

Picture Happenings

The Magical Interventions of Diane Landry

Thursday, July 30, 8pm, Durham Art Gallery
Continues to September 20

by Ilse Gassinger

Diane Landry is a Quebec City based artist whose multi-disciplinary art practice embraces kinetic sculpture, installation, performance, public art, video and audio. In the course of two decades Landry has created an extraordinary body of work that reflects her interest in visual perception, optical illusions and mechanical contraptions. Her kinetic works, which she refers to as "œuvres mouvelles" combine the temporal concept of performance and the spatial notion of installation. Some works summon

pre-cinematic optical technology such as the zoetrope (wheel of life) by William George Horner (1833). For example, *I can't find my watch, yet it hasn't flown away* (2006) is an installation of six, wall-mounted salad spinners moving circularly at an intermittent tempo, while offsetting the sound inherent in kitchen appliances. At a closer look we discover a small window cut directly into each of the plastic containers. Through these peepholes we see a film loop of the artist doing everyday activities such as cutting vegetables. The 'film' is made of a series of photographs wrapped around the inside of the salad spinner. The circular movements of the object

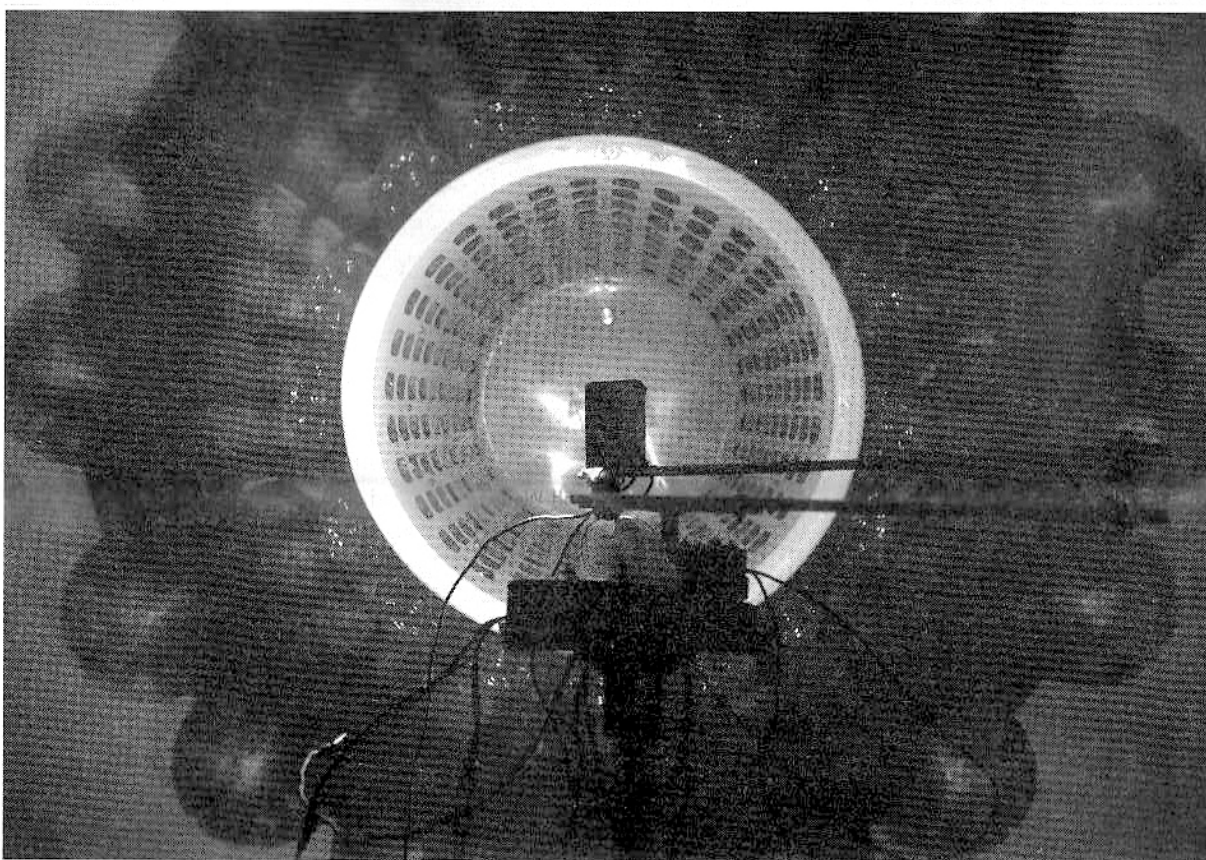
create the illusion of a moving image. Through appropriation Landry transforms the utilitarian purpose of a banal object such as a salad spinner into a film apparatus or optical deceiver, and gives an inanimate object a kind of body language, shifting the emphasis from object to performance.

Another body of work that encompasses optics and motion (and on display at the gallery), is Landry's *Mandala Series* (2002). Using the now ubiquitous plastic water bottle, Landry's mandalas summon shadow versions of a spiritual symbol. In *Mandala Naya*, a laundry basket ringed with water bottles is attached to the wall. A tripod, supporting a light attached to a mechanized arm, stands in front of the basket. As the arm moves forward, the light shines through the holes of the basket and through the water bottles, creating a startlingly beautiful shadow that stretches across the wall in a hypnotic repetition of patterns.

In her series *Naked Shield* (2005-2009) and *Magic Shield* (2005) Landry transforms and animates metal bed frames through various mechanisms and objects placed underneath. One of the beds in this exhibition has count-

less pencils with keys attached suspended from the frame. In an on/off interval a fan sets the keys in motion thus creating an enchanting sound reminiscent of chimes, while a halogen light casts various ghostlike projections onto the ceiling.

Recycling and appropriating a simple bed frame by employing a subtle combination of sound, light, movement and projection enhances the performative qualities of this kinetic sound sculpture. The bed 'moves' from a state of



restfulness to wakefulness, from object to event. Enhanced by the dramatic play of light and shadow, the different elements explore the contrast between what is perceived on the surface of things and what can be discovered lurking beneath. As Landry summarizes: "We are invited to enter and cross to the other side of the looking glass."

Complementing the showing of three-dimensional works from Landry's *Mandala* and *Naked Shield* series is a video installation called *A Radio Silence* (2008). While staying in New York, Landry photographed herself once a minute during two 24-hour periods in different rooms, trying to adopt the same position each time. She then chronologically edited thousands of still images of her intense performance into a six-minute video. Here Landry uses the idea of time lapse photography to compress and accelerate the time continuum of her performance and the environment that surrounds her. Time no longer is a container in which events take place, but an ecstatic dimension of reality that is intertwined with fantasy. Day and night morph into a cumulative flow of shadows and light. Confining herself to a fixed position the immobility of the

female figure becomes theatrically animated: a flickering body with jerky, frenetic movements 'glued' to the same spot in the room.

In her continuous search for new and different ways of seeing, Landry invents works that suggest a new perspective into the existence of grey zones between the rational and the imaginative, the mundane and the sublime. Landry's poetry of ideas, which she applies to objects and actions, creates new meanings and functions as a heightened form of social and

cultural critique. She has said, "My projects are born out of current events or criticisms. This reading of our world is added to my personal experiences. I seek to reverse the reading of manufactured images. Thus, I choose objects with universal meaning and attempt to reveal their secret face. I modify the original material as little as possible and just transform the standard meaning. When we see the result, nothing is really hidden; we are instead thrown into confusion by the new direction these things take."

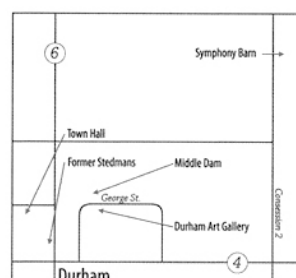
By stripping off the everyday meaning from banal and ordinary objects and situations, and by altering readymade artifacts

semantically and temporally, Landry lets us discover the magic within them. Plug into Landry's enchanted world of suspense, meditation and surprise!

Born in 1958 in Trois-Rivières, Diane Landry now lives and works in Quebec City. She holds a BFA from Université Laval and in 2006 completed a master's degree in art at Stanford University in California. In the past two decades her work has been exhibited widely across Canada and in major cities in the United States, Mexico, Argentina, Australia, China and Europe. She is represented by the SolwayJones Gallery in Los Angeles, and her works can be seen in notable collections, including the Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec. Throughout her career her oeuvre has garnered important prizes, including, in 2007, the very first Giverny Capital Award, presented for excellence in contemporary art in Québec, the 2006 - 2007 Videre Reconnaissance Prize, presented by Manifestation internationale d'art de Québec, and a Murphy and Cadogan Fellowships Award from the San Francisco Foundation in 2005.

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