

ETC



Jean-Marie Martin : *Paysages*

Annie Paquette

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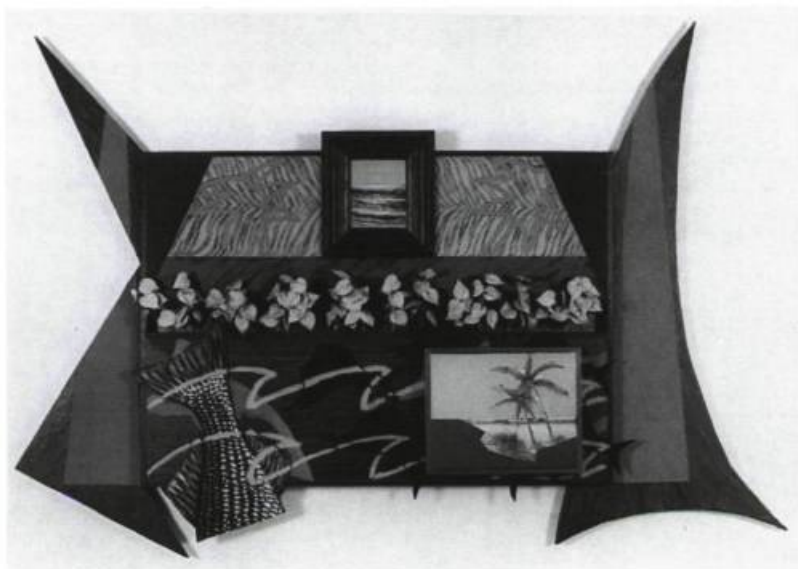
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Jean-Marie Martin : Paysages



Jean-Marie Martin, *Remembering Hawaii*, 1988
Mixed media; 220 x 230 cm. Photo : Michel Dubreuil

Pay worship to the garish sun; cruise down the boulevard of the royal palms; walk the winding pebbled-path through an astroturf ground spotted with plastic flowers and pink flamingos; pass under the baroque vault of the sweeping, coral-stuccoed building; glide across the slick dark marble floor of the lobby cum gameroom littered with stuffed 'gators, swordfish and leopard-skin chairs. You have reached the antechamber of Miami's Arquitectonic Group — the spiritual centre of impossible dreams — the profane source of an "affect" built on excesses and extremes. One might envision such a promenade-prelude en route to the galerie Trois Points exhibition of twelve new collages/montages by Jean-Marie Martin. (September 10 to October 5, 1988)

Although the oeuvre of Martin has been frequently identified with numerous (anti)aesthetic qualities associated with so-called postmodernity (anti-form, playfulness, irreverence, scriptibility, polymorphism, indeterminacy, immanence... — see statements by Claude Gagnon, Lisa Desilets, Paul-Albert Plouffe, and the artist), and these qualities do persist, this most recent exhibition titled *Paysages* would seem to focus principally on the relationship between nature and culture, and its inherent problematic reading and meaning.

Martin treats nature as wholly domesticated by culture — as selected, cropped, mounted, framed, and synthesized. Nature is addressed only through its

cultural presentation. The artist does not recreate natural imagery himself; rather he "appropriates" (plastic fish in *Hunting and Fishing*; artificial plants in *Remembering Hawaii*; false wood and stone, synthetic fur, animal-patterned fabric, and landscape reproductions in almost every other composition) in order to express the degree to which nature is already implicated into our system of cultural values. Thus, the artist reinvents the strategy of the readymade, utilizing it as a disturbing deconstructive instrument that demonstrates a considerable measure of arbitrariness with respect to meaning.

Martin's "paysages" follow a discursive model by compelling part by part reading which is temporal in character. It becomes impossible to extract a monological message from examination of a single work, or body of works. Any art critical or art historical discourse under the dubious category of iconography is confounded. The level of meaning of each fragment, each image, is informational, referential, exegesis. It unproblematically assumes the reality of what it denotes — a fish is a fish, a tree is a tree, a rock is a rock — sign is transparent to referent. The observer is confronted by a fragmented and piecemeal "landscape based on knowledge rather than representation" (the artist) — one which challenges our tolerance to the acceptance of kitsch cum high culture, design cum fine art, and "patenteux" cum artist.