

Allison Moore (looper.ca) is an artist, educator and cultural operator. Originally from the West Coast, she is based in Montreal, and has produced projects in Ecuador, Brazil, the United Kingdom and Europe. Allison achieved a BFA in Interdisciplinary Arts from Concordia University in 2005. She is an active member of Ateliers Graff (Montreal) and has developed new projects in video, animation and interactive computing as an invited artist at Studio XX, Oboro New Media Labs and the Society of Arts and Technology in Montreal. Allison's projects at Studio XX focus on using open source media tools such as Pure Data, Arduino and Blender 3d Game engine to create new media installations. In the summer, she teaches animation and film at Galiano Island Film School in British Columbia.

Arthur Desmarteaux (arthuro.ca) obtained a degree in Visual Arts at the University of Montreal and UQAM in 2003. He has steadily advanced his printmaking practice for the last 6 years as an active member of Ateliers Graff in Montreal, and has exhibited his work internationally as an invited artist to contemporary printmaking biennales in places such as Trois-Rivières, Quebec; Guanlan, China; Italy, Denmark and Sorcelles, France. Arthur has also participated as resident artist at Martha Street Print Studios in Winnipeg, Queen Street Studios in Belfast, and Engramme in Quebec City. Arthur is a member of the Association of Puppeteers of Quebec [AQM]. He is presently developing a third puppet theatre piece entitled "The Conquest of Sorrowland". Arthur is represented by La Petite Mort Gallery, Ottawa.

Together, Moore and Desmarteaux co-founded Egotrip Productions (egotripproductions.blogspot.com), collaborating together since 2006 to produce puppet performances, public art and exhibitions.

Lisa Borin investigates the sensory realm of communication, language, and memory through installation and mixed media work. She holds a combined degree in Visual Arts and English Language and Literature from Brock University (2007), and a Master of Fine Arts degree in Visual Arts from the University of Calgary (2009). She has received numerous awards and scholarships for her research and artistic practice such as an Alberta Foundation for the Arts Award and an International Research Grant to study at the Royal College of Art (London, UK). In addition to her art practice, she also instructs art courses and contributes to art publications. Currently Lisa is living and working in the mountain town of Banff.

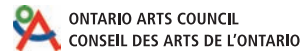
Open Studio, Canada's leading printmaking centre, is dedicated to the production, preservation and promotion of contemporary fine art prints.

Open Studio acknowledges the generous support of its government funders, members, individual donors and volunteers.

2011-2012 Supporters:

Anonymous
The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation
Emerald Foundation
The J.P. Bickell Foundation
The Japanese Paper Place
The McLean Foundation
The Ontario Arts Council Foundation:
Arts Endowment Fund Program
Public Service Alliance of Canada
Ontario Region

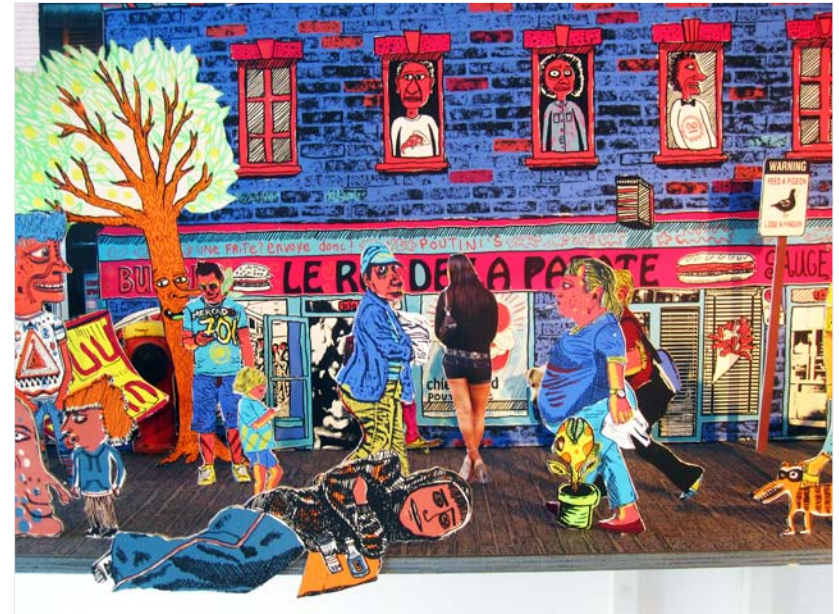
Printing provided by our Friends at:



January 12 – February 18, 2012

Opening Reception: Thursday, January 12, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Arthur Desmarteaux & Allison Moore *Micropolis 2.0*



Micropolis (detail), screen & digital prints on cut-out cardboard, 112 x 427 cm, 2010.



Open Studio
401 Richmond Street W. Suite 104
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 3A8
tel/fax 416-504-8238
office@openstudio.on.ca
www.openstudio.on.ca
Gallery Hours
Tues. to Sat., 12-5 pm

Micropolis 2.0

by Lisa Borin

To walk in the city is to experience the disjuncture of partial vision/partial consciousness. The narrativity of this walking is belied by a simultaneity we know and yet cannot experience. As we turn a corner, our object disappears around the next corner. The sides of the street conspire against us; each attention suppresses a field of possibilities. The discourse of the city is a syncretic discourse, political in its untranslatability.¹

Poet and linguistic theorist Susan Stewart describes the experience of navigating the city as a fusion of impressions that cannot be translated or fully perceived. She posits that urban life offers an influx of sensory information, with each instance representing a world of fleeting possibility. The scene Stewart describes is riddled with politics — streets “conspire” against inhabitants and many competing stimuli prevent full consciousness. Montreal-based artists Arthur Desmarteaux and Allison Moore convey a similar experience of city life, though in this case the language used to structure the narrative is sensory. Their print and mixed media installation *Micropolis 2.0* uses immersive visual and audio components that speak to the fragmented experience of city life to which Stewart alludes.

Open Studio, in downtown Toronto, is a fitting location for this mythical urban story to transpire. Inside the gallery, viewers are transported into an imaginary cityscape, inspired by streets like those existing just outside. Desmarteaux and Moore have collaborated to create a dynamic scene through an inventive use of printmaking and mixed media. The diorama spans over 16 metres and is constructed of assembled screenprinted cutouts and digital prints on cardboard.

An audio piece by Desmarteaux enlivens the gallery; a compilation of sounds, such as chirping birds, steps on cement and accelerating vehicles, immerse viewers in a rich fantasy world. The visual pieces are similarly abundant with colours, shapes and lines that inundate the eyes to create a lively and suitably chaotic scene. While the diorama is clearly constructed from the imaginative wanderings of the artists, the reference to reality is evident and can be seen through the use of photographic elements and somber subject matter, such as the drug overdose seen in one example.

Historical and fantastical references punctuate contemporary landscapes in *Micropolis 2.0*. Vivid creatures are mutations of reality and imagination that are surreal, human, animal and inanimate. Women in Victorian attire lean out windows overlooking yellow taxicabs. Plants with eyes and mouths appear to talk, while dwarves ride the backs of snails, and an intoxicated man lies in the street only to be ignored by passersby. The prints are exaggerated reflections of urban landscapes that evoke childlike wonder, amusement and confusion. Diverse characters populate chaotic and absurd scenes, and everyday objects are translated into potent symbols of contemporary life such as demolition machines with sneering teeth. Both playful and sinister possibilities abound.

Menacing characters animate two-dimensional space; piercing eyes gaze out at viewers while sneering smiles unsettle rather than invite. Point of view is demonstrated as a narrative strategy signaling delicate power dynamics, with viewers positioned to peer back at watchful eyes.² Though the figures may be small in size, they are vast in quantity and significantly outnumber the viewer. *Micropolis 2.0* presents a bustling and dramatic scene that cannot be visually consumed in one glance. Instead, viewers must traverse the



space, taking in the scene through strategic navigation, knowing that they cannot compete with the vast imposing gaze.

Social dynamics are a recurrent theme for Moore and Desmarteaux, who present observation as a disconcerting element of social interaction. The miniature is a significant component in their installation and another indication of power structures being explored. The small, constructed figures are unimposing because of their size and reference to children’s cartoons. The use of the miniature also indicates the distance that is imposed between viewer/viewed and the resulting element of surveillance.³ Though the printed figures are small in size, the evident repetition of eyes on mythical creatures, or free floating and imposed on typically unanimated objects, is unsettling.

The leering eyes create a sense that the characters are carefully watching each other while undertaking mundane actions like eating french-fries or riding a skateboard. These creatures are spectacles, watching each other as though they are animals in a zoo. Viewers are also implicated in this drama by their positioning in the gallery space. The implication is that people in urban spaces become unwitting performers who have constantly evolving relationships that are negotiated as they move through shared space.

Arthur Desmarteaux and Allison Moore use narrative strategies common to storytellers and apply them through visual and sensory language. By associating seemingly disjointed elements of history, fantasy and reality, the artists portray a syncretic miniature world. In *The Poetics of Space*, philosopher Gaston Bachelard writes about this tendency:

A fairy tale is a reasoning image. It tends to associate extraordinary images as though they could be coherent images, imparting the conviction of a primal image to an entire ensemble of derivative images. But the tie is so facile, and the reasoning so fluid that soon we no longer know where the germ of the tale lies.⁴

As Bachelard explains, storytelling and mythology use elements of mystery and exaggeration to entertain, yet moral messages are often laced through these narratives. Moore and Desmarteaux have scripted a similarly intricate story. In this installation, as with any good work of fiction, social commentary is carefully packaged within an imposed structure that holds viewers’ attention by filling them with wonder.

¹ Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993, p 3.

² Stewart comments on the significance of point of view with reference to city landscape: “In a world where access to speed is access to transcendence, point of view is a particularly narrative gesture.” *Ibid.*, p2.

³ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. Bachelard’s thoughts on distance and fantasy as they are associated with miniatures are also pertinent to this work. He writes: “Distance, too, creates miniatures at all points on the horizon, and the dreamer, faced with these spectacles of distant nature, picks out these miniatures as so many nests of solitude in which he dreams of living.” p 172.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p 164.