

CINDY DUMAIS, SUZY LECOMPTE,
DAVID MARTINEAU LACHANCE,
ARTHUR DESMARTEAUX ET
ALLISON MOORE

MONSTER TENSION

September 6th - October 20th, 2018
Multidisciplinary



This exhibition brings together four artists of different mediums and backgrounds. These artists, each in their own way, create discomfort and test the limits of the “acceptable,” offering both a clear-headed and idiosyncratic look at an endangered future.

Cindy Dumais lives in the Saguenay, where she pursues research in writing and the visual arts. Besides her work in the visual arts, she is also involved with les éditions *LaClignotante* as publisher and author. Her work has been supported by the CALQ and the *Canada Council*, and has been exhibited in Québec and overseas.

Suzy Lecompte is an emerging artist from Montréal who works primarily in painting. She has participated in several shows in Québec, notably *L'affaire du 3915 rue Sainte-Catherine Est*, an in situ show pairing UQAM student with artists Christine Major, Claude Majeau, Valérie Perron, Camile de Courier de Mère and Marie-Pierre Thériège (Montréal).

David Martineau Lachance works are exhibited in a wide variety of institutional and independent art centers since 2012 (*L'Œil de Poisson*, *L'Écart*, *MACBSP*) and screened in international film festivals since 2006 (*Berlin ZEBRA*, *Fantasia*, *Ottawa International Animation Festival*). In parallel, he composes scores for film and designs costumes for theater (*MITF New York*).

Étienne Rochon (aka Arthur Desmarceaux) – Allison Moore have codirected the puppet theatre company Egotrip Productions since 2006. They have exhibited their collaborative artworks in many galleries, including *Saskatoon's AKA* in 2011, and *Galerie d'art d'Outremont* in 2015. Their multimedia installation *Micropolis 2.0* was presented at *Belém Contemporary Art Museum*, in Brazil, in 2014. Moore and Desmarceaux's shadow theatre pieces have been performed at Montréal's *Festival Phénomène*, and, in 2015, they directed two music videos for singer-songwriter Julien Sagot's *Docteur C* and *Transsibérien*.

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Monster tensions are nowadays ubiquitous. They are viral and socially mediate. They shape a pressure point topology, exerting force upon all areas to influence the fluid behaviour of even bodies at rest. But the monstrosity conjured by the alignment of the works in this exhibition extends far beyond the scope of such relentless daily stress tests, still under cerebral control. It evokes a terrifying noncognitive universal order, administering it all through the inexorable processes of hyperarousal and tessalation.

Hyperarousal, also known as the acute stress response, or more commonly, fight-or-flight, is an instinctive reaction to threat genetically programmed as a biological safeguard or survival mechanism. Distress signals trigger a carefully orchestrated, near-instantaneous hormonal cascade, activating the autonomic nervous system controlling involuntary body functions, while shutting down non-essential (immune and digestive) systems. It generates a state of increased alertness or vigilance overriding cognitive command: running on code red high alert as opposed to hyper focus. When generalized, it can lead to break down emotional dysregulation and PTSD – post-traumatic stress disorder.

Meanwhile, tessellations are repeated patterns casing surfaces in their entirety. Animated by a dynamical system, they operate following a self-replication mechanism yielding construction of an identical copy to themselves, covering over and crowding out, squeezing in and spilling out, fuelled by an

autotrophic drive for self-similarity. Here, tessalation suggests a sinister, crafty decorativeness marked by abstraction, innate compulsion, and exponential multiplication, evoking the chillingly mindless and unstoppable logic of natural forces at work in micro and megacosms.

In its selection, 'Monster Tensions' gathers artworks that capture the over-stimulation, arousal and rogue growth of hazardous environments where competing organisms and outstripping patterns vie, smothering and coopting by grand design. Mediated by art, surface tensions and menacing occurrences turn into signs, and these signs register as innumerable threats foreshadowing an always-immanent hostile takeover – whether viral, military, or otherwise – naturally compelled by an inbred craving to expand, colonize and supplant. Caught between claustrophobic entrapment and uncontrollable seepage, bodies are possessed by an instinctive drive rather than an attentive impulse. And such is the truly egregious and bloodcurdling proposition put forward by the exhibition via the expressly cognitive operation of artistic judgement: the delivery of the knowledge that there are latent primordial forces more powerful than the mind and the thinking subject, ready and lurking at every instant, and in the face of even the most mundane tension, to take charge, and relieve us.

Stéphanie Bertrand is a Canadian independent curator based in Thessaloniki, Greece.

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