

MYRIAM JACOB-ALLARD  
(MTL)

MAMAN(S)

Februray 28 - March 29, 2014  
video installation



Myriam Jacob-Allard favours an interdisciplinary approach, anchored in her own relationship to Quebec's country and western culture. In this exhibition, she explores the idealized notion of the Mother, giving free reign to all its contradictions, in a space where the ordinary and the spectacular converge.

*Maman(s)* includes a video projection and an installation of backlit panels. In the video *Maman, ne t'en fais pas*, (Mommy, don't worry, 6 min.) the artist performs the country song of the same title (Mary King, 1978), her voice alternating between that of mother and child. Through the use of understated staging and restrained visual effects, Jacob-Allard invites viewers to reappraise the song, creating fresh perspectives and novel interpretations without destroying the integrity of the original.

In order to develop the backlit panels, Jacob-Allard cast her eye on the perceptions that Quebecois girls and women have of their mothers. Having conducted a series of interviews and exchanges from which she collected short phrases, Jacob-Allard presents these as an improvised accumulation of handmade panels, which suggest multiple readings through an orchestration of flickering lights.

In the small gallery, the artist presents the video diptych *Soldat Lebrun : devenir et être le héros*, (Soldat Lebrun : becoming and being the hero) in which she personifies a popular masculine figure of country-western Québécois culture of 1940-1970.

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**Myriam Jacob-Allard** lives in Montreal. She holds a degree in Studio Arts from Concordia University and is currently pursuing her Masters degree at the School of Visual Arts and Media at l'Université du Québec à Montréal. She works primarily in performance art, video, and installation art. In 2009, she presented the solo exhibition *Country en trois temps* (Country, in three-four time) in the basement of the Saint-Édouard Church in Montreal. For the 2011 edition of the OFFTA she presented the performance installation *Renaissance no.6*. Jacob-Allard has participated in various group exhibitions and festivals both in Quebec and abroad.

[myriamjacoballard.com](http://myriamjacoballard.com)

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The hero figure in Québécois culture is a hybrid character; soldier and singer, chanteuse and mother. He/she sings country songs and lullabies. Pop icon: hero as woman, heroine as mother. The Québécoise mother is an equally hybrid figure – goddess and martyr. She is a pagan divinity, heroic figure of the Quiet Revolution of half a century past, with dozens of offspring ordered up by God himself.

Myriam Jacob-Allard's multidisciplinary art practice is informed by the family, the mother, Québec pop culture and, more specifically, its country music subculture. A sense of the sacred – and even the religious – is also present in her works, a mix of influences proper to the Québec of the 1950s and 60s – the era from which Jacob-Allard draws many of her references.

For her exhibition at Skol, the artist proposes a three-part exhibition that revisits the theme of the mother through the ubiquity of language – language sung, recounted, written, visionary. In the video works presented, the artist plays and performs the characters, hybridizing and empowering them. Though her pastiches of country music culture are certainly humorous – revisiting in particular the aesthetic of the music video, through the lens of kitsch sensibility – they are never mocking nor ironic. Pastiche here is rather a sort of homage, memory as a moral obligation.

In the video *Maman ne t'en fais pas*, the mother is portrayed as an almost divine figure. Mother and daughter talk, explain, forgive. Interpreting a song by Marie King, the artist performs the two roles one after the other. She embodies the sacrificial mother who has to go away and abandon her child and who, stoic in this “suffering”, is glorified, illuminated – pardoned. She then, in the same mode, takes on the role of the child. Jacob-Allard revisits stereotypes and turns them into pop mythologies. The emotions evoked, filtered and transformed through the mise-en-scène in front of the camera, short-circuit the viewer's expectations.

At the same time, this same mother enrolls in the army, almost as a “sideline.” *Soldat Lebrun : devenir et être le héros* is a video diptych that, through accounts and songs, pays homage to the 1940s Québec country singer Soldat Roland Lebrun. The second channel of the installation shows the metamorphosis of the artist into soldier, and from soldier to mother. We then see her doing dishes, while the lyrics to a prayer-song scroll across the screen – a lament of the abandoned mother (abandoned to housework?). The mother as hero; the mother as Soldat Lebrun's universalizing alter ego.

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A brightly-lit wall installation acts as counterpoint to the videos; a look at the underside of mother-worship. The words remain in the foreground, as does the light that continues to emanate from inside the light boxes. These light boxes seemed to be cobbled together, not unlike those constructed by country singers to advertise their names during tours, and seem to contain a choir of voices expressing the inevitable reproach that follows being brought into the world. For we don't choose for the world to be the way it is, and even less to be born into it.

And being your mother's daughter is to see outside of yourself what shapes you on the inside.

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**Nathalie Bachand** writes, notably about visual and media arts. She edited *Angles Digital Arts* (2009) and contributed to the group publication *Tactiques insolites : vers une méthodologie de recherche en pratique artistique* (2004). She is in charge of development for the Elektra international digital arts festival.

- Text translated from French by Simon Brown