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THEASON LUKEWURM

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Andres Manniste at Galerie Joyce Yahouda, Montreal, January 20 - February 10, 2007

After more than three decades of much-disciplined studio-practice, prolific painting, and consistent exhibition, the art production of Montreal artist, Andres Manniste, goes largely without critical attention. One reason for this void in reportage may very well be a body of work potentially assessed from the point of view of three "discordant" 'phases' of coming into being /meaning -- envision those evolutionary stages to be "concept", "inventory", and "issuance".

From initial steps of concept through early application of pigment, Manniste's paintings display little, if any, recognizable concern for traditional values of aesthetics, 'style', or the cosmetics of 'beauty'. Decidedly NOT intended to be part of some "new-image", cerebral-circus-eye-candy, Manniste's works do, nonetheless, spin out of the same swirl of contemporary 'babel'* -- inspiration drawn deeply from the realization that for many of us today, television viewing and web-surfing are too often taken to degrees of excess. Culture-shock collision, diverse and complex topic, abundant leaps in analogy and association ... indeed, information overload ... the 'uninitiated' visitor leaves the artist's studio, verbally bombarded, and as much confused as informed -- as much 'abandoned' as seduced.. ... And yet, the artist remains somehow, at once, brilliantly and naively unaware of either the gray-matter dullness and opacity of "the masses", or the actual, marginal, art-knowledge-base of the run-of-the-mill, enthusiast.

With paintings, at or near completion, Manniste becomes [almost] silent. He scans an inventory -- full-to-brimming with references to past cerebral 'chaos' -- works much-scattered in size, scale, and subject matter, inconsistent in the nature of support, varied in terms of manner of framing / presentation -- although still somewhat 'tangible' as-a-whole when considered as memory-artefacts of "one passageway

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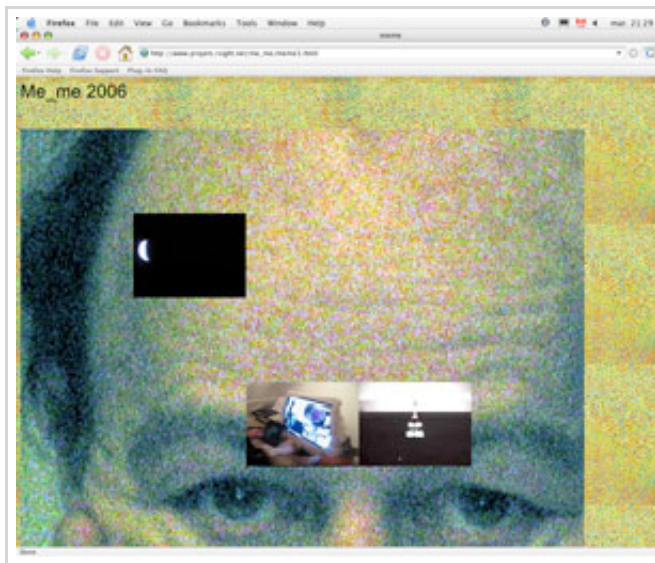
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through which process is fed by experience” -- evidence of “a surface dependent on the narrative of physicality” [the artist, 2003]. ... The art works remain immanently conjoined and abundantly relevant vis-a-vis one artist’s unique process of information ‘gathering’. In the studio, the body of manufacture remains an alphabet without lexicon; the makings of a language without syntax.

Finally, filtered through keen, curatorial-eyes, Manniste’s paintings are edited and remixed for issue -- abridged for easier entry into the public domain of the exhibition space. Here, the works take on a third level of complexity and banality. Imagine a curator’s daunting task of selecting from a myriad of signs without referent, and presentations without representation, in an effort to introduce a new, palatable, and therefore potentially much fallible, mix of markers denoting contradictory moments of both conventional and contemporaneous experience ?



... With the recent exhibition, appropriately entitled "Cacophony of the Spirits"

[i.e. The ‘Discordant’ Sounds of the Spirits], the art agents at Galerie Yahouda appear to have accomplished just such a task of ‘articulate unintelligibility’. A very large, five panel, acrylic on canvas composition -- titled Me _ Me [2007] -- served as the lodestone of the show. In this ceiling-to-floor work, two predominantly orange over blue, pointillist-painted (think: pixel), panels imaged a monumental-scaled, “blow-up” of the artist’s forehead which was slammed up against three smaller panels, crude-painterly executed, to time-mark

the childhood innocence, advanced adulthood, and subsequent demise of pop-legend Grace Slick. Is Manniste a diehard fan of Slick? Who knows? Are both characters principal players? Sure they are !!

[...] In similar, almost flippant, feigned-association, half-a-dozen smaller paintings and one computer-program-design gravitated around "Me _ Me". ... Some subject matter and/or text 'meant' something to the artist at one point in time, while other elements were selected randomly. 'Leancoilia', for example, -- a word scrawled across the surface of one panel -- alluded "to the sound of melancholia and was an onomatopoeic reference to fossilized remnants", [whereas] " 'Hubris' was a word [happen chance] paired with [the painted image of] a sport utility vehicle" [...] "colour was practically arbitrarily applied with little concern for optical effects, and the object was buried within layers and layers of paint. [With "Cacophony ..."] painting has become a metonymy for the passing of time and the becoming of a history." [paraphrasing the artist, 2001]

[extraneously now]: After the vernissage, outside of the gallery, across the street, and around the corner (...) a coffee-shop had its' television tuned-in to the Canadian Figure Skating Championships. Yawning somewhere between the awkward, white-static noise of a television in-between commercials, and the comforting, hum of human, social-interaction, the following commentaries crackled forward: "a more than OK, sub-par performance up there in cyber-space", "a feast or famine whether or not you hit or miss", "a final flight in which he lost his axle", "a triple-flip -- a triple plant -- a nice combo-spin on the bubble", " a program of intellectually, over-rotated jumps", "despite a complex choreography that left no room to breathe, he did take alot of air", "a great showman; if he had skated last night he would not have made it to the podium" ... In consideration of the mixed-measure of applause and cat-call, judicial appraisal and performance scores came from an apparently unfathomed source. Cameras scanning the enormous volume of the ice-dome witnessed viewer dislocation -- lots and lots of vacated seats -- red (more orange on 'that' screen) over blue [by viewing-value hierarchy] -- tiny squares of colour pixellated and overflowed the cafe's monitor. [...]

There is no escape. With explicative 'meaning' twisting below and behind knowledge, and connotation jetsam-adrift, we exist everywhere today on the cusp of a fragmented, programmed, and oft-clichéd, extended-reality. Manniste, ever-vigilant in watching the exhaustive variances of our ultra-high-tech, information- era, is the consummate

showman who spins alot of air
[-time] ... sometimes hitting and sometimes missing an audience-
landing.

T.L. Mtl, 2007

* "Babel" [babble] has traditionally signified the frustration of over-abundant and disorganized information and was a title given by the artist to his own electronically-manipulated, digital image and painting series beginning in 1996 -- a broad sweeping fin-de-millennium-spirited, 'marker' suite which culminating in a 2006 artist-book called "Phasis" [this title, literally referring to phases -- processes of creation premised on "covering" then "uncovering"]. This decade-long artistic endeavor began as "Babel" and was only recently retitled "Phasis".

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