

## Art and audio description

Claudette Lemay



*The Recipe: Making Latin-American Art in Canada* –  
Exhibition tour with audio description

February 27, 2020, in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal (QC, Canada)

This presentation is part of *Interrogating Access*, a series of talks and workshops on accessibility in art and media production developed by OBORO and Spectrum Productions with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts. OBORO and Spectrum Productions acknowledge that their activities take place in Tiohtià:ke, an unceded Kanien'kehá:ka territory.

### **(Beginning of transcription)**

(Narrator) *The Recipe: Making Latin-American Art in Canada* – Exhibition tour with audio description.

OBORO Artist Centre, February 27, 2020.

The exhibition brings together six artists and two exhibition curators originally from Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Salvador and Venezuela.

They live, work and dream in Chicoutimi, Montreal, Oakville, Quebec City, Toronto and Vancouver.

This is a presentation of some of their artworks explored in the company of Julien.

## **Tonel**

### **Art Shouldn't Be Expensive to Make, 2009/2020**

- (Claudette) Here we have a piece by an artist who is originally from Cuba, called Tonel.

- (Julien) Okay.

- He works between Cuba and Vancouver. He uses everyday objects that he covers with white paint, and on which he writes, "Art Shouldn't Be Expensive to Make." There's a can of paint covered in white, a vinyl disc...

- Yes.

- ... on a shelf. There's a juice bottle, a brick and a baseball.

- Art shouldn't be too expensive to make.

- Exactly. There's a baseball, because the national sport of Cuba is baseball.

- Oh yes! Quite a few Major League players in the U.S. are from Cuba.

- That's right. There's humour, too. And covering the pieces in white gives them a unity, instead of having disparate objects. But you can still recognize the objects: the can of paint, the vinyl...

- Well, his goal isn't to have them hidden, or not recognized.

- No, it isn't. And do you remember colours? When I say "white"...?

- Yes. Yes. For example, when I could still see, I remember that I had trouble with greens and blues until I was 15 years old. Sometimes I'd say that something was green, and my mother would say: "That's not green, it's blue."

## Alexandra Gelis

### Doing and Undoing: Poems from Within, 2020

- We're going to enter a smaller room. There are large video projections on two walls.

- All right.

- This is an artist who worked with their mother, who had cancer, and filmed her on video.

- Ah!

- There are bits of stories of illness, and relapses, and healing. She loses her hair.

- The story of her cancer.

- Exactly. In the video, she is getting her hair shaved off. She asked people to give her some hair. So she collected a lot...

- Oh?

- ... of hair that she braided, and coloured. On the wall is a large video image of their mother, who is naked and points at the marks for radiotherapy on her body. She points out the marks on her belly, her side, her neck.

- (Laughing) She wasn't an exhibitionist, really, but...

- (Laughing) She wasn't shy, either!

- She wasn't too shy!

- It's true. It's very intimate, and personal.

- There's a goal.

- Of course, to share.

- Yes.

- She received a lot of hair donations.

- I'm sure she did!

- She made a sort of braid work that she hung on the wall. You can touch the hair gently here.

- Ah, okay...

- You're underneath a speaker from which the woman's voice comes.

(Indistinct words in Spanish)

(Low whistle and clicks)

At the further end of the room, there is a quantity of thread spools of various colours, like a rainbow of colours.

- Okay.

- It also symbolizes... The title of the piece is *Faire et défaire...* [Making and Unmaking], so the hair that falls, and that you build back up.

We'll go through the entrance again, and into a much larger room.

- Okay.

## **Giorgia Volpe**

### **Works from the series "Exercice de mémoire" [Memory Exercises], 2020**

This is an artist who works with objects that refer to obsolete technologies. For example, she worked with audio cassette tapes. You probably remember cassettes, right?

- Oh yes, yes.

- We're moving toward a piece on the floor that looks like a large snake, about 10 feet long, made with cassette tapes placed end to end.

- Okay.

- I can draw it on your hand, it snakes like that.
- It's the evolution of recording technology.
- Yes. So from one object, here the audio cassette, she made three sculptures. There's the snake weaving on the floor here... We can touch the cassettes lightly if you'd like.
- Some ideas, aren't they? Not everyone would have thought of them.
- Yes. The object is being diverted, so to speak.
- It's a type of reuse.
- Reuse, yes.
- Let's go further. She then used the cases from the cassette tapes...
- Yes, ah, yes.
- ... that she installed on the wall, like a staircase going up...
- Does this person live in Montreal?
- It's Giorgia Volpe, and she teaches in Quebec City.
- At Laval University.
- Here too, we can touch the cases lightly.
- Oh yes! Mmm...
- This catches the light, and it's reflected on the wall.
- When we still had tape decks, I would send books that I wanted to read...
- Oh yeah?
- ... to American prisons. Some prisoners there would read the books for

me.

- What kind of books? Novels?

- Um no, they were more technical books.

- Here is Giorgia's third object here, with the audio tape itself. She removed the tape from all the cassettes, about a hundred of them. At the entrance of the gallery, we'll have...

- She worked quite a bit on this!

- She installed all of it on a rope hanging from the ceiling. We can touch it as well. It's a thick rope.

- Oh yes, yes!

- The tapes are coiled around the rope. Oh! These are the rings from the cassettes!

- You know, when I had these, sometimes the cassette would break, and it would make me angry. I didn't know what to do!

- Sure!

- I had to glue it back together.

### **Frances Cordero de Bolaños Invasion I & II, 2014**

Here we have a piece by Frances, who is originally from Salvador and lives in Oakville, Ontario.

- Okay.

- She made large shapes with wool felt, and these are hanging from the ceiling. They're rounded, sort of egg-shaped. Each is a little larger than a human head. There are multiple balls hanging, and they're linked with wool threads.

- Right.
- I can lead you to touch one.
- You could almost call it a recycling exhibition.
- Sure!
- Recycling things, materials...
- So here we have one of these felt balls.
- Ah okay!
- They're a sort of beige, with coloured veins.
- Right.
- And you can also smell one, behind you, just above your head...
- Yes, I hit it with my head.
- If you lift your nose up a little...
- Yes!
- Do you smell it?
- Yes, mmm.
- It smells of rosemary, and camphor.
- I wasn't sure what it was.
- So for her, they're very soft and esthetically pleasing shapes, but at the same time, they represent tumours.
- Oh!

- Because she had cancer.
- Yes.
- So it represents...
- It's like an allegory of tumours, the symbolism of tumours.
- At the same time, it's beautiful, it beckons, but there's a bit of danger in the air.
- When you think about what it represents for her, anyway.
- Exactly.

**Romeo Góngora**  
**Liquid Immersion (Jordan), 2010-**

Another piece. This one is by Romeo, who works in Montreal. He went to Jordan for three weeks to live as a shepherd there.

- Oh really!
- For three weeks, he stayed with a shepherd among his herd of sheep. He wore the long dress and the checkered scarf.
- He wanted to experience it.
- Exactly. So on the floor, we have a large woven straw carpet, and artifacts from his experience. He brought back various objects. There's a skin shed by a snake. He found it in the desert. There's his scarf, and a large coat made of linen or cotton, lined with sheepskin.
- Oh, yes.
- A rope, a long tunic. There are multiple drawings of objects from his travel journal. I see a handgun, a tree, an olive tree. There's also handwriting, probably in Arabic. He learned some words while he was there.



- You know, in Morocco, there are donkeys in the cities.
- There are what?
- Donkeys.
- Donkeys? Oh yeah?
- It's strange, because you have car traffic. You can have beautiful cars going by, and donkeys carrying things, you know.
- Carrying... They're vehicles, like lorries.
- That donkey is like their truck. It's because donkeys are considered less expensive than horses, for example.
- Ah! Okay. And less than a car, I suppose.  
(Laughs)
- On the wall, he appears in a video.
- Okay.
- He's making a campfire in the desert with some brush. The landscape is very arid. The sky is blue, but the land is arid. He's still in the company of the shepherd and sheep.
- Yes, okay. So, we can see the sheep?
- Yes, we could see them earlier.
- Ah, we saw them.

**(End of transcription)**

**Translation: Marie Lauzon, C. tran. (Canada)**

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