

Sophie Jodoin, il faut qu'elle sache, Arprim, Montréal

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[See table of contents](#)

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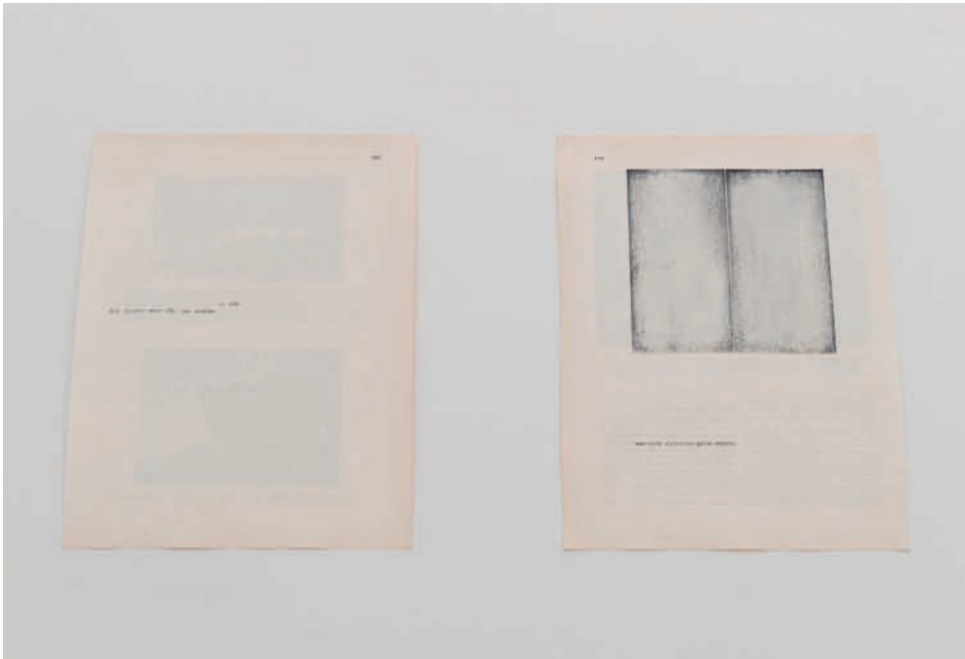
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Sophie Jodoin

← *il faut qu'elle sache*, detail, 2017.

Photo : © Éliane Excoffier, courtesy of the artist

↑ *il faut qu'elle sache*, installation view, Arprim, Montréal, 2017.

Photo : © Éliane Excoffier, courtesy of the artist

Sophie Jodoin

il faut qu'elle sache

It would be insufficient to describe *il faut qu'elle sache* as a bookwork. On a long tabletop surface covered in paper, Sophie Jodoin presents eighty-four pages that she has carefully removed from a long-discarded French-language illustrated medical textbook. She has sanded the printed matter of the book, working away at the ink until all that remains of the text are excised phrases, placed at fleeting coordinates in each page's surface area.

These sanded pages project a faint but insistent sculptural presence: worked at like marble, as matte tiles of absorbed light bearing glossy traces of the original paper coating, they remind us that Jodoin has shown a constant preoccupation with the surface properties of her materials. She leads us to apprehend even more closely our own effort in knowing: sound of breath, aching of step, halting again at each page (on foot, or in a wheelchair... there is no uniform or normative body presumed as Jodoin's reader or viewer). Working away at the very experience of the book, she invites us to recognize and question the limits of its conventions.

Jodoin had set out the terms of this engagement with the installation *une certaine instabilité émotionnelle* (Battat Contemporary, Montreal, 2015): then, as now, table structures support our encounter with the drawings; references to the body are made through text and image in ways that remind us that the borders between the two are also matters of convention. Well known for her fluent understanding of the human body through drawing and her "metavisual" engagement with surfaces of iconographic and textual reproduction, Jodoin leaves the body's forms aside on this occasion to reach instead to the subjectivity that we carry within (and as) our bodies. Burrowing toward phrases, resequencing them to form a narrative, her sanding, finding, and isolating actions discard the original order of the deconstructed manual. We attend to the "she" whose existential vagaries

we encounter, follow, embroider, and make our own. Jodoin discloses her to us by listening closely, eliciting this narrative that was always lurking (among countless others) within the textbook, scattered fragments that she has retrieved so as to suggest patterns of discontinuous cross-readings that reveal her to be "her" first listener.

In this reassembly, photographs remain only as vestigial surfaces of ink—roughly gathered within phantom edges—that from time to time interrupt the page's surfaces, tending to an incipient figuration as pulses of unresolved meaning that nestle in Jodoin's inquiring and responsive visual grammar. The artist's hands and eyes are here coordinated to release a sustained human presence, one that is always spoken of and spoken for outside of the recourse to "I," nevertheless assuming identity, fear, strength, precariousness, a presence shown to have the possibility of will. "She" may or may not ever come to *know*, in accord with the imperative/subjunctive play of the title; we accompany this resilience with fragments of phrase, injunction, excerpt, detail, evocation. Recovered from their deep embedding, from their infratextual moorings, they are left behind in a process of erasing that undoes the codes and constructions of prescriptive text.

Dominic Hardy

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