's intervention (an intervention into the production of images, into the history of colonialism, into museum practices), it is necessary to step back from that process. We must work back to the African sculptures pictured in the Resnais/Marker film-essay—sculptures that would have had specific roles, ritualistic or political, in traditional cultures. They were instances of craft, artisanship, aesthetics but also praxis. Colonial interventions—invasions and wars—ensued, whether in the form of Arab and European slave traders or the more recent 1895 Berlin Conference, at which Africa was divided up by conquerors. The sculptures then ended up in museums in Paris, London and Berlin. After World War II, as the great period of decolonization began, along with liberation struggles in Africa, the Americas and Asia, Resnais and Marker made a documentary (viewable on YouTube) that shows the objects in museum settings, as well as in rituals in the Belgian Congo. One is reminded of Adorno's comment that "Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are like the family sepulchres of works of art." A moment of French anti-colonialism aware, however fitfully, of its own role, that the cleanliness of the museum only emphasizes the stench of the colonizer. Boisjoly plays the film, works it through the digital machine. The images are now large, on the gallery wall (although not as large as if they were projected as a film), and they will be destroyed when the exhibition closes.

The images themselves are striking in their size and, frankly, are beautiful, a function of the way that the seriality of the glitches echoes or in some way mimics the reproduction of images via the digital. In *Preceding Contexts (Places and Practices)* (2015), for example, the left side of the picture is an undulating and mesmerizing scrim of doubled or tripled bas-relief forms, shadows or drop shadows smeared with elongations of RGBY. In the centre, a statuette may be doubled, one on top of itself, and on the right what looks like a snake, again speckled with RGBY, looms or leers into the black picture plane.

The role of blackness is profound. The signifier, as well as the effect, has played an important role in Boisjoly's *œuvre*: *The Writing Lesson*, after all, used "black metal" typography to reproduce aboriginal place names (Massett, Chilliwack) on black construction paper. Texts in this exhibition draw on a font originally used for the L.A. punk band Black Flag. And there is no small importance to be placed on the significance of a Québécois-Haida artist drawing inspiration from a film that is critical of European colonialism in Africa: another blackness, a dark continent. However blackness, in Boisjoly's work, turns out to have nuance. Consider *Subsequent Categorizations (Institutional Framings)* (2015), an immense piece (290 x 418 cm), the centre and entire left side of which is black. But when you get up close to the piece in the gallery, there are little squiggles, as if hairs, or other items, were trapped in the scanner: visual imperfections, perhaps. But blackness here—whether thought of ideologically, or chromatically, or racially—signifies not just the darkness of absence, of not knowing, but also the dark matter of the digital. It is creative, and created.

And the title of this last piece is also important, I'd wager. For the historical narrative I offered above—Africa -> colonialism -> museum -> decolonization -> digitization—should not be thought of as a teleological process. This is not the final "institutional framing," there will be other "categorizations." As if to confirm this thesis, we have another piece, *The Objects Themselves (And Now Their Image)* (2015). The same statuette appears four times: on the right, it looks as if it glances to the left and the right, or is it Janus-faced, looking to the past and the future. What, here, are "the objects themselves"? And can one, with any certitude, separate objects from images?

I think not, nor can one separate this exhibition from the efflorescence of indigenous art and art making and criticality here in Vancouver, to which Boisjoly has contributed, including the Wood Lands School, organized by Duane Linklater at the Or Gallery in March of this year (at which Boisjoly delivered an oration on the work of Brian Jungen as "art about native art"), the summer blockbuster of Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun at the Museum of Anthropology and a new exhibition at Presentation House Gallery, *Screens and Thresholds*, curated by Boisjoly that includes work by Postcommodity, Krista Belle Stewart and others. Whether this political grouping is any more productive than one oriented towards *process* or that old Vancouver tradition of *intermedia art* remains to be seen.

Clint Burnham teaches at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. His book *Fredric Jameson and the Wolf of Wall Street* was published recently by Bloomsbury, and this past November, he presented a paper on Raymond Boisjoly at the Modernist Studies conference in Pasadena.

