

Four Views

LALIE DOUGLAS

KARILEE FUGLEM

MARLA HLADY

ANDREA MORTSON

Foreword

The exhibition *Four Views* brings together the work of four artists — Lalie Douglas and Karilee Fuglem from Montreal, Marla Hlady from Toronto, and Andrea Mortson from Sackville — for the first showing of their work at the Owens Art Gallery and in the Atlantic Region. We are grateful to exhibition curator Sandra Margolian for her organization of the exhibition which has included the selection of work, catalogue production and the choreographing of travel so that all four artists could be present for the installation and opening of the show. Bringing to the project as she does a strong interest in installation art and a thoughtful, lively approach to the work, Sandra has produced an exhibition and publication which make a valuable contribution to our contemporary program this year.

The exhibition is also the third in a series of shows organized each year as part of the Gallery's Internship Program which was initiated in 1995. Previous exhibitions have been *Small As A Way of Working*, curated by Barbara Carter in 1996, and *David Milne: Eliminating Sentiment*, curated by Julian Forrest in 1997. The success of these projects has confirmed our belief in the critical

importance of the Internship Program in providing opportunities for developing curatorial practise, and in extending the Gallery's mandate as an educational resource within Mount Allison University.

I would also like to sincerely thank the artists for their participation in *Four Views*, and to welcome them to the Owens Art Gallery. We are grateful to the Canada Council for assistance with the travel of Lalie Douglas, Karilee Fuglem and Marla Hlady to Sackville. I would also like to acknowledge the Owens Art Gallery staff who, as always, have contributed in crucial ways to the realization of this project.

Gemey Kelly

Director

Four Views

It can be so many things to so many people that it leaves one free to get on with the works without wondering about the boundaries between disciplines. –Lalie Douglas

I feel that installation art insists upon the artist's consideration of the whole exhibition context and the presence of the viewer within that context. –Karilee Fuglem

Installation provides the ability to work with time and space in a more overt way than other sculptural forms. And the structure – the frame is defined as in drawing and painting. –Marla Hlady

It has to do with space: the directness in addressing the physicality of the exhibiting space but also the flexibility of perimeters in making it or viewing it. The realm of installation facilitates reverberations between signs and referents. –Andrea Mortonson

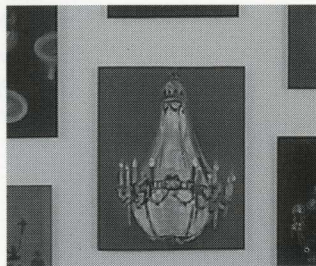
Installation – *the idea descends from Dada and Surrealism and reemerges in Fluxus, Conceptual art, and other radical movements such as German sculpture of the 1980s – involves guiding attention away from singular objects onto complexes and relations structured within the viewing space itself, where that space is now taken as a physical context rather than as a neutral background for the work.*¹

Installation is a term which encompasses an extensive range of meanings. It suggests the notion of “exhibition” or “display” and it is a form of expression used by many artists today. The interaction between things and their contexts, the merging of art with life, the concept that space and duration are materials for art, are all ideas which relate to the history of installation and with the artists’ work in *Four Views*.

Four Views presents work produced in the last year and a half by four emerging artists who may or may not solely make installations. The artists deal with a diversity of materials, ranging from painting, sculpture, found objects, mixed media, electrical devices and sewing, and a diversity of subject matter ranging from chandeliers, systems, relationships, and the gap between the human and non-human.

The work shown in this exhibition was, for the most part, previously installed at other galleries at different times. I have chosen to bring these four artists together with these specific works for several reasons: initially because their work stood out in other shows I had seen, and sparked an interest for me, and because of my own interest in installation art and its status in contemporary art. After speaking with the artists and asking specific questions about their work, I found there to be one common thread that runs throughout. Their interest in installation has stemmed from a frustration, or a felt constraint, which they found to be present while working in standard two or three dimensional space. It could be said that they all felt the need to work in the fourth dimension of time.

As you enter the Gallery and face the back wall of the high wall gallery, you are visually bombarded with a vast number of little squares and rectangular shapes that appear to hover in space an inch away from the wall. The positioning of the paintings, hung floor to ceiling, is reminiscent of a traditional salon hanging, yet the impression is more like an illuminated brick wall. Upon closer inspection you find 365 images of



Andrea Mortson
*365 small paintings
of chandeliers*

glowing chandeliers, some detailed and some reduced to abstract forms of light as circles, dots and lines.

This is the first time Andrea Mortson's paintings have taken the form of an installation outside of her studio. She notes:

As each group of paintings became more integral and the number of paintings in each series became more significant, I found that they began to make references outside of what was happening on the painted surface and that their position in relation to the exhibiting space had become more important.²

...she stuck to her goal of 365 works, painting each day of an entire year...

Mortson describes her installation of 365 paintings as “a strict routine of daily artistic production that parallels, and to some extent parodies, the literary ritual of keeping a diary.” By referring to her work as a diary she is imposing the passing of time, a narration of daily life. An installation of many paintings of the same subject suggests a driven repetition with variation, bringing the act of painting into the realm of everyday life with its tedious mundane ritual and thus robbing painting of its ‘high art’ position. It is impressive that she actually stuck to her original goal of 365 works, painting

each day of an entire year. The exploration of the same idea over and over again lead unannounced to other ideas: "I think the illusion of hovering paintings as well as the seemingly random juxtaposition of styles sets the stage for ambiguity and a degree of deception, and comments on the position I feel Painting occupies." In fact, the conventions of painting are challenged by the complexities present in Mortson's work. The artist's intermingling of beautiful rendering, abstraction, and attention to formal aspects certainly embraces an important part of the history of painting. Mortson can do it all, yet that is not what these paintings are about. She chose to use chandeliers as subject matter because of their suitability as a metaphor for painting, since both the chandelier and painting are manipulations of light. Mortson's technique of painting wet-on-wet adds a feeling of opulence and excess which lends itself to the richness of colour and light of the chandelier. Aside from being excessively fancy lamps, chandeliers are producers of light, and represent the excesses and repetitious nature of life. Mortson sets up an interesting relationship between chandeliers as light and painting as the illusion of light.



Marla Hlady
*Untitled (Amusement
Machine Series)*

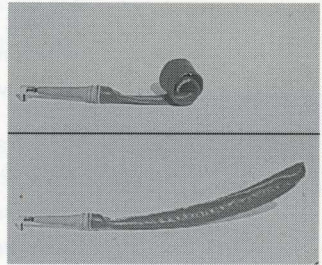
Marla Hlady's *Untitled (Amusement Machine Series)*, is a series of small shelves which display the functional innards of paired mechanical toys. With the flick of a switch, the little machines start to move and make distorted noises, squeaking and yapping. "The toys are paired according to such qualities as size/profile, kind of gesture and likeness of sound."

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viewer to become
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life into art.*

All pairs look different and make different sounds. When all are in motion there is a cacophony that fills the room creating a wall of sound, accompanied by a mechanical dance from each pair. As opposed to Mortson's work which is the constant metamorphosis of an idea, Hlady's work physically presents repetition of sound and motion. Because of the familiarity of the sounds and the scale of the toys, the viewer can relate to the work, becoming involved as participant in the functioning of the pieces, bringing life into art. Hlady talks about her work in terms of systems: "The dictionary definition of 'system' is the body considered as a functional unit and a group of devices or objects forming a network especially for distributing something or serving a common purpose" She sees her small

machines as systems in themselves with the outer shell's, "distracting representation", removed to reveal the mechanical workings of the machines: "While insistently functional, my work is without the 'real' function we assume from the systems they resemble." Hlady's work is only functioning when it is put in motion by the human hand and will cease to function at any time that the viewer decides to flick the switch. In fact, if there are several viewers there can be any combination of movements and sounds happening uncontrollably and simultaneously, suggesting an element of chance first thought of by the Dadaists. In spite of the hard metal and plastic, and the absence of colour, Hlady notes "I actually find the toys I've been working with to be sensuous."

Les Tres Riches Heures de Lalie Douglas is a series of small sculptures made of fabric, wood, bronze and found objects, using sewing, embroidery and knitting as tools. Each piece, looking like a quirky nick knack, is set up individually on its own plaster shelf. Some hang from the wall with embroidery and bronze. Each piece is related to the human presence, to relationships, and to objects which suggest double meanings, and each reference



Lalie Douglas
Noisemaker

*Douglas uses
man-made found
objects which merge
art with life.*

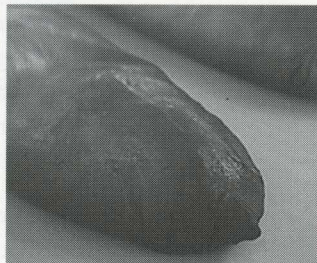
humorous sexual innuendoes or puns, such as the inflating and deflating *Noisemaker*. The narrative suggested by the title of the installation "A Book of Hours" is a calendar and a loose compendium of devotional texts taken from *The Hours of the Virgin* (i.e. Matins, lauds, vespers, etc.). She views her work not so much as an installation but as a series of sculptures, although I see it as a collection of stories which certainly exhibits characteristics of installation, such as the interaction between each object and its contexts and an exploration of the passing of time. Douglas uses man-made found objects which merge art with life, each object bringing a history of its own to the work as a whole. She writes:

I began using techniques such as sewing out of a desire to make real objects. A wish to be able to say, "Look, I found this! this complexity was already existent in nature and I am only presenting it to you," rather than "I make this." I did this by making everyday objects, which were transformed in different ways.

Narration implies the passing of time and the creation of a fictional history which is prevalent in Hlady's and Mortson's work as well. Fortunately, installation is all-inclusive, allowing room for the use of embroidery

and knitting as fine art tools, although traditionally thought of as craft. Douglas uses “high art” techniques such as stone carving, but also enjoys knitting and sewing stemming from when she played with embroidery and knitting for dolls clothes as a child. She states, “I see this return to ‘feminine work’ as validation of those earlier efforts and a turning away from the notion of a male-centered art history as the only right track.”

Karilee Fuglem’s *languor* is presented as three soft, shapeless elongated forms, red and glowing from within. They have a strange aura. In this “bodily-developed” work she tries to link human qualities with insect-like qualities. The slow “breathing” of the forms is vaguely familiar yet unnameable; mechanical lungs come to mind, but they could also be referred to as tongues, slugs, mummies, or giant condoms. Really they are none of these – rubber latex, platforms with plexiglass, fans activated by timers and fluorescent light tubes is what they are, all mechanically man-made objects evoking an indescribable mood:



Karilee Fuglem
languor

I struggle to keep it from becoming too much of one thing or another, that is, too verbally identifiable... Again, I wanted the work to involve myself/the viewer in such a

*The “breathing”
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way that one’s visceral comprehension of the work would not be annulled by a more image- or word-centric “reading” (as is often the case with issue-oriented, narrative or theoretically framed art)... It is of the time and place in which it is seen.

The term “real” has been used by Douglas to describe objects and again by Fuglem to define space. This highlights a tendency towards an art practise that tries to relate living space with art space. Fuglem’s work comes closest to what is thought of as an installation, because it animates the space surrounding the work, achieved in part through the use of lighting. The installation which is dimly lit, self-contained and separate from other works, sets up a stage for viewing. “I usually develop the work as one would an installation for that reason, whether it is a site-specific work or a sculpture which acknowledges its environment from this more autonomous vantage point.”

The works of the artists in *Four Views*, with their diverse methods of working, their involvement with and investigation of space, context, time, and the merging of art with life, provide a stimulating view of installation as a method of production in contemporary art. —*Sandra Margolian*

Notes

1. Brandon Taylor, *Avant-Garde and After: Rethinking Art Now*, (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc. and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995).
2. All quotes are from artists' correspondence with the curator, January 1998.

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List of Works

All dimensions are in inches,
height, by width, by depth.

Lalie Douglas

*Les Tres Riches Heures de
Lalie Douglas*

1. *Rose Corset* 1997
steel, bronze, fabric
16 x 15 x 34
2. *...And the Princess cried
and her Tears were changed
to Diamonds* 1993
broken glass, cloth, leather,
metal plaque
18 x 12 x 14
3. *Heart Shirt* 1994
man's shirt, embroidery floss,
garment bag
20 x 27 x 3
4. *House* 1997
wood, metal leaf, wool,
silk, cotton
11 x 16 x 2
5. *...For Adam* 1992
etched glass, cast paper,
acrylic paint
7 x 7 x 7
6. *Tea Set* 1997
china
8 x 6 x 12

7. *Noisemaker* 1993
leather, wood, air compressor,
timer, valve
2 x 5 x 2
8. *Les Jalousies* 1992
paper, leather, metal
5 x 4 x 1
9. *Untitled (Penis Toy)* 1997
wood, steel
5 x 6 x 9

Karilee Fuglem

languor 1997
rubber latex with acrylic,
wood and plexiglass platform,
fans on timers, lights
96 x 96 x 12
Courtesy of Gallery Samuel Lalloux
Photo: Paul Litherland

Andrea Mortson

365 small paintings of chandeliers
1997-98
oil on board
various sizes

Marla Hlady

*Untitled (Amusement Machines
Series)* 1997-98
painted wood shelves, toy parts,
miscellaneous electrical in-line
on/off switches, hardware and
fabricated metal parts
various sizes

The Artists

Lalie Douglas studied Studio Art at Concordia University in Montreal, graduating in 1995. She has been involved in numerous solo and group exhibitions at Neutral Ground Gallery in Regina, Occurrence in Montreal, and A Space in Toronto. *Les Tres Riches Heures de Lalie Douglas* has previously been shown at Circa in Montreal, and at Vaste & Vague in Carleton, Quebec last year.

Karlee Fuglem was born in Prince George, British Columbia in 1960. She earned her Masters in Studio Arts at Concordia University in Montreal, and has completed two residencies, one at The Banff Centre School of Fine Arts and the other at Alliance of Independent Art Colleges of America in New York. *languor* was previously exhibited in the group show *De Fougue et de passion* at the Musée d'art contemporain in Montreal last year. Her work is represented by Gallery Samuel Lalloux in Montreal.

Marla Hlady was born in Edmonton, Alberta. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Victoria in 1987 and completed her Masters in Visual Arts at York University in 1990. Marla Hlady is presently on the Board of Directors at The Power Plant Gallery and an instructor at the Toronto School of Art. She is also part of the Phoebe Street Project (Made in Canada Studio Collective), and Peregrine: Independent Exhibition Collective, in Toronto. *Untitled (Amusement Machine Series)* was previously exhibited at Galerie Christiane Chassay in November 1997. Her work is represented by Galerie Christiane Chassay, in Montreal and Cold City Gallery, in Toronto.

Andrea Mortson studied at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario in 1988-92. Since then she maintained a studio practise in Ontario and Massachusetts. Earlier this year she was a Sessional Lecturer at Lakehead University in the Visual Arts Department. Currently Mortson is living in Sackville, New Brunswick and is a board member at Struts Gallery.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank several people who assisted me in the production of this publication and with the exhibition including the staff of the Owens: Gemey Kelly, Director; Roxy Ibbitson, Registrar/Preparator; and Jane Tisdale, Fine Arts Conservator. On a personal note I am grateful to Andrew Myatt, John Murchie and Barbara Carter for their assistance, and to the artists for their cooperation, and finally, Choleena Di Tullio for her help with the design of this publication. Karilee Fuglem would like to thank the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Quebec. Andrea Mortson would like to thank the Ontario Arts Council. —*Sandra Margolian*

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