

**Pierre Dorion and Janet Biggs exhibit at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal**



Janet Biggs, *A Step on the Sun*, 2012. Single-channel video projection, 9 min 22 sec, sound

**MONTREAL.** - This fall, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is presenting a major exhibition on Québec painter Pierre Dorion. The show covers the last twenty or so years in the career of this leading figure in painting here and across Canada, and is the latest in the MAC's series of monographic exhibitions devoted to artists of Dorion's generation. At the same time, the museum is also showcasing work by Brooklyn-based video artist Janet Biggs as part of Montréal / Brooklyn, a contemporary art event initiated by Centre CLARK with the aim of establishing a cultural exchange between 2 cities, 16 institutions and 40 artists. The presentation at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is Biggs's first in Canada. Pierre Dorion and Janet Biggs is on at the Musée from October 4, 2012 to January 6, 2013.

**Pierre Dorion** Comprising more than seventy pieces produced since 1994, Pierre Dorion offers a critical overview of the painting of this major Montréal artist. While various authors have quite rightly stressed the important role played by photography in the creation of Dorion's works, this exhibition focuses on their presentation context rather than their production process. Its starting point is a reconstruction of *Chambres avec vues*, an exhibition mounted by the artist in 1999 in a vacant apartment in the Dauphins sur le Parc building across from Parc La Fontaine in Montréal. There, Dorion made use of installation as a device for presenting his painting, as can be seen in the mise en abyme observed in the work *Chambre à coucher*, 1999. Notable in this part of the Musée presentation is the development of a dialogue between the physical space where the exhibition takes place and the image of that space. This reconstruction of *Chambres avec vues* also reveals the roots of the painter's current approach and the different stages in his practice that have led to the great simplicity which characterizes his work today.

Further on in the exhibition, the hanging of the works adheres more closely to a conventional chronological organization, but interspersed with a few paintings out of sequence. Visitors journeying along this path will be able to observe that, since *Chambres avec vues*, Dorion's paintings have become increasingly pared down from a formal standpoint. Indeed, we see that the identity and function of the places photographed (in order to then be painted by the artist), and references to their social and cultural history, are rendered in an unadorned style verging on abstraction. The two new polyptychs created in 2012 specially for the exhibition—*Gate* (The Piers) and *Sans titre* (DB)—are prime examples. In an interview with the MAC, the artist explains his recent work as follows: "In the last few years, I've worked extensively from photographs that I've taken in galleries or museums on various trips and that consequently include certain works or fragments of works. My preference is for formally spare, very minimalist works, in which the boundaries between architecture and the artwork fade away in the painting."

The exhibition Pierre Dorion will travel starting in March 2013, with the support of the Department of Canadian Heritage's Museums Assistance Program. The Dalhousie Art Gallery in Halifax will be its first stop.

Born in Ottawa in 1959, Pierre Dorion lives and works in Montréal. Since graduating from the University of Ottawa in 1981, he has shown regularly in Montréal and New York, as well as across Canada and Europe. He is represented by Galerie René Blouin in Montréal, Diaz Contemporary in Toronto and the Jack Shainman Gallery in New York. In addition to the numerous solo exhibitions that have been devoted to the artist over the past thirty years, a number of major artistic events, such as *Aurora Borealis* in 1985, have included his work. Noteworthy among his solo exhibitions are *Auto-portraits: 1990-1994* at the Centre international d'art contemporain de Montréal, in 1994; *Solo: La peinture de Pierre Dorion* at the Galerie d'art du Centre culturel, Université de Sherbrooke, in 2002; and *Pierre Dorion: Painting and Photography* at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, in 2010.

**Janet Biggs** Janet Biggs is known mainly for her video, photography and performance works that revolve around an exploration of extremes, whether geographical or physical. In them, Biggs takes her subjects, and herself, to the very limits of what is possible. Four of the artist's video pieces, produced between 2010 and 2012, are being screened at the MAC: *Fade to White*, 2010, *Brightness All Around*, 2011, and *In the Cold Edge*, 2010, which together form *The Arctic Trilogy*, and her latest video, *A Step on the Sun*, 2012. Each of these works portrays lone individuals in extremely harsh environments. We meet an arctic explorer, a coal miner, an ice spelunker and a sulphur miner. They are all simply performing their jobs, but the artist sees their labours as testimonies of existential quests, unfettered desires or dire economic necessity. Biggs describes the works as "prompting questions about power hierarchies, social structures and individual relationships to desire."

The exhibition Janet Biggs is being presented at the MAC in connection with the Montréal / Brooklyn event, which also showcases a video by French-born Montréal artist Aude Moreau. As part of this contemporary art event, the Musée is partnering with the Brooklyn gallery Smack Mellon. The Brooklyn segment of this cultural exchange consists of a site-specific installation by Aude Moreau and a new video work by Janet Biggs, scheduled to run at Smack Mellon from January 12 to February 23, 2013.

Janet Biggs's videos, photography and performances have been exhibited regularly in the United States and Europe, including at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art in Ithaca, New York, Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York, Vantaa Art Museum in Finland, Passagen Linköpings Konsthall in Sweden and Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts in Australia. A retrospective of her work was held by the Tampa Museum of Art in Florida in 2011.