

FASTWÜRMS: #Q33R_WTCH_P155

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qu'il y a peut-être à voir comme un écosystème sensible, s'accompagne d'une volonté de la part de l'artiste de rendre performative la réception de l'œuvre. Notre corps participant résonne, en quelque sorte, avec celui de ces femmes et de ces hommes dont les corps ont vibré en tout premier lieu, en livrant au départ les mélodies. Cette dimension est également soutenue par un autre choix de la part de l'artiste, celui de transmettre les chants selon la forme polyphonique du canon. Aussi les chants semblent-ils se répandre dans l'espace en se répondant, les idées musicales reprises d'une voix à l'autre se reproduisent elles-mêmes dans un esprit de circulation, voire de passation. Outre que donner à ces chants une dimension incantatoire, l'esprit d'imitation propre au canon musical répond aussi d'une préoccupation de Fiona Annis, celle de perpétuer des traditions orales. Or, l'attention portée par l'artiste aux propriétés physiques du son et de notre propre corps dans l'espace aura soutenu un passage de l'oralité à l'auralité, de la voix à l'oreille, pour mettre ainsi l'accent sur ce qui est transmis par l'écoute, la répétition et la mémorisation. À activer nos sens de la sorte et considérer la charge émotive des chants entendus, c'est tout le corps, traversé par un doux frisson, qui se met à vibrer au sein de cette installation.

Conservateur de l'art actuel (de 2000 à ce jour) au Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) depuis 2012, Bernard Lamarche a travaillé au Musée régional de Rimouski de 2005 à 2012, à titre de conservateur de l'art contemporain. Il a auparavant œuvré, pendant près de dix ans, comme critique d'art et journaliste pour le quotidien *Le Devoir*. Il a publié nombre d'articles et de catalogues d'exposition.

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Adam Barbu

**OAKVILLE GALLERIES
IN GAIRLOCH GARDENS
SEPTEMBER 24 –
DECEMBER 30, 2017**

Over the past several decades, the artist duo FASTWÜRMS (Kim Kozzi and Dai Skuse) has fashioned a unique DIY kitsch sensibility that extends across historical narratives, contemporary discourses and utopic mythologies. Occupying this space between blurred pasts, presents and futures, their work imagines alternative practices of political resistance by drawing from an extremely broad range of topics, some of which include anti-colonial resistance, queer ethics, ecological processes, emergent technologies and the occult. #Q33R_WTCH_P155, FASTWÜRMS' recent exhibition at Oakville Galleries in Gairloch Gardens, further develops these lines of inquiry by experimenting with new forms of narrative play.

Upon entering the exhibition, we encounter a seemingly abandoned site that appears to be part-studio, part-laboratory and part-devotional centre. One of the direct challenges in describing this intriguing space lies in quantifying the extraordinarily broad collection of objects on display, such as healing crystals, plastic human skulls, tie-dye sheets, industrial work benches, painted canvases, models of unicorn horns, dildos, typed sheets of white printer paper, pegboard signs containing circular world babble and so on. Alongside these discrete curiosities,

the gallery's large pane windows, which typically look out onto the landscaped gardens surrounding Lake Ontario, are mostly obscured with spreads of paint, makeshift curtains and crossed tape strips. Additionally, much of the gallery's floor space has been covered with packing paper, rubber mats and slightly worn rugs. Spread across four rooms and multiple hallways, this display is impossible to digest in a single take, and perhaps even a single visit. It demands our utmost patience. #Q33R_WTCH_P155 is, by all measures, a maximalist artist intervention.

Even considering the diverse selection of objects on display, #Q33R_WTCH_P155 is situated within a precise and unified narrative structure. At the entrance of the gallery, we encounter a panel of wall text and a folio that helps illustrate FASTWÜRMS' approach to "Witch Nation identity politics"—a mode of praxis that pursues "the diverse, plural, and hybrid, the bountiful and the beautiful, polymorphous and polycultural Avalon." The wall text and the folio also provide a detailed fictional account of the history of the exhibition site. Within this narrative, Gairloch Gardens is referred to as Warlock Gardens, a cover location and code name for the secret military intelligence unit UR BZRCK Warlock. As the story goes, in 1943 the collective unlocked the Nazi enigma machine and subsequently won the war. UR BZRCK then wrote the War against Wars, an emancipation plan that shattered all forms of injustice to construct a new world centred on radical inclusion and the love of difference. Shortly after achieving queer utopia, UR BZRCK abandoned their military post and fled from Warlock Gardens without a trace, leaving behind the space as we see it today.

FASTWÜRMS stages tensions between the narrative frame and the material intervention that stem from the opaque and unresolved visual identities of the display objects. Notably, none of the forms left behind by UR BZRCK bear titles, and their fluid spatial arrangement makes it difficult to identify where one installation ends and another begins.

Furthermore, the story of Warlock Gardens does not reveal the precise function and source of each individual curiosity. It is impossible to decipher which items may have been used as working models, devotional objects or combat tools. This line between display value, spiritual essence and tactical utility is blurred throughout #Q33R_WTCH_P155. For example, in the first exhibition space we stand before a large semi-rectangular structure cloaked in a tie-dye sheet. Atop its sloped surface stands a black box marked with an open star that is pierced by an arrow. Nearby, we happen upon a kitsch dot painting that leans against an existing fireplace. Behind the canvas, directly in firebox, a large pile

is situated within a particular historical context, yet it describes a kind of emancipation that has not yet been achieved on this planet. Within this space of temporal dislocation, #Q33R_WTCH_P155 points to an irrecoverable utopic past.

After exiting the gallery, leaving behind these intertwined pasts and futures, we come up for air. In this brief yet disorienting transition from Warlock Gardens to Gairloch Gardens, our return from utopia, we are given the chance to reimagine our political and ethical ideals in the here and now. In doing so, one must be willing accept the fact that



FASTWÜRMS, #Q33R_WTCH_P155, 2017. Installation view. Courtesy of the artists. Photo: Tomi Hafkenscheld.

of white crystals peak out from the shadows. FASTWÜRMS arrests these forms of evidence in a state of visual non-disclosure. They remain abstracted and obstructed artefacts of a far-gone Witch sensibility.

In front of one of the gallery's larger rectangular windows, there hangs a large rainbow-coloured curtain made up of floor length plush bands. Given the fact that, according to the narrative, UR BZRCK occupied the space roughly thirty-five years before the invention of the pride flag, this rainbow curtain cannot merely be read as a symbol of LGBT+ identity politics. Stripped of its baggage as a lobbying tool for LGBT+ social inclusion, marriage equality and military presence, it returns from the past as a pure expression of love and unity. FASTWÜRMS' rainbow is, in the broadest sense of the term, a visualization of utopic liberation. In this regard, the installation highlights a striking paradox that lies at the core of the intervention: The story of Warlock Gardens

the absolute transcendence of all forms of injustice is not within reach. FASTWÜRMS' pursuit of counter-narratives through ordinary objects encourages us to celebrate the microcosmic, unspectacular acts of resistance that belong to everyday experience.

Adam Barbu is a writer and curator living between Toronto and Ottawa. His current research focuses on intersections between queer theory and curatorial practice. In 2015, he was the recipient of the Middlebook Prize for Young Canadian Curators. His recent writings have appeared in publications such as *Canadian Art*, *esse*, *ESPACE art actuel*, *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, and *Momus*.