Artist: Luanne Martineau (Saskatchewan, Saskatoon 1970)

Select Recent Solo Exhibitions

Select Recent Group Exhibitions
2015  Unreal, Kelowna Art Gallery, organized and circulated by the Vancouver Art Gallery Oh, Canada, Glenbow Museum; The Esker Foundation; Illingworth Kerr Gallery at the Alberta College of Art + Design; The Nickle Galleries at University of Calgary; all venues located in Calgary, Alberta 2014  Oh, Canada, Confederation Centre Art Gallery, Charlottetown PEI; Owens Art Gallery, Sackville, New Brunswick; Louise and Reuben Cohen Art Gallery at the University of Moncton, New Brunswick; Galerie Sans Nom, Moncton, NB Through the Looking Glass: A Modern Story from the Collection of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Victoria, Unreal, Kamloops Art Gallery, organized and circulated by the Vancouver Art Gallery New Lines: Contemporary Drawings from the National Gallery of Canada, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton Made in Calgary: The 1990s, Glenbow Museum, Calgary Collages : Gestures and Fragments, Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal Contemporary Drawings from the National Gallery of Canada, Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon 2012  Oh, Canada, MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts The Shape of Things, Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto Freedom of Assembly, Oakville Galleries, Oakville 2011  Unreal, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver
Luanne Martineau is a well-known Canadian artist and prominent professor at the Concordia University in Montreal. Her textile sculptures, collages and drawings challenge the supposed dichotomies of figuration and abstraction, high art and craft, as well as the deskillling of art that was championed by the Minimalist and Post-Minimalist movements of the 1960s and 1970s. By engaging critically with, and subsequently conflating recent art historical legacies, Martineau’s work makes a case for the reskilling of artistic production, while drawing attention to issues of gender, labour and economy that surround broader notions of “making” in an age of outsourcing and theorized artistic production.

Martineau’s densely layered sculptures employ soft materials such as wool, felt and bed foam and are constructed using traditional craft techniques; the flaccid yet evocative *Parasite Buttress* (2005) acquired by the National Gallery of Canada in 2007, is made out of raw wool with its thickness having been built up by the repeated jabs of a serrated needle. Seething with this physical energy, the triple-striped sculpture of pastel pink and white drips languidly from floor to ceiling in the gallery space, a hybrid of feminized yet aggressive handiwork and sculptural bravura where knots, twists and tiny braids erupt among what appear to be human fingers, mouths and toes. Referencing iconic works of modern art such as Robert Morris' minimalist felt sculptures, postwar paintings by Philip Guston and, in particular, Barnett Newman's "Voice of Fire", this limp architectural form refuses - or perhaps cannot sustain - its role as a “support” in the gallery.

The concerns and contradictions expressed in this early work that, as the artist has said, fuse “the heroic Vertical with the bestial Horizontal,” austerity with softness and appropriation with originality, have remained mainstays in her ongoing practice, that as mentioned earlier, includes an equally strong emphasis on drawing, and recently, on collage as more immediate forms of expression. In them, she riffs on the idea of the ‘deskilled’ work – where quick cuts and intuitive associations take the place of the detailed handwork apparent in her sculptures. Through these works on paper, Martineau enacts a form of personal and historical “cannibalism” – mining her archive of found imagery, paper scraps and left-over print materials, isolating and extracting her sources and recombining them in ways that not only fragment the original material, but allow them to be transformed into unrecognizable subjects. She sees the act of hoarding imagery for a later use as akin to the way a crafter or scrapbooker might save materials for a rainy day; while this aligns her with the hobbyist tradition, she also sees the act of borrowing back from her archive as a way of “pointing a finger to the history of appropriation-based practices (specifically found
objects), collage, and assemblage.”¹ In this repetition, recycling and reprocessing, she internalizes the readymade, taking more from her own works than exterior sources in a search for found objects.

Please cite in the following manner:

Rhiannon Vogl, Acquisition Proposal for Luanne Martineau’s *Take a Knee* and *PEACH / CHEAP*, accession #46560 and #46561, Curatorial File, National Gallery of Canada.

¹ Email correspondence with the author, 2015