

Liz Magor — *The Blue One Comes in Black*

From 9 September to 18 December 2016

**Associate curators:
Claire Le Restif and
Nigel Prince, Director of
Contemporary Art Gallery,
Vancouver**

A major artist on the contemporary Canadian art scene, Liz Magor (born in 1948; lives and works in Vancouver) finds her ideas in human beliefs, reactions, and behaviors, especially when they have something to do with the material world. Magor is interested in the social and emotional lives of ordinary objects, being particularly fond of materials that have since lost the luster of their use or their function from an earlier time. Selecting them for their capacity to contain and reflect stories, like personal and collective identities, the artist points up a resonance that goes beyond their simple utilitarian function via transformations and shifts in context or perspective.

Magor's art practice began forty years ago. This long period has witnessed great changes in artmaking, from the dematerialization of the object to its rematerialization, from a movement away from the studio to its recent reaffirmation and a renewed interest in materials and making. Throughout this whole period, the artist has maintained her studio practice, specifically questioning the things that share the same space-time as her own body. In the catalogue of her recent retrospective at MAC, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, she has gone, she says, "from words to the visible, from the idea to the object" for "it was a long process and it was in the studio that this change took place. Nowadays I need the concrete space of the studio to examine the world. It isn't enough to just look. I need to transform things to better capture and understand the constituent properties of the materials and processes that form the objects of the world. Since all of these things already bear a social stamp, it is a bit as if I was

bringing scraps of the world into the studio."

Thanks to this experience, Magor decided to explore and absorb the world, to experience it before beginning to conceptualize. "For my use objects can be divided into two categories, those that come from the world and those that I produce in the studio." The objects she chooses to make a part of her work are at the end of their expected life, dirty, rebellious, devalued, old fashioned, stupid. She traces their slow deterioration in connection with the domestic realm, then takes them into her care and slowly brings them around to a new attraction.

"What interests me is the influence of what is fashioned in the studio on what is simply found. By a mysterious phenomenon, found objects truly come to life when they are in the presence of the sculptural representation of something ordinary."

Her works, which she says are designed, created, and polished by the play of contradictions, seem to restore the torment but also partake of the vitality of existence. By working from hyperrealist casts of day-to-day objects or pieces of clothing, mending and protecting objects chosen for their obvious disuse and obsolescence, realizing negatives of objects or facsimiles (two processes connected with reproduction), Magor puts us on alert. Through this awakening of an anonymous material world, a certain history of our modern culture can be read, from property to the need for protection and accumulation, to the ambiguity and inconstancy of the desire that connects us with objects. The artist creates and keeps a "photograph" of objects for a long time by putting an abrupt end to the process of corrosion and collapse. For sculpture has quite a lot to do with time and Magor's sculpture, which is endlessly negotiating with "oxidized" matter, has to do with the idea of putting an end to time and to death. With these

new associations between objects, Magor recreates life without creating new stories since she doesn't want to lend particular meanings to her assemblages. There is no romanticism in her approach, maybe a slight nostalgia only. Nor is there any "regionalism" since she chooses her materials where she works.

Magor knows that the viewer doesn't always make the difference between a real thing and a sculpture. She looks for that space of error between the manufactured and reality precisely where a disconnection with reality can play out.

Like large uniform patches of color, **the covers suspended from hangers (gallery 1)** are folded and ironed, and still bear the protective plastic bags from when they last came out of the dry cleaners. The artist carefully selected them in second-hand shops, had them cleaned, and then darned them with thread or polymerized gypsum as if to point up the preciousness of their threadbare condition, and the intensity of the connection that links them to their former owners (cigarette burns, snags in the material, wear and tear, etc.). The outdated labels they sport indicate the quality of their wool or their mothproofing. Their use seems to be closely bound up with the national identity of Canada, because they conjure up the length and rigor of winters in North America, or because their motifs recall the history of one of the oldest business ventures, the Hudson's Bay Company, specialized in trade and furs since the 17th century.

All the Names II and III is one of the artist's many pieces in which forms are encapsulated in silicon envelopes. The series features translucent, slightly iridescent cases that protect a particular content that is thus put beyond our reach and rendered imperceptible. They were molded from cardboard boxes that were wrapped in brown paper and ready to send. Left empty, their interiors were filled with a

number of objects and then were hermetically sealed. One contains small packages wrapped in gift paper and ribbons as well as an accumulation of various papers; the other holds books and papers that were probably found, possibly abandoned. The latter interest the artist since they are tokens of a certain historical period yet are incomplete, outmoded, and attain none of the status of heritage items or even curios. The sculptures *Mademoiselle Raymonde* and *Chère Juliette* are open to our gaze. Lace aprons, string, gift wrap and wrapping paper, and other obsolete labels emerge from molded colored paper shopping bags.

Formal II and *Casual* are silicon-molded wardrobe bags that are posed on a chair (generally found on site at the exhibition venue). Suggesting phantom clothing as a kind of memory of our skin, the silicon protects and isolates a colored fabric. The first, navy blue, is stiff and stretched out while the second, a subdued pink, is soft and slack. They seem to illustrate two distinct emotional states, whether associated with the different outfits one slips on like suits of clothes, or with different moments of the day.

The black-and-white photograph titled *A Thousand Quarrels* (gallery 2), whose point of view seems to be from inside some kind of shelter or burrow, constitutes both a physical gesture, like her sculptures, and a fragment of the landscape. This image has been deliberately hung to suggest a connection with *Hudson's Bay Double*. The hole seen in the former is inside the image where on the woolen garment the holes lie on the surface. It is a yearning for more light. The relationship is reversed.

In the series of small "wall sculptures", real objects are posed on molded cardboard boxes. These boxes, which were no doubt used to deliver things, become here the pedestal of a puppet, a glove sporting a stuffed bird, a cuddly polar bear, a knit cat's head, or a collection of excerpts from 1970s and '80s magazines and reviews. The sculpture becomes the support of something that is not sculpture. In this series Magor is interested in how the value of things is decided, their hierarchy. From the elements she places together there springs a tension, a certain vanity. "Even a dead bird is more living than the replica from a cardboard box," Magor assures us. The packaging may be simply rubbish that can become magnificent once again. It serves to protect and preserve things we have finished with. These packages must shine to exist.

The exhibition ends with a very recent work that the artist created during a residency in Glasgow (2016), *Sweet Aïrs* (gallery 3). She reworked the inside of a found cardboard box, coated the surface with iridescent pigments, then molded it to create a free-standing sculpture which she then "dressed up" in different accessories, viz., a dress, gift bags, gloves. This sculpture introduces a connection with the world, rendering absence present. "When I go walking and I observe what is around me, I don't linger over the people, but over their clothes, buildings, accessories, and tools. When I watch a film or a play, I focus on the sets, the costumes, or the accessories. There is a whole world of things that exists right alongside the world of humans, and the dance between the two is synchronized to such an extent that it is hard to determine who or what is directing the action. If there is an absence, it is the absence of recognition of the relationship between the subject and the object. If I don't provide the subject and in its place I deliver an excess of material, the role of the subject remains open, to be filled in. That is something other than absence altogether. Maybe it's expectation or hope."

The exhibition is a partnership between CAG Vancouver (Canada) and Peep-Hole, Milan (Italy). It has been supported by the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris ; Canada Council for the Arts International Touring Program, The Province of British Columbia / Touring Initiative and BC Arts Council Touring Initiative Program.

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Book

Liz Magor
The Blue One Comes in Black, 2015

Texts: Céline Kopp, Liz Magor, Lisa Robertson and Jan Verwoert
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 22,5 x 31 cm ; 170 p. + booklet
 English / French
 28 €

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>>-> **For sale at reception desk and on credac.fr !**

Interview between Cécilia Becanovic and Isabelle Alfonsi - on the occasion of *Humidor*, Liz Magor's solo show at Marcelle Alix gallery from 9 September to 29 October 2016 - 4 rue Jouye-Rouve, Paris 20.

>>-> 3 December at 4 pm : A guided tour of the show at Crédac by Cécilia Becanovic and Claire Le Restif <<-<

Cécilia Becanovic: I recently visited the Cluny Museum. Essentially, I went so as to experience again the beneficent gentleness that prevails there. The Roman baths in particular give prominence to the body, offering it protection and an infinite breath. I was struck, this time, by the fruitful relation that existed, it seemed to me, between the very singular Bound Christ – a wood sculpture enhanced by polychromy – and recent works by Liz Magor which consist in "petrifying" cardboard boxes into stands for sculptures that cleverly combine modified materials and familiar objects. The technique Magor uses, based on polymerized gypsum mixed with colored pigments, gradually replaces the cardboard – like a mould that gives her sculptures their particular bearings – so that only a nearly mineral surface prevails. The Christ I was referring to is also dotted with colorful bursts and small holes : much wear and tear, chemical phenomena and accidents that come to mingle, as in Liz's work, an array of insured gestures and a blind faith in the power of forms, whatever they may be: creating an illusion (the cardboard turned stone) or gross realism (like those skillfully staged used clothes and accessories). I was wondering if you'd also thought about the role Liz takes on within the creative process, isn't she, once again, an artist who is content with the creation of a far more fluid circulation system for thought than if she decided to "change everything" and hold every particle of matter in her chosen place?

Isabelle Alfonsi: yes that's true. Lig evidently has a willingness to "let certain forms be", using them for their narrative potential, without feeling overwhelmed by what they otherwise carry with them. A respect for the world of objects which does not establish "the Artist" or human beings in a demiurgic position vis-a-vis things. It rather looks like she adopts a posture of openness, curiosity and modesty, as if she was as much "acted" by objects than acting upon them. I very much love the opportunity she gives us to have an emotional connection to her pieces. I think this is an important dimension of her work: the cigarettes that are present in some sculptures or represented in exhibition spaces (at Triangle, in Marseille in 2013, she dressed the pillars to resemble cigarettes) tell of this concept of comfort. When we smoke, it is often to reassure ourselves: we give in to a "small pleasure". The Toblerone bars, chocolate wrapping papers or cuddly toys that are found in her pieces are of much comfort to me; they're signs that attracts us to them. They have an emotional familiarity but simultaneously repel us because they're vanities also, memento mori, right?

CB: I believe that Lig is very conscious of creating works that question our relationship to death. It seems to me she bets on continuity, as the Egyptians did. She stages objects that are "without impatience". Their display indicates this quiet withdrawal. They are there, present to the eye or to be touched, but are placed on the edge of time, in another life that was theirs and, at the same time, not disappearing yet. The artist puts herself in the position of someone who escorts objects beyond their usual destination and actually turns them into eternal escapees. When they reach our present, it's because they've managed to establish that emotional connection you're speaking of. Lig takes us out of the image to focus on a reading "by the hand". Did you notice as well as I did that she constantly fiddles with her works when she talks about them? She animates them as one would set a table while chatting about diverse topics with one's friends. This is far remote from the sole and unequivocal message of the still life, wouldn't you agree?

IA: I do. If we were to approach these pieces through a psychoanalytical angle, we might as well call them "transitional objects". In this case, to follow your comparison with the Egyptians, they would

be marking the passage from life to death, thus portraying a continuity between these two states as an extension of one into the other. Your idea of a "reading by the hand" is very interesting to me: I find it a nice formulation. Lig's works are obviously calling on anyone to touch them, so as to "know" the stuff they're made of, to distinguish between "facts" and "fiction". At any rate, it was also my temptation when I first saw her works on display. Now that I know them better, I find the difference between what's "made by the artist" and the "readymade" less crucial to my understanding of her practice. The continuity of states that you mentioned is carried out also on a formal level. Lig fabricates boxes, cocoons and pedestals for objects that were destined to end as waste or to be sold cheap. One feels an infinite tenderness in this repertoire of gestures. For me, the minimal interventions on the pieces made with stained and holed blankets that we had exhibited in *L'intruse*, our 2014 show (colorful yarn mendings, presentation on hangers, plastic films as if "back from the dry cleaner") are the same as the creation of pedestals/polymerized gypsum boxes that can be seen in this exhibition's sculptures. These are additions, adjuvants; they accompany the found-objects that surround them. With great delicacy, these new large-scale works invite us to consider the world beyond standard binary categorizations: living/dead, natural/built, new/recycled, pedestal/object... Lig unfolds in her work an energy that's in line with the current calls to question, for instance, the hierarchies between animate and inanimate. The fact that she chose to live part time on Cortes Island, a sparsely populated island near Vancouver, is probably not foreign to all this.

CB: It's great that you mention how Lig regularly adopts this island life. There is, I think as well, an essential key for understanding a practice which could also have become that of a writer: this idea of a mandatory retreat in order to create. Nevertheless, Lig is more adventurous and versatile; this is an important difference. When altering the collected blankets, she defines her relation to a work done by small gestures, that's true, but which is always connected to a larger story. I can not help but thinking of the lives of the pioneers, that of the natives, or of airline rugs that invariably end up rolled into balls after a long flight. I see bodies trying to warm up, men and women

assembling in ephemeral tribes. Each movement dissolves formerly-established ties and results in a dispersion: we deviate so easily from one another. Lig's work is about establishing connections so as to sustainably combine several elements that each have their separate world. She never departs from the production line but what she creates tells of a desire to find rest or appeasement while we're confronted to objects that inevitably circulate and detach themselves from us, whether we like it or not. The artist softens the enjoyment and loss tirelessly practiced by human beings, through visions of deserted festive buffets or museumified interiors. She considers an hallucinated love that binds us to reality by creating vertical works that are staggered like the medieval tapestries from Cluny. Out of this (inevitably human) verticality, she extracts an exhilarating ascent imbued with sweet melancholy. Any element can come to the fore, according to the attention given to it by its beholder. Lig exposes the rags of humanity and animality as if they were reminders that our memory is short and that reality is never explored enough.

Upcoming show at Crédac

Lola González / Corentin Canesson

Two solo shows

From 20 January to 2 April 2017

Opening, Thursday 19 January 2017
from 5 to 9 pm

Nina Canell

Solo show

From 21 April to 25 June 2017

Opening, Thursday 20 April 2017
from 5 to 9 pm

Biography

Liz Magor was born in 1948. She lives in Vancouver (Canada).

Triangle Marseille showed a selection of her works in 2013 (cur. Céline Kopp). She participated to a number of group shows at the Vancouver Art Gallery, National Art Gallery in Ottawa, Seattle Art Museum, Wattis Institute, to Documenta 8 and to the Venice Biennale. Her retrospective at Musée d'Art Contemporain in Montreal, on until September 5 (cur. Dan Adler and Lesley Johnstone), will tour to Kunstverein in Hambourg and the Migros Museum Zurich in 2017. The presentation of her most recent works at Glasgow Sculpture Studios from April to June 2016 (cur. Kyla McDonald) was a crucial moment in her research that we are now showing in Paris. Crédac's show is a following of 2015 show at Peep-Hole, Milan.

Liz Magor will be a resident at DAAD in Berlin in 2017. She is represented by Catriona Jeffries in Vancouver, Susan Hobbs in Toronto and Marcelle Alix in Paris.

Rendez-vous !

Sunday 25 September, 23 October, 20 November and 18 December at 4 pm

Les Eclairs

One Sunday per month, an exhibition tour with Julia Leclerc sheds light on featured works.

Free admission, meeting point at the reception desk.

Saturday 17 September at 2 pm and

Sunday 18 September at 4 pm

Heritage days

Guided tour of Liz Magor's exhibition *The Blue One Comes in Black*.

Free admission.

To follow: Saturday 17 September at 3:45 PM, the Société des Études Robespierriennes proposes an historic tour besides the multi centennial oak tree in front of the Manufacture des Œillets, which would be one of the Tree of Freedom planted during the French Revolution. Meeting point: Place Emile Gosnat in front of la Manufacture des Œillets. Free admission.

Thursday 22 September from noon to 2 pm

Crédacollation

Guided tour of the exhibition by

Crédac's team, followed by a lunch
Participation: 6 € / Members: 3 €

Thursday 10 November at 4 pm

Art-Tea

Guided tour of the show followed by an exchange time around artistic references, documents and literary, filmic, musical excerpts. Free tea, coffee and biscuits.

Free admission, booking required.

Sunday 27 November from 3:30 pm to 5 pm

Studio-Snack

During these "workshop-afternoon treats", children from 6 to 12 years of age lead their families on a tour through the show. Families are then invited to enjoy an afternoon snack and a practical workshop that extends the exhibition visit in a sensitive and playful way.

Free admission, booking required.

Saturday 3 December at 4 pm

Meeting / From Milan to Ivry, through Glasgow

Guided tour of Liz Magor's exhibition by Cécilia Becanovic – codirector of Marcelle Alix gallery – and Claire Le Restif. They will talk about the artist's carrier and her recent shows (Peep-Hole, Milan ; Glasgow Sculpture Studio, Glasgow).

Free admission, booking required.

MARD! 10 years

For this season, ten in the series, Crédac and Médiathèque have invited Sophie Lapalu, art critic and independent curator. She is currently completing her doctorate at Paris 8 University, where she is also teaching. For three years, she was the coordinator of YGREG, the exhibition space of Cergy fine art school.

The secret action. Between poetry and politics, the art of acting without being noticed.

Program 2016-2017

Some artists in the twentieth century made the choice to leave their studio to act in secret in spaces that are not traditionally dedicated to art, to realize ordinary and imperceptible gestures. These gestures, they claimed it as work of art.

Which worlds are they making coexist next to the one we know, subject to the regime of visibility, to the pressure in profitability and the supremacy of rationality?

Tuesday 11 October at 7 pm

Look upwards: a subversive artistic gesture?^{1/4}

From New York to Nice, through Mexico, artists from different backgrounds take position in the street to look upwards. This insignificant gesture challenges equally the cornerstones of the notion of artwork, that people's interactions within the city.

Tuesday 13 December at 7 pm

Scratching the neck on a public place of Czechoslovakia: a political gesture?^{2/4}

In 1976, Jiri Kovanda scratch his neck on a place of Prague, brushing past with his shoulder and stick his look in someone's eyes.

The repressive context leads to offer a political reading of these acts. The artist disagrees, defending the expression of individuality.

→→ The *Mard!* talks are held at the Multimedia Center of Ivry – The Antonin Artaud Auditorium, 152, avenue Danielle Casanova – Ivry-sur-Seine Metro: the 7 line, Mairie d'Ivry (50 meters from the station). Talks run 90 min. Free admission.

For the *Mard!* evening events, *Crédakino* and exhibitions at Crédac remain open until 6:45 PM



Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry - le Crédac

La Manufacture des Œillets
25-29 rue Raspail
94200 Ivry-sur-Seine

Info / booking :

+ 33 (0) 1 49 60 25 06

contact@credac.fr

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Open every day (except Mondays)
from 2 to 6 PM, weekends from 2 to 7 PM
'free admission'

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