

Pascaline Knight: The Art of Seeing

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PASCALINE KNIGHT

THE ART OF SEEING

By Dorota Kozinska

FOR AN ARTIST WHOSE WORKS ARE HARD TO FIND, WITH NO AFFILIATION WITH A COMMERCIAL GALLERY, PASCALINE KNIGHT EXHIBITS SURPRISING MATURITY, BOTH IN HER ART AND ATTITUDE. MORE INTERESTED IN LIFE THAN IN FAME, SHE HAS MANAGED TO PRODUCE A BODY OF WORK THAT IS AT ONCE FRESH AND SOPHISTICATED.



Perspectives, 2009
Print

With European roots, 39-year-old Knight spent time studying and practicing print-making in such diverse places as Italy and Scotland. She went through a period where her interest turned to fabric and clothing design, only to return to art stamped with a very personal touch.

My first encounter with her images was of the “double take” kind. Passing a wall of what appeared from afar to be posters, which blocks the crumbling Seville Theatre and environs, I had to turn back and look at them again. I soon realized they were a series of prints, and part of the Off-Biennial, an event that showcased various original artistic projects including performances, dance, installations and sculpture, and organized by DARE-DARE, an artist-run centre.

Taking place last May in non-conventional public spaces in and around the Cabot Square as well as the Atwater Library, a church, Alexis Nihon Plaza, the bygone Forum, Ste-Catherine Street, the 19 projects took their inspiration from the surrounding. As did Pascaline Knight, who turned out to be the author of the prints that caught my eye.

Titled *Is there more in a Coffee Chain?*, the series focused on people of all ilk frequenting a coffee chain spot in Alexis Nihon Plaza, “impersonal and anonymous

but strangely comforting,” in the words of the artist. She spent hours observing and sketching the shifting humanity, with all its “frailty and absurdity”.

Knight’s *graffiti wall* was drawn with a fluid line that in brief strokes delineates an entire personage and atmosphere. It goes with the artist’s philosophy, which favours an interest in transmitting the profound triviality of the quotidian over the demands of the medium.

In her drawings, she pinpoints the prevailing sense of alienation, and seeks to answer the question of what separates her from the subject, what unites them? Combined with serigraphy, and pasted over the surrounding peeling graffiti that adorn the wall, around rusty padlocks and behind sentinel parking meters, they worked as if in a theatrical setting, with images overlapping and co-habiting, creating a one-of-a-kind collage. The passersby and the homeless Inuit that converge in the area further enriched the overall image.

The introduction of graphic and abstract elements, a splash of colour, a surreal shape . . . all work to produce a style that speaks of accomplishment in both pictorial approach and craftsmanship. Minimalist but always poignant, each drawing encapsulates

more than what is defined by the lines. Knight draws “the uncertainty, the desire, the beauty . . . the invisible that lies beneath the appearances.”

People leaning on tables, snoozing on benches, pigeons pecking and strutting, a mother and child, a giant skull with a cigarette, all these elements form a unique storyboard, unflinchingly accessible in its human expression.

Often incorporating text into her images, Knight, in sparse hand-written notations, shares moments of reflection with the viewer, drawing one further into her universe. She is presently writing and printing a book called *A Knight’s Move ou l’Émergence De La Chrysalide*, supported by a grant from the Canada Arts Council and the Conseil des arts du Québec. □

EXHIBITION

PASCALINE KNIGHT – IS THERE MORE IN A COFFEE CHAIN?
Graffiti wall on Ste-Catherine Street,
May 2009

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