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Art, photo, médias, culture

Bodies in Trouble / Corps en péril, Galerie SAW Gallery, Ottawa, July 22 to October 3, 2010

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URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/63758ac

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ACTUALITÉ

Greta Pratt, *Channel Two News*, Monmouth, NJ, 1991 (from the series *Using History*), c-print, 76 x 76 cm

Bodies in Trouble / Corps en péril

Galerie SAW Gallery, Ottawa
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A limp body brought back to life, a figure leaping impossibly into the air, a gun wielded by a faceless hand: with images like these, "Bodies in Trouble," Galerie SAW Gallery's concise but ambitious exhibition of photo-based work, explores the body, performance, media, and danger. Mounted as part of Festival X, Ottawa's biennial city-wide photography festival, "Bodies in Trou-ble" pairs photojournalistic images with performance art, implicitly critiquing the news image and stressing a visual poetics through juxtapositions of these forms.

Organized by SAW curator Stefan St-Laurent with intelligence and great inven-tion, "Bodies in Trouble" offers a mélange of visualizing strategies and media. The nine image-makers represented here range from photojournalists to pivotal figures of the post–Second World War avant-garde and contemporary performance artists. Within the tight, dark subterranean space of Galerie SAW Gallery, their works inter-mingle and illuminate.

Entering the exhibition, the viewer first encounters a small alcove with a slide show, *Between Heaven and Earth*, by Cristina García Rodero, the Spanish photojournalist and member of the renowned photo agency Magnum. The slide show establishes pho-tojournalism as the touchstone for the exhi-bition as a whole. Produced by Magnum in Motion, the agency's multi-media arm, *Between Heaven and Earth* depicts a

sequence of rituals, traditional and new, in countries ranging from the photographer's native Spain to Haiti. The photographs, in dramatic black and white, focus on human bodies in ecstasy, confrontation, and trance-like states; in short, Rodero shows us corporeal expressions of intense emotion. Her work exemplifies the seductive technical prowess and voyeurism of contemporary photojournalism at its highest level. But with little specific context pro-

Yves Klein, *Le Saut dans le vide [Leap into the Void]*, *5, rue Gentil-Bernard, Fontenay-aux-roses, France, October 1960* [the title of this work by Yves Klein, according to his newspaper *Dimanche 27 novembre 1960*, is, "A man in space ! The painter of space throws himself into the void!"], Artistic action, © Yves Klein, ADAGP, Paris. Photo © Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, photo Harry Shunk-John Kender, courtesy of Yves Klein Archives

vided for these images, the presentation evokes an updated "Family of Man," a visual narrative of a homogenized global community unencumbered by any ethical concerns over spectacularizing moments of intimate internal and sacred life.

If Rodero's work establishes photojournalism's representation of the human body in performance as the exhibition's unifying theme, the other works featured in "Bodies in Trouble" – in part through St-Laurent's selection of images and innovative emphasis on performance – productively compli-

cate the experience of photojournalistic viewing. Most of the remaining works in the exhibition are by artists using cameras or by photographers whose work merges aesthetic expression with documentation, often the documentation of performance. Greta Pratt, for example, explores the performance of American nationalism in her series *Using History*, which is represented here by two ironic, deadpan images showing re-enactments of historical events in U.S. history. In *Artist Rifles*, the British artist (and former soldier with the Royal Corps of Engineers) Paul M. Smith multiples his own image in combat gear, wielding firearms, until he has formed a digital army of one; these works at once display a conventional form of violence-infused masculinity and recall Susan Sontag's famous equation of the scopic violence of the camera to the physical violence of the gun. The performance of gender and violent confrontation takes another form in two images selected from Croatian-Canadian photographer Lana šlezic's 2004–06 series *Forsaken*, a body of work visually exploring the lives of Afghan women today. One depicts a woman known as Malalai, the only policewoman in Kandahar; Malalai poses for the camera fully shrouded in a burka and aiming a handgun, a figure of both force and subjugation. This image is paired with a second, more disturbing, portrait. Here we meet eleven-year-old "Gulsuma," who, we are told by an accompanying caption, was sold into marriage at four years of age into a family that beat her and treated her as a slave. In contrast to Malalai, with her veiled body, Gulsuma appears naked before the camera revealing the scars on her back, indices of her torment. Like šlezic, photographer Alex Webb treads a line between photojournalistic documentation and self-reflexive imaging strategies in his series *Crossings*. The two photographs by Webb shown here underscore the arbitrary nature of borders through the cinematic posing of figures, with one image presenting a human border formed by a string of men waiting anxiously on a precipice.

Lana Šlezić, *Malalai*, 2005 (from the series *Forsaken*), c-print, 60 x 90 cm

Along with photo-based expression, photographic documents of performance punctuate the exhibition; indeed, one of the recurrent themes of the show is the overlapping of those interlaced categories. The works include a photograph of Canadian artist Jana Sterbak's harrowing 1986 performance *Artist as Combustible*, in which she set herself aflame, and Ottawa-based photographer Jackson Couse's documentation of performance artist Hélène Lefebvre's enactment of a violence-tinged domestic life for the performance cooperative Fait Maison. But the exhibition also reaches back for historic moments when art, performance, truth and fiction collide subversively. "Bodies in Trouble," for example, includes a print of Yves Klein's 1960 *Le Saut dans le vide* (*The Leap into the Void*), a celebrated monument of performance art comprising a feigned "document" of Klein jumping from a window. Finally, the exhibition includes a rarely seen selection of stills, restored specially for the exhibition, from a 1961 film on Haitian voodoo by the American experimental filmmaker Maya Deren. As the viewer follows the dancing figures from frame to frame, the spaces

between media document and art overlap and merge.

The innovative pairing of performance and photojournalism underscores the constructed nature of news photographs while linking images across fields through a visual poetics. This is evident in the one remaining work in the show. *The Kiss of Life*, a 1968 Pulitzer Prize-winning news image by photojournalist Rocco Morabito, pictures a Florida lineman performing CPR on an accidentally electrocuted colleague. The grace of the image – evoking both human compassion and homoerotic love – transcends the human drama that it conveys, offering the image as a performance of lived experience.

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Carol Payne teaches at Carleton University, Ottawa, and has two forthcoming books: a monograph on the NFB's Still Photography Division and a volume on photography in Canada, which she co-edited with Andrea Kunard (McGill-Queen's University Press).

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Jocelyne Alloucherie

Climats
Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa
Du 7 septembre au 24 octobre 2010

Je ne parle pas des expositions en galerie. Il y avait longtemps qu'un musée ou un centre d'exposition à Montréal n'avait pas présenté une exposition aussi importante de Jocelyne Alloucherie. Récemment l'artiste a pourtant été l'objet d'innombrables présentations en France – et même au Grand Palais à Paris – et en Italie. Dernière en date, *Lames* avait lieu off Biennale à Venise en 2009 au Palazzo Brandolini Rota. Cette discrétion est peut-être symptomatique d'un certain monolithisme qui pousserait sur la scène montréalaise critiques et conservateurs à inscrire leurs choix sous un même dénominateur à va-

riable sociologique : être « jeune » et émergent ! Invitant l'artiste à investir franchement l'espace de sa galerie, Diana Nemiroff réfute, en guise de bénéfice collatéral, toute fracture générationnelle.

Ici à travers ces paysages, c'est aussi une certaine idée de la nordicité qui est convoquée. Nous sommes immergés dans une installation tenant minutieusement compte des caractéristiques de l'espace d'accueil dont l'éclairage, plus éclatant, plus indirect, a dû être modifié. Entre ces trois œuvres, mais aussi entre chacune de leurs composantes, des liens se créent, des rythmes s'orchestrent. Cette cohé-

Climats, Terre de brumes, 2010, 15 photographies montées sur plaques de métal et bois, trois modules architecturaux, bois, caséine, laque, vue partielle de l'installation, 76 x 114,3 cm ch.