DANIEL CORBEIL
FRAGMENTED LANDSCAPES
PAYSAGES MORCELÉS

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OPENING AND ARTIST TALK
Friday, January 14 at 7pm
VERNISAGE ET DISCUSSION D’ARTISTE
Le vendredi 14 Janvier à 19h

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Daniel Corbeil creates landscapes that at first glance appear as if they are actual places. The large photographic images in Fragmented Landscapes appear as if they are from aerial photographs taken at great heights and in various seasons. Meticulously pieced together using blue archival tape, the images are scale models of fictional places created by the artist after losing most of his work in a studio fire. Daniel has used the Abitibi mines in northern Quebec, the model, 13 years in the making, as the basis for the large installation piece "Complex Industria" that together form the exhibition. The multi-layered work speaks to environmental issues, erasure, landscape, fragmentation, liminal spaces and perception.

The Abitibi region of northern Quebec, where the artist grew up, is known for mining of heavy metals such as gold and copper. These activities drastically mark the earth, contamination rendering parts inhabitable. Drawn from memory, Corbeil recreates a cress between a map and landscape or "abstraction and fiction". 2 Scraggly green patches, rock formations, nasty decaying buildings, are actually a miniature landscape, collectively painted on contaminated ground, then photographically fabricated, part of the artist’s process, and is a factor in the act of looking and creating fiction. Traditional western landscapes overlooking vast areas manipulate the eye in a particular direction along a linear plane, creating a certain fantasy and upholding a worldview. Corbeil’s satellite observation is one commonly found in the dead image of a Google map. The bird’s-eye view flattening out the landscape, the human vista is now what was once only accessible by fists. In this instance, the possibility goes is of distance, disconnection, and subordination, nevertheless one of power or powerlessness. Power, because it creates the illusion of all seeing, disempowering as the gaze only has the ability to look, but not affect the circumstances perceived.

The blue tape suspends the landscapes’ cohesiveness as true documentation, usurping the stability of the image itself, as the eyes are not lead but interrupted. Fragmentation resists the static structure of an accurate map, allowing for abstraction—the shadows of planes and the geometric shapes of the buildings bring one back to the possibility of a satellite map. The tape marks the awakeness of the picking together and could imply a subset, as every story has one, whether specifically written or implied. Mapping is one of the key strategies in any colonial process, whether by governments, corporations or individuals looking to stake a claim. Shifted to the land as means, place, space to enact power, there is an awareness that this region of Quebec is home to peoples and other species’ homes. The artist’s choices confine and limit lives and continue to be affected by industrial interests. The politics of territory is a real presence in Corbeil’s work and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Quebec, a nee-colonial world. Any map, through not displaying what is missing, acts as a means of erasure and allows for implied and implicated assaults on [non] existing people, as they are not part of the narrative of the map. The tape marks the in-between of the places, the possible areas that we miss in the concentration of laying from one area to the next. Literal space is where changes take shape, hence the transitions in the artist’s map reveal the illusion of the map’s test, when read as symbolic of a particular stance.

In the spirit of Baudrillard,3 the three-dimensional piece "Complex Industria" is an epipheme for simulation. For this piece, the artist drew from maps that he created from miniatures from his imagination of a remembered place (in the past tense as places can become unrecognizable). Also subjective experience post important elements accordingly. All references that created the works are separated from the actual reality of the 1970’s Abitibi. Foremost, by memory, this imagines basic elements for a believable recreation—documentation which reveals the stance of the observer and the reading by the viewer or the artist himself who is left in a state of hyper-reality. The work and its elements and objects are self-referenced. Corbeil successfully interrogates the constructed nature of landscape, and the mediation processes that exist between perceptions and intentions. There is almost a playfulness to the work, reminding us of a desire to control on a massive scale as one manipulated toys in childhood games. Corbeil’s reminds us that if manipulations and simulations are not readily, but have the power to reveal conceptions, intentions, and desires, the model therefore becoming the reality of Abitibi, whether real or imagined.

Leanne Llorrindell
Director / Curator, Gallery 101

1. Email correspondence with Daniel Corbeil, December 17, 2010.

BIORPHIGE


2. Correspondence with Daniel Corbeil, 17 December, 2010.