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Liz Magor
Press

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Liz Magor

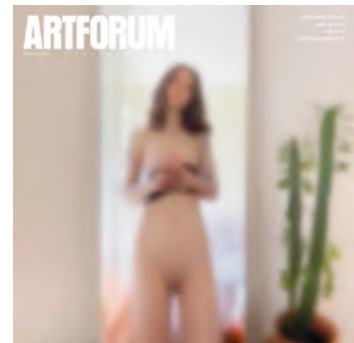
Focal Point Gallery

By Emily LaBarge



Liz Magor, *Coiffed*, 2020, painted plywood, fabric skirting, silicone rubber, artificial hair, acrylic throw, woolen blankets, silver fabric, linen, jewelry boxes, costume jewelry, packaging materials, 2' 3 1/8" x 12' 11 7/8" x 8'.

“Material talks,” the Canadian sculptor Liz Magor has said, and in “The Rise and The Fall,” an exhibition of ten works spanning 2017 to 2021, it’s true. A panoply of sculptural assemblages large and small unfolds across three rooms: real stuffed animals (birds) and fake stuffed animals (toys). Rubber replicas of fake stuffed animals made strange (a life-size, powder blue, fantastically white-maned lion with a sooty, hollowed out eye socket). Real fur (rat skins) and fake fur (hairy white boots). Woolen blankets, linen, silver fabric, trinkets. A sea of flimsy transparent plastic boxes is like shimmering mausoleums for crumpled cellophane, patterned tissue paper, candy wrappers, twine, gold foil, old sweaters, toys torn open: eyes and limbs and torsos and stuffing innards strewn about.



hannah baer nude deepfake, 2023.

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Magor is a regular at thrift stores, where she gleans worn and familiar effects that are “free in a way, empty of their original purpose and no longer the target of human interest.” She repossesses and reappraises these items, which she calls “zero” things, often setting the discarded articles alongside versions of their ilk that she has transmuted. For *Leather Palm*, 2019, she cast a well-creased leather glove in polymerized gypsum, setting it palm up on a low circular wooden side table stained with sticky rings of liquid, as if from some social gathering long dispersed. The glove is solid but appears pliant, still bearing the form of its wearer, as gloves so often do. A half-smoked cigarette sits affixed to its cuff and clumps of white ash have fallen into the palm of the glove, as if the sculpture might double as a decorative trompe l’oeil ashtray.

“I need to transform things to better capture and understand the constituent properties of the materials and processes that form the objects of the world,” Magor has said—as though her practice might return these objects to some autonomous state, unburdened of our cloying, fickle desires and able to enact their own affinities. Two white Yeti boots stand facing each other on grubby yellow boxes cast from cardboard in *The Boots*, 2017. Each shoe is gripped from behind by a stuffed animal made from a similar synthetic textile, as if mistaking the footwear for a long-lost family member or lover. In *Delivery (sienna)*, 2018, a silicone rubber version of a “stuffie” (as the artist calls them) dangles from a tangled bunch of colorful twine, grasping in its hands a garment bag emblazoned HARRY ROSEN. I hadn’t thought of that upscale Canadian men’s clothing store in years.

The gesture of embrace, of inanimate things holding each other close, recurs throughout Magor’s oeuvre, akin perhaps to the artist’s own gestures of embellishment—how, as she says, she “rises up” the objects of her attention to suggest new ontological relationships. In *Perennial*, 2021, an old duffel coat has had its holes and imperfections valorized with silver, bronze, and gold embroidery. In *Coiffed*, 2020, a blue lion lies on its side on a wide, skirted platform, alongside a collection of open ex voto-like jewelry boxes. But the most tender offering is *Wasted*, 2021, a thin silver wedge cast from cardboard, whose slender ledge holds a stuffed bird (real). A tag on its ankle reads YUCATAN, JUNE 1887. Beneath its soft brown body a dark-blue shadow, like a condolence, has been painted. If Magor’s work is about what and how we love (until we don’t), it is also about the labor of art as an invested form of looking: one that is transferred to the viewer, who is asked to question the ways in which meaning is assigned—in life as in art. Even the most forsaken things do not disappear when our backs are turned—a reality both ecological and political. That includes art objects and the humble material resurrections they offer, if we pay attention. How ordinary, how remarkable, how enduring.



FEATURES
STATION TO STATION



FEATURES
THE ANTI-AESTHETIC AT FORTY



Alla Fondazione Giuliani la complessità dell'ordinario con la nuova mostra di Liz Magor

Una forza all'interno di oggetti inanimati e materiali affiora nella ricerca di Liz Magor: un'indagine sulla loro risonanza emotiva

mercoledì 1 Novembre 2023

Sofia Di Gravio

La mostra di **Liz Magor** alla **Fondazione Giuliani** è un viaggio avvincente nel rapporto con il mondo materiale che ci circonda. L'artista canadese, con una carriera artistica di oltre quarant'anni, si è specializzata nella scultura, ma la sua opera va ben oltre il mero processo di modellazione di oggetti. L'artista ci conduce in una dimensione in cui la nozione di tempo si intreccia con la materia evocando desiderio e nostalgia. Le opere di Magor esplorano il nostro costante rapporto con le cose nella sua complessità. Lavorando con oggetti comuni di uso quotidiano, cui non si presta attenzione, l'artista utilizza diverse tecniche scultoree per donargli in forme nuove, a metà strada tra la natura morta e il perturbante. Oggetti come coperte, vestiti rovinati dagli agenti atmosferici e giocattoli abbandonati suscitano emozioni che vanno ben al di là ed anzi prescindono dal loro uso e della loro funzione originaria.



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La complessità dell'ordinario nella nuova mostra di Liz Magor



Il lavoro di Liz Magor si svela come una riflessione sulla nostra incessante ricerca di nuovi oggetti e nuove esperienze. In ogni sala della mostra, gli oggetti sono presentati in modo straordinario ed avulso dal loro contesto originale; in tal modo, essi diventano un mezzo espressivo, come una tela su cui Magor dipinge raccontandoci nuove storie e narrazioni. Questo processo crea emozioni inaspettate e spesso contrastanti. Con un gusto estetico che si muove tra il macabro e il provocatorio, l'artista ci conduce verso territori emozionali di dipendenza e paura. L'allestimento della mostra, semplice e quasi spoglio, conferisce alle opere d'arte la possibilità di occupare uno spazio minimalista e di colpire profondamente gli spettatori. La loro presenza, insieme alla loro espressività, crea un'esperienza coinvolgente che fa riflettere sulla nostra relazione con il mondo materiale che ci circonda.



https://insideart.eu/2023/11/01/la-complessita-dellordinario-nella-nuova-mostra-di-liz-magor/?fbclid=PAaABY0MXH4BVhDivw9_VTnrARPII8H6CELn63dhOTOIfPA3Rf4yCnbH5V4_aem_AVFvKMIeVPIxiNglljFVVL... 2/6

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La complessità dell'ordinario nella nuova mostra di Liz Magor

La mostra di Liz Magor alla Fondazione Giuliani è un'opportunità per riflettere sui significati più reconditi che si nascondono nell'ordinario, ovvero in ciò che costantemente ci circonda. L'artista ci sfida a guardare al di là dell'apparenza degli oggetti e della loro funzione immediata, e a esplorare il mondo ricco di significati che gli stessi possono evocare. In un'epoca dominata dall'effimero e dal superficiale, Magor ci offre l'opportunità di soffermarci sul valore estetico degli oggetti e sulle storie che essi possono raccontare.

La mostra, in definitiva, è un invito a esplorare il mondo sotto la superficie delle cose, lasciandoci emozionare e, talvolta, anche turbare da porzioni di realtà alle quali, normalmente, non prestiamo alcuna attenzione.



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fiera guarda al mondo
ma consolida le
relazioni con le
istituzioni territoriali



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REVIEW

Liz Magor's new MOCA exhibit is a provocative reflection of contemporary life



KATE TAYLOR >

PUBLISHED: SEPTEMBER 23, 2023



Liz Magor, a veteran Canadian artist based in Vancouver, has long worked with domestic and commercial materials and found objects.
IAN BRADICA/COURTESY THE ARTIST

Liz Magor's current exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Toronto includes a recent sculpture featuring a stuffed baby giraffe lying on a work table; it's rather life-like and recognizable by its extended neck, but its patterned coat is a ghostly shade, a soft metallic grey. A white ceramic cup with the dregs of a coffee sits nearby as though the toy maker or the taxidermist has just stepped out. In a larger installation that takes over most of MOCA's second level, Magor pursues this unsettling aesthetic yet further, covering the floor with box after box containing minor litter and dead birds.

Meanwhile, downstairs, the late British sculptor Phyllida Barlow is represented by a series of rough, massive columns made in big round sections, stacked up to the ceiling or lying about on the floor. Both artists use an eccentric vocabulary to make bold intrusions into the visitor's physical space yet take very different approaches to sculpture: If Magor's work hints at a dark story, Barlow's considers its materials, drawn from the urban environment.

Magor, a veteran Canadian artist based in Vancouver, has long worked with domestic and commercial materials and found objects. In *The Separation*, her new installation at MOCA, she has laid out 41 boxes, each about the size of a small tabletop and made of stiff transparent mylar, the kind of container sometimes used for food storage or



in which a dry cleaner might return a fancy dress. Each holds only a few items, civilization's scraps and leavings: empty takeout coffee cups, a few of the fluted foil papers used to hold a single chocolate and several plastic toys, miniature lions and a smiling walrus. Birds' skulls are perched on top of several boxes and fabric monkeys hang over this display, holding spotlights that they shine on it.

Magor's animals are particularly disturbing, simultaneously stuffed toys and dead things. The boxes include a bird sprayed the most unhealthy shade of metallic blue, as though the paint had killed it. The humans, meanwhile, have left the room.

There are many ways you can interpret this, but the images of a fabricated or modified nature, the leavings of consumerism and the human absence spoke to me of environmental calamity. Belatedly I wondered if the monkeys, despite their lights, are those who see, hear and speak no evil – an image of fatal innocence.

The contrast with Barlow is sharp because Magor's work is narrative, it suggests that symbolism is at play, while Barlow's work deals mainly with its materials and their presence in our space. Her columns, built in sections using grey, lumpy concrete plastered on polystyrene bases with the odd scrap of coloured ribbon sticking out, are both amusing and slightly threatening: in the manner of the most effective abstract sculpture they ask we move around them, modifying our path to their shapes.

This work, called *untitled: eleven columns; standing, fallen, broken*, dates back to 2011 and has been reconfigured for different venues over the years. The British artist, who had found fame in later life after many years teaching art, was working on a new installation for MOCA when she died last March, at the age of 78. In the absence of whatever she would have created reacting to MOCA's industrial architecture, the museum has reconfigured *eleven columns* for its ground-floor lobby. Displayed in her native Britain in the years of the London riots and the Brexit debate, it could also be read as symbolic, a statement about fallen empires and a society making do with what's at hand.

But now it is mainly an interaction with the former Tower Automotive building, which itself has heavy interior columns of grey concrete; here, Barlow's work seems like a playful dialogue with that space. There's a similar humour in *squint* (2018), a pair of cannon balls, again roughly fashioned from both cement and foam, and dangling from a wooden arm. The arm is a solid and beautifully built thing but the balls themselves look too provisional, too much like something slapped together in craft class, to actually swing out and hit anything with force.

Using everyday materials and purposefully sloppy, Barlow's sculpture comments on its own transience. She did not live in an era where it seemed like a good idea to be erecting new monuments. Nor does Magor. Their meeting at MOCA makes for a particularly provocative reflection on the current moment.

Work by Liz Magor and Phyllida Barlow is showing at the Museum of Contemporary Art Toronto to Feb. 4.



Phyllida Barlow, *untitled: eleven columns; standing, fallen, broken*, 2011.
COURTESY THE ARTIST

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LIZ MAGOR, TROUBLER L'HABI- TUDE

06.04.2018 | MATHILDE BELOUALI-DEJEAN



Liz Magor, *Carton II*, 2006, gypse polymérisé, cigarettes, gomme à mâcher, allumettes, briquets, 29,2 x 53,3 x 48,2 cm, Courtesy Marcelle Alix, Susan Hobbs et Catriona Jeffries © Liz Magor

Si Liz Magor est une sculptrice majeure de la scène nord-américaine, sa renommée reste à faire en France. Après une première exposition personnelle organisée par Claire Le Restif au Crédac, centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry-sur-Seine, en 2016, c'est au tour d'Hélène Guenin de consacrer à L. Magor une rétrospective, au musée d'Art moderne et d'Art contemporain (MAMAC) de Nice, composée d'une sélection d'œuvres créées depuis 1989.

L'artiste prouve, au sein des quatre espaces qui scandent la visite, sa maîtrise du volume et de la combinaison de différentes échelles, de l'objet que l'on tient dans sa main aux pièces que l'on habite. Son travail, qui explore le vernaculaire et le quotidien, a des allures de pauvreté, parfois de *ready-made*, qui cachent une grande complexité technique où le moulage en gypse polymérisé occupe une place de choix.

L'entrée dans l'exposition se fait avec *One Bedroom Apartment* (1996-2017), où le contenu d'un appartement semble tout juste sorti d'un camion de déménagement ou d'un garde-meubles. La présence d'éléments disruptifs, porteurs d'étrangeté, complique cette disposition faussement hasardeuse ; version après version, la seule constante de l'installation demeure le moulage d'un chien couché sous la table.

Plus loin apparaissent des piles de vêtements et de serviettes qui, lorsqu'on les contourne, se révèlent être des moules creux et hyperréalistes servant d'enveloppes à des packs de bières et à des cigarettes. À partir d'objets aux contours familiers, L. Magor instaure un jeu entre



apparences et matières, un leurre bienveillant qui se résout par la déambulation. Cette étrangeté des faux-semblants, ce va-et-vient entre objets réels et fictions sculptées est justement ce qui rend l'œuvre de L. Magor curieuse et jubilatoire, notamment pour la commissaire et la scénographe qui associent de nombreuses possibilités théâtrales et distribuent frustrations et permissions. Quant au public, il s'agit pour lui de reconnaître sa défaite et d'accepter de composer avec la présence et l'absence de pièces qui se dérobent au regard, à la façon d'*All the Names II* (2014) : un bloc de silicone, dont l'opacité rend difficile tout discernement précis, servant de réceptacle à une accumulation de reliques de la vie quotidienne qui s'y trouvent comme fossilisées. Cette série, aussi belle que silencieuse, constitue un écho fantomatique aux *Poubelles* d'Arman qu'on croise à l'étage supérieur du musée.

La production industrielle d'objets, la multitude de leurs emballages et contenants, le désir compulsif de consommation qu'ils font quelquefois naître en nous sont autant de thèmes auxquels les sculptures hétéroclites de L. Magor font appel. Elles n'excluent néanmoins pas l'idée de l'attachement sentimental à des objets existants, parfois surannés, comme ces couvertures aux couleurs fanées, qui suggèrent le confort et la protection, et que l'artiste rapièce, combine et orne. Nombreux sont d'ailleurs chez L. Magor les personnages au repos, que ce soient les chiots, les petites créatures emmaillotées appelées *Sleepers* (1999), ou même les présences énigmatiques qui gonflent les *Sleeping Bags* (1998-1999). Le kitsch, manié par touches, intervient également dans une réflexion sur le folklore lié à l'identité canadienne, avec des œuvres subtilement ironiques, comme *Banff Chair* (1991), qui flirte avec le fantasme et le fétiche. Les sculptures de L. Magor, dans leur douceur et leur mélancolie, témoignent de différentes formes de dépendance, de la gourmandise à l'addiction, avec tout ce que cela comporte d'impulsion, d'attraction et de rejet. Le MAMAC propose une exposition somptueuse, surprenante dans sa sobriété et exigeante dans son rejet du spectaculaire, qui invite le public à transmettre et à réitérer l'attention portée par l'artiste à ses œuvres.

Liz Magor, du 18 novembre 2017 au 13 mai 2018, au musée d'Art moderne et d'Art contemporain (MAMAC) (Nice, France).

Pour citer cet article :

Mathilde Belouali-Dejean, « Liz Magor, troubler l'habitude » in *Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions* magazine, [En ligne], mis en ligne le 6 avril 2018, consulté le 19 avril 2018. URL : <https://awarewomenartists.com/magazine/liz-magor-troubler-lhabitude/>.

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EXPOSITIONS

LIZ MAGOR, LES OBJETS AFFECTIFS

Découverte en France à la Friche de la Belle de Mai et exposée au Crédac, l'artiste canadienne installe son univers semé d'objets du quotidien au Mamac à Nice

ART CONTEMPORAIN

Nice. De la scène artistique de Vancouver, on retient la glorieuse aventure du photo-conceptualisme. À l'ombre de ses hérauts, Jeff Wall ou Rodney Graham, Liz Magor (née en 1948) développe depuis les années 1970 une esthétique modeste à rebours des canons élaborés par ses acolytes masculins. À la distance conceptuelle d'images construites, l'artiste canadienne préfère des environnements d'artefacts qui nous sont proches.

L'univers de Liz Magor est le produit d'une histoire affective avec des objets et c'est à travers leur médiation qu'elle envisage son rapport au monde. L'installation *One Bedroom apartment* (1996-2017), qui accueille le visiteur au Mamac (Musée d'art moderne et d'art contemporain) de Nice, en est l'affirmation programmatique. Pour chacune de ses occurrences, l'artiste assemble des objets glanés à proximité des lieux dans lesquels elle réactive sa pièce. Les cartons de cette « installation » (est-ce l'artiste qui s'installe ?) manifestent-ils un emménagement ou bien sont-ils là en vue du démontage ?

Entre occupation des lieux et abandon, l'exposition de Liz Magor est un univers sans corps. L'humain la hante pourtant par les empreintes qu'il semble y avoir laissées. Cette robe à pois suspendue ou cette cigarette qui n'en finit pas de se consumer en sont les traces. Les cendres qui en tombent mesurent la profondeur du temps dans lequel tous ces témoins historiques nous replongent. Des mains gantées, une veste de cuir négligemment posée sont autant de fantômes dont les peaux font vibrer l'atmosphère de leur présence

absente. Quitte à s'y méprendre : ces surfaces ne sont pas en cuir, mais en plâtre, moulées sur le vif... Dans ce trouble du regard se manifeste la résistance de nos sentiments à l'épreuve du réel. C'est peut-être ce que tentent de nous dire toutes ces peluches (des sculptures ?) et oiseaux taxidermisés (sont-ils endormis ?), qui jalonnent le parcours.

Une fragilité enveloppée

Comme pour protéger ce bestiaire de chambre d'enfant et ces corps absents, sacs en plastique, couvertures et autres enveloppes sont omniprésents. Sous ces doubles peaux, cigarettes et bouteilles d'alcool forment les états gonflants de l'intérieur des sculptures qui, à notre image, sont aussi fragiles que peuvent l'être des tas de chiffons. Les substances addictives forment les murs de soutien nous permettant de négocier avec le réel. Comme ces cartons moulés et posés en équilibre instable qui montrent la fragilité d'une œuvre au bord de l'effondrement.

Alors, ce réel, aussi factice soit-il, Liz Magor l'enduit d'une douceur nacrée comme pour l'appriivoiser. Mais de ce rose bonbon sourd une violence qui vient imprimer sa morsure par endroits. Présentés pour la première fois en France, plusieurs « Sleepers » (1999) jonchent le sol de l'expo. Cocons ou linéaux ? L'image de ces bébés emmaillottés, dont seule la crinière dépasse, pourra glacer d'effroi un observateur que ces choses renvoient à leur ambiguïté : des sculptures fonctionnant comme des interfaces affectives.

● CÉDRIC AURELLE, ENVOYÉ À NICE

LIZ MAGOR, jusqu'au 13 mai, Musée d'art moderne et d'art contemporain, Place Yves Klein, 06000 Nice.



Liz Magor, *One bedroom apartment*, 1996-2017, vue de l'installation au Mamac, Nice.
© Photo : Ville de Nice.



Vue de l'exposition de Benoît Maire, « Thèbes », au CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux. © Photo : Frédéric Deval/CAPC.

BENOÎT MAIRE, L'EXPOSITION COMME TOTALITÉ

En une dizaine de salles et plus de 80 œuvres, le CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux consacre à l'artiste bordelais sa plus importante monographie à ce jour. L'institution confirme son rôle clé dans le paysage français

ART CONTEMPORAIN

Bordeaux. Que l'on s'engage dans l'exposition « Thèbes » par la droite ou par la gauche, c'est le même personnage qui nous accueille en nous auscultant à travers une loupe. *Mathias* (2012), une photographie d'un ami de l'artiste, qui tel le Sphinx fait du visiteur le sujet observé, celui qui devra résoudre l'énigme. Celui-ci est invité à choisir son chemin sur un principe dialectique et à parcourir l'exposition comme une quête du sens. Benoît Maire poursuit ici son travail de mise en forme de concepts philosophiques par l'art et envisage l'exposition comme champ d'interrogation métaphysique.

Ce projet ambitieux fait dialoguer avec brio plusieurs ensembles, notamment ses peintures de nuages, des éléments de mobilier, de nouvelles séries de sculptures (« Châteaux » et « Sphinx »), des films ainsi que des journaux anciens. Une diversité de médiums à laquelle répond un accrochage qui envisage chaque salle comme une possibilité d'exposition nouvelle. On circule entre théâtralité et *white cube*, musée d'art moderne ou de traditions populaires, environnement domestique et salle d'attente, éclairage du jour et pénombre de la caverne.

L'ensemble met en tension les processus discursifs dont les œuvres, en tant que produits d'une série de décisions, sont la matérialisation. Les éléments de rebut et autres reliquats d'atelier figurent à ce titre dans l'exposition. Ce sont ces *Déchets indexés* (2014-2018) balayés dans un coin, témoins en creux des sculptures ornant les socles. Celles-ci combinent des éléments naturels, comme les coquillages, à des instruments de mesure ou d'indexation. Apparaît là une tension entre la nature et sa mise à distance par les outils conçus pour la calculer, à l'image de l'exposition comprise comme zone de conflictualité. Comme par mise en abyme, les journaux de 1939-1945 affichés aux murs cernent l'espace d'une rhétorique militaire nous ramenant dans le miroir du présent. Conflit du corps et de l'esprit également : le mobilier (par nature indécidable entre art et utilitaire) sollicite les corps là où ces *Mains* de pierre désignent le firmament comme

on s'adresse à l'esprit. Ces index levés empruntés au *Saint-Jean Baptiste* de Léonard de Vinci pointent l'ineffable autant qu'ils lancent une invitation à la jouissance.

Convoquant Emmanuel Kant dans cette zone de conflit, l'artiste explique que « l'art peut faire ciment social, car on peut échanger à son propos de manière libre ; la résolution des différends n'étant pas importante ». Et les questions abordées ici sont existentielles, comme celle qui sous-tend le film qu'il a réalisé pour l'exposition. *Le Mot origine* est l'histoire d'un homme pris dans la contingence qui, pour ne pas chercher de réponse, évacue « la » question en mangeant la poule et l'œuf.

“ L'art peut faire ciment social, car on peut échanger à son propos de manière libre ; la résolution des différends n'étant pas importante ”

BENOÎT MAIRE

Laissant le visiteur errer seul avec son estomac dans l'empire de l'énigme, Benoît Maire en tente pour sa part une résolution avec ses *Peintures de nuages*. Dans le ciel compris comme surface de projection, il précipite l'aridité du concept et la sensualité gestuelle dans la matérialité de la peinture à l'huile.

En concevant l'exposition comme un projet totalisant dans lequel le nuage, forme insaisissable par excellence, hisse l'évacuation du sujet au rang d'œuvre, l'artiste entend se situer au-dessus du conflit. Mais parvient-il pour autant à échapper à sa propre contingence, lui-même objet d'un processus historique de domination au cœur duquel se trouve un système de l'art dont il incarne la figure héroïque ?

● C. A., ENVOYÉ À BORDEAUX

BENOÎT MAIRE, THÈBES, jusqu'au 2 septembre, CAPC, Musée d'art contemporain, de Bordeaux, 7, rue Ferrère, 33000 Bordeaux, France.



Liz Magor, *Phoenix*, 2013, wool, cotton, mica, plastic, 57 x 21 1/2 x 5".

NICE

Liz Magor

MUSEE D'ART MODERNE ET D'ART CONTEMPORAIN | NICE

Place Yves Klein

November 18 - May 13

Liz Magor is extremely interested in the objects that we surround ourselves with, though this is neither because of their status as commodities nor because of their materials. What fascinates her is the physical and psychological relationships we establish with them—our emotional investment in objects and the aura they consequently assume.

To bring out this animism, Magor essentially resorts to two artistic strategies. On one hand, she juxtaposes real objects with finely detailed polymerized and colored plaster casts, creating a continuous and uncanny ambiguity between original and simulacrum, ready-made

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and sculpture. On the other hand, she considerably alters the objects or their reproductions, charging them with anthropomorphic connotations. *Tweed (Kidney)*, 2008, for example, is a cast of a folded overcoat from which a (real) liquor bottle juts out, like an organ exposed: an unsettling hybrid that calls to mind Robert Gober.

However, some of the best works in this traveling retrospective (which spans from 1989 to the present, with Nice as the final stop) belong to a group that forms a category unto itself. These are secondhand blankets, complete with stains and burn marks, on which the artist makes small manual interventions, such as mendings and applications of pieces of fabric. Magor then has the blankets dry-cleaned, and she exhibits them still partially wrapped in the dry cleaner's protective plastic coverings. They communicate the female ethics of daily care—of objects as well as bodies—but, above all, they exude a sense of precariousness and loss. And it is with this feeling, more than any other, that this exhibition of orphaned objects leaves the viewer.

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

— Simone Menegoi



Magor majeure

À Nice, le Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain consacre une rétrospective à la sculptrice canadienne la plus influente des 30 dernières années. Un événement.

Par Luc Clément, portrait Karolina Kodlubaj

"Je ne suis pas une animiste mais quand je vois un objet, je peux dire d'où il vient, quelle a été son histoire."

Liz Magor in art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s8/vancouver/



Banff Chair, 1991. Base en acier, polyuréthane, fourrure synthétique, gants en cuir. 76.2 x 121.9 x 88.9 cm. Collections du McMaster Museum of Art et McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario © Vue d'expo au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2016, photo Richard-Max Tremblay
Buck (Jagermeister), 2008. Gypse polymérisé, alcool. 40 x 76 x 66 cm. Courtesy Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver © Photo : SITE Photography

Depuis plus de quarante ans, Liz Magor s'intéresse de très près aux objets, qu'elle choisit et chérit, non pour leur qualité mais comme traces d'un vécu, stigmates endotiques d'un quotidien banal, cet infra-ordinaire dont parlait Georges Perec. Montrés à Nice pour la première fois dans une rétrospective essentielle, ses compositions, installations, assemblages font naturellement écho aux tableaux-pièges de Daniel Spoerri (*revus cet été dans la très belle exposition Écoles de Nice et issus de la collection du Mamac*). Par un regard approfondi, on comprend pourtant qu'elles se distinguent des compositions spontanées de l'artiste nouveau réaliste, le *hasard en conserve* comme les décrivait Marcel Duchamp, par l'association, invisible de prime abord, d'objets usuels et usagers, sortes de ready-made de l'obsolescence, et de fac-similés d'objets, moulés par la sculptrice dans la minutie intime de son atelier. Carton, couvertures, peluches, napperons, les laissés-pour-compte d'une société consumériste retrouvent vie dans leur rencontre avec la représentation sculpturale d'autres objets, reproduits avec tout le soin du monde, au sens plein du terme, sans que l'on sache, au final, lequel compte le plus. Sans doute cette attention particulière procède-t-elle, pour cette native du nouveau monde, d'une volonté de le documenter en créant ces artefacts archéologiques. Ainsi, l'une de ses pièces les plus connues est une sculpture en aluminium, reproduction de l'un des taudis qui peuplaient le port de Vancouver de son enfance, désormais effacés au profit d'une urbanisation galopante. Mais il semble qu'au-delà de la matérialité, la quête soit anthropologique, tant ces œuvres parlent de la mémoire et de l'usure du temps, de fragilité, de désir et d'addiction – les nombreuses références à l'alcool ou à la cigarette – une recherche de réconfort face à la menace de la disparition.



Liz Magor

ZÜRICH,
at Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst

by Penny Rafferty

Liz Magor: *Double Cabinet (Rust and Wine)*, 2001, polymerized gypsum and bottles of gin, 9 by 27 by 16 inches; at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst.



Stark fluorescent lights and vast white walls magnify the uncanniness of the domestic motifs that populate the sparse landscape of "you you you," a retrospective of work by Canadian artist Liz Magor at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst. At one end stands *One Bedroom Apartment* (1998), a group of household items and furniture pieces clustered together, as if ready for a move. Elsewhere, in *Formal I* and *Formal II* (both 2012), two chairs are draped with garment bags cast in silicone rubber. These various constructions seem oddly melancholic, the apartment installation suggesting the belongings of someone in a transitional state and the



artificial formal-wear bags, for me, evoking themes of *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller's play about the professional ambitions of a delusional ordinary man.

The exhibition assembles a diverse assortment of Magor's works dating from 1989 to the present in a single, open-plan gallery. With sculptures of chairs, stained blankets, towels, and other everyday objects, many placed directly on the floor, the overall installation suggests the contents of a partially raided store, or even a postapocalyptic scenario where only the barest remains of consumer culture are left.

What seem to be familiar objects presented as readymades are in fact casts. From certain angles, three floor-bound works from the series "Double Cabinet" (2001) appear to be merely stacks of towels or cable-knit sweaters. But from others, you see that the textiles (which are made from polymerized gypsum) are stiff, hollow constructions, their insides filled with stores of gin, beer, chewing gum, lighters, cigarettes. Similar openings appear in many of Magor's sculptures. *Tweed (Kidney)*, 2008, is a hard sculpture of a folded, multicolored coat that bears a slit just large enough for the tequila bottle inserted into it.

For the most part, the works on display are recognizable examples of Magor's signature approach, but the oldest piece on view, *Field Work* (1989), looks quite different. It consists of a selection of black-and-white snapshots from the late 1960s showing Magor's white friends wearing moccasins and feathered headdresses while fishing, sunbathing, or sitting around an open fire. When Magor first displayed the photographs as an innocent document of hippie hedonism, she was strongly criticized for her cultural appropriation, since the work (which she titled after Edward Curtis's photogravure portraits of Native Americans from the late '70s) seemed to trivialize indigenous traditions. After this incident, Magor shifted her tactics of appropriation toward sculpture and installation. Her willingness to reckon with past follies is rare. Furthermore, displaying *Field Work* alongside her subsequent pieces shows the vitality and adaptability of her conceptual framework. The unsettling result locates cultural appropriation among the normalizing fantasies of domestic life.



Liz Magor

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A reflective approach on our unconscious interaction with the material world



Liz Magor, Buck (Jagermeister), 2008 - Courtesy Catriona Jaries Gallery © the artist

Liz Magor (Canada, 1948) investigates the culture of production and value as well as the associated ambivalent relationship humans have with consumer goods. Magor's creative practice starts with forays into thrift stores and second-hand shops. Timeworn and sentimental objects that once made someone's life more comfortable, added a decorative touch, or served as personal mementos, resurface in these stores as anonymous and disparate flotsam.

The artist is interested in a wide range of discarded articles, from clothing to trinkets, and she attempts to restore the allure and charm

they have lost through various studio interventions. Her artistic transformation of the world of everyday life challenges our understanding of central aesthetic categories such as reality and simulation, presence and absence, attention and indifference. Categories that are central to the logic underlying the utilization of material and objects but also the culture of art exhibitions.

The Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst presents Liz Magor's first extensive exhibition in Switzerland. The retrospective focuses on sculptures and installations created over the past three decades.

Sculptures such as *Banff Chair* (1991), *Eddie's White Wonder* (1994), *Tent* (1999) and *Chee-to* (2000), take a critical view of idealized notions of nature and self-reliance that are entrenched in the collective memory of North American culture. The nineteenth century exploration of the Rocky Mountains by the so-called «mountain men» (trappers, adventurers, prospectors) has left its traces in mundane consumer products and equipment that imitate the style of the period. Magor articulates her own take on this culturally ingrained nostalgia by employing targeted material interventions to invent new relationships between things. Objects are released from their conventional meaning and become available for reconsideration.



Liz Magor, you you you, 2017 - Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst - photo FBM Studio



Liz Magor, GoodShepherd, 2016 - Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst
- photo Site photography

Since the late 1990s, Liz Magor has extended her practice by combining found objects and casts: cigarettes and half empty liquor bottles meet believable plaster casts of discarded household goods. Formally speaking, these works consider mould making and casting as a form of unsuccessful repetition. Magor's pieces bear visible traces of their making retaining the marks of their struggle to come to visibility. It is this lack of ease that contributes to their immediacy and break with the familiar.

Magor's interest in textiles is evident throughout her oeuvre. The artist worked with found blankets emphasizing the traces of

material failure by repairing holes, enhancing stains and altering the shape of these exhausted forms. Once reworked, the sculptures are dry-cleaned and presented on hangers, still wrapped in the cleaners' plastic bags. A recognizable method of protection applied to a now strange object. The gesture of solicitude, protection, and preservation—another aspect in the cycle of human consumption—is also the focus of some of her recent pieces.

The exhibition at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst was conceived in close cooperation with Kunstverein in Hamburg and realised in partnership with Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, as well as with Vancouver Contemporary Art Gallery.

Liz Magor: you you you

Curator: Heike Munder
Until 07.05.2017

Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst

Zurich, Switzerland
www.migrosmuseum.ch



Liz Magor, you you you, 2017 - Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst -
photo FBM Studio



VISUAL ART

Liz Magor

by Benjamin Klein

Liz Magor's exhibition "Habitude" at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is the largest major survey of the artist to date, corralling a comprehensive swath of artwork from approximately 40 years of her production. Co-curated by Lesley Johnstone, curator and head of exhibitions and education at MACM, and York University associate professor of modern and contemporary art, Dan Adler, the show is scheduled to tour, with stops at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Zürich, Switzerland, and the Kunstverein in Hamburg, Germany.

Accompanied by an excellent catalogue, a touring show of this scope provides a proper chance to more fully encounter an artist whose work gains in emotional and intellectual reverberations the more of her wide-ranging oeuvre we are able to engage with at once. Her aesthetic propositions are appreciably skilful, self-aware and thoroughgoing, as well as pleasurable, layered with good-humoured analysis and commentary. Available in large doses, her project takes on an inclusive particularity, revealing a driven, long-term plan of investigatory aesthetic research through explorative making. The work manifests substantial acumen and provides challenging enjoyments, and in "Habitude" the scope of her achievement is revealed as broadly flexible and systematically ambitious, operating across the eclectic, multivalent spectrum of three-dimensional contemporary art.

Magor appears to have been trying since her early maturity to respond to and utilize the post-structuralist ideas that helped form the nexus of her generation's aesthetics—those of early Postmodernism at its most



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exciting—while quietly trying to incorporate a highly personal but nonetheless self-conscious form of existential subjectivism. Sixties's culture and its aftermaths have exemplified this dichotomized identity from pop art to the Nouvelle Vague, academic Marxism to arena rock. And Magor's work begins to disclose surprising effects as more time is spent with the show. The viewer may expect a coolly rigorous line of conceptual conclusions, especially from certain pieces that exhibit the symptoms of belonging to that area of influence. But even there a sense of private and expressive content emerges the longer we look. An example is *Messenger*, 1996–2002, which occupies its own room and comprises a life-sized cabin whose interior we glimpse through two windows. Mimetically, it initially seems to belong to a crackpot survivalist, and to offer a stern social critique, a warning to the

viewer, perhaps about alienated ultra-conservatives going stir-crazy deep in the woods. But after an examination of the esoteric and wide-ranging objects within, which run from the found to the carefully fabricated (including a sleeping dog sculpture) and the self-evident to the very bizarre, the piece begins to emanate the oddly unsettling sense of being the lair of a misfit or hermit artist, but also some sort of complex synecdoche or cypher for the meaning set "Artist." *Messenger*, a title of quiet but not literal eschatological force, is a moving demonstration of the phenomenon of necessary outliers.

Magor's work strangely seems to belong to minimalism and conceptualism the more she forces the boundaries of what those systems have conventionally accepted, proving by experimentation that the rules themselves are provisional and subject to redefinition. It seems accurate to call

1. Liz Magor, *On the Shores at Nootka*, 1999, from "Field Work," 1 of 10 silver prints, 55.9 x 71.1 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo: Trevor Mills. All images courtesy Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.
2. *Stack of Trays*, 2008, polymerized gypsum, chewing gum, found objects, 25 x 45 x 47 cm. Private collection, Calgary. Photo: Scott Massey.



her a post-minimalist with strong conceptualist aspects, but Magor's practice contains the mass and gravity to be seen as its own world, not a satellite of someone else's—artist or theoretician.

In the process-based work *Production*, 1980, she exhibits both the means of production and the product of her labour—a large multi-sided wall of paper bricks and the machine she used to make them—cannily implying that the visual strength of the result is in the meaning of the process, while the piece's formidable physicality derives from the rigour of its planning and execution. This kind of QED is everywhere in "Habitue" but doesn't seem hectoring or academic and is communicated without loss of sensuous immediacy.

There is a plethora of different artwork to consider, from her trademark shelf pieces and installation of naturalized and synthetic animals, to her frequent use of polymerized gypsum as the *tabula rasa* onto which to inscribe a multitude of subjects, to the majestic recent piece *The Good Shepard*, 2016, which occupies its own wall and synthesizes

beautiful formal presence with keenly objective presentness, and much more. She offers materials and meanings of and in enormous variety. The show makes finely explicit Magor's configurations of space through the precise use and installation of materials which she deploys in ways that are both innately self-referential and indexical in their rotating axes of reference. The work subtly blurs the line between an academically professional exploration of theoretical propositions and putative tropes, and a private language of existential expression.

In the piece *Cabin in the Snow*, 1989, a quiet analogy is drawn between the meaning of northern (perhaps tacitly Canadian) identity and artistic inspiration, as we look through a darkened glass window to catch a glimpse of a small model-like wooden cabin, glowing from within with a quietly warm light, in the middle of a midnight expanse of snow. The value of real-world solitude imaginatively takes shape the longer we view this vision of a soft sublime. Any possible saccharine feeling is absent, frozen out of possibility, in a subject that risks a too-easily

romanticized or comforting reading with clear artistic sure-footedness. We are in fact situated in a peacefully firm manner in diachronic time, observing and feeling the force of Magor's wintry beacon, as though we are headed home, and it seems to expand and fill the landscape with a growing inner self, possessing both knowable and unknowable elements, a voice and a message from the other side of the dark glass.

It's gratifying and exciting that the show is going to be seen in Europe (albeit in a somewhat smaller incarnation) since it's often a rarity, even for the artists considered the most important in Canada, to get that chance. "Habitue" proves that Magor is certainly worthy of the opportunity.

"Habitue" was exhibited at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal from June 22 to September 5, 2016. ■

Benjamin Klein is a Montreal-based artist, writer and independent curator.



EXPOSITION

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LE QUOTIDIEN DE L'ART | LUNDI 28 NOV. 2016 NUMÉRO 1182

LIZ MAGOR, THE BLUE ONE COMES IN BLACK
Crédac, Ivry-sur-Seine - Jusqu'au 18 décembre

Liz Magor au Crédac : magistrale délicatesse

L'artiste canadienne Liz Magor, née en 1946, réalise sa première exposition personnelle institutionnelle en France au Crédac à Ivry-sur-Seine. Découverte dans l'Hexagone à travers un ensemble d'œuvres montrées à Triangle (Marseille) en 2013, elle a ensuite rejoint la galerie Marcelle Alix (Paris) qui vient de présenter cet automne un *solo show* de ses dernières réalisations. *Par Cédric Aurelle*



Liz Magor, vue de l'exposition « The Blue One Comes in Black », Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry - le Crédac, 2016.
Sweet Airs, 2016, gypse polymérisé, feuille plastique, tissu, papier. Courtesy Marcelle Alix, Paris.
© André Morin / le Crédac.



Liz Magor, vue de l'exposition « The Blue One Comes in Black », Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry - le Crédac, 2016.
Silver Body, 2016, gypse polymérisé, tissu. Courtesy de l'artiste et Marcelle Alix, Paris.

LE PASSAGE
DU TEMPS, LES
MATÉRIAUX
TEXTILES ET
LA BELLE
MANUFACTURE
SONT DES
ÉLÉMENTS
DÉTERMINANTS
DE L'ŒUVRE DE
LIZ MAGOR

Quel meilleur endroit que le Crédac pour faire résonner l'œuvre de Liz Magor ? Ce lieu conserve de son histoire industrielle les stigmates d'activités humaines ayant traversé le temps et contient une invitation à divaguer dans ses plis, tel un lacet se faufilant dans les trous d'une étoffe dont la tenue serait assurée par les produits de cette ancienne Manufacture des Ceilleets. Le passage du temps, les matériaux textiles et la belle manufacture sont des éléments déterminants de l'œuvre de Liz Magor. Cette artiste a construit depuis la fin des années 1960 à Vancouver un délicat travail de sculpture en marge et à l'ombre de l'épopée masculine héroïque de la photographie incarnée par ses confrères Jeff Wall et Rodney Graham. De celle-ci, Liz Magor retiendra la question de la capture de l'instant, privilégiant le moulage pour reproduire le visible, un chemin de traverse la conduisant à explorer le réel par la collecte d'objets.

L'accrochage de la salle principale du Crédac fait la part belle à l'important travail que l'artiste réalise depuis plusieurs années à partir de couvertures en laine. Chinés, recyclés, pliés et suspendus à des cintres, semblant tout droit sortis du pressing dont ils conservent parfois les films d'emballage, ces lainages délavés par le temps évoquent un musée imaginaire dont la collecte aurait été effectuée dans nos greniers et la présentation s'inspirerait de kakemonos japonais. Mais la mutité des surfaces, la rareté des motifs et la parcimonie des touches de polychromie ne livrent ici aucun récit, n'était la présence d'étiquettes dont la lecture renvoie à l'histoire socio-économique de la région de Vancouver : « Baie d'Hudson », « 100 % pure laine », « Girlaine »... Ce à quoi Liz Magor semble inviter le spectateur,

/...



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LE QUOTIDIEN DE L'ART | LUNDI 28 NOV. 2016 NUMÉRO 1152

LIZ MAGOR AU CRÉDAC : MAGISTRALE D' LICATESSE

Liz Magor, vue de l'exposition « The Blue One Comes in Black », Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry - le Crédac, 2016.
Au premier plan : *Chère Juliette*, 2014, gypse polymérisé, tissu, étiquettes, ficelle, papier, sacs en plastique. Courtesy Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto.
Au second plan, de gauche à droite : *French from France*, 2013, laine, tissu, fil, métal, bois. Courtesy Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver ; *Chinese Green*, 2011, laine, tissu, métal, fil, bois. Collection Sue Kidd, Toronto. © André Morin / le Crédac.

Liz Magor, vue de l'exposition « The Blue One Comes in Black », Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry - le Crédac, 2016.
De gauche à droite : *Alberta / Quebec*, 2013, laine, tissu, fil, teinture, plastique, métal, bois. Courtesy Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver et Marcelle Alix, Paris.
Phoenix, 2013, laine, coton, fil, flocons de mica. Lafayette Anticipation - Fonds de dotation Famille Moulin, Paris. © André Morin / le Crédac.

SUITE DE LA PAGE 06 c'est à une plongée dans le cœur de la matière, à en soulever métaphoriquement les replis, comme pour y retrouver l'insondable secret recélé par les pans de textiles usagés, afin d'inhaler l'effluve ultime d'histoires évaporées. Si ces tartans résistent à l'interprétation, c'est qu'ils s'adressent avant tout à l'émotion déclenchée par la présence résiduelle de souvenirs retenus à la croisée de la trame et des fils de chaîne. L'artiste viendrait pour ainsi dire en stopper la désagrégation par ce passage au pressing, rendant aux textiles la prestance relative que confère, telle une béquille à un corps estropié, la cambrure d'un cintre. Cette réhabilitation du corps-textile, Liz Magor la pousse jusque dans ses plaies intimes, enduisant de gypse les trous de mites ou de cigarettes - ménageant ce que l'on pourrait appeler ici des œilleux -, venant cautériser à tout jamais les outrages du temps. Ces différents lais dessinent la toile de fond de l'exposition à la manière d'une partition d'émotions contenues.

À même le sol sont disposées deux séries d'œuvres. *Mademoiselle Raymonde* et *Chère Juliette* (2014), deux sacs en carton renversés, qui s'avèrent être des moulages hyperréalistes, peignent à retenir quantité de papiers d'emballage, tissus, napperons et menus objets enveloppés de blister. Leur répondent deux parallélépipèdes de silicone translucides, *All the names II* et *III* (2014), dans la chair desquels on distingue des liasses épistolaires. Par-delà la surface des matières, Liz Magor nous invite à percer la profondeur des choses et fouiller leur intérieur du regard, dans une opération lestée d'une certaine charge érotique. Par nature rétive à la pénétration, l'œuvre se défend ici par son jeu de voiles ambigu, par ses films translucides et ses ourlets empesés qui résistent au retournement total, mais dont les étiquettes retournées et les revers apparents suggèrent un hypothétique abandon.

Dans la salle suivante sont présentées de petites boîtes en carton collées au mur, moulages parfaitement illusionnistes juchés de mains gantées moulées, paperolles entassées et autres oiseaux taxidermisés. Ces œuvres apparaissent dans un équilibre au bord de l'effondrement, flirtant avec la béance du réel qui s'ouvre à leur flanc, prises du même vertige que le regardeur éprouve devant leur perfection illusionniste. L'étoile noire accrochée en regard et percée d'orifices enduits de gypse argenté en souligne l'insondable profondeur par son horizon étoilé. Un infini sombre toutefois, qui trahit une présence morbide traversant l'œuvre de Liz Magor qui culmine dans la dernière salle aux rideaux tirés avec sa grande sculpture *Sweet Airs* (2016), portrait en creux par ses atours d'une jeune fille absente, un cénotaphe pourrait-on dire.

L'œuvre de Liz Magor se situe à ce point de jonction dans lequel la matière et le temps se télescopent dans une œuvre qui fait jaillir dans l'exercice de la plus parfaite manufacture non pas l'illusion d'une réalité plus vraie que nature mais l'expérience même de ce que pourrait être le réel : l'empreinte visible du sentiment généré par le croisement d'un souvenir et d'un regard dans la trame des matériaux corrodés par le temps.

LIZ MAGOR, THE BLUE ONE COMES IN BLACK, jusqu'au 18 décembre, Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry - le Crédac, La Manufacture des Œilleux, 1 place Pierre Gosnat, 94200 Ivry-sur-Seine, <http://www.credac.fr>



Rendez-vous

Rencontre le samedi
3 décembre à 16 heures
entre Cécilia Becanovic,
codirectrice de la galerie
Marcelle Alix (Paris),
et Claire Le Restif,
directrice du Crédac.



MARCELLE ALIX. PARIS

Liz Magor Humidor

"Liz Magor's wall sculptures are delicate companions that teach us something every day about how we relate to the Other, whether human or not, animate or inanimate. Rather than telling us off, they guide us towards a symbiotic relationship along which old cardboard boxes and plastic bags affirm life within an entropic system; where the familiar, in the hands of the artist, unveils its regenerative potential, its infinite strength. There is no fatigue in the habits that Liz and the gallery's artists approach here with us, these are bewitching rituals that dare to reach for the others by an accumulation and juxtaposition of points of view that make this place a home to our chosen family".

Liz Magor, *Buckle*, 2016. Marcelle Alix, Paris





Liz Magor au Crédac

Par Camille Paulhan

Liz Magor – The Blue One Comes in Black.
La Crédac, Ivry-sur-Seine
Jusqu'au 18/12/2016

EXPOSITION

Bien qu'elle soit une figure importante de la scène canadienne, il serait difficile de dire de Liz Magor (née en 1948) qu'elle bénéficie d'une reconnaissance institutionnelle en France. Le Crédac lui consacre actuellement une exposition présentant une vingtaine d'œuvres très récentes, qui ravira sans doute ceux qui connaissent déjà un peu son travail, très peu montré en France, mais qui laissera sans doute un peu sur leur faim ceux qui souhaiteraient voir de son œuvre une présentation plus rétrospective.

Une certaine austérité parcourt les salles du Crédac, et il faut s'armer de patience pour que les œuvres, plus du côté du peu que de la démonstration emphatique, se laissent découvrir. Car on serait bien en peine de les envisager d'un seul coup d'œil, elles dont l'apparence parfois ordinaire cache de bien discrets détails. Les références à l'univers domestique, par le biais de pièces de laine qui semblent sortir du pressing, parfois encore recouvertes de leurs housses en plastique, ne sont qu'un leurre: il faut s'approcher, puis s'approcher encore, pour distinguer fils tirés, raccommodages, ici une mèche de cheveux ondulés, là des trous mités cerclés de gypse polymérisé argenté, de légers flocons de mica semblables à des écailles de poisson égarées ou des traces pailletées... Ces couvertures épaisses, accrochées à des cintres, pourraient connoter une certaine rigidité – on songe au feutre de Joseph Beuys ou de Robert Morris – mais toutes ces petites marques additionnelles parlent nécessairement d'autre chose. Difficile de ne pas penser à des sécrétions, à toutes sortes d'humeurs diurnes ou nocturnes, mais également, dans ces empreintes délicates qui suggèrent le corps sans jamais le montrer, à des formes de blessure: les tissus ont pu être cousus et recousus, mais il faudra là encore accepter de se pencher sur ces formes modestes pour s'en rendre compte.

Un autre ensemble d'œuvres, proches de capsules temporelles, joue



Liz Magor, Vue de l'exposition *The Blue One Comes in Black*, Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry – le Crédac, 2016.
De gauche à droite:
Alberta / Quebec, 2013. Laine, tissu, fil, teinture, plastique, métal, bois. Courtesy Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver et Marcelle Alix, Paris.
Phoenix, 2013. Laine, coton, fil, flocons de mica. Lafayette Anticipation – Fonds de dotation Famille Moulin, Paris.
© André Morin / le Crédac.

aussi sur une apparence déceptive: dans les *All the names* (2014), des objets ont été englués dans un bloc de silicone: l'un renferme des petits paquets mystérieux dont on ne saura rien, l'autre des papiers, peut-être des échantillons de tissus. On distingue les contours de ce qui affleure, avant que les objets les plus profondément enfouis ne se perdent dans une sorte de flou blanchâtre, entre le brumeux et l'aspect de verre dépoli. Comme pour les couvertures laineuses, l'œil hésite face à ces objets mémoriels pour savoir ce qui relève de la mollesse et qui se situerait plutôt du côté de la dureté.

C'est également le cas pour ses moulages de fragiles cartons d'emballages, que le gypse polymérisé rend secs et cassants alors que leur surface est faite, comme une peau, de rides et de plis plus ou moins marqués. Ces structures soutiennent des objets communs ensachés et posés là, entre le déchet et la relique – mais les deux ne se rejoignent-ils pas, excréments vulgaires ou sacrés? L'une d'entre elles est couronnée d'une main jaune, qui renferme un bien délicat oiseau mort, aux yeux cousus. Le dépérissement, la mort et l'oubli semblent guetter à chaque œuvre, en dépit d'apparences bien peu spectaculaires: en guise d'apparitions mélancoliques, des cartons abandonnés, des accumulations d'objets communs et des couvertures tachées et reprises.

En dépit de la qualité des œuvres

de Liz Magor présentées au Crédac, l'exposition laisse un goût de trop peu, pas en terme de quantité mais réellement en matière d'étendue chronologique du travail de l'artiste, très peu montré en France. Elle a en effet travaillé auparavant à de nombreuses productions qui manifestaient aussi cette idée de la transition et de la fixité, mais avec des formes différentes: dans les années 1970, elle s'intéresse aux nids d'oiseaux, puis élabore de mortifères compressions de vêtements moulés. Lors de la décennie suivante, elle fabrique des murs compacts avec des briques de papiers journaux et réalise un hommage à une femme âgée de son entourage, Dorothy, en gravant des récits sur sa vie sur de petits poids de plomb aux formes variées. Loin de moi l'idée de penser qu'un centre d'art devrait organiser des rétrospectives semblables à celles que les musées proposent, mais il est certain que l'exceptionnelle exposition que le Crédac avait présentée en 2015 autour du travail de Bruno Pélassy avait mis la barre un peu haut. Malgré la frustration, l'exposition demeure riche en promesses, comme en témoigne la photographie *A Thousand Quarrels* (2014), grand tirage noir et blanc aux reflets bleutés: des découpes franches laissent entrevoir la scène, mystérieuse, d'une sortie de terrier. Autour de nous, les racines et les feuilles mortes, mais au loin, une lumière très blanche dessine un horizon. §



EN DIRECT
DES GALERIES

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LE QUOTIDIEN DE L'ART | JEUDI 20 OCTOBRE 2016 | NUMÉRO 2259

NOCTURNE DES GALERIES — Paris
Jeudi 20 octobre de 18 h 00 à 22 h 00

Entre chien et loup, les galeries ouvrent aux nyctalopes

Comme chaque année depuis 2011, les galeries parisiennes font leur nocturne à l'occasion de la FIAC. *Par Cécilie Aurelle*



La nyctalopie est cette faculté permettant de mieux voir le soir et de développer une vision crépusculaire. Pour ceux que les lumières trop violentes du monde aveuglent et que la verrière du Grand Palais éblouit, les galeries parisiennes ouvrent leurs portes pour une visite entre chien et loup. On commencera notre parcours tout en douceur à Saint-Germain-des-Prés à la galerie Arnaud Lefebvre qui présente — en écho à son stand sur la FIAC et au *solo show* curaté par Guillaume Désanges à La Verrière-Fondation d'entreprise Hermès à Bruxelles — une série d'œuvres de l'artiste féministe Hesse qui, dans les années 1970, réinterpréta

Louis-Cyprien Rials, *And there was no miraculous*, Kazakhstan 2016, extrait vidéo. Courtesy de l'artiste.

LA GALERISTE
CORÉENNE
DOHYANG LEE
PRÉSENTE LE
PREMIER SOLO
SHOW DE LOUIS-
CYPRIEN RIALS
QUI ENVOIE
DES CARTES
POSTALES DE SES
PÉRÉGRINATIONS
GÉOPOLITIQUES
EXTRÊMES

la grille minimaliste en autant de broderies. On poursuivra en direction de la rue Mazarine et de l'installation du Congolais Sammy Baloji chez Imane Farès qui présente un bel ensemble de papier peint et plafonniers en cuivre avec motifs de scarifications. On ira ensuite se faire peur devant les dernières productions des frères Jake & Dinos Chapman chez Kamel Menmoun, avant de terminer ce petit tour sur la Rive Gauche par le quai des Grands-Augustins. Gaudel de Stampa y présente sous sa verrière les œuvres du Berlinoïse Samuel Jeffery, cubes et miroirs qui accumulent poussières, couches de peinture et traces de vie sous des dehors froidement minimalistes. De là, on empruntera le pont des Arts en direction du Marais, où l'on fera une première étape rue Quincampoix chez Dohyang Lee. La galeriste coréenne présente le premier *solo show* du prometteur Louis-Cyprien Rials qui envoie des cartes postales de ses pérégrinations géopolitiques extrêmes : Tchernobyl, la ligne de front de l'État islamique, la ligne verte de Chypre, et un film tourné aux abords du lac Chagan, au Kazakhstan, cratère produit par un essai nucléaire soviétique ; on l'en voit sortir de son eau radioactive, en larmes, et se faire sécher au soleil. On repense aux pleurs de Bas Jan Ader, mais Cally Spooner, que l'on ira voir ensuite chez gb Agency, nous rappelle que les larmes peuvent être fausses, par le biais de son projet inspiré du courrier mouillé de gouttes d'eau qu'adressa en littérature l'hypocrite Rodolphe à Madame Bovary.

De là, plusieurs options s'offriront au visiteur. Ceux qui ne croient plus à rien et considèrent que l'art est une *commodity*, comme on dit outre-Manche, iront chez Perrotin faire le plein des dernières productions de Takashi Murakami — inutile de prévoir le *shopping bag*, certaines peintures sont présentées avec. Ceux qui voudraient y croire encore tenteront de réveiller l'âme du héros masculin en formulant des invocations visuelles au formalisme zombi devant les toiles abstraites de Jacob Kassay présentées par Art : Concept. Et ceux qui prennent le parti du rire ou de la beauté d'indifférence iront à la Galerie de Multiples fêter le centenaire du mouvement Dada avec les dernières productions de la « Collection DADA Fétiche ». Quant aux mélancoliques, ils pourront toujours se réfugier chez Chantal Crousel pour y respirer l'« ETHER » raréfié d'une exposition collective consacrée à ce qui pourrait être le produit de la sublimation de la matière. Quoi /...



EN DIRECT DES GALERIES

ENTRE CHIEN
ET LOUP,
LES GALÉRIES
OUVRENT AUX
NYCTALOPES

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LE QUOTIDIEN DE L'ART | JEUDI 20 OCTOBRE 2016 | NUMÉRO 2258



Liz Magor, Buckle
(détail), 2016, gypse
polymérisé,
250 x 109 x 18 cm.
© Photo : Aurélien
Mole. Courtesy
Marcelle Alix, Paris.

SUITE DE LA PAGE 21 qu'il en soit, personne ne quittera le Marais sans passer chez mfc-michèle didier affronter les Guerrilla Girls, sauf à se faire taxer de couard : assez tortillé, il est plus que temps de mesurer le déficit de visibilité des femmes dans le monde de l'art en France et, même si la nuit, tou(te)s les chat(te)s sont gris(es), inutile de faire semblant de n'y rien entendre aux questions de genre. À quelques encablures de là, on prendra le métro ligne 11 du métro à République pour se rendre à Belleville, qui n'est qu'à deux stations. On remontera la rue de Belleville pour commencer par Marcelle Alix et les magnifiques sculptures de Liz Magor qui font écho à l'indispensable exposition que le Crédac, à Ivry-sur-Seine, consacre à cette artiste canadienne. On redescendra en passant chez Jocelyn Wolff qui présente le travail du cinéaste plasticien allemand Clemens von Wedemeyer dans une reprise partielle de l'exposition « P.O.V. (Point of View) » organisée par le Neuer Berliner Kunstverein de Berlin au printemps 2016. L'artiste y présente une sélection de ses films analysant la production du Baron Vietinghoff-Riesch, cinéaste amateur allemand qui filma l'arrière des lignes de front au cours de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Dernière étape chez Antoine Levi, avec le délicat Francesco Gennari qui poursuit son travail sur les matières comme interprétation de ses états d'esprits et changements d'humeur. « Je voudrais être moi-même, mais seulement à la lumière du Soleil », nous dit son bloc de verre de Murano chargé d'alexandrite qui change de couleur selon la lumière. L'éclairage artificiel d'une visite nocturne le rendra bleu turquoise ou bleu foncé, alors que l'éclairage naturel d'une visite de jour l'aurait laissé mauve. Une visite crépusculaire qui permet ainsi de voir les œuvres différemment. Et pas seulement pour les nyctalopes. ●



NOCTURNE DES
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BONS PLANS & INVITS



Alors qu'une rétrospective vient de lui être consacrée au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, l'artiste canadienne Liz Magor, née en 1948, investit l'espace industriel du Crédac. Dans son exposition *The Blue One Comes in Black*, elle explore avec une surprenante tendresse le monde vulnérable des objets.

Liz Magor se préoccupe principalement des objets délaissés, usés. Ainsi, des couvertures achetées dans des magasins de seconde main se trouvent, après leur nettoyage au pressing, suspendues à des cintres, pliées, repassées et même reprises. De ce geste artistique émane une grande bienveillance à l'égard de ces pièces de tissu, que l'artiste soigne véritablement. Panser les plaies d'une vieille couverture trouée, quoi de plus juste, au fond, quand celle-ci a passé sa vie d'objet à réchauffer des corps ? D'autant que ces corps ont laissé leur empreinte : marques d'usure, accrocs, brûlures de cigarettes... Ces objets disent quelque chose de leurs anciens propriétaires, ils sont les témoins attachants de vies anonymes, aussi portent-ils en eux de grandes potentialités narratives. Et par le traitement affectueux que l'artiste leur applique, ces objets en fin de vie, abandonnés, acquièrent le statut d'œuvre d'art. Quel saisissement de constater que, sur les murs de l'espace d'exposition, les couvertures prennent indubitablement l'allure de toiles abstraites : l'objet mis au rebut, oublié, attire à nouveau les regards ! Naît alors un sentiment d'empathie mêlé d'amertume, face à ce qui émerge douloureusement ici : l'évidente absence de pérennité dans les liens qui nous unissent aux objets, si caractéristique de notre société.



Pour les préserver de la détérioration due au temps et à l'usage, l'artiste abrite également divers objets dans d'étranges enveloppes protectrices en silicone (série *All The Names*, 2014). Ces boîtes translucides font l'effet de modestes capsules temporelles, pourtant bien déterminées à traverser les années. Une certaine luminescence émane de ces œuvres, ajoutant au mystère de leur contenu rendu indiscernable par l'épaisseur du caoutchouc.

Les sacs de courses échoués sur le sol un peu plus loin se trouvent eux aussi figés dans leur état actuel. Il s'agit en vérité de moulages incroyablement réalistes, conçus en gypse polymérisé, témoignant d'un délicat travail de sculpture. Devenus armures, ils semblent protéger plus efficacement les fragiles choses qu'ils contiennent. Dans de curieux assemblages, divers objets (oiseau naturalisé, ours en peluche...) sont disposés sur des socles : ce sont là encore des reproductions en gypse polymérisé, qui revêtent l'apparence trompeuse de boîtes en carton. Si ces associations entre moulages renversants de réalisme et objets réels peuvent surprendre ou amuser, ils interrogent également, en filigrane, sur le rapport hiérarchique existant entre sculpture et ready-made.

Ainsi, Liz Magor dialogue avec le monde matériel. Avec une douceur mélancolique, elle donne vie à un univers singulier et touchant de délicatesse, au sein duquel les objets semblent habités d'une existence propre. Qu'elle répare les blessures du temps en soignant des objets dévalués, ou qu'elle fige dans le temps des objets du quotidien dans ses moulages hyper réalistes... Liz Magor s'efforce de garder les choses vivantes le plus longtemps possible et sonde avec justesse notre rapport au temps, à la mort.

Liz Magor, *The Blue One Comes in Black*, Jusqu'au 18 décembre Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry - Le Crédac, La Manufacture des Œillets, 25-29 rue Raspail, 94200 Ivry-sur-Seine. M°Mairie d'Ivry / RER C, Ivry-sur-Seine, Tous les jours sauf le lundi, de 14h à 18h (19h le weekend). Entrée libre.

Jusqu'au 29 octobre, Liz Magor présente également l'exposition *Humidor* à la galerie Marcelle Alix.

<http://www.anousparis.fr/culture/expos/la-vie-des-objets-0>



expos

babas de laine

Avec **Sheila Hicks** et **Liz Magor**, la laine s'expose sous tous les plis à Paris. Tissage et raccommodage font bon ménage dans les magnétiques installations de ces deux voix délicates de la scène artistique contemporaine.



Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, courtesy of the artist

Laine, lin, coton, fibres en tous genres, pelotes géantes entremêlées dans des installations bariolées, riches de mille nuances chromatiques, cordages ou simples vêtements posés sur un cintre... Le textile s'expose à Paris en cette rentrée, mais au-delà d'un quelconque salon professionnel vantant les mérites de l'artisanat et du tissage. Outre de rapprocher, en effaçant leur ligne de partage, les arts appliqués et l'art contemporain, deux artistes, d'une jeunesse insolente, attentives aux étoffes et objets de nos vies – l'Américaine Sheila Hicks, 82 ans, et la Canadienne Liz Magor, 68 ans – réconcilient avec le tricot les traumatisés des cours de travaux manuels au collège, où la transmission du geste délicat de tisser se faisait à la serpe, les mains sales dans le mohair hostile.

Chez Sheila Hicks, la laine devient la matière d'une extase visuelle, comme si, travaillée et sculptée dans l'atelier parisien de l'artiste (elle y est installée depuis 1964), la fibre pouvait s'extraire de sa condition domestique pour se fondre dans l'espace-monde et l'irradier. Face à ses sublimes assemblages de pelotes, posées les unes sur les autres et dans lesquelles on aimerait plonger, comme dans une piscine de David Hockney, on en vient à oublier la matière de la laine elle-même pour ne s'attacher qu'à l'abstraction qui s'en dégage.

Dans ses variations de couleurs et de matières, exposées chez Frank Elbaz (*Si j'étais de laine, vous m'accepteriez ?*), la laine est le support d'une pure et douce sculpture, dont la fébrilité tient moins à la souplesse des fils qu'à la grâce des mouvements qu'elle dessine. C'est un appel sensuel qu'elle semble lancer à celui qui la contemple, à la fois surpris et excité par la révélation d'un pouvoir d'attraction insoupçonné.

Dans la cour du musée Carnavalet, où le Festival d'Automne l'a invitée à installer ses tissages, Sheila Hicks se tourne vers une forme de land art : le paysage rigoureux d'un vieux musée du XVI^e siècle s'accorde à la présence discrète de couleurs pop. Dissimulée, au sol, parmi les buissons verts, épousant les courbes du jardin, la laine a la beauté d'un fleuve rouge ou d'une rivière bleue. Tombant aussi, telle une chute d'eau, du balcon du premier étage, les fils de laine de Sheila Hicks, tondus dans le décor, confèrent à la bien-nommée cour des Marchands-Drapiers le statut d'une cour des miracles polychromée.

Depuis qu'elle a découvert, dans les années 1950, la sophistication des tisserands péruviens dans les civilisations précolombiennes, Sheila Hicks n'a jamais cessé de consacrer sa vie au textile pour en faire autre chose qu'une technique artisanale, pour œuvrer à ce que Clément Dirié, commissaire



courtesy Susan Hicks Gallery, Toronto, photo André Minville Crédac

**Bamian
(Banyan),
1968/2001
(détail), de
Sheila Hicks
(à gauche),
et Mossfield
Twins, 2011,
de Liz Magor**

de ses expositions, appelle un geste "de déconstruction de la structure des médiums traditionnels". Un art dégagé de l'artisanat "qui lui permet d'élaborer un nouveau langage, celui qui surgit d'un espace coloré émancipé, situé dans l'intervalle entre peinture et sculpture".

Chez Liz Magor, exposée au Crédac, les tissus, érigés en sculptures magnétiques, font aussi l'objet d'une contemplation sidérée.

Mais l'artiste canadienne, installée à Vancouver, s'intéresse, elle, moins à la puissance chatoyante des tissus et à leur potentiel fantasmagorique qu'à leur résistance à l'usure de l'existence, à leur manière de sauver leurs apparences lorsque la vétusté les a gagnés.

Sur les murs, Liz Magor expose des couvertures de laine suspendues à des cintres, pliées, recouvertes d'une housse en plastique, comme si elles sortaient du pressing. L'artiste a elle-même récupéré ces couvertures dans des magasins de seconde main, avant de les faire nettoyer et de les repriser. La présence étrange de ces couvertures en laine, ainsi reconfigurées par l'intervention de la main féminine sur leur matière usée (trous de cigarettes, fils arrachés), convoque un autre regard sur les objets du quotidien : un regard purement affectif, conférant à une simple couverture la force d'un souvenir possible, d'une histoire qui croise celle du spectateur, touché par la nudité d'une telle apparition.

Intéressée depuis des années par une sorte d'ontologie des objets familiers, Liz Magor joue des ambiguïtés entre l'usure et le luxe, entre la matérialité et l'affectivité. "J'ai besoin de transformer les choses afin de mieux capter et comprendre les propriétés constitutives des matériaux et des procédés formant les objets du monde", dit-elle dans le catalogue de sa récente rétrospective au musée d'Art contemporain de Montréal.

De cette revitalisation d'un objet perdu, opérée par Liz Magor, à l'exaltation colorée d'un objet en devenir, exprimée par Sheila Hicks, entre vieilles ficelles et fibres luxuriantes, la laine n'avait jamais été aussi joliment comprise qu'à travers ces deux chemins artistiques singuliers. Oscillant entre les propositions délicates de ces deux artistes-modélistes, on se met à réhabiliter les gestes austères du tissage et du reprisage autant qu'on se perd dans la contemplation heureuse de la laine, notre nouvelle amie.

Jean-Marie Durand

Sheila Hicks *Si j'étais de laine, vous m'accepteriez ?*, jusqu'au 15 octobre à la galerie Frank Elbaz, Paris III^e

à voir aussi *Apprentissages* jusqu'au 2 octobre au musée Carnavalet, Paris III^e, dans le cadre du Festival d'Automne à Paris

Liz Magor *The Blue One Comes in Black*, jusqu'au 18 décembre au Crédac, Ivry (94), et *Exposition Humidor* jusqu'au 29 octobre à la galerie Marcelle Alix, Paris XX^e




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Liz Magor, vue de l'exposition « The Blue One Comes in Black », Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry — Le Crédac © Slash-Paris

LIZ MAGOR — LE CRÉDAC, IVRY-SUR-SEINE

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Critique / October 5, 2016 — By Guillaume Benoit

Le Crédac organise une exposition exceptionnelle de Liz Magor, née en 1948. Figure de proue de la scène canadienne, le travail de cette artiste discrète et sensible reste encore peu montré en France, un état de fait qui risque bien d'évoluer. Après une grande monographie présentée au Musée d'Art contemporain de Montréal, cette exposition au Crédac (avec la tenue d'un parcours parallèle à la galerie Marcelle Alix) nous plonge au cœur de sa création. Une reconnaissance tout à fait méritée tant son travail, pluriel et ouvert offre de prises à la pensée pour s'évader ou, au contraire, sonder plus en profondeur notre perception des objets qui peuplent le monde.

Liz Magor — The Blue One Comes in Black @ Le Crédac, Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry from September 8 to December 18.

De grandes couvertures peuplent les cimaises de la première salle ; à travers des micro-changements, Liz Magor attire l'attention sur un détail, une altération de l'état originel qui, si elle annule la fonctionnalité première de ces objets, leur redonne une vie en en faisant les témoins sensibles et muets d'une histoire secrète. Repassées, bien pliées sur leurs cintres, leur durée de vie, malgré leur état parfois largement dégradé, semble avoir été écourtée, comme si leur usage restait possible, prêtes à être remises en service ou, à tout le moins, en état. En témoignent ces trous qui pourraient tout aussi bien servir de repères à une intervention ultérieure visant à les réparer. À travers ses gestes, Liz Magor ajoute des éléments discrets à ces objets, des signes étranges qui soulignent leur imperfection, entourant des trous de cigarettes d'un plastique qui les protège autant qu'il désigne leur fragilité. Sous les housses plastique des services de nettoyage leur donnant de faux airs de jupes à collerettes



d'enfants d'un autre âge, les couvertures rappellent également leur fonction de protection dans un Canada au climat hostile. Mais les épingles qui les maintiennent droites, les ajouts secrets et discrets qu'elle y greffe (tels des mèches de cheveux et autres écussons) empêchent toute réutilisation, le temps de leur fonctionnalité est révolu, les voici dans le temps de notre histoire, parties intégrantes d'un vocabulaire singulier.



**Liz Magor, vue de l'exposition
The Blue One Comes in Black,
Centre d'art contemporain
d'Ivry — le Crédac, 2016**

Courtesy of le Crédac — Photo ©
André Morin

Au sol, des sacs divers contiennent des outils de couture surannés qui rappellent également l'intégration de cette industrie dans la vie canadienne, les écussons originaux témoignent quant à eux de la qualité certaine de ces pièces et du glissement opéré par l'artiste, qui prolonge le soin apporté à la confection en le reportant sur sa mise en scène. La suite du parcours va s'attacher plus précisément à ses sculptures, qui mélangent des

matériaux de récupération, débris et autres objets. Autant de fragments de narrations complexes où les signes se croisent, font sens mais n'annulent pas une certaine obscurité. Le plastique semble donner un lustre, un vernis à ces associations hétéroclites et la main, le toucher y sont omniprésents avec les multiples gants qui les évoquent. De là découle certainement la nature profondément empathique du regard de l'artiste sur ces fragments du réel abandonnés, une fragilité qui en interdit à présent l'usage, seul un gant vide est autorisé à s'emparer d'eux. C'est une des forces de l'œuvre de Liz Magor, une puissance évocatrice et une fertilité métaphorique que l'artiste maintient à plein en s'effaçant derrière ces assemblages hétéroclites et en brouillant toute piste qui permettrait de décèler un ordre précis à ses constructions. L'ordre, ici, est celui des objets, qui imposent leur singularité et laissent ainsi vagabonder l'imaginaire comme il l'entend. Il y a incontestablement quelque chose du rêve chez Magor, du songe intranquille de l'enfance qui porte en lui une certaine part de peur, une mélancolie douceuse qui finit de s'incarner dans la figure d'un nourrisson, lequel, loin d'être un symbole fantasmé, est mis en scène dans une position d'effort, escaladant un bloc qui

se fait miroir d'une lutte constante des objets pour leur propre préservation.



**Liz Magor, vue de l'exposition
The Blue One Comes in Black,
Centre d'art contemporain
d'Ivry — Le Crédac © Slash-Paris**

Cela vient aussi d'une envie de prendre soin, « d'avoir cure » de ces objets anonymes et nous confronter ainsi à notre propre regard ; apprécions-nous vraiment (dans les

deux sens du terme) ce qui nous entoure ? Une pudeur et une discrétion ensorceleuses émergent derrière les matériaux mêmes, où carton et plastique se révèlent bien différents de ce qu'ils laissent apparaître. En



trompe-l'œil, la banalité devient une construction précieuse, la forme aléatoire des modèles qui ont permis de les mouler, l'artiste imprimé une volonté de laisser voir l'identique, de faire résonner la tautologie du monde pour que notre propre regard ne soit plus dupe de sa lassitude et, de fait, de son inaptitude à « percevoir » la vitalité des objets. Point alors un sentiment diffus de danger, comme si ce monde plus lourd, réalisé dans les rêves en négatifs des objets du réels (moulages réalisés de l'intérieur, laissant entrevoir l'envers de housses et de cartons), n'en demeurait pas moins bien plus exposé à la fêlure, à la brisure.

En face, la très belle tenture de couverture noire (*Hudson's Bay Double*) dessine une constellation. Rejouant le format du panorama, ce paysage qui n'en est pas un évoque une constellation de points d'intérêt que seul un regard attentif sur le monde peut déceler. Pas de nature donc ici, et ce malgré le profond amour que l'artiste lui porte, elle qui passe une grande partie de l'année sur une île reculée ; ce sont bien plutôt les objets, les sculptures et autres reliquats qui deviennent des parts indissociables de paysages qu'elle invente, d'un ordre qu'elle fait émerger autant qu'elle continue de le scruter, observant la vitalité nouvelle qui en émane.



Liz Magor, *Palm Pet*, vue de l'exposition *The Blue One Comes in Black*, Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry — le Crédac, 2016 Gypse polymérisé, laine, bois, sachet en plastique
Courtesy de l'artiste & Marcelle Alix, Paris — Photo © André Morin / le Crédac

Cette réutilisation, remise en perspective de la familiarité des objets, vient ainsi perturber notre rapport au monde. Au final, ce parcours déploie un ensemble pluriel qui, sous des atours d'accumulation ready-made, révèle sa minutie si précieuse que le décalage, perceptible après examen attentif, voire par l'insensible, se fait vertige. En ce sens, Liz Magor, en laissant une totale liberté d'interprétation, parvient à forcer le visiteur à user de la même application d'observation et de perception qu'elle, encourageant dans tous les cas à observer à son tour la vie des objets, cette fragilité qui se dessine comme un mirage, insensible et contradictoire, mais terriblement présente.

<http://slash-paris.com/articles/liz-magor-le-credac-ivry-sur-seine>



EXPOS

LIZ MAGOR

—
: jusqu'au 29 octobre
à la galerie Marcelle Alix,
jusqu'au 19 décembre
au Crédac (Ivry-sur-Seine)
—



Liz Magor, *Casual*, 2012

OFF

En cette rentrée, deux expositions sont consacrées à cette artiste canadienne, méconnue en France, qui manie avec délicatesse l'art de «(re)mettre du baume» aux objets perdus – et au cœur. Emballages, couvertures, peluches... autant de petites choses a priori sans valeur ni avenir qui font l'objet de transformations, soins et autres reprises leur conférant une force aussi tranquille qu'irrésistible. Étrangement, on se prend d'affection pour ces objets de seconde main chargés d'histoires, délaissés, abîmés par la vie et l'usure, qui nous enrobent d'une chaleur bienveillante et que l'on est tenté de toucher à notre tour, comme pour leur rendre un peu du réconfort qu'ils diffusent. Accrocs et tâches deviennent les grains de beauté de vieilles couvertures en laine sorties du pressing, suspendues au mur sur cintres. Moulées en silicone, des housses de protection de vêtement reposent sur des chaises, évoquant l'habit ou la peau qui épouse le corps. Des moulages réalisés en gypse polymérisé à partir de boîtes en cartons donnent naissance à des coffres translucides hermétiquement fermés renfermant livres et papiers, ou à de petits ou grands socles muraux accueillant ici un petit oiseau naturalisé sur un gant jaune, là un ensemble de coupures de revues des années 1970. Entre pétrification et seconde vie, ces caressantes vanités nous offrent une troublante lecture de l'empreinte du temps et des êtres passés. ● ANNE-LOU VICENTE

**On se prend
d'affection pour
ces objets de
seconde main
chargés d'histoires.**



MENU



Liz Magor, déchiffreuse de rebuts



100



CONNEXION

ABONNEMENT

CINÉMA + MUSIQUE + LIVRES + SCÈNES + **ARTS** + IMAGES + LIFESTYLE + MODE + BEAUTE + FOOD

EXPO

LIZ MAGOR. DÉCHIFFREUSE DE REBUTS

Par Judicaël Lavrador

— 18 septembre 2016 à 17:11

Les sculptures murales de l'Américaine sont enfin visibles au Crédac d'Ivry-sur-Seine et en galerie parisienne.



f PARTAGER

TWEETER



Palm Pet, de Liz Magor. Photo courtesy de l'artiste et Marcelle Alix, Paris/ André Mor

A la question de savoir pourquoi un artiste peut bien naître ou renaître aux yeux du monde de l'art alors qu'il travaille depuis des décennies et a d'ores et déjà dépassé l'âge de la retraite, le cas Liz Magor constitue un cas d'école. Il lui a fallu attendre d'avoir 68 ans et une rétrospective - montée au Canada cet été, remontée cet automne en Suisse puis en Allemagne, plus deux expositions parisiennes, l'une à la galerie Marcelle Alix, l'autre au Crédac, centre d'art d'Ivry-sur-Seine (Val-de-Marne), pour que tout ce qu'elle a mis au point trouve aujourd'hui un certain écho. Certes, il y a que Liz Magor est une femme (artiste) et que cela a longtemps suffi, comme pour ses consœurs, à la rendre invisible (*lire page précédente*). Mais il y a surtout que son travail était finalement en avance. C'est pourquoi il est aujourd'hui sorti du placard par une génération de curateurs plus jeunes, et admirés par des artistes émergents. Liz Magor, avec ses sculptures fait-main, à taille humaine, mettant en scène de simples choses abîmées et datées, ou de petits animaux, moulés ou taxidermés, sur des socles tout gondolés, fait figure d'anticipatrice d'un rapport modeste, voire apaisé, et surtout très inspiré, de l'homme à son environnement.

Libération

18/09/2016

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Ses œuvres commencent au socle, c'est-à-dire à ce qui leur permet de tenir, de se présenter, de s'imposer. Chez Magor, ils ont cette forme que prennent les cartons, dont on se débarrasse dans la rue après s'être fait livrer une télé ou un canapé. Appuyés ou fixés contre le mur, ils ont l'air bel et bien vrai, même s'ils sont légèrement teintés de gris ou de mauve. L'illusion est parfaite. Il a fallu qu'on y touche pour faire la part des choses. Ce sont des moulages en gypse, une roche tendre et cristalline.

Babioles.

Là-dessus, Liz Magor dépose ou accroche de menus objets, des magazines emballés dans des films plastiques des babioles, des napperons, ou bien des animaux, un oisillon, un petit ours blanc, un chaton en tricot... croyait-on. Car il a fallu qu'on mette (discrètement) les doigts sur le chaton et sur le reste de la ménagerie pour en identifier la matière. Plus facile et imparable. Ici, du papier, de la peluche, ou des vraies plumes d'oiseau taxidermé. Et là, au contraire, une consistance dure révèle que sous le tricot, il y a du gypse. Mais cette découverte ne résout rien. Parce que chez Liz Magore, la chose fait œuvre et l'œuvre ouvragée, si on peut dire, se réifie. Les rebuts récupérés, ceux auxquels elle n'a pas touché, comptent autant que la partie véritablement travaillée de la sculpture. Ce qui dit une manière de collaborer avec les choses telles qu'elles sont.

Jusque-là, rien de très nouveau : les artistes contemporains sont friands d'objets cassés, usés ou démodés - qu'ils les déversent en tas (compressés à la César), qu'ils les trient et les assemblent en fonction de leurs formes ou de leurs couleurs (à la Tony Cragg), ou encore qu'ils y trouvent le moyen de s'inscrire dans une économie de moyen avec un esprit bricoleur. Rien de tout cela ne correspond à la valeur ni à l'usage de ces objets de seconde main chez Liz Magor. Qui s'en explique ainsi : *«Puisque toutes ces choses portent déjà une empreinte sociale, c'est un peu comme si je faisais entrer le monde par bribes dans l'atelier.»* Les objets ne l'intéressent qu'en tant que traces de la vie des êtres qui les ont laissés derrière eux. D'où ces couvertures qu'elle pend à leur cintre aux murs du Crédac, non sans avoir cerné de gypse rouge les trous (causés par des brûlures de cigarettes ou par des mites), ni les avoir au préalable envoyés au pressing - une attention dont témoigne l'emballage qui les protège.

Illusionniste.

Or, ces couvertures rehaussées, objets chaleureux et réconfortants laissés de côté, comme toutes ses autres pièces, ne valent plus seulement comme des témoignages de la vie de leur propriétaire. Augmentées par l'artiste, réemballées, pétries en tout ou partie d'un matériau illusionniste, elles vivent leur vie. *«Ce qui m'intéresse, dit ainsi l'artiste, c'est l'influence de ce qui est fabriqué dans l'atelier sur ce qui est trouvé. Par un phénomène mystérieux, les objets trouvés s'animent vraiment lorsqu'ils sont en présence de la représentation sculpturale de quelque chose d'ordinaire.»* Et puis ceci : *«Il y a tout un monde de chose qui existe parallèlement au monde des humains et la chorégraphie entre les deux est synchronisée à un point tel qu'il est difficile de déterminer qui ou quoi dirige l'action.»* Un questionnement dont Liz Magor a eu l'intuition il y a quarante ans, rejoint par ceux qui entendent laisser place sur Terre à d'autres espèces, animées ou non.

Judicaël Lavrador

Liz Magor The Blue One Comes in Black Crédac, à Ivry-sur-Seine (94). Jusqu'au 18 décembre. Rens. : www.credac.fr **Humidor** Galerie Marcelle Alix, 75020. Jusqu'au 29 octobre. Rens. : www.marcellealix.com

http://next.liberation.fr/arts/2016/09/18/liz-magor-dechiffreuse-de-rebuts_1501767



REVIEW - 15 AUG 2016

Liz Magor

BY JON DAVIES

Musée d'art contemporain de Montreal, Canada

Liz Magor: Habitude' surveys the Vancouver-based artist's sculpture and installation practice from the mid-1970s to date. Magor's influence over the decades – magnified by her teaching at Emily Carr University of Art + Design – has been profound, and the exhibition adeptly establishes how her work has impacted on many of contemporary sculpture's most pressing concerns, and a generation of younger artists investigating them.

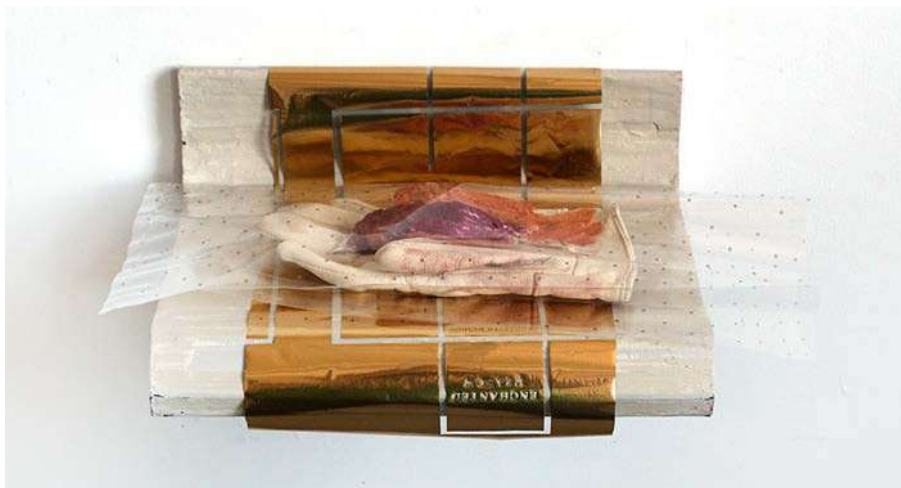


Liz Magor, *Carton II*, 2006
polymerized gypsum, cigarettes, gum, matches, and lighter, 29 x 53 x 48 cm.
Courtesy: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; photograph: Richard-Max Tremblay



Throughout her career, Magor has sought to get as close as possible to the marrow of everyday life by casting quotidian objects – from fallen trees to old clothing – in her signature medium of polymerized gypsum. Sculptures of organic matter and consumer goods, frozen in the moment, allow us to contemplate the affective dimensions of their consumption or decay. Magor's uncanny combinations of objects, both cast and real, reframe our relationships with the commonplace materials we take for granted. Product packaging and giftwrap, for instance, which appear in a number of her works, serve as intermediaries between ourselves and the goods we desire, delaying the gratification that comes with their use.

At the Musée de art contemporain, stacks of gypsum towels hide neat rows of found beer cans and gin bottles, while gypsum clothes, mittens and hats conceal stockpiles of real cigarettes and chocolates – cosiness masking contraband, soft protecting hard. This tension between inner depths and surface layers parallels not just our own corporeal interior and exterior but also the ways in which we customize our appearance, from fashion to home décor. This is particularly evident in Magor's expansive installation *Being This* (2012), an idiosyncratic 'portrait gallery' of found and altered clothing, displayed in paper-lined boxes, as if recently purchased from a department store. Each evokes the distinct personality of an imagined wearer.



Liz Magor, *Ladies Soft Leather (Russet)*, 2015
polymerized gypsum, cellophane, and foil, 14 x 29 x 21 cm.
Courtesy: Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver; photograph: SITE Photography

Co-curators Dan Adler and Lesley Johnstone use the three large galleries to mimic the environments that typically harbour consumer objects, from retail displays to warehouses. For instance, an enormous shelving unit holding dozens of individual sculptures bisects the second gallery. (Unfortunately, one consequence of MACM's huge spaces is that they make some of Magor's monumental works appear small.) Avoiding a chronological treatment, the curators stage dramatic juxtapositions of scale from the exhibition's opening moment: the dainty yet morbid *Ladies Soft Leather (Russet)* (2015) – a gypsum glove holding a dead bird, ensconced in foil and cellophane – is juxtaposed with the adjacent large-scale installation *Production* (1980), a press for crafting bricks out of wet newspaper alongside a wall of the same crumbling bricks. The bird's frail beauty appears all the more singular when placed next to the press: a machine for the production of mundane multiples.



The first gallery is dominated by three large cedar trunks cast in gypsum; two of them (*Hollow*, 1998-9 and *Burrow*, 1999) cache sleeping bags while one (*Wrap*, 2003) is stuffed, éclair-like, with fibreglass insulation. By combining cast objects with found elements – as in *Chee-to* (2000), where real scattered cheese puffs peek coyly from under a pile of gypsum rocks – Magor intends not to deceive by illusion but to question the truth in visual perception, and to discover new ways of making meaning. As Magor once remarked, in a 2015 talk at the Art Gallery of Ontario, ‘That mistake between the real and the mimic [...] that disconnection from knowledge and naming – I love it as a form of freedom.’



Liz Magor, *Tweed (Toblerone)*, 2008
polymerized gypsum and chocolate bar, 41 x 41 x 13 cm.
Courtesy: Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver; photograph: SITE Photography

Some of the strongest works in ‘Habitade’ are Magor’s most recent sculptures, such as the impressive, large-scale *Membership* (2016), a confrontation between a toy dog and an oversized cardboard box. Other recent gypsum sculptures feature too-tiny toy dogs curled up on crumpled boxes, timidly facing the wall. Animals like these act as ersatz companions that hold the potential for kinship but ultimately leave it unfulfilled. Magor’s sculptures leave us alone with the silent, burdensome company of our accumulated possessions.



Liz Magor Waits, But Not For You

BY E.C. WOODLEY • REVIEWS • AUGUST 17, 2016



View of Liz Magor's exhibition *Habitude* in Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2016

A retrospective exhibition should be thick with time. More ephemeral than the objects it displays, it is a stillness that passes, a terrain upon which viewers and artworks coexist within a dynamic that has as much to do with time as space. This breadth of the *now*, the temporary fixing of temporal bandwidth, allows us to listen to what seemingly disparate works have to say to each other when placed in proximity.

Habitude, Liz Magor's first major survey, is at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal until September 5th, where it has been curated by Dan Adler and Lesley Johnstone. In 2017 it will appear in Europe, re-curated by Heike Munder at the Migros-Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, and by Bettinna Steinbrügge at the Kunstverein in Hamburg. The retrospective survey as a form, whether chronologically structured or not, almost always tells us something that's otherwise elusive about the body of works that involve it. This is certainly true at the MACM.



Magor's production appears, at first glance, various. But the consistency of her concerns suggests that she may be, as Stanley Cavell said about Eric Rohmer, more of an artist of *oeuvre* than *genre*. Juxtaposed in the exhibition are works that use completely different casting processes and take bewilderingly different visual forms. A rarely-seen work, *Double Scarp* (1980), sits on the gallery floor near a large selection of small cast pieces, from 2001-2008, arranged on an enormous, white, three-tiered shelving unit developed for the exhibition. Nearby, in the same voluminous gallery, the earliest works in the exhibition, *Bird Nest Kits* (1975) – three neat stacks of found nests delicately packaged in boxes affixed with lovingly descriptive labels, as if to be sold in a gift shop – are among the last to be seen.

Non-Chronology is no more legitimate a tack than chronology for a living artist's retrospective. But for many who are still working strongly, to begin at the beginning and end at the end suggests the end of a career as well. Time looms heavy even though an exhibition's viewers are free to wander forward and back – to take all that time up, into themselves, and at their own pace. Viewing *Habitude*, faced with complex and riddling images made during five decades, one ends up, anyway, attempting to sort out a chronology. Finding this sort of a temporal bearing in the geography of the exhibition helps me sense the pressures and attractions of association among the diverse bodies.

In *Habitude's* installation of *Production* (1980), a tall, long, immaculately-constructed wall stands before a wooden, debris-splattered, brick-casting press. Magor built the rudimentary machine and then used it to create the bricks that compose the wall – a task that required several months' labor. The bricks are made of discarded daily newspapers collected each day by Magor, before being brought to her studio to become the materials of her production. The newsprint has aged like the pages one finds within the frames of old houses, pages chattily insistent that the past happened (and we with it), frozen in the closely-subjective, restricted visual field of their present, and the concomitant uncertainty of any present moment. Occasionally a date or a place or a time – an ad for air-conditioning, or a fragment of an Associated Press story about the Montreal Alouettes's Spring training – appears intact enough to be read. Mostly, though, the wall possesses a sort of dusty, pink beauty – marbled but also somehow embalmed or intestinal. Small shards, bits of the wall's debris, have collected on the gallery floor around its base: artefacts of its construction, one presumes. As in many of Magor's works, *Production* is evidence of a careful, and even loving labor to preserve and universalize the quotidian, to make time speak as structure, to make the days count, to make them hold up at length.

In Magor's oeuvre, the stuff that surrounds the body often does the speaking. In *Double Scarp*, like *Four Boys and a Girl* (1979), the material that's pressed into a shallow oblong form – in scale and shape inferring the body – is clothing. Rusted steel binds the garments: the press cleaves to its pressings. The fabrics are layered thick and cut to make edges like geological strata, compressed by a great force but fraying a little. Like the words and paper in *Production*, the clothing can be registered in places as it once was: some thin corduroy plainly visible at one of the edges. But mostly they're painted or plastered white, a form suggesting both grave and body at once, the funereal wrappings of some sort of early modern industrial mummy.

Nearby *Double Scarp*, on the shelving unit, are several examples of small silicone rubber pieces called *Sleepers* (1999). These appear to be persons wrapped in fabric almost like a cone so that only the uncanny, orange-blond synthetic hair is showing.



They might almost be tiny babies swaddled at birth (white fabric substituting for womb). When a newborn sleeps, it sleeps so completely that a parent can be forgiven for moving it a little, for provoking a response to confirm that the baby is still alive. Again, at the end, beside the deathbed, it's not always clear if the departed has yet departed. The cusp of life and death are almost unintelligible to the living, and sleep, like death, is a wholly private matter. It's not insignificant that in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Mercury was responsible for leading the dead to Hades and for bringing dreams to those who slept. Perhaps the prone or curled-up animals that populate Magor's later work, if they aren't dead, are free from the tempests and desires of dreams. In Magor, one suspects, the only afterlife is the life of art, a stillness in the safety of the gallery or museum, a place of contemplative attention and sustained concentration.

Writing in the catalogue for his 1986 AGO exhibition that surveyed Magor's manufacture from the time she moved from Vancouver to Toronto in 1981, Philip Monk observed:

Every work of art develops its own narrative and history separately from the artist: this is part of an interpretive process that people other than the artist produce over time. Not every work of art, however, is allowed its own physical history – a history of decay, for instance. Rather, there is a massively coordinated attempt to maintain its original identity through the principles and procedures of the museum. The possibility of a history for an object was taken into consideration as one of the concerns of such Magor installations as Four Boys and a Girl and Production. They were produced, but not programmed, to have their own history. ... Through this history of decay, they assumed their own identity beyond the artist. But this history was taken as a metaphor for something else, however, as it became a poignant reflection on the human condition.

In *Habitude*, a dramatic shift away from pieces that decay, that are materially subject to a natural aging process, occurs in *The Most She Weighed/The Least She Weighed* (1982). This two-part sculpture shares an exhibition room with *Production* and another primarily wood-and-paper installation, *Sowing Weeds in Lanes and Ditches* (1976). *The Most She Weighed* is, by contrast, made of shiny aluminum plates and heavy lead castings. The piece refers to an elderly woman, but as an object, it resists aging. This shift in approach toward a likeness that won't decay is so dramatic, so pronounced, it's as if *The Most She Weighed* appears not to belong to the same body of work as the other pieces in the room.

In fact, Magor curtailed the aging process in 1982, after which there seems to be a more direct attention to preserve and dignify or rescue what was aging and about to be lost. Her series of blankets, including *Maple Leaf* (2011) are, materially, about as far as one can get from the lead of *The Most She Weighed* and yet they, too, resist decay. Their flaws have been fixed or beautified, damaged blankets that were once separate have been combined, becoming a single blanket that outlives the bodies they once sheltered and protected.

Magor's use of new techniques in the later 1990s deepened her exploration of prior themes. She adapts advanced casting processes developed for the film industry – techniques that recreate unique textured and worn surfaces, such as the walls of buildings, that need to be transferred from outside locations to the more controlled environs of the film studio. Three of these sculptures, *Hollow* (1998-1999), *Burrow* (1999), and *Wrap* (2003) – two of which involve cast segments of the same large, hollowed-out tree trunk – are temporary abodes. *Hollow* is lined with thin foam insulation used in building construction upon which an empty sleeping bag lies loose as if left behind by its occupant,



bedding not ordered after waking. The interior spaces of the other two trees are stuffed by material that substitutes for what was once there, or invokes the interior stuff of that temporary dwelling known as the human body. In *Burrow*, it's the sleeping bag itself that fills the empty space; inside *Wrap*, pink flame retardant insulation is compressed, slightly fluffy at the edges that overshot the log, like dense stuffing emerging from an old winter jacket. All of this non-cast material is made from extremely artificial substances resistant to age; the casts themselves use polymerised gypsum, also more resistant to decay than the wood they are imprinted with. Yet the casts take on the body, or at least the surface and form of the tree they have displaced. Perhaps the early work is still fraught, still paying for its mortal materiality in its aging – in intimations of its eventual disappearance – while the cast, fallen trees will endure. In doing so, however, they forfeit likeness to some degree, forfeit something like the living spirit of the actual.

After playing with materials more inert, Magor returns to the physical imprint and pigmentation of decay, age, and wear – to its *appearance*, if not its actuality – in the small cast sculptures of 2000-08. These objects are cast and pigmented to mimic tarnished pewter or silver trays, things that show the pull of time, are redolent of the inexorable movement toward the scrap heap or incinerator. They are stacked together with things that aren't usually considered deserving of representation: cigarette butts, pieces of half-eaten toast, the corpse of a small animal.

The tension or play between the cast objects and the actual ones in Magor's small pieces involves a complex relationship between history and memory. One of the elements in the small sculpture *Still Alive* (2016) is a very used, actual deerskin jacket, such as what might have been worn by the late 1960s, a hippy-era "back-to-the-landers" item in her photo series *Field Work* (1989). The jacket retains its own history, its marks and scars, and its strange, embroidered, leather-fringed materiality forfeits nothing.

Both the actual objects and the cast ones are capable of provoking memory in the viewer. This usually happens fast, before one has examined them and clocked what they are: that they're either casts or held by casts. The polymerized gypsum glove in *Speckled Veil* (2015), for example, tenderly cradles a dead bird as if offering it to an eternally dignified, beautified – perhaps memorial – moment. Especially lifelike with its cream-colored skin, the stitches in the seams lovingly rendered, the glove is like the gloves of our mother, or a fashionable aunt, perhaps. Here, material wear seems to belong both to memory and history. The cast remembers the glove that it has displaced – destroyed in the casting process – and subtle color from a fashion moment prior to our own has been added. What we encounter, then, is both actual and a fiction: a real bird and a sculpture. The gold foil-wrapped chocolates that I would buy in the hospital gift shop and bring to my grandmother as she waited to die, are offered by the work *Tray (Bird/Heart)* (2008). Real chocolates are accompanied by various imperfect fictions: on silver platters, a ceramic heart-shaped tray holds eight pieces of chocolate, and beside the tray, the crumpled skeleton of a tiny bird rests on a discarded paper candy trivet. Although the candies, cigarettes, and bottles of alcohol that one finds in Magor's works may invoke taste, they cannot be tried. We are strictly in the realm of visual memory here, and none of the weathered or decayed elements have any trace of scent. There seems always an element in Magor's small sculptures that eventually prohibits anything other than the present moment.



The display unit that holds the small cast works appeared to position itself somewhere between the furniture of museum display and the shelving of high-end retail. The shelving unit had a more massive physical presence than the works it held, leaving many of them both too available and too out of reach, restricting the power these pieces have possessed in the smaller confines of a commercial gallery and in the 2008-09 touring exhibition, *The Mouth and Other Storage Facilities*. In that exhibition, the objects were arranged on tables composed very much like the works they held – tables with “real” legs and cast table-tops with “flaws” in evidence like scars, and dusted, in places, with pigment suggestive of paint, wine, or blood. Given the importance of the support in Magor’s small pieces – as well as the status of the marginal object in her entire oeuvre – it’s safe to say that these kind of display bases are crucial even if they stand unnamed on the edge of recognition as a work.

For the sculptures in Magor’s oeuvre that don’t sit directly on the gallery floor, the problem of their support seems solved in her most recent small cast pieces such as *Pink Shimmer* and *Ladies Soft Glove (Russet)* (both 2015). Not only is this powerful work, genuinely tender in its treatment of mortality, and deeply beautiful, but the sculptural base, often an old cardboard box, is fully realized as a cast object. Much of Magor’s recent cast cardboard is dusty grey or closer to green than the expected brown, or is a pearlescent shade that takes her sculptures playfully away from outward likeness.

This solution – that the sculptural base has become a full participant in the work it supports – unfortunately did not reduce the problem that Magor’s pieces were lost in the huge rooms of the MACM. No matter how much time was concentrated in the selection of these works, it was too often diffused by the scale of their spaces. Walking into the semi-industrial, semi-domestic rooms of Susan Hobbs Gallery, for example – rooms scaled more to the human body – it’s as if the air is sucked out of those rooms, as if everything had been cast from the same inert material as the sculptures themselves, leaving only the necessity of engagement. In the installation in Montreal, the inattention to scale – to the modulation of the spaces around each piece – tells us that the atmosphere of time and the silence of space surrounding Magor’s work needs to be palpable, to exert a little invisible somatic pressure. The emptiness needs shaping, a holding presence, an infusion of time rather than a vapidness of space.

Two of Magor’s major installations pointed the way to what needed to be registered in the entire exhibition: *Production* with its wall enclosing a corner of the gallery, and *Messenger* (1996-2002), where Magor provided the entire room – a cabin outfitted with a cot, enough food to last a year, a cast white dog, hand grenades and other eccentricities – and which could be viewed only through its windows in a darkened gallery. Essentially, the piece was a room within a room. *Habitude* shows us that, more often than not, it’s the spacial register of the rooms in a house (or perhaps a studio) that should be kept in mind when displaying Magor.

Magor’s works don’t put on a show: they present a situation that waits, but not for you. *Production* is suspended until another brick is pressed; *Sowing Weeds in Lanes and Ditches* stands by for a character who might appear as if out of an Alice Munro short story; *Hollow* and *Messenger* persist, attendant upon the return of their missing occupants. Unlike the objects used in film production, Magor’s materials do not participate in the suspension of disbelief. They keep in view a certain existential distance.



Glow Pet, 2016
polymerized gypsum, textile, plastic
44 x 38 x 17 cm



Liz Magor
Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto
Oct. 29 — Dec. 5, 2015
by Lena Suksi

Liz Magor recently showed five new sculptures (all produced in 2015) at Susan Hobbs Gallery. In *Speckled Veil*, a stuffed blue bird sleeps in a glove. The posed fingers appear tenderly possessive, closing gently around the bird's throat and chest, while the bird's head remains animated as its live self would. It angles into the world through the spotted cellophane that gives the work its name. This evocative glove, though, is as eerily unoccupied as the bird's body, its fingertips collapsing into the softness of shed clothes. Upstairs, the glove in *Pink Shimmer* makes this still more clear, with fingers limp along their length, and the bird that it supports in a death pose, breast to the sky.

Magor's work gets talked about in terms of entropy and detritus, but the sculptures on display here mark the moment between disposal and its opposite: offering. Casts of cardboard boxes acting like plinths have come up from the basement and been altered by her in a way not unlike what the weather does when we leave things on the street. So, the boxes look salted and wet, ready for the garbage collector. However, the levitation of their potential contents — *on* them, rather than *in* them — takes us again to that delightful act of display in order to give away. Giving is the best outcome of shedding. We hope that others will take what we no longer need. The glove in *Speckled Veil* could be catching what it's catching to release it.

Indeed, the central objects of these sculptures are still things that we expect to see as trash. Ornamental taxidermy is, like pressed flowers, a typically clumsy Victorian way of commemorating nature. The way that the stuffed dog topping *Glow Pet* has been unevenly painted is intriguing, like the teen impulse to spray-paint our stuff out of boredom with its stubborn persistence as our bodies change. However, these works suggest that the decision to transform something comes as much out of hope for an object's future as the desire to dismissively sabotage it.

The sculptures refer still more strongly to giving and sharing through the wrapping materials used in each one: bubble wrap resting gracefully under the toy dog of *Glow Pet*, yellow cellophane generating reflected light around *Gold Box*. More specifically, these materials lend the works movement. Formally, in the lovely way that they offer light and potential sound to the other, calcified components. Otherwise, in that gift wrap and packing material is suggested the passage of our things between destinations and hands. They also present the event of covering and uncovering. Without their rustling skins, the stacked birds, gloves, toys and their boxes might feel consigned to the dump, the curb, or the specimen cabinet. With them, they circulate through those and other places.

The cellophane that, again, gives the bird works their names — *Speckled Veil*, *Pink Shimmer*, *Gold Box* — does another sensitive thing. In her artist talk upon reception of the Gershon Iskowitz Prize at the Art Gallery of Ontario this past October, Magor spoke tenderly about wanting intimacy with the world in an impossible way. She described wanting to feel her pillow closer to her head than it could be, and wanting to absorb all the rain that fell in Prince Rupert, BC, and how her practice copes with these impossible desires. Sensitive cellophane is radiant and seductive, but it is also a slippery obstacle. The bubble wrap perched beneath *Glow Pet*'s little bum cuts it off entirely from its grounding support. Sensible knowledge is realized through the same material as protective distance, like how our skin holds our organs in while it sends them nervous signals. The lovely transparencies invite the inspection of the boundaries of our senses at the same time as they enforce them. The satisfaction of pinching bubble wrap still gives way to two seamed plastic surfaces. Feeling, rather than dissolving, limits us. At the same time, it is a condition of survival.

This thwarted investigation of the stuff of our world looms in Magor's long body of work: casts of tree trunks stuffed with unlikely secrets, blankets repaired and folded. For her, nothing can be altogether handled, much as we might inspect it. What is unknown is an inevitable frustration. That she achieves experience of resistance in an expertly crafted way



is poetic. That she works through our mundane surroundings reminds me of more of the close afternoon light of an enigmatic short story. Alice Munro writes experience through minor details, describing, for instance, in “Deep-Holes” (2008), a landscape of champagne bottles, picnic blankets and cellars that nervously supports the untethering of a family. Ultimately, these objects are not catalysts but settings for our experience, advancing and receding in the way of weather and dust. Munro and Magor might agree that our efforts to solve our lives with signs or objects are futile, but that we cannot entirely neglect their delicate impacts. In 2011, Magor produced works called *Marks* for the City Centre Library in Surrey, BC: big clay ottomans with barely legible evidence of relaxing bodies impressed into their surfaces. This treatment of trace persists in her new sculptures, allowing the effects of the world and ourselves on one another while acknowledging that we get up, that we move on.

This observation is not sentimental. The *Pets*’ noses are inches from the wall they are mounted on, diverting us from nostalgia. The birds do not invite us into the wilderness. Everything here has flown its obvious coop and past uses get confused by the closeness of the inspection Magor’s work demands. We want to angle our heads, like the bird in *Speckled Veil*, near to the wall to measure the barely present distance between it and *Glow Pet*’s nose. Between disposal and offering, taking stock and imagining new purpose, there is fleeting space in this work for our solitude and innocence.

Lena Suksi attended OCADU. She writes poetry in Toronto.



Liz Magor, *Glow Pet*, 2015
PHOTO: TONI HAFKENSCHIED;
IMAGE COURTESY OF SUSAN
HOBBS GALLERY

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Liz Magor, *Speckled Veil*,
2015 (detail)
PHOTO: TONI HAFKENSCHIED;
IMAGE COURTESY OF SUSAN
HOBBS GALLERY





LIZ Magor

Out here, on the northwestern coast of North America it wasn't easy to be influenced by art during the second half of the 20th century. With an emphasis on practicality and resource exploitation, the incumbent, pioneer culture was resistant to "imported" ideas and did a good job of blocking and ridiculing "poetic" tendencies. As a result we had to be nimble to pick up the "new."

We had to travel, go to talks, convene conferences and generally do a lot of hanging out, gleaning intelligence from friends and putting things together in bits and pieces. Context made the difference in determining what was worthwhile: where were you when you heard or saw something? What was the occasion? Who else was there? What did they say? What were you working on? The flow was unregulated. You didn't turn it on in the privacy of your own space and you could never summon exactly what you wanted when you wanted it. Instead, you worked with whatever fell into your path.

The inefficiency of this form of growth was part of its power. Often it was hard to follow up on stimulating new information. No library had the books we wanted to read and few galleries brought in the things we wanted to see, so when the stars aligned and you were able to apprehend a sculpture or a book or a film that you had only heard about until that moment, the event was stoked by such intense longing for experience that perforce, it would inevitably become an "influence." As a result, my influences are better described as random moments, rather than particular artists, having no obvious connection to one another but each occurring as a fortuitous encounter, arriving, as I needed them and providing guidance as to how I might proceed. These moments are thicker in number at the beginning when I had lots of questions. But they still happen.

A partial list of influences:

- The image of the ocean on a picture postcard pinned to the far wall in an unidentified space, present in the last frames of Micheal Snow's film *Wavelength*, 1968.
- The exhibition "The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age" curated by Pontus Hulten for the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1968.
- Betty Goodwin's "Tarpaulin" works (1972-1974).
- Advice for one's personal life delivered by Agnes Martin at the Vancouver Art Gallery in the early 1970's. She instructed that a serious artist should have no companions, not even pets!
- The Complete Stories of Franz Kafka, published in 1971.
- A huge lump of tallow (Joseph Beuys) in the foyer of Museum Monchengladbach, mid-'70s, presented with no attribution or explanation.
- A small photograph of a white dress, with a pattern painted on it, hanging from a tree; collaboration between Robert Gober and Christopher Wool, 1988.
- Rosemarie Trockel's cots for visitors at the German Pavilion of the Venice Biennale, 1999.
- Pina Bausch's piece, *Kontakthof*, as seen in Wim Wender's 3D film *Pina*, 2011.

to be continued...

Liz Magor is an artist who lives and works in Vancouver, Canada. Her work was recently shown at Triangle France and Peephole, Milan. Upcoming exhibitions include an extended survey exhibition at Musée d'Art Contemporain Montréal; an exhibition of recent work at Credac d'Ivry, France; and a two-person show, with Alisa Baremboym, at Glasgow Sculpture Studios, Scotland. A recent publication regarding her work is *The Blue One Comes in Black* co-published by Triangle France and Mousse Publishing, 2015, editor Celine Kopp.

In questo luogo sulla costa nord-occidentale del Nord America, non è stato facile coltivare il mio interesse per l'arte durante la seconda metà del Ventesimo secolo. Ponendo l'enfasi sulla praticità e sullo sfruttamento delle risorse, la cultura pionieristica dominante ha opposto una forte resistenza alle idee d'esportazione, rifiutando e ridicolizzando ogni tendenza "romantica". Di conseguenza, siamo stati costretti a diventare agili nel cogliere tutte le novità. Abbiamo dovuto viaggiare, partecipare a incontri, organizzare conferenze e, in generale, conoscere tantissime persone, cercando di carpire le idee dagli amici e mettendole insieme a spizzichi e bocconi. Il contesto faceva la differenza nel determinare ciò che era importante: dove eravate quando avete sentito o visto questa cosa? In che occasione l'avete sentita? Chi altro c'era? Cosa han detto? A cosa stavate lavorando? Il flusso non era regolare, non potevi raccogliere le informazioni che volevi quando volevi. Al contrario, finivi per lavorare con qualsiasi cosa ti capitasse a tiro.

L'inefficienza di questo modello di crescita era parte della sua forza. Spesso era difficile proseguire. Nessuna libreria aveva i libri che volevamo e solo qualche galleria presentava le cose che ci piacevano, quindi quando per un caso fortuito eri in grado di vedere una scultura o un libro o un film di cui, fino a quel momento, avevi solo sentito parlare, quell'evento era alimentato da un desiderio talmente intenso che, per forza di cose, sarebbe diventato un'"influenza". Di conseguenza, le mie influenze si possono riassumere in momenti casuali, senza nessuna connessione ovvia tra loro. Sono incontri fortuiti che avvenivano quando ne avevo bisogno e mi fornivano indicazioni su come procedere. Questi momenti erano più frequenti all'inizio, quando avevo tante domande, ma accadono ancora.

Una lista parziale d'influenze...

- Una fotografia dell'oceano su una cartolina illustrata affissa alla parete di fondo in uno spazio sconosciuto, presente negli ultimi fotogrammi del film di Micheal Snow *Wavelength* del 1968.
- La mostra "The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age" curata da Pontus Hulten per il Museum of Modern Art di New York nel 1968.
- La serie "Tarpaulin" di Betty Goodwin (1970 circa).
- Un consiglio per la vita privata dell'artista impartito da Agnes Martin nei primi anni '70 alla Vancouver Art Gallery. Ci ha insegnato che un artista serio non dovrebbe avere compagni, neanche animali domestici!
- *Tutti i racconti* di Franz Kafka, pubblicato nel 1971.
- Un enorme blocco di sego (Joseph Beuys) nel foyer del Museo Mönchengladbach, a metà degli anni '70, presentato senza attribuzione né spiegazione.
- Una piccola fotografia di un abito bianco, con un pattern dipinto a mano, appeso a un albero; una collaborazione tra Robert Gober e Christopher Wool (1988).
- Le brande di Rosemarie Trockel per i visitatori del padiglione tedesco della Biennale di Venezia del 1999.
- *Kontakthof*, una performance di Pina Bausch inclusa nel film 3D *Pina* di Wim Wenders (2011).

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Betty Goodwin, *Tarpaulin n° 2*, 1974-1975.
Courtesy: Collection Lavalin du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Photo: Richard-Max Tremblay



Rosemarie Trockel, installation view at La Biennale di Venezia, German Pavillion, 1999 (film still). © Rosemarie Trockel by SIAE, Rome, 2016. Courtesy: Sprüth Magers, Berlin / London / Los Angeles



Robert Gober and Christopher Wool, *Untitled*, 1988.
© Robert Gober and Christopher Wool. Courtesy: the artists; Luhring Augustine, New York / Bushwick; Matthew Marks Gallery, New York / Los Angeles



Michael Snow, *Wavelength* (still) 1966.
Courtesy: the artist and LUX, London



Liz Magor, *Pearl Pet*, 2015. Courtesy: Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid



Liz Magor, *Gold Box*, 2015. Courtesy: Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid



Liz Magor, *Companion*, 2015.
Courtesy: Marcelle Alix, Paris

<http://mousse magazine.it/articolo.mm?id=1374>



SOFT YELLOW

Polymerized gypsu, plastic,
stuffed bird
23 x 30 x 12 cm
2015



LIZ MAGOR

SOFT YELLOW

At first glance it looks like nothing more than a little gray cardboard box, a butter yellow glove, a sleeping sparrow, and a thin clear case. But in actuality, the box and glove are perfect replicas sculpted by the artist, the bird is stuffed, and the case is a sheet of plastic wrap. In defiance of appearances, Liz Magor (Canadian artist born in 1948), through her unique associations and elegant production, manages to imbue inert elements with a quiver of life that escapes any

absolute certainty or comforting sense of possession. As in her previous works, which use found dresses and stoles folded and presented as though fresh from the dry cleaner, nothing is what it seems in Liz Magor's work: the pleated and pressed materials are not offered to the viewer as apparel ready to be tailored to their personal tastes. Enveloping each object is a form of thought, whose folds necessarily resist any excessively superficial approach to understanding. Moving from the

human to the object, and from the object to ideas and vice versa, Magor's elegantly simple works stir up a subtle feeling of the uncanny, which marks all of her career in Canada and bears a signal relevance to Europe today.

CÉDRIC AURELLE



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ABOUT

— A RETURN TO ART CRITICISM —

THESE ARE NOT IDEAS; THESE ARE THINGS: A CONVERSATION
WITH LIZ MAGOR

BY SEY DOODEN • FEATURES • NOVEMBER 13, 2015



Liz Magor, "Being This (Argence)," 2012. Image courtesy Catriona Jeffries Gallery.



Liz Magor, "Siberian Husky," 1990. Image courtesy of Ydessa Hendeles.

Liz Magor claims her “space between the mould and the cast.” It’s a pronouncement reified by thirty years of installation and sculpture that reads tentatively, delicately, inscrutably, and sometimes misleadingly. In person, though, Magor is totally resolved. She communicates an uncanny clarity and determinacy, a dedicated idea of her practice, revealing nothing of the obfuscation or ambivalence that her work sometimes conveys. When she speaks, she imparts fully-realized meditations, as though threaded from a safe in her chest where she keeps them coolly spooled. Magor is slow and assured and wholly articulate. She insists on saying things simply. Indeed, on the occasion of her 2014 Iskowitz Prize exhibition at the AGO, *Surrender*, we walk through her spare show, peopled by the appearance of a sleeping Husky (*Siberian Husky*, 1990) and crowded with her famed *One Bedroom Apartment* (1996), and during this tour she establishes her markers of import by a list of exclusions. Among these are nostalgia (she has no use for it), home (it’s not a painful notion, just “work”), and conceptualism (“I’m totally against ideas. Ideas are a dime a dozen”). Magor is one of the most articulate and poetic thinkers I’ve had the pleasure of interviewing, though I’m not sure her cogency goes reflected in the words below, as so much of it flowed from inflection. I felt, let it be said, completely convinced that the indeterminacy of her work stems from me (from us?) than anything else.

Looking at *One Bedroom Apartment*, with its collection of boxes and wrapped furniture, I’m made to wonder about your relationship to the process of moving. For a lot of people it’s considered a traumatic event ...

I’m with you on that. [*Laughs*] So that’s the nerve I’m interested in [touching]: why would moving be so bad? Often you’re moving to a better place. Often the move is voluntary (it’s a tragedy if it’s not voluntary, let’s put it that way). Often you’re moving to another city, moving in with your boyfriend. However, in the process of going towards that goal, whatever we’ve chosen, we have to throw all our stuff in the air, and it’s painful. Because that stuff is supposed to be our pacifiers. So when they’re disrupted, it’s not that pleasant. Then the recognition that all that stuff you



bought for pleasure – even the buying is pleasurable – it's all just a great big lead boot. You get to the truth of it when you move. I don't like getting to the truth of it. [Laughs]

I think about your work, especially this one, in its relationship to home, and the realization that you can't get home again. James Agee articulates this in *A Death in the Family*, that you can try to get home again, that it's good to try, but you'll never get all the way home again. Unless you have a little child of your own ... he gets into a familial aspect of trying to turn the corner on your own pain by creating a home for someone else. What is home for you? Is it a painful idea? No, just that it's work all the time. You have to maintain the center, even though the center is moving. By the center I mean, you might call it home. [Agee's] probably referring to the idea you form as a child. And then you're kind of cast out of paradise — you have to pay your own rent, and it's never the same again. But I don't lament that; I'm used to that. It's part of my human job to feel familiar in the world outside of my parents' house. And for me, that's a long time ago. I remember ... the thing I called normal? – I was never at a normal place again. Normal doesn't really exist, except for children. So it's not painful; it's normal to be abnormal, normal to be disrupted all the time. This isn't trauma.

I'm sort of interested in the below-the-radar traumas, which are more like irritants, small anxieties. Things are always breaking. You drop things on your clothes. There's a general entropy and destruction going on in your life. It's not like your roof is caving in, but there's a lot of stuff that you are responsible for, and it fails. A constant humiliation. The failure of it.

Let's talk a bit about media. There's a moment in a frieze review of your work where the author picked up on how a lot of artists would, if they were trying to articulate similar fallibilities and insecurities, do it through performance or the body or, anyway, less tangible media than what you're electing to use. How do you perceive this comment? How do you account for your choice of such solid media in communicating such instability?

I think my choice is consistent with the subject, in the sense that if my subject is the relationship I have, including my body and my mind, with the inanimate or the material, it is this soft, amorphous thing called *me* bumping up against this hard, intransigent, uncooperative thing called *hard material*. It's not me bumping into the movies, or TV, because they're mutable and manageable. These things are not. They don't listen, they don't cooperate. They were created to sit still, and be at my service. That sofa [*gestures across the room to One Bedroom Apartment*] is my servant. It's not my fantasy. So when I think of media that is more mobile, it's equivalent to the imagination; whereas that's equivalent to my body. Because my body is also not that responsive to my desires. I can't make it the shape I want. If it's sick I can't heal it, exactly. I like the intransigence of this.

So my processes are difficult. I'm not conceptual. I don't say, "oh I have this great idea." I say, "oh, I have this material with this characteristic. I'm going to explore the characteristic and see what's unseen so far in its behavior." I use the casting material a lot because it flows; it's liquid at one point. And it will flow into any shape I provide, and it will mime that shape. These are not ideas; these are things. I'm totally against ideas. Ideas are a dime a dozen. [Laughs]

You said in a talk at FIAC that you wanted to empower the idea of zero. There's a nice elusiveness to that. What did you mean?

If I create a longing for a state or a life I would like to have, or things I would like to touch or be with ... if I am engaged in that longing incessantly or thoroughly, I turn them into idols, idols for things I don't even have. And while I'm doing that I'm probably sitting in a chair that I do have. My bum is on it. [Laughs] So I think, "what if I flip it and idolize the things that I do have, and I look at them so hard that they become important?" Because I give them my full attention? So the



extreme version of that would be to say nothing is everything; zero, dust is important. I can do that for a few moments [at a time]. I can't do it forever, I'm not a Buddhist. But for a moment. And as an artist I want to go for those things that have fallen down, and been discarded, and find in them the allure they had when they were first picked up.

The relevant term for your projected or perceived allocation of meaning in a used, even historic object, might be aura. Is that a term you think about?

Aura is – it comes directly from us. There is some phenomenology in the idea of aura, so there is some material reality in aura. So aura's pretty good. [Laughs] Yeah, I'm interested. But I also would go into the auratic space and –

Muck around? –

Yeah, muck around. I would go in and drill a hole in it and say, "what are you made of?" [Laughs] So I don't stay in that dream space. I want both. I want that dream to be about what is around me now, in every moment. That's why I don't really deal with pop culture. I'm not doing rifts on TV shows or music because it's already quite famous.

It doesn't need you.

Yeah, it doesn't need me. It's redundant, my efforts are wasted there.

You have some objects here that make me think of my mother, and her mother, though. They're already becoming signifiers.

Yeah, they're becoming signifiers. It's like when you're driving on the highway and those lights are coming toward you: they're like signifiers. And then it passes you and you see what kind of car it is and who's in there. Those things, I don't know if they're receding or advancing. They might be receding for someone your age because they're coming out of your grandmother's view and into yours. But to her, they might be going back. She probably doesn't want to see them again, while they're exotic for you.

That's an interesting way to invert the common narrative of nostalgia.

Yeah, everyone's in a different place when it comes to the trajectory of their intersection with the things in this room. So I don't have a meaning for them, exactly. I just want them to be here with some degree of charm that I know is latent in them. So I pull up the charm with a bit of sparkle. And then often people say [my work is like] I've cleaned up after a party. I didn't mean to do it that way, like the scene after a party. I don't have moral or narrative or fixed [meaning].

Right. The artist I associate with you, however adjacently, is Iris Häussler. And yet she's stringing a narrative through, or certainly laying the narrative crumbs for us, in a way you're really not.

Yeah, I just truncate it. I just say, "it's an excerpt, one frame out of a film." Maybe I can imagine a beginning and an end, but it would be different for everybody.

Do you have an instinct around that? A water's edge that you bring things to, narratively, but know not to go beyond?

I'll try. Like sometimes I let it go quite far along – like probably the dog there [*Siberian Husky*, 1990] is quite far along, narratively, because it's quite articulated. I call him a Siberian Husky, for instance. There's a lot of things where I play with sentiment and mortality. I get as close as I can to the brink of "suck," and then sometimes I fall in. But I'm not cynical, I'm not ironic; I don't want



to be detached. I don't want to be afraid of attachment even though it's full of hazard and ... it's expensive. To get stuff to –

Oh you mean it's expensive literally! Not just in the sense of emotionally taxing ...

No! I mean literally. I mean you have to have a lot of privilege to be attached to things. Look at the migrants, they can't even carry a bag. If they want to keep going they have to drop, and drop, and drop.

***Being This* (2012) feels different – it's more directional, more citational.**

I was trying something. It came after the blankets. With the blankets I was trying to identify them through their affiliation, their label, and their material. So if they say, "all wool," you think to yourself, "okay, that's pretty good." And if they say, "made in Scotland," you go, "oh hey, *that's* pretty good!" So in the hugeness of the things that come floating towards us we have to do some quick sorting. And so even though we don't want to look at labels, we do; we do that probably for each other, too [label and sort each other]. So I started looking at labels. I go to Value Village, it's like my archive for the world. I started finding things that had labels of stores that were in Vancouver when I was fourteen – that was when I started my retail experience. I would start finding these and then keep the garment and the label; and I knew that all those stores had disappeared in Vancouver.

There's this constant change, something you don't realize until you find a record or a photograph that reminds me how momentous and constant the change is. I started making these as though they accepted that change. Each one of them is incoherent and has no center. Even though it's wanting to say, [as the work points to its own label with a gloved finger], "I'm something. I hope I'm something." [Laughs] So with all that turmoil – not just human but material turmoil, the churning of stuff is enormous.

I'm noticing the title of the exhibition, *Surrender*, on one of these labels. What's the significance of this show's title?

Titles are hard; you can see they're fairly literal. I do them mostly just to identify things [for myself]. I don't want the titles to tell you how to view, though. But it does seem that all the works have some relationship to the inevitable, inexorable deal that you have to make with the material world, and that you can't boss it around. And that at some point it might be that our things give the narrative to our life, as opposed to us giving the narrative to theirs. The relationship might not be as unequal as we think it is. I surrender to that.

<http://momus.ca/these-are-not-ideas-these-are-things-a-conversation-with-liz-magor/>



exponaute

ACTIVITÉ

EXPOSITIONS

LIEUX

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Un musée, une expo

Magazine »
Voir + clair

Actualités Comptes-rendus Voir + clair Entrer dans l'œuvre Entretiens Voir + loin

VOIR + CLAIR

Sept artistes à découvrir à la FIAC 2015

Magali Lesauvage • 22 octobre 2015

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Cent soixante-quinze exposants, 1733 artistes, plusieurs milliers d'œuvres : autant dire qu'opérer un choix à la FIAC relève de la plus grande subjectivité. On avait donc choisi de concentrer notre regard de prédateur esthétique autour de critères précis : des artistes dont le nom commence à émerger ça et là (mais pas forcément très très jeunes), et plutôt représentés par des galeries françaises (histoire d'avoir plus de chance de les revoir par la suite). On n'avait pas mentalement coché la case « sexe féminin », et pourtant sur les sept artistes dont on a griffonné le nom sur notre dépliant, cinq sont des femmes... et c'est peut-être tant mieux.

EXPOSITIONS À LA UNE



1 WARHOL

02/10/2015 > 07/02/2016
Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (MAM) - PARIS

2 PICASSO MANIA

07/10/2015 > 29/02/2016
Galeries nationales du Grand Palais - PARIS

3 FANTASTIQUE ! L'ESTAMPE VISIONNAIRE

01/10/2015 > 17/01/2016
Petit Palais - PARIS

LIZ MAGOR (galerie [Marcelle Alix](#), Paris)

Elle est, de loin, l'artiste la plus âgée de notre sélection. À soixante-sept, la Canadienne de Winnipeg Liz Magor n'en impose pas moins un vent de fraîcheur par sa pratique, dont elle dit qu'elle est destinée à « réhabiliter le zéro ». Ses sculptures et assemblages, encore peu montrés en France, prélèvent et empaquettent les objets du quotidien avec amour. Une pratique sensible qui touche.



Liz Magor, *Companion*, 2015, courtesy galerie Marcelle Alix, Paris.

<http://www.exponaute.com/magazine/2015/10/22/sept-artistes-a-decouvrir-a-la-fiac-2015/>



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Surrender: Liz Magor AGO exhibit a sincere art of juxtapositions

JAMES ADAMS

The Globe and Mail

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“Stuffy” is what you could call Surrender, the Liz Magor exhibition that opened on the weekend at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Stuffy not in the sense of being straitlaced, but in the sense of being full of stuff – boxes, blankets, garments, coverings, containers, materials “real” and “synthetic.”

Winnipeg-born, Vancouver-based Magor, at 67, is getting the solo showcase as part of her winning the \$50,000 Gershon Iskowitz Prize last year for outstanding lifetime contributions to Canadian art.

Surrender’s artful juxtapositions – the exhibition is devoted mostly to sculpture and installation work – are distinguished by a sincerity and rigour rooted more in the nitty-gritty of art-making than any act of intellection (although Magor gives you plenty to think about regarding identity, history and memory). Through Nov. 29 in Toronto.

James Adams

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/surrender-liz-magor-ago-exhibit-a-sincere-art-of-juxtapositions/article26166090/>



frieze

No Fear, No Shame, No Confusion

Triangle France, Marseille, France

In a recent talk at FIAC, Canadian artist Liz Magor pointed out that her practice is about empowering the zero. The exhibition 'No Fear, No Shame, No Confusion', her first solo show in Europe, which opened at Triangle France in Marseille in October, can be read in this key, as an infinite labour of love where making art is making space for the ordinary, shaky and uncertain. This exhibition, curated by Céline Kopp, features a selection of the artist's works from the 1970s to today, and engages Magor's practice in a compelling conversation with works by three younger artists: Jean-Marie Appriou, Andrea Büttner and Laure Prouvost.

Since the early '70s, Magor has produced photographic works and sculptures that question the unstable character of objects, ideas and human beings. Instead of opting for a representation of the frantic rhythm of precarious life through the performance of the object or the body, Magor's works confront the viewer with uncanny factuality and eerie stillness. Tables, chairs, cupboards – the contents of a one-bedroom apartment in *One Bedroom Apartment* (1996) – with their presence and volumes invite the viewer to consider the weighty sensation of living an unsettled life. Uncertainty is also a presence: a white dog rests under one of the tables. Is the dog real or a model? It seems to be at ease, though the rest of the scene provokes anxiety. Who hasn't experienced the stress of moving from one place to another, after all?

If material possessions might produce a sense of certainty and comfort, in Magor's works, materials often embody and show their fragile status. In the work *Tweed (neck)* (2008), a cast tweed jacket folded together with brown gloves has its neck stuffed with a bottle of whisky. The stiffness of this glass neck is concealed by the apparent softness of the piece of cloth. Things are never one-sided in Magor's work. In *Double Cabinet (blue)* (2001), what from one side looks like a pile of blue towels laying on the floor, if looked at from a different angle reveals a hollow interior filled with real beer

About this review

Published on 19/11/13

By Federica Buetti



Liz Magor, *Tweed (neck)*, 2008, gypse polymerisé, 41 x 42 x 14 cm. Courtesy" Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

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cans. Though on closer observation, the towels are a cast. In fact, many of her works are casts made of plaster, resin, silicone, Platinum-Cure silicone or rubber. So a piece of wood and construction material leaning against the wall and sheltering potatoes, onions and carrots in *Stores* (2000) is not necessarily a piece of wood – just as a tweed is not necessarily as soft as it appears to be.

Magor's artistic practice is about inhabiting – to quote her – 'a space between the mould and the cast', between the potential and the already exhausted, the imagined and the factual, where the object becomes a mobile threshold between different realities. The uncertain status of matter in the works expresses the resistance of the material world to meaning or forms of representation. But matter here never merely equals the physical. As the nuns in conversation with artist Andrea Büttner in her video *Little Sisters: Lunapark Ostia* (2012) suggest, spirituality is an ordinary, material practice of living and sharing with others. And being with others can also mean being confronted by a heavy inheritance. So, in her video *Wantee* (2013) Laure Prouvost pushes the inheritance of art history over the edge and engages in a spooky conversation about art with her fictitious grandfather, an artist and close friend of Kurt Schwitters.

More than particular motifs, the works by all of the artists in the exhibition share an attitude and an understanding of art as a practice that values the domestic and unspectacular – where things and materials whisper their secrets to us: that they have no secret at all. They offer themselves in their sensuality, as bodies, as things, as human beings, without fear or shame.

Federica Buetti

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REVIEWS

VANCOUVER
CATRIONA JEFFRIES

LIZ MAGOR

by Lisa Marshall

In reference to earlier work, Liz Magor has spoken of an "aggressive offer." The description fits with what she showed in "I is being This" at Catriona Jeffries, where the visitor was confronted by an army of gift boxes. Each box presents its own unique arrangement: a neatly folded shirt, blouse or jacket embellished with fabrics, sequins, price tags, garment labels, slogans and other found objects sits nestled in crinkly tissue paper like a freshly opened present. One box catches the eye with a swirl of hot-orange tulle that wraps around a

neatly trimmed hole. An elegant vintage label reading "Made in England" is featured in the centre. The archaic label—a rare find these days—immediately brings to mind today's intensely globalized industry. Adding to the contrast, hand-sewn stitches attach a delicate net to a substrate of coarse machine-made fabric. The richly textured assemblage culminates in a crumpled candy-bar wrapper trapped beneath the sheer surface, suggesting compulsions that diverge from fashion but will eventually feed right back into it—I imagine the clichéd paranoia of dressing: "Does this make me look fat?" In fashion, sheer is sexy. In the best of this exhibition, sheer fabric becomes a morbid membrane mingling attraction, repulsion and compulsion: the desirable becomes abject, cool is corny and luxury is indistinguishable from trash.

Another piece features a haughty glove pointing to a regal insignia and a scattering of cigarette butts. The cigarette butts allude to the two enormous cigarettes supporting the gallery ceiling: cylindrical beams painted to resemble cigarettes evoke the smoking crowd clustered outside any opening. More "cigarettes" appear in *The Rules* (2012), a collection of painted driftwood ranging in size from a few inches to one and a half metres in height. Standing on their characteristic ochre tips, they make an oddly delightful crowd.

Magor is known for her polymerized gypsum sculptures, so her turn to found objects such as garments and driftwood seems a departure. Continuity is to be found in the murky side of the psyche that runs through the secret stashes, the hideaways, the peculiar simulations and the garment-based assemblages. "I is being This" worked by flaunting that which would be covered over while presenting the peculiarities of display. An "aggressive offer" can't be refused—it arrives in those things that seduce us into identifying with them too deeply to resist. "I is being This" disrupted the syntax of those desires a little bit, with a cacophonous play of offers and counter-offers.

LIZ MAGOR *Being This* (detail)
2012 36 boxes, paper, textiles
and found materials 30.5 x 48.2
x 6.3 cm each (approx.);
overall dimensions variable
PHOTOS SCOTT MASSEY

ABOVE: INSTALLATION VIEW OF LIZ
MAGOR'S "I is being This" 2012





LIZ MAGOR
Double Cabinet (blue)
2001, Gypse polymérisé,
canettes de bière, 23.5 x 68.5 x 43 cm
Courtesy Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

NO FEAR, NO SHAME, NO CONFUSION

Liz Magor accompagnée
de Jean-Marie Appriou,
Andrea Büttner et Laure Prouvost.

Exposition du 11 octobre 2013 au 2 février 2014

Dans le cadre de la programmation artistique New Orders, Triangle France poursuit ses engagements féministes et internationaux en invitant une artiste majeure : la canadienne Liz Magor (née en 1948, vit et travaille à Vancouver). Visible pour la première fois en Europe depuis sa participation à Documenta VIII en 1987, elle présente une sélection conséquente de sculptures datant de ces vingt dernières années. Elle est accompagnée de trois artistes européens parmi les plus reconnus à l'heure actuelle et dont l'univers esthétique et les recherches proposent une mise en perspective complexe des questions posées par son travail.

Jean-Marie Appriou (né en 1986 vit et travaille à Paris), Laure Prouvost (née en 1978, vit et travaille à Londres) et Andrea Büttner (née en 1972, vit et travaille à Francfort), dont la gravure sur bois datée de 2006 *No Fear, No Shame, No Confusion* donne son titre à l'exposition, réalisent un projet spécifique pour cette exposition.

Depuis le début des années 1970, le travail sculptural et photographique de Liz Magor questionne avec poésie et retenue les questions liées à ce qui est apparent. Elle examine la façon dont les objets et les personnes se dévoilent, se revendiquent et prétendent être. À travers de nombreuses références faites à la nature sauvage et aux refuges de pionniers, elle pose la question du désir d'abri physique et émotionnel et celle de la fragilité identitaire et matérielle des objets et des corps. Depuis ses machines des années 1970 transformant des matériaux

ordinaires en formes sculpturales, en passant par ses séries photographiques des années 1990 documentant des 'reenactments' historiques, Liz Magor n'a eu de cesse de dévoiler les strates d'informations qui cachent le sens des choses tout en le fabriquant. Les œuvres de l'exposition, dont certaines ont été réalisées spécialement pour l'occasion, constituent une sélection précise de sculptures présentées ensemble pour la toute première fois. On y retrouve sa célèbre installation *One Bedroom Apartment* (1996), ses objets ambigus réalisés par moulage et ses dernières œuvres textiles.

En réutilisant, dupliquant et transformant des objets souvent issus d'un quotidien qui a fini de les consommer, Liz Magor questionne leur statut social et émotionnel, leur



inconsistance, et révèle leur anxiété. Si l'anxiété et la confusion sont des éléments récurrents du travail de Liz Magor, les sentiments de gêne et de honte constituent la structure et le moteur même du travail plastique et conceptuel développé depuis une dizaine d'années par Andrea Büttner.

L'artiste dégage la valeur positive, politique et productrice de ces émotions en leur attribuant un caractère heuristique. Dans la lignée de *Little Sisters: Lunapark Ostia* (2012), où elle documentait le travail d'une communauté de sœurs qui animent un stand de fête foraine près de Rome, Andrea Büttner présente ici une installation composée de travaux qui reflètent son intérêt pour les questions sociales et éthiques liées à la dignité, à l'émancipation, à la pauvreté et aux systèmes de croyances.

La présence du folklore et l'utilisation de techniques traditionnelles se retrouvent également chez Jean-Marie Appriou. Ce jeune artiste français réalise une toute nouvelle série de sculptures en bronze dont la préciosité est révélée par un caractère brut et étrange. Il conçoit la sculpture comme la forge : une cuisson, une transformation et un amalgame d'où émergent parfois des personnages.

Ce caractère expérimental, où tout semble possible jusqu'à la perte de repères, se présente sans doute de la façon la plus forte dans la nouvelle installation vidéo que Laure Prouvost réalise pour cette exposition. Il s'agit d'un nouvel épisode de la série d'œuvres narrant la vie de son « Grand père conceptuel, mort lors de la réalisation de sa dernière grande œuvre qui visait à creuser un tunnel vers le Maroc depuis son salon ». Après avoir reproduit le salon de ce grand père fictif pour la Tate Britain (*Wantee*, 2013) lui valant une nomination au prestigieux Turner Prize à l'automne prochain, Laure Prouvost propose pour Marseille de se concentrer sur la chambre à coucher de cette grand mère éperdue de chagrin. Il s'agira d'objets, de rêves, de fantasmes... Laure Prouvost introduit avec humour une cacophonie à la Kafka où les objets quotidiens, le film, le son, auto-génèrent une narration qui semble à la fois logique et produite par erreurs de traductions successives.

Production Triangle France
Projet lauréat Mécènes du Sud 2013

LIZ MAGOR

Casual

2012, Silicone durci au platine,
caoutchouc, chaise, 80 x 61 x 63.5 cm
Courtesy Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver

SEVEN PRINTS!

Du 30 août au 7 septembre 2013

Le Dernier Cri, éditeur et atelier sérigraphique, produit plusieurs estampes d'Atelier Van Lieshout, ainsi que de quelques-uns de ses auteurs. Le Dernier Cri s'interroge sur l'émancipation et le statut de l'artiste face au marché de l'art. Il tend à un fonctionnement similaire à une coopérative « d'art total ». Artistes : Fredox, Henriette Valium, Andy Bolus, Yann Taillefer, Sam Rictus, Sekitani, Pakito Bolino. Les estampes seront présentées pendant ART-O-RAMA.

Production Le Dernier Cri



THE ART OF LIZ MAGOR

Facing page: Liz Magor, *Stack (Raccoon)*, 2009, polymerized gypsum, ash, wood, 56 x 68 x 68 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada. Photograph: Toni Hafkenscheid. Courtesy Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto.

1. *Corner Mouse (left hand)*, 2009, polymerized gypsum, wood, caulking, 79 x 28 x 23.5 cm. Photograph: Toni Hafkenscheid. Courtesy Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto.

2. *Corner Mouse (left hand) (detail)*, 2009, polymerized gypsum, wood, caulking, 79 x 28 x 23.5 cm. Photograph: Toni Hafkenscheid. Courtesy Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto.

by E C Woodley

To use language at all is to use an instrument that was forged by others. The purely personal cannot be uttered in language at all.

— Gabriel Josipovichi, *Writing and the Body*, Princeton University Press, 1982.

Objectivity is left when something is finished.

— Siri Hustvedt, "Ghosts at the Table," *Yonder*, Henry Holt and Company, 1998.

There is a line written by Northrope Frye about Flaubert, how he turns "all simple life into an enormously intricate still life, like the golden touch of Midas." Liz Magor also freezes and transmutes "simple" life, and her tableau can be just as intricately precise or as abjectly complex as an image in Flaubert. Her accumulations of foodstuffs, clothing, deceased animals and other objects are uncannily odourless and irrevocably silent. They are capable of stopping your breath, if only for a moment, in mortal dread or fascination. The airlessness and the motionlessness of time in the gallery rooms these things inhabit must be negotiated without much recourse to language. Fluidity of speech is held like Midas's water and wine.



Unlike the occasionally lavish, gold-tasselled banquets Flaubert transcribed (when *Sentimental Education* was published in 1869, the critic Edmond Scherer dismissed the novel as "a collection of photographs"), Magor has a fondness in her still life for the quotidian amalgam of pewter (which is primarily tin) or silver-plated lotus-shaped or round trays. In their modesty and intimations of worldly dignity, these domestic objects transmit a certain pathos, especially when they are tarnished. The effects of the daily atmosphere seem to have adversely affected these decorative plates, as gravity affects mortal skin and bones.

Magor's objects may be "real"—a mickey of scotch or a stick of gum (the labels removed but identifiable as Johnnie Walker and Wrigley's), a box of Toblerone chocolate—or, like many of the plates and cigarette butts, and the animal corpses and leather or tweed jackets, they may be remade as polarized gypsum casts that hold every surface detail of the originals and are painted or coloured to more or less match them. For the viewer, there is more to this position than to simply sort out the "real" from the "fake," although that is part of the tentative questioning one becomes involved in. How much "reality," how much pre-fixed meaning is resident in any object? Objects are made by us, and in this sense they contain us, are made of us; it isn't only media, as McLuhan famously observed, that are "the extension of man." The few pieces of Chiclet gum sitting in the shadows of one of Magor's stacked-plate still-life sculptures are the height of artifice, whether Magor has manufactured them or not. A strange, chemically engineered habit, not quite a food but a moulded thing that seems to speak of Magor's methods and concerns. An insignificance that is capable of invoking cultural and individual memory. In Canada, a stick of gum is more likely to act as an agent of memory than any Proustian madeleine.

Alone in 2009, in the narrow, domestically resonant space of the upstairs gallery at Susan Hobbs in Toronto was a work called *Corner Mouse* (left hand). A simple, darkly varnished wooden corner cabinet about three quarters of a metre high, something from the 1950s or '60s that you might find at a Salvation Army store. On one of its shelves was an ashtray of similar vintage in which a mouse was lying dead. The cabinet was made of real wood and glue, but the ashtray and corpse were cast and coloured by Magor, each one made with great attention to the detailed life of the thing produced. All together, a dead ringer for "real," like a quotidian scene in a little-used country cottage at the change of season.

But, then, thinking more clearly, I found that the intense sense of the real these objects communicate was somewhat unmade by the scalloped pattern of opaquely cream-coloured glue that the ashtray was half sitting on. What is this dollop of glue doing here? Why would anyone glue an ashtray to a corner cabinet and do it so badly, so obviously? This flourish of process, of showing-as-made, asserts the scene as fiction, as artwork. But the bodily, gluey substance of this bold but seemingly clumsy reveal complicates Magor's act. Glue was once manufactured from the bones of dead animals, and it still retains that bodily character. The mouse, once in living possession of its skeleton, is capable of becoming the substance that visibly strengthens the cabinet's joints. *Corner Mouse* (left hand) is unmade as reality by the very substance that appears to make it up. What seems inanimate becomes animate in the mind of the viewer, before being scattered and backing away into some more complex state. Magor works with the innate complexity of substance, the thin borderline between the artificial and the "natural," and the mind's wavering and naïve perception of these states.

The genius of objects is that they speak of the precise boundaries of human knowledge, and also of the imprecision of our perception of them. "In solitude, objects are the company we keep," writes Siri Hustvedt. In Magor's work, objects keep their own company. This includes living creatures, which in



1. *Leather Ashtray on Table*, 2009, polymerized gypsum, cigarettes, wood, 57 x 121 x 63.5 cm. Photograph: Toni Hafkenscheid. Courtesy Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto.

2. & 3. *Leather Ashtray on Table* (detail), 2009, polymerized gypsum, cigarettes, wood, 57 x 121 x 63.5 cm. Photograph: Toni Hafkenscheid. Courtesy Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto.



2



3

The genius of objects is that they speak of the precise boundaries of human knowledge, and also of the imprecision of our perception of them.

death have become objects. A corpse, like an object of mass production, seems to oppose uniqueness, or at least complicates the notion, demonstrates the replaceable-ness of any individual in the great mass of living things. Magor's works resist language, but like props in a theatre, they seem to belong in proximity to words. One can imagine that, in their solitude, they themselves are strange and literal embodiments of a descriptive quality in language.

In *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (University of Chicago Press, 1983), Svetlana Alpers commented on the relationship between language and image in early 17th-century Dutch painting, including still life. "The vanguard of language studies at the time had led away from names redolent with meaning to the things themselves and to what [Sir Francis] Bacon variously referred to as 'the creator's own signature and marks' or 'footprints' or 'stamps' on them. God creates by imprinting himself (as in the imprinting of a coin or a seal) in things rather than by writing texts." Alpers notes that in the 17th century and again in the 19th many of the most advanced artists in Europe adopted a highly descriptive mode. "The stilled or arrested quality (of this work) is a symptom of a certain tension between the narrative assumptions of the art and an attentiveness to descriptive presence. There seems to be an inverse proportion between attentive description and action: attention to the surface of the world described is achieved at the expense of representation of narrative action." In opposition to primarily Italian, allegorical or symbolic works, "northern images do not disguise meaning or hide it beneath the surface but rather show that meaning by its very nature is lodged in what the eye can take in—however deceptive that may be."

In this sense, something of Magor's sculptural still life is recognizable as "northern art." She shares with Dutch art a concern with "the problem of the relationship between art(ifice) and nature." Considering the writings of one of the leading 17th-century Dutch cultural figures, Constantijn Huygens, Alpers concludes that when looking at the ornate and often lavish still life of Willem Kalf, "we have to consider if, more often than scholars have been willing to admit, deception here engages not a moral but an epistemological view: the recognition that there is no escape from representation."

In Magor's work at Susan Hobbs, which dated primarily from 2009, the question of the strategy and nature of representation was asked in an exacting way, however difficult it was to answer. In a series of installations of work from 2007 and 2008 that began its life at the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle with the title *The Mouth and other storage facilities* (the mouth here, among other things, suggestive of a cavity diverted



1. *Tray (bird/heart)* (detail), 2008, polymerized gypsum, 17.75" diameter x 2". Edition of two. Photograph: Site Art Services. Courtesy Equinox Gallery, Vancouver, BC.

2. *Tray (bird/heart)*, 2008, polymerized gypsum, 17.75" diameter x 2". Edition of two. Photograph: Site Art Services. Courtesy Equinox Gallery, Vancouver, BC.

3. *Twend (tableone)*, 2008, polymerized gypsum, 16 x 16 x 5.25". Edition of two. Photograph: Site Art Services. Courtesy Equinox Gallery, Vancouver, BC.

4. *Raccoon*, 2008, polymerized gypsum, 31.5 x 23.5 x 4.5". Edition of two. Photograph: Site Art Services. Courtesy Equinox Gallery, Vancouver, BC.

from producing language), Magor's Dutch-like "trust in the attentive eye" of the viewer played out in a different way. In this work, it was more often obviously clear that many of the cast objects were just that. One reason for this was the almost mythic, non-naturalistic or semi-naturalistic pigmentation of some of them, especially the animals. Here, at one station of the journey you made along a tableau of goods strung out across overlapping Ikea-like tables was *Raccoon*. Shiny blue wrappers of Krinos Ouzo candies glittered almost blindingly unstable under extremely bright lighting and were scattered across a cast and tarnished pewter plate on which was arranged a white raccoon curled into the fetal position. Held up by "real" legs, the table tops were cast, "flaws" in evidence like scars and, in places, dusted with pigment that suggested paint, wine or blood. In some works, the paint of a cast cigarette butt or paper candy wrapper had overshot the limits of its moulding and bled clumsily onto a decorative plate. At first viewing, you perceive these objects as "real," and then quite quickly the gap between this perception and what is actually present opens up and you are plunged into an abyss. In this instant of recognition, when "what-I-think-it-is" becomes "what-it-really-is," also comes recognition of one's own flawed and easily lead perceptual apparatus. This is irreversible knowledge. Once you have seen the thing for what it is, you cannot return to the previous state of simple belief. The meaning, whatever it might have been, seems to drain out of the objects on display.



Perhaps paradoxically, there is a correspondence between the wordlessness one is left with when attempting to negotiate the optical and the existential conditions of Magor's work and wordlessness as a strange condition of the allegorical German *Trauerspiel*, the Baroque "Sorrowplay." Beyond both the mimetic attitude with which the allegorist approached nature as a form of transience and decay and his attraction to an abject world of objects and things, there is, in the 17th-century drama as described by Walter Benjamin, a tension staged between the spoken and the written word. The sound of fragmented passages of spoken dialogue oppose the meaning communicated when read on the page (as the *Trauerspiel*

often were). "The spoken word is only afflicted by meaning," Benjamin wrote in 1928, "as if by an inescapable disease; it breaks off in the process of the middle of resounding, and the damming up of the feeling which was ready to pour forth provokes mourning." (John Osbourne, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Verso, 1998) Mourning is a silent, inexpressible condition nearer in proximity to death than everyday experience. It brings living beings closer to inhabiting an object state. ■

E C Woodley is a composer, artist and regular contributor to the pages of *Border Crossings*, *Art in America* and *Canadian Art*. He is currently a candidate in MVS Curatorial Studies at the University of Toronto.





Liz Magor

by Nicholas Brown

Liz Magor's recent sculptures are a danger to themselves. Abandoned trays replete with lifelike leavings from yesterday's parties, they frequently risk damage from real glasses and plates carelessly discarded next to them at gallery receptions. Her facsimiles of edibles and their containers, as well as other materials like clothing items, tree stumps and driftwood can be so convincing as to pass unnoticed by viewers used to the presence of ready-mades in the gallery. This is the sort of work that's inadvertently thrown away by maintenance staff. Magor's process of casting sculptures in polymerized gypsum (an industrial material capable of greater synthetic detail than plaster due to its hardness when formed) from real objects simultaneously asserts these reference objects while displacing them with their uncanny copy.

And yet the uncanny experience here is related to the act of looking, of discovering that we can be deceived by the material's ability to masquerade as the real. One must look closely to notice that things aren't as they seem: a waxen ashtray, curiously drained of hue, contains a lumpy and resolutely unacceptable fake mouse, though it sits atop an utterly compelling metallic tray (each object composed of the same material). Elsewhere, viewers discover real cigarette butts—a recurring theme for Magor, who insists on smoking her own as both research and method—littered amongst fakes. In cases where the fake is so convincing as to fool the most scrutinizing eye, the work's meaning is uncovered by reading the lists of materials posted on the wall or hand-out. Thus, Magor's works oscillate between an affirmation and a frustration of our senses. Even as we apprehend the material facts of the things before us, we are nonetheless confronted with the enigma of their existence in the first place. The compelling matter-of-factness of the object is so strong in many cases that it causes us to ignore the issue of their referentiality. Cast from originals (which we have no direct access to), Magor's objects take on a surrogate role that threatens to collapse the distinction between sculpture and reference.

It is this status as sculpture that makes them uniquely suspect. Unlike tromp-l'oeil painting, which employs established techniques to convince the viewer that they are looking through a window into a fully formed environment, here each object is a material fact, asserting its identity by what it is made of. It is not merely a question of illusionistic technique, but of the exact copy—the one-to-one. Philip Monk, linking the artist's sculpture to her earlier photographic output, has observed, "Magor's mould-cast relationship is the crux of her work," going on to offer "the sculpture seals the surface in a deceptive act."¹ This artificial surface, accompanied as it frequently is with unaltered artifacts from the real world, cannot help but raise niggling questions of authenticity that nudge us towards considerations of what came first.

It is at this point that my observation that Magor faithfully replicates her source objects might not be sitting well with some viewers. One might question the verity of the surrealistic, indeed phantasmagoric qualities of works like *Stack of Trays* (2008), in which seven trays pile high, their uneven stack revealing an apparently sleeping rat nestled amongst the comestibles, liquor bottles and cigarette packs. There is nothing straightforward about this relationship, neither in the odd juxtaposition of things and bodies, nor in our awareness that they are rearranged facsimiles of objects taken out of the world and into the artist's studio. Unlike many other artists who traffic in copies, Magor insists on performing the moulding and casting process herself. From her perspective, this is chiefly a matter of process (she formulates this as a question of developing "an ability to find things that would otherwise be hidden"²), but it also affects how we relate what we see to human processes. What may appear to our trained eyes as a readymade is in fact collected, manipulated, and repeatedly contacted all over for impressions that result in its mould. The artist herself acknowledges the nature of this departure from the notion of the readymade, stating, "a readymade has not gone



through a material transformation... it is a language game, not influenced by looking."³ Thus, Magor's sculpture is equally about the transformative qualities of replication of an object into an entirely different material, and about the scopie possibilities of its display in a gallery.

In a body of work that indirectly indexes the body—sculptures manually traced from source objects, themselves harvested from the artist's surrounds—it should be noted that no actual human forms are found in Magor's sculptural output (rodents are another story, but it might be said that they function as detritus objects alongside the cigarette butts and gum wrappers). Unlike many of her peers in the field of sculptural simulacra, such as Ron Mueck and Evan Penny, Magor's work refrains from the spectacle of human cloning and the whole creepy "uncanny valley" phenomenon. Yet, somehow her work feels all the more uncanny for its object-centeredness. Away from the grotesque qualities of simulated flesh and sinew, Magor's work simultaneously narrows and widens the gap of human identification. Rather than confronting people with their own image cleverly duplicated, Magor sets up distorted mise-en-scenes that offer a greater power of estrangement by avoiding the directness of the body simulated.

Compared with the deathmask preservation of the above artists, the weight of mortality similarly hangs in Magor's trays and tablecloths. As though plucking the flowers and rotting fruit out of the vanitas paintings of 17th century Dutch masters, Magor presents us with our own fleeting desires and the exhaustion of the after-party lull. Walking amongst these ossified pieces, we are subtly confronted as we take our own leisure. Thus is the indeterminacy of an object that simultaneously fools one viewer into resting his drink on its table (that is, its base), while prompting another to reconsider their appetite for excess.

¹ P. Monk "Playing Dead: Between Photography and Sculpture" in *Liz Magor exhibition catalogue, Power Plant and Vancouver Art Gallery* 2002

² Liz Magor, interview by Jen Hutton in *WHAT IT REALLY IS exhibition catalogue, Red Bull 381 Projects*, 29.

³ 28.



TORONTO

Liz Magor

SUSAN HOBBS GALLERY

Liz Magor's recent exhibition of sculpture was one of her best to date, combining—with the formal refinement we have come to expect from her—a nuanced mixture of references to domesticity and wildlife, still life, religious art, and Minimalism.

A pair of sculptures, *Bedside* and *Dresser* (all works 2007), installed on the ground floor of the gallery, address the tensions that exist between private and public contexts for the display of artworks and other objects. Each work features a cast of a deer's head, occupying a shelving unit attached to the wall with large triangular brackets so that it projects forward toward the viewer. Each is illuminated by a high-end halogen lighting fixture that looks to have been taken straight from an architect's drafting table.

This installation allowed the two works to waver between the traditions of domestic decor and the institutional and professional associations of more contrived or physically complex methods of display. While alluding to a lodge full of hunting trophies, the unlucky specimens are cut too high on the neck and look too young and too diminutive to serve the demands of machismo.

Stag and doe are both rendered in white, with irresistibly illusionistic details that extend to an unevenness of the cartilage in their ears and the presence of little bumps at the bases of the stag's antlers. This eerie verisimilitude is made yet more strange by the morbid surprise of real hairs creeping out from the sculptural material (a polymerized gypsum). The abrupt realization that one is looking at casts of the dead is tempered by art-historical associations with the painterly tradition of the study of animal corpses. A studio context is further signaled by the artful spattering of wine stains and paint drips on the shelves. But the unnatural blankness of the heads—and the absence of other connections to still-life convention—served to broaden and diversify their semiotic resonance. Their coldly lit white surfaces brought to mind marble statues of the decapitated John the Baptist. This feature also contributed to the anthropomorphizing of the forms and further evoked Christian iconography: Before being cast, woven material was inserted into the animals' necks, and this protruded in a way that recalls the seductive folds of drapery that adorn canonical *Pietà* statues.

Subtle references to the Crucifixion continued in the upstairs gallery with a third work, *Hallway*, featuring the death mask of a pygmy owl whose claws had been pressed together and wrapped around a piece of electrical wire. Like the deer, it had a mostly monochrome surface, with isolated pink and purple details perhaps signifying blood. However, as with *Bedside* and *Dresser*, the spiritual resonance of the work is complicated by its juxtaposition with a domestic appliance—another expensive-looking lighting fixture—and the anonymous industrial surfaces of the shelf, cast in polymerized gypsum, on which the creature lies. Here, as elsewhere in the show, Magor demonstrated a masterful ability to produce formally austere works that still pack a powerful emotional wallop.

—Dan Adler



Liz Magor, *Dresser*, (detail), 2007, polymerized gypsum, hardware, lighting fixture, 84 x 23 x 10".





1

Steinway, on the end of the world:

"Walkers in the twilight of the West, we are bewitched by transitions, sweet mutants and ingenious freaks, things winding down or vanishing into the violet shadows. We are obsessed with the iconography of our fading civilization, the emblematic defeats of its majestic ambitions ...

"In music, drifting chromaticism — In architecture, the patische of organic and historical forms, the pleasures of the cute, the vague, the ominous — In art, the drab play of hungry children in the dangerous ruins of modernity's garden ...

"In painting and sculpture and criticism — yes, principally there: we are curious children, excited by the fragrance and picturesque stain of decay, making an art of enfeebled desire, of theory. We are sure we live in the decline of a civilization, because all our art aspires to the condition of writing."

2

Before you left this time, I wanted to tell you a story, but I couldn't think of one. I guess we could have talked about why being an art critic makes telling stories so hard, but I didn't have the heart for it.

You fly back into town tomorrow, two days later I leave for Germany, for Kassel and Documenta 8. You'll unpack the big brown suitcase, hand it over, I'll pack it and leave, and that's the way it is with us nowadays.

Sometimes I wish you were interested in art — the stuff of it, the talk, the intrigues. Sometimes I wish I were more interested in all that part of it.

I recall that it was different with us once. We once drove down every twisting, hedge-lined backroad in the west of Ireland, stopping at every tumbledown abbey and fort. While we picknicked on chicken and Strongbow cider among the ruins, you would read me the little stories in the *Blue Guide*.

Before you left on your trip south, you gave me a roster of errands to do. I haven't done any of them.

Trips are lists. Toothbrush. Pasta del Capitano *con fluoro, gusto fresco*. Vitamins C, B, and E. Blue throw-away razors. A dozen 5 mg Valium tablets. The cologne you gave me last Christmas. I always take the Book of Common Prayer on trips, then get busy and forget to say the daily prayers. Notebooks, ink cartridges, etc.

Germany is lists; — a theory of what Germany will be like. Lists of artists, art works, issues, dealers, restaurants, key players in the art world game, second-string players, controversies, deadlines, people to see, people to avoid.

The list of Canadian artists in Documenta 8 includes: Robin Collyer, Jeff Wall, Krzysztof Wodiczko, David Rabinowitch, George Trakas, Liz Magor and Ian Carr-Harris.

3

"Our invalids, ourselves! The undesired male body — and who is desired in this dusk of pleasure? — seeks its pleasure in itself, abandoning the complications of transacted sex, of civilization itself, which has failed us. The weak dazzle, as the male body spends itself into the emptiness, and then the falling back, into the febrile hungers ...

"Our fathers, the patriarchs and master-builders, sought to remake the world in the noble images of grid and theorem. Orphaned offspring of these men, we move out now at dusk into the roofless temples and museums, the deserted graveyards and plazas, hunting in the dark for the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity. In the shadows she waits for us, her painted smile and red cunt-hair glowing in the gathering gloom, naked Lilith, theory, our seductress and destroyer and destiny ...

"We may forgive the liberal, rational spirits of the nineteenth century for their hubris — their haughty bourgeois realism, their good sense. But we will never forgive them for withdrawing from

history before we killed them — for giving us open minds and marvelously clever eyes, then snatching from us the chance to destroy them, and set ourselves free from their heroic projects and their calamities ...

"I am sick of writing this, but I cannot stop writing the sick thought — how we must everlastingly live their failure, fascinated and paralyzed by it, writing it incessantly, originating nothing ...

"The ancestors live among us still, as terrible, unslain absences. Children of the undead gods, we sometimes flee into the waste places, and there begin to fashion some forbidden thing — a story, an object that mirrors the true, instead of incessantly expressing. But suddenly, emerging from the darkness into half-light, appears the smile of Medusa, of theory, the gaze that turns us instantly into stone. Transfixed by the gaze of criticism, artists become critics, doing the work and will of the hungry ghosts living in us, haunting our conscious lives ..."

4

Toronto. A morning in late spring, a few days before I leave for Documenta. Pale sunlight pressed as peacefully as soft wind against the daffodil paper curtain, spreading in the bedroom's air as a warm yellow glow. I was still in bed, drinking tea, staying out of your way.

You came splashing out of the bathtub in a hurry, hustled naked and dripping into the bedroom, towelling hair, arms, butt as you went around the room, scrabbled in the closet for the clothes you should have laid out the night before.

As you rushed naked around the room, dragging things out of some drawers and throwing them into the big brown suitcase, you gave me the usual list of errands and chores. At last you pulled on something and rushed to the door to catch your plane, kissed me on your way out, warning me, for God's sake, not to turn the apartment into an absolute pigsty while you were away.

Alone again, I stood naked in front of the mirror, imagining your body as I had just seen it, busy and bare, looking at my own body, and noting again, that we were no longer young.

To my mild surprise, it was not sobering or sad, this thought of two bodies somewhat more dilapidated and disheveled than they had been. The mirrored sags and wrinkles, washed in the bedroom's daffodil light that spring morning, perfectly refuted all the utopian self-improvement schemes I'd ever entertained or tried. And somehow that was happy — a decisive piece of proof, of the sort that ends an old, troublesome argument, and lets something new be talked about.

This has nothing to do with art, of course. I don't expect you to agree with any of this. Your nutbrown eyes gleam festively in every light, like the sherry we serve guests at Christmastide from a cut-glass decanter.

5

[Undated entry from Steinway's green book. Written sometime in the spring of 1986:]

Liz Magor: *Regal Decor* (1986).

An installation work hugely filling the gallery space, impending.

I am received into it — Engulfed by the Other — No chance merely to view it — no perspective from which merely to see it. The distance is immediately obliterated by its incessant working as object, castrating — engulfing — the subject.

The path prescribed by the piece lies always inward — through two orders of defined space.

The outer space — a passage lined by tall, hollow columns (each three meters tall) sheathed in linoleum, leading to a huge (simulated) machine — a press for the reproduction of linoleum floor-covering, presumably.

(Synecdoche for the system producing the cultural imprints which have replaced terror as the principal instrument of social regimen-



tation in late capitalist society — the tight-woven fabric of newspapers — magazines — mass circulated photography — advertising — fashion and style and so forth.)

The *inner space* — a privileged domestic interior, notionally suggested by baronial fireplace executed in flimsy papier-mâché. Behind it — embracing it (as a pop-up book embraces the pop-ups) — a huge interior-design magazine open to a photograph of a second domestic interior.

In the photo — (we are constantly moved inward by the composition) — some pictures — a Gottlieb perhaps, other abstract paintings — a plain, squared-off modernist fireplace — over the fireplace a large, square photo over her head — ambiguous expression on her face (post-ecstatic languor? awakening? a moment of relief between contractions?)

The woman is the centre of the piece — Ariadne.

The piece itself — both maze and minotaur.

6

I am going to Kassel. Kassel is in Germany, which is in Europe, and Documenta is Europe. Europe is the West.

North America is elsewhere.

From a brochure published by the Kassel Chamber of Commerce: "Home of Arts! Conference Centre! City of Leisure-time! Kassel, a city with a special atmosphere! City of Fairy-Tales!"

The fairy-tales referred to are those collected by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, and the painter L. E. Grimm, brothers. Their bi-centenary was celebrated in 1986 in the Fridericianum Museum, in which Documenta is to take place next week, in 1987.

Kassel, home of fairy tales, hero tales.

This year, the scheduled productions at the Staatstheater Kassel include: *Götterdämmerung* von Richard Wagner, *Viva la Mamma* von Gaetano Donizetti, *Jesus Christ Superstar* von Andrew Lloyd Webber, *The Wall* von Pink Floyd, and *Love, Death and Tango* von Wilhelm Dieter Siebert und Michael Frohling, among other things.

7

The liberal self-love of the West, Freud tells us, has suffered three immense humiliations from which it will probably not recover.

The *first* came from the cosmology of Copernicus, which dislodged the earth from the centre of the cosmos, and sent it skating around the rim of a vast dimly-sunlit silence.

The *second* came from the biology of Darwin, which stripped us of divine paternity and made us brothers of the animals, and co-sufferers with them of Nature's mechanical sorting and producing.

And the *third* came from the psychological discoveries of Freud himself, who had unmasked the once-sovereign conscious ego, showing it to be a mere puppet puppet-king, manipulated and tormented by revolutionary conspiracies in the body's darkest cellars and sewers.

Freud's triad of humiliations, outlined in an article published in Budapest in 1917, intrigued my friend, the art critic Steinway. He said the article could be read as a bad dream — a dream analyzed more easily as an expression of distraught cultural history than of individual neurosis.

"The West" in Freud's article, argued Steinway, was Vienna; its period of "liberal self-love" was the era between 1848, when a liberal rationalist bourgeoisie took charge in the Austro-Hungarian imperial capital, and about 1890, when the "humiliations" of anti-semitism, nationalism and irrationalist sentimentality were already destroying the old universalist, liberal hegemony.

Of course, Freud lived to see the century's most drastic attack on the liberalism of Vienna and the West, by the Austro-German

fascism of Adolph Hitler. What if he had lived, said Steinway, to see Western liberalism doing to itself what Hitler failed to do — being whirled apart by militarism and greed and injustice, ripped to pieces by the capitalist culture it had historically served so well!

The dream of comprehensive urban planning wrecked by the greed of real-estate developers, governments, the corporations. The hope of a universal extension of human rights, foundering on the reef of national and regional self-interest. The vision of technical mastery over the earth and beyond, perverted into a reign of technological terror over a universally impoverished mankind.

8

Kassel is known as a city of truckstops. It is very near the border between the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic. Documenta is to be opened by the widow of Joseph Beuys, who will plant a tree in the town centre.

The map of Europe is a map of wars concluded and projected — appropriate for the continent which invented total war, then exported it (as political practice) to every corner of the world. Europe is always at war, or remembering war or plotting war, or embarking on wars elsewhere.

These may be the reasons why Europe is the home of the best stories. The great fictions, from Homer through *Beowulf* and *Malory*, to Joyce, were always about only two things — wars and voyages — and perhaps there really aren't any other topics.

In my neighborhood, there is a shabby hall where tottering veterans of the European war of 1939-1945 gather on Friday nights. I like to think they tell stories about the war. Once upon a time, in another time of dissolution and failed hearts, discouraged old veterans would get together in the taverns and tell stories about long-past glories and fights. A boy named Homer sat at the edge of the tavern's firelight, ignored, listening to the talk of sad, grizzled soldiers in their cups, remembering everything.

I hear that the Greeks and the Turks are threatening each other again, the Irish fight the English — generation after generation, replaying the grand scripts of the nineteenth century.

Every now and then, a Polish child playing in the forests is blown to bits by a mine that's been slumbering under the trees for decades. Soviet blood, Islamic blood bleeding, blending every day in the dry soil of Afghanistan.

Documenta is a show of capitalist Europe, hence half of it — a reproduction of the map of wars, occupations, the enduring violence.

9

Steinway on Vienna, Steinway on the West, even our West:

"As the liberal ego fails, the fascination with the patterning of culture — the freely-flowing, sensuous iconography of production — expands steadily, allured by *fabric*, the opposite of *object*...

"The mind of failed rational subject — the critic — turns from the concrete Other, and becomes obsessed with consciousness, sensibility, the nuance, pattern. We men of shrunk souls now view the city as a continuous, glowing skin of *building*, an exquisitely patterned textile cast over the abyss...

"We slake our lust with bodies confectioned of dreams, clothing, nothing but the sheen of glorious fibres, precious metals...

"The critical act becomes the caress of surfaces, the worship of production. The critic descends by night into the engine rooms beneath the city, to gaze fixedly at the machines of culture, ceaselessly producing the decor of seething desire, the *theory*, that has displaced the obsolete city of object, act and project..."

10

"The driving anxiety of the art theorist," said Steinway as we kicked



Edmund Engelman; Anna Freud's Consulting Room; 1938. Plate 40 from "Berggasse 19", University of Chicago Press, 1976.

along the sandy rubble of Cherry Beach one ravishingly beautiful summer day, "is caused not by heterodoxy, or even intellectual untidiness, but by ageing."

Of all verbal discourses, theory is the one most ambitious to be free of time, the unknowing that haunts mortal life, death. Hence, it is a vigorous young man's past-time, and no job for men not as young as they used to be, who knows too much about mortality.

In his youth, every critic is a theorist, Steinway believed; in the end, every critic sits in the rubble of his theories, telling stories, killing time, filling up the unknowing.

There is a certain kind of person who begins to write about art because he finds in it the silence and timelessness so absent from everyday life — a secret garden from which ageing is absent.

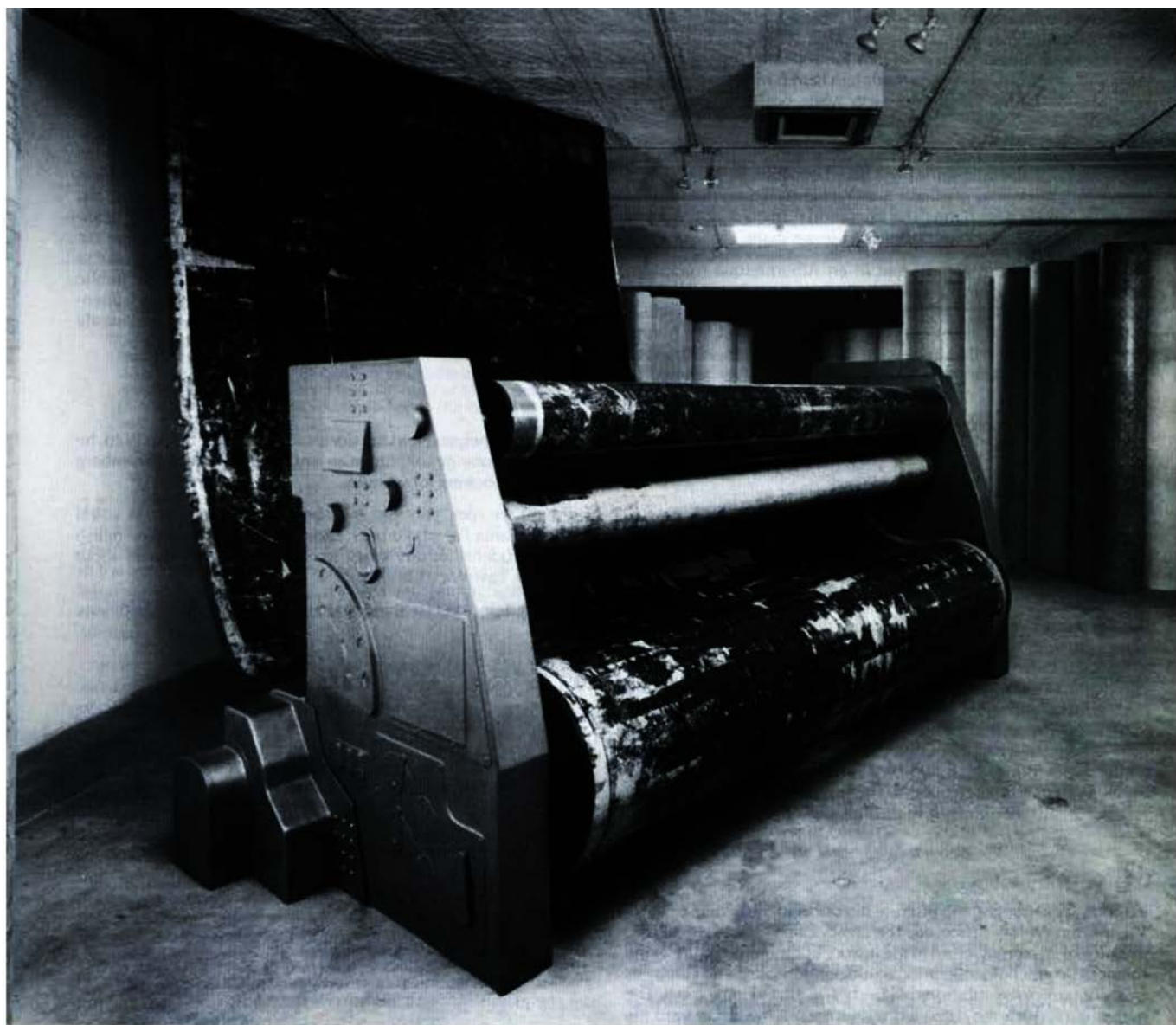
But the work of art necessarily offends because it is vulnerable,

tentative — as threatened by the same inexorable ungrounding and uncertainty as the body — and criticism finds this mirror of the real very hard to account for. Faced with the mute, vulnerable art object, appalled by the *horror vacui* and reminded of his own mortality, the theoretician writes up his fascination as an anti-narrative of production — a non-story.

Steinway believed that theory is the highest form of the decorative — the ultimate, obsessive elaboration of an insight into an exquisite fabric cast across the abyss — the abyss that eventually engulfs the textile of language, giving us an enigmatic silence in return — silence enshrined in stories.

II

[An undated entry from Steinway's green book:]



Liz Magor: *Regal Decor* (detail); 1986; machine: plywood, masonite, metallic paint, plastic sheet; 4 x 6 x 11 1/2 ft. Photo: The Ydesa Gallery, Robert Keziere.

Magor's *Regal Decor* again — haunted by it.

To go into it — A descent into a sacred grove, from the sunlit clearing into the dusky forest, to meet the goddess.

Or (the same thing formally, lifted from rural setting and installed in the heart of the Greek city) — a transition from the broad, sunny agora (place of conversation, commerce) into the shadowy, many-columned temple.

The mythic route — Penetration of female space, to encounter the goddess in her shadowy shrine — to speak to final meaning, there, shrouded in imagery.

But in Magor's piece, the mythic dance-route is denied — We go inward and find there — not the final meaning behind appearances — but the incessant business of cultural production penetrating, pervading all reality.

The baronial fireplace is naked status symbol, stripped of its function as warmth-giver and re-presented as bare sign of wealth.

The woman in the large photograph is also mere product — a trophy installed over the fireplace — a woman being *medicalized* as well, *produced* — accorded importance as commodity — by the doctors.

The logic of the piece — from the outer world, into the factory (site of linoleum production) — then into the home (site of neurosis production) — and through the photo over the mantelpiece, into the hospital bed (site of the body's production as commodity).

12

For the first few days after you left, I luxuriated in the sudden silence of the apartment, and the abrupt simplification of life. I called in pizzas, drove out to suburbia to drink coffee in the malls, didn't come home if I didn't feel like it. Now it's different. I'm ready for you to come back. When you come through airport customs tomor-



row night, I'll be waiting there.

As we drive back into Toronto, you will have stories to tell — stories about frustrating meetings, business deals that flew, fell through or went on hold, pleasant day-trips into the southern American hills we both come from, where the mountain laurels must be blooming now, showering the forest floor with white petals, a warm June snowfall.

But in the few days between your return and my departure for Documenta, all the little stories will have been told, laughed about, largely forgotten. And gradually we'll settle back into the routine ways we talk — negotiating the operational matters of our busy lives, managing and administering the life we share.

We fell in love the night we met in an Albuquerque truckstop, almost 20 years ago, because we were story-tellers. But as the years went by, we gradually stopped telling stories. Trapped inside a hotel by days and days of rain one August, we read *Wuthering Heights* aloud, and fell in love again. Back in Toronto, we tried to go on reading to each other after dinner, but it never seemed to work out.

"As capitalist-bourgeois culture has moved inexorably into its present bureaucratic form, the personal story has been displaced by the discourse of management as the principal mode of communication between partners. This development cannot be viewed as benign. The story is critical, disruptive and insistent by its very nature, hence capable of defining a personal integrity against the remorseless levelling of the social mass. The discourse of administration, on the other hand, is, by its very nature, a form of mutual policing; the establishment of a centre of police authority in the very midst of intimacy."

We are always "too busy" to read after dinner, or "too tired." We complain, from time to time, about "not having as much free time as we used to have," though there is no objective grounds for this complaint. We always have "something else to do." You and I are both writers, and there is always something to write, of course. Something else to think about, to get curious about. And it's hellishly expensive, living in Toronto, so there's always a goad to work harder, write more, etc. But there is never any time for stories any more. We sometimes wonder why, buy a couple of books, try reading them after dinner, give up after a few days.

13

In Steinway's thought, the discrete historical identity of the city — Vienna, the West — dissolved. The city became instead merely the instance of an eternal return in the history of capitalist culture — the moment in which liberal, rational imagination fails, wrecked by its own contradictory ambitions of liberty and total management. The moment in which the damaged self emigrates inward toward the darkness, where the irrational, forbidden and repressed lurk.

Or the moment in which the irrational forces punch through the weakened liberal rationality which had hitherto contained them, producing the sudden paralyzes, the hysterias, the bewildering obsessions in which Freud discovered the key to the wellsprings of personality and history.

Looking out at the world of the late 1980s from his window high over Spadina Avenue, Steinway believed he saw a reprise of that long-past Vienna — a recurrence of the disease of failed European rationality; a return to the same point on Western culture's furiously turning wheel of fortune.

14

Vienna, 1900 — Europe, 1987 — times when the revolutions, the springtimes are all past. Sometimes I try to remember 1967, 1968. Liberal civilization in crisis, poisoned by its hypocrisies — the sulphurously burning ghettos of Detroit, riots in Chicago, barri-

cades in Paris. I watched all this on television, while vacationing in a Georgian country house deep in the Irish countryside.

In 1967, there was something called "the summer of love" in San Francisco. Drug dreams, the occult, digger communism, eros — fumes of suppressed desires, rising to intoxicate and disarray the rational culture which had capped and contained them.

Yet in the 1960s, liberal culture was merely intimidated, not overthrown — I finally did not want it overthrown, despite all the sit-ins and anti-war demonstrations I took part in, despite being a talkative, feisty Marxist for a while. The revolution wasn't coming, the regime we'd worked to get installed in Saigon wasn't exactly Jeffersonian after all — so it appeared that perhaps a deal could be cut with imperialism, after all. A deal that involved my staying loyal to mainstream liberal values — human rights, personal liberty, public compassion and so on — while pointedly not paying much attention to the contradiction between those values and the vastly destructive capitalist culture I live in, and prosper in.

15

The night we met, you told me stories about your father. In 1926, he dressed in an orange suit, drove around town in a sleek Duesenberg convertible, looking for women.

The night we met, you told me about an ancient woman you'd known in Santa Fe, who'd been cadging free dinners from English graduate students for fifty years, in exchange for her stories about being D.H. Lawrence's last lay.

That night, I decided I wanted to spend the rest of my life with you.

16

[Notes on the fireplaces in Liz Magor's *Regal Decor*. Notes on the fire.]

In a footnote to *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud suggests that all human culture may have sprung from a specific act of self-denial by primitive males: the repression of the primordial desire to piss on fire. Hence, the control over fire, prerequisite of all cultural advance beyond barbarism, is grounded in the prior control over urinary function, toilet training.

If Freud is correct, the first class-division would have been between those who could control their desire to piss on fire, and those who could not or were unwilling to do so — thereby creating a progressive, self-controlled elite with power over the fire, and a deprived underclass ideologically portrayed as intractable, dirty, sensuous, impoverished by their own self-indulgence and so forth. Such characterizations of overclass and underclass have persisted down to modern times, of course.

Thus has the fireplace, though obsolete as a means of cooking or heating, come to have peculiar importance in bourgeois domestic architecture during the modern period. To have a fireplace is to be in control of urination, hence civilized — not primitive, disreputable. To have an elaborated fireplace (constructed of costly materials, prominently installed, and so on) is to go beyond merely wishing to see oneself as repressed, and embark on ideological proclamation.

The originals of both fireplaces represented in *Regal Decor* are rhetorical, inasmuch as both are visual synecdoches for the larger social and architectural systems fantasized by their owners. Both, it should be noted, are fireplaces merely for ornamental heating; neither suggests cooking, i.e., alimentation — pissing, defecation.

The so-called "baronial" papier-mâché element in Magor's piece reproduces a pompous, ill-proportioned fireplace from a Victorian pseudo-medieval mansion — a fireplace that, in turn, clumsily mimics a modest hooded fireplace constructed in the true Middle Age (about 1250) at Luddesdown Court, near Cobham, Kent.

Thus Magor signifies one phase of the modern crisis of liberal ego: the attempted retreat of the threatened self, via architectural simulacra, into an imagined time of steady hierarchy, coherently applied repression, rigidly observed prohibitions against the rising



Compost Figures Liz Magor's New Sculpture

Liz Magor's latest sculptures, *A Concise History* and *Compost Figures*, were exhibited at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria from January 9 to February 11. They will also be shown at the UBC Fine Arts Gallery from March 1 to 30 and at Lethbridge's Southern Alberta Art Gallery from September 2 to 30.

Liz Magor's new work must come as a bit of a surprise to those who know her work, as well as for the uninitiated. A brief look at earlier sculpture is useful. The differences between work from, say *Four Places* (VAG, March-April, 1977) and the new pieces are obvious enough, but the connections (and they are numerous) are more interesting.

For several years, Liz Magor has been gathering eccentric, charming combinations of natural materials to form outfits for strange occupations and bizarre hobbies. *Birdnester*, for instance: a little pull-along cart with trays of nests to aid an ornithological merchant in some quixotic world of the imagination. *Beaverman*: a similar paw-drawn arrangement with live-in facilities and all the necessary apparatus for beaver-dam building. Another sculpture provided the complete set-up for a web-maker. There were *Breast Nest Pressers for the Perching Birds of Canada*; a *Hornby Island Tool Kit* with wood and bone utensils whose utility one might speculate about for years; and complete equipment for *Sowing Weeds in Lanes and Ditches*.

One thing these sculptures all had in common, besides immaculate, elaborate craftsmanship, was the absence of their owners. Each piece was the imprint of some extraordinary creature, a lifestyle without a life, suggesting how little we know of one another. Bones were much in evidence, and pickled things in jars, and dried-up plant forms. There was a museum quality to the exhibits, hints of time past and human ephemerality, a certain preoccupation with death, relieved by organic detail.

These deeper preoccupations, these "metaphysical things," as Magor calls them, are more evident in her new work. She has simplified her approach, tried to reach the bare bones rather than get lost in the creative fascinations of the art process. The painstaking, whimsical excesses of her occupational tool boxes were deflecting the viewer from looking beneath the surface of the work. "I got tired of people telling me bird stories," she says. She has not grown tired of birds, of course, just people who view her work as the brainstorm of a mad nature lover.

This is partly her own fault. There is a

self-indulgent, almost fetishistic, quality to many of the early pieces, a quaintness which says that the artist cannot resist throwing in every last possibility. The overall imaginative integrity of the work overcomes this weakness, but the new pieces are in some measure a reaction to a slight lack of control, and reaction is a delicate neck of the woods for artists. A clarification of one's intentions can result, a corollary freedom from distracting idiosyncracies and influences (as I feel happened with the *Compost Figures*). Regressive harping on a theme which has been already resolved can also occur.

A Concise History consists of about forty-five men's old jackets and overcoats dipped in a mixture of plaster and various pigments then hung on coat-hangers from coat-racks made of rusted pieces of pipe. There are six of these racks, each supporting seven or eight jackets. Some jackets contain trousers hung suit-style and one or two coats are hung directly from the rack. One pair of pants swing separately. Magor brought most of the coats back with her

from a trip to Europe and Egypt in 1977, and her observations there have played a role in the formulation of this current work, especially with regard to colour.

The large number of coats and their careful, rather contrived regimentation initially (and intentionally) diverts the viewer from considering the work's meaning. It seems that Magor is caught in a bind: viewers either get the point too quickly or have to be sent on a diversionary aesthetic goose chase, or else have so much fun playing with the piece they never bother to get the point at all. The point, here, is that the coats are the husks and relics of human lives, the discarded shells of humanity, and that man is blind to these rich trails he leaves behind, this glorious garbage and divine debris.

For colour, Magor has recalled the earthy pastels of Greece and North Africa. For texture, she has made the coats architectural, given them the plaster surfaces of old walls, old rooms where generations of human lives were played out. Ochre, sienna and umber evoke Italian memories.

Installation view of Liz Magor's *A Concise History* and *Compost Figures* at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.



Robert Kozere

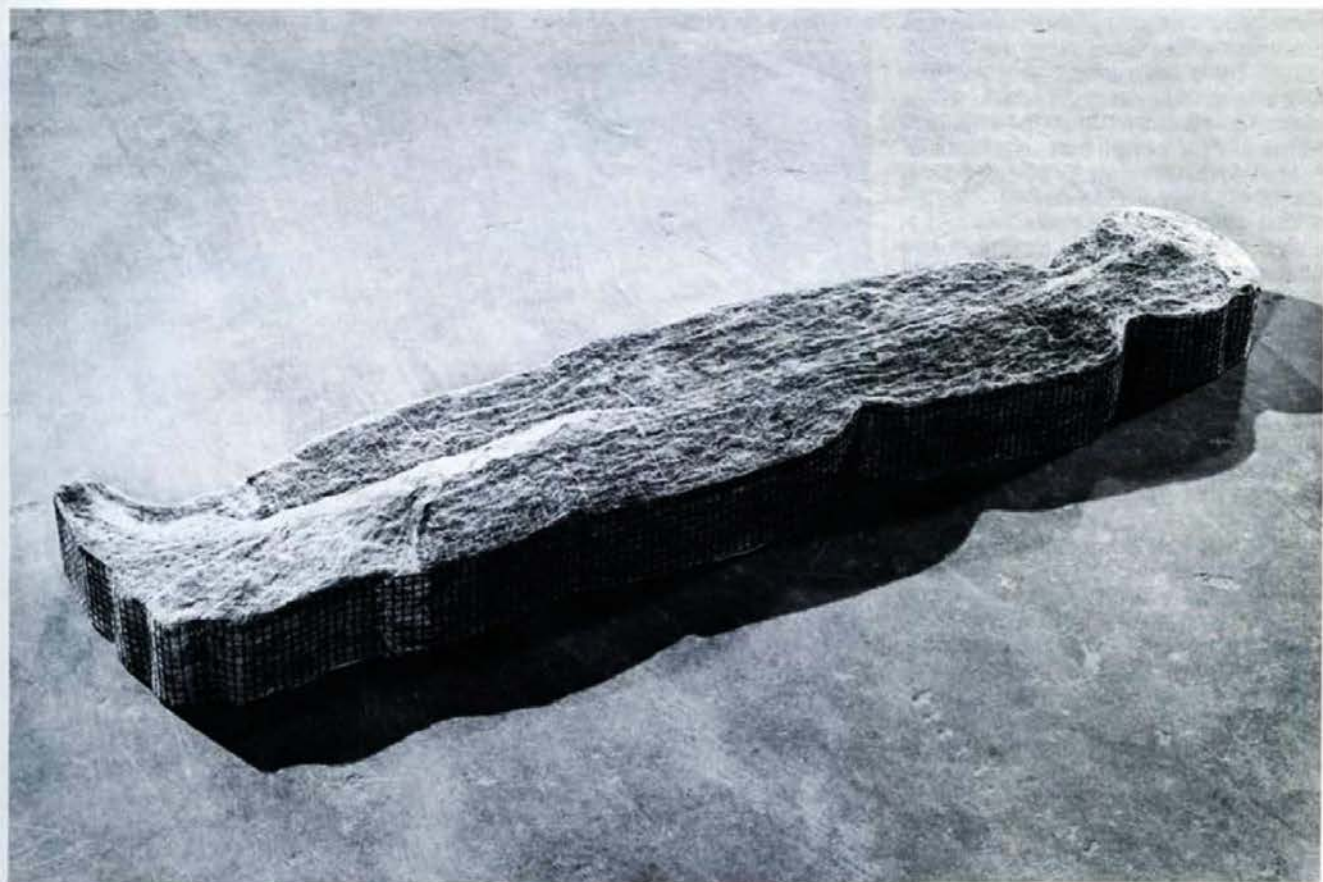


Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Photos: Robert Kezner

Compost Figure-Leaf (1978), wood, cotton and natural materials



Compost Figure-Mulch (1978), wood, cotton and natural materials



Compost Figure-Grass (1978), wood, cotton and natural materials

On facing page: *Compost Figures-Man and Woman* (1978), wood, cotton and natural materials



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A Concise History (detail) (1978), coats, plaster and pigment



while peach, salmon, beige and aqua blue and greens continue the Mediterranean theme. Art history echoes off these pieces and there are contemporary links with the figurative plaster works of Kienholz, Segal and Colette Whiten, but the overall effect of *A Concise History* is one of artifice. The past remains stiff and sad.

Magor, who claims that she cannot paint and that her drawings are ineffectual, seeks painterly effects with sculpture. Some of the coats work like drawings; the colouring is chalky and light, and the shadows have been highlighted with graphite. Others are more heavily plastered and act like paintings. The entire work offers a range of art-conscious clues in this vein. The *Compost Figures* continue the sculpture-as-painting ideas using cheesecloth as line and compost as pigment, but offer a number of physical and intellectual contrasts to the coat section. These figures are less acutely art-historical although the recent cut-outs of Anne Kahane, and some pieces, again, by Colette Whiten come to mind.

Magor has taken profiles of human figures from photographs and blown them up full-size to make plywood cut-outs for the base of her sculptures. Then, using a weldmesh or chicken wire mold, she has filled it with a five or six inch layer of wet compost. The resulting object has been wrapped with cotton cheesecloth and set to dry so that the cotton is stained by the organic matter. Some pieces are without cheese-cloth; an outer ribbon of pop-riveted sheet metal is filled with compost, rocks and a strand of old cloth, covered with pine needles, cones, twigs, bits of wood, bark and moss, then sprayed into solidity with acrylic bond-fast — casting in compost. Magor rejected the idea of using a surface of living turf.

The human outlines are disguised and abstracted by the drapery lines of the clothing. Some figures are grouped together: male and female shapes face each other and touch, creating beautiful negative spaces between them. Three figures fit together, emphasizing shared lines. A number of other pieces are slung, coffin-like, on a vertical drying rack. Several kinds of compost are used — grass, leaves or mulch — resulting in different coloured stains to the cotton. The fabric often appears as a lichen, extending the organic nature of the materials used. In one case, the cloth itself has been coloured before use.

Influenced by Egyptian tomb imagery, Magor has created for us a rich overlapping of sensory, intellectual and emotional experiences. The gauze scrim suggests a shroud, and the natural surfaces are like grave plots. The superimposition of the human figure points to the cyclical nature of life, while the "painting" of compost on cotton gives surprising visual results.

Andrew Scott