



There is certainly no lack of reasons to be angry and disheartened by the state of the world and the future of humanity. But how can we make this indignation take form within unique art practices? *Ras le bol* is developed around this question, and brings together artists whose works express being generally sick and tired with certain realities. Far from adopting contemplative, formalist, self-referential or timid approaches when faced with taking on subjects that go beyond art for art's sake, the artists presented in *Ras le bol* assert themselves, observe the world, communicate their feelings, point out aberrations, and deal directly with their place within society.

The impetus for the exhibition was Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa's diptych *The Soiled Queen (God Save the Queen)*, a photographic work where the cross-dressing artist plays the role of a fat, bearded and... incontinent Queen of England. We understand that his goal is to tarnish the image of the Queen with a nod to the song of the same title by the celebrated British punk band the Sex Pistols¹. The urgency to communicate and the connection to punk culture present in this work motivated the search for the other participants in the exhibition: young artists with practices that embody both force and fragility and that, like the punk movement², are driven by an inescapable need to express themselves, to provoke, to challenge authority, and that refuse virtuosity, often subscribing to the DIY ethic³. While all the pieces in the exhibition do not overtly present all these specificities, they do all display a commitment and desire to denounce, be it forcefully or subtly. The artworks in *Ras le bol* foreground unacceptable realities that we nonetheless accept in everyday life, realities that alienate but that in moments of lucidity can give way to the latent spirit of revolt within us, a disgust that can paradoxically be both generalized and specific.

Fed up with monarchism. Fed up with the consequences of colonialism. Fed up with electoralist scheming. Fed up with supposed purity. Both touching and repulsive, Ramirez-Figueroa's *The Soiled Queen (God Save the Queen)* deals with the image of the Queen of England, symbol of Anglo-Saxon colonialism and its obsolete mode of social organization. The work brings to the fore the absurdity of the pledge of allegiance to Elizabeth II that all immigrants to Canada must still make in order to become citizens⁴.

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The presentation of this diptych is timely, with a federal government in power that recently had the paintings of Alfred Pellán removed from the hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to replace them with portraits of Her Majesty, a gesture seen by the arts community as deeply retrograde political instrumentalization.

Fed up with the obligation to be happy. Fed up with political correctness and hypocrisy. Isabelle Guimond's artworks, constructed from seemingly banal photographs taken in the street, from the media or social networks, work to unveil cultural and territorial specificities. The painting *Karmen* gives off a spirit of revolt that only the power of images allows for. Rendered with deliberate representational crudeness, the combination of strong stereotypes used goes beyond cliché and opens the work up to interpretation. In a decidedly irreverential mode, feminism meets native imagery without ever fully resolving the semantic riddle that Guimond proposes.

Fed up with disciplinary specificity and intolerance. Fed up with authority. Fed up with the objectification of women's bodies. Isabelle Mathieu situates her practice between artmaking and boxing, in a relationship where one can question the other. While her photograph *Les Gants Blancs* seems to fall in between these two worlds, it leans more heavily towards the street. Far from the sexy image associated with the "ring girls" that traditionally brandish the placards identifying the beginning of each round, the person portrayed in the photos, a homeless man suffering from AIDS and alcoholism, accepted the artist's offer to pose for her, resulting in a friendship that developed over the course of several months. On the wall of the Underdog boxing club where the artist trains, a fresco by an anonymous artist commemorates the 1980 world championship

match between Sugar Ray Leonard and Roberto Durán in Montreal. A delicately-balanced allegory that "breaks away from the usual pugilistic aesthetic, where impressiveness gives way to bareness and destitution," as the artist states, the work brings together very different realities – boxing, art, humanity – casting a critical light under which we might see more clearly the value that we accord to each.

Fed up with abuse of power and ambiguity. Fed up with representation and the media. Aurélien Monsarrat Chanon's artworks are created directly on old sheets, giving them an intimate character that contrasts with the social atmosphere of the scenes represented. The titles *Fusillade* and *Qui sont-ils?* evoke a police or media-inflicted abuse of power. The expressionistic technical approach and freehand brushstrokes give the works a disconcerting vivacity, and the artist's need to urgently express the imminence of a crisis or outbreak without the encumbrance of the artifice of colour is also manifest. The rawness of the works and the pessimism that they give off allies them with the attitudes associated with the punk movement, minus the explicit recourse to violence.

Fed up with a society of waste, industry and worker exploitation. Fed up with overconsumption and programmed obsolescence. The works of Kristin Nelson address how the production techniques of ordinary consumer objects can be transformed. The artist initially uses a loom to weave pieces of cloth resembling "brown paper" that she then installs in a paper distributor like those found in public washrooms. During a previous performance, she had invited workers in a Winnipeg office building to use the paper as dinner napkins, thus questioning the value placed upon manual labour.

The second work, also textile-based, uses cross-stitch, a type of embroidery, to depict a mass-production factory. However, only the back-side of the work is presented, as if to show the hidden face of industrialization and the orchestrated order behind chaotic appearances.

Fed up with sexism. Fed up with distinctions between high and low culture. Fed up with the psychological appropriation of the proletariat. Whitney Lafleur takes action in zones of vulnerability, testing modes of communication and trust between people. Using an approach alternating between gentle humour and violence, she blurs our understanding of empathy, of giving of oneself and one's ego, and of good and bad taste. The eclectic performance installation *Nourrice* gives voice to men who, in videos, recount what makes them unique, all while getting their hair cut or beards trimmed. From time to time, while singing a throbbing, beat-driven pop song, Lafleur gets on and pedals a strange exercise bike-centaur hybrid on the installation's rotating platform, triggering a bright white light that briefly sweeps the dim exhibition space.

Fed up with predictability. Fed up with rationality. Fed up with background noise. Fed up with the system. Fed up with Canada. Fed up with art in general and work in particular. Musician, performer, and former member of les Georges Leningrad, Bobo Boutin has kept up a daily drawing practice for many years, responding to the thousands of aberrations he observes around him and in the media. The result is an immense, strange and eccentric fresco made up of over a hundred small drawings: a collection of impulsive caricatures and raw commentary on our contemporary world.

While *Ras le bol* brings together singular and critical practices driven by a sense of revolt against society

and its preconceptions, hypocrisy and proper manners, these artists do not allow themselves to become prisoners to the attitudes associated with these artistic approaches, nor to those associated with the punk movement itself. These works thus share the desire to transgress both society's moral rules as well as those, generally unstated, that are dictated by their own artistic disciplines.

1: *God Save the Queen* is the title of one of the songs from the Sex Pistols' 1977 album, *Never Mind the Bullocks*.

2: The origins of punk rock are associated with the NYC underground scene of the late 1960s and early 1970s that, once exported to England, found favour with the younger generation of the alienated working classes, willing to avoid the status quo at any cost. The term "punk", in English slang, originally meant crazy, worthless or good-for-nothing.

3: This principle, associated with the punk movement, advocates producing one's consumer goods oneself in order to avoid all socio-economic and industrial dependency and to operate in the margins of these systems. DIY is interesting from an artistic viewpoint as it is in a sense the diametrical opposite of the ready-made, re-according value to types of labour that are manual, roughly-executed, craft-oriented and non-industrial

4: An immigrant from Guatemala, Ramirez-Figueroa was deeply marked by the immigration process as a child. For him, as for Guatemalans in general, the Queen "represents one of the invaders", thus rendering a pledge of allegiance to her absurd.