

## Marie-Claire Blais *Inner Horizons*

### Caroline Cloutier *Fragments*

March 11–May 9, 2021

#### Joint Residency, Take Two

As agreed, and despite the upsets of the pandemic which intruded on the presentation of the first part of their joint residency, Marie-Claire Blais and Caroline Cloutier return now to the Foundation to complete their pact. This time, it's Marie-Claire in the lead role, after launching her sound piece *From left to right, in marble and in wood* last spring in the bank vault, the site where Caroline will now be *confined*, in turn, to set up new photographic experiences.

#### Marie-Claire Blais: *Inner Horizons*

We have to constantly balance  
the vanished horizon and the imagined horizon<sup>1</sup>

The artist told me that these two lines by Roland Giguère kept haunting her during the conception and execution of her installation in the main gallery of the Foundation. She was aware, at the same time, that the perspective angle was far from a favourite motif in Molinari's work. And even less *two* perspective angles superimposed. . . Then for good measure, she mentioned another poem, *The Infinite* by Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837), which has been on her mind for years and, in fact, her installation, entitled *Days Go By, Far Behind the Eye*, could in some ways be read as a spatialized version of this poem (reproduced on the back). Marie-Claire Blais candidly admits that she creates with a foot in two practices: "I never went to art school—I trained as an architect—and did not have to situate myself in the various currents of art history. I often find myself in between

two things, and that suits me very well." Hence her fondness for "perfectly ambiguous and contradictory spaces," as Catherine Bédard, curator of the Canadian Cultural Centre, put it, in works that are paradoxical, more often than not, and that do not swear allegiance to the program of any artistic group or school. In this, she is one with the unclassifiable Leopardi, her favourite poet, known by his contemporaries as a modernist who disliked modernity.

Keep in mind that it is no easy thing to comment accurately on a still incomplete work, and even more so if it is created *in situ*—incidentally, it's the first time the artist has done this. (It's a bit like talking about a photo that hasn't been developed yet.) In any event, Marie-Claire Blais's sculpture calls on all the architect's skills at her disposal; it takes the form of two perspective angles, each passing in a straight line through vertical elements judiciously placed and repeated so as to mark the progression of the perspective until it reaches a vanishing point at the horizon. The two angles meet exactly in the middle of the gallery. A comment made by Serge Murphy regarding the artist's drawings comes to mind: "We're dealing here as much with a deconstruction in progress as with a construction in the making."

The spirit of Molinari can clearly be found in the repetition of a vertical motif and, more subtly, in the reference to the Mondrian painting (*Pier and Ocean #9*, 1915) that was one impetus for this polysemous project. Finally, the structure, which evokes a beautiful yet austere drawing in space, will be placed on a large coloured rectangle, formed of strips of canvases "ordered in a certain way" so as to suggest an abstract landscape or bits of sky. All these things prompt the viewer-walker to reflect on the function of the two perspective angles, which do not simply underpin the vertical elements. . . At the time of writing, the main installation was to have an echo upstairs as well,

likely another perspective angle that would integrate the famous jute canvases of Marie-Claire Blais in another way, revealing their backs and something of the site as well.

### **Caroline Cloutier : *Fragments***

"In my works," states Cloutier, I offer spaces to project what one wishes." This exercise goes smoothly when her highly refined images, utterly irreproachable in technique, are presented in the sobriety of white-cube spaces. But Molinari's old bank vault, with its considerably dilapidated walls, carefully preserved, presents a quite different space, and for various reasons. Under such conditions, there will be no continuity between the image and what lies beyond its frame, in particular because Caroline Cloutier is currently working with frosted glass plates, very sensitive to light, and her works are more delicate and stripped-down than ever. She presents two works in the space, on large sheets, unframed, and suspended along the walls. These aseptic compositions are provided generous margins, as if to create a zone of silence between them and the capricious, psychologically charged space of the vault. A beautiful dialogue in perspective. . .

— Gilles Daigneault

### The Infinite

So dear to me always is this lonely  
Hill, and this hedge that halts  
All glimpse of the earth's horizon.  
But I sit and seek boundless  
Spaces beyond it, and silences beyond  
Human ken, and very deep stillness,  
To the point where  
My heart is not afraid. And so I hear wind  
Toss the leaves, and go comparing  
Infinite silence to this voice; and I remember  
The eternal, and past seasons, and the present  
So alive in this sound. Immensity  
Into which my thoughts plunge:  
So sweet it is to sink into this sea.

from *Canti*, by Giacomo Leopardi (1819)  
Tr. de l'italien par E. Moure

<sup>1</sup> Roland Giguère, *L'âge de la parole*, poèmes 1949–1965, Éditions de l'Hexagone, Montréal, 1965. (English version by E. Moure)