MOCAD 20

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART DETROIT

LORIS GRÉAUD*CORTICAL:SMOKE+MIRRORS

Curated by Jova Lynne & Abel González Fernández

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CORTICAL:SMOKE+MIRRORS

MOCAD, MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART DETROIT (US)

The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit presents *CORTICAL:Smoke+Mirrors,* a solo exhibition by Loris Gréaud at Mike Kelley's *Mobile Homestead.*

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On March 21, 2020, France announced the first national lockdown in its modern history to curb the spread of COVID-19, the same day the much-awaited exhibition *Christo et Jeanne-Claude. Paris!* was scheduled to open at the Centre Pompidou. Christo passed away without having had the opportunity to walk through it. Renowned for "empaquetage" and concealing objects or landmark architectural sites–such as the Reichstags in Berlin, the Pont Neuf in Paris, and eleven islands in Biscayne Bay, Miami–Christo and Jeanne-Claude's retrospective was then rendered inaccessible by circumstance. The timing resonates strangely: the exhibition's enforced invisibility echoed the very logic of concealment that defined much of their practice.

Within this context of confinement and generalized withdrawal, with the museum plunged into darkness and Christo and Jeanne-Claude's early packages-works with no one to look at them, both seemed abandoned to their unresolved state. It was precisely this opaque and silent situation, which paradoxically pushed art to its pinnacle, that Gréaud wanted to crystallize.

After obtaining an exemption from the museum's health and security services, Centre Pompidou, the curator Sophie Duplaix, Vladimir Yavachev (Christo and Jeanne-Claude foundation) and the lenders of the presented works, Gréaud used automated video recording devices equipped with night-vision cameras. Originally developed as cutting-edge military technology for nocturnal surveillance and the observation of restricted zones, these devices entered the museum, skirting and flying over the deserted galleries of the historic exhibition to capture the aura of the works and objects in the absence of any human presence, as one would hunt and set a trap for a creature. Filmed in the green spectrum of night-vision infrared technology, the images use the exact same visual language of contemporary warfare as broadcast by Western media, in which art and cultural patrimony have become recurring targets.

Building on a five-year exchange that has fostered a sustained collaboration among museums, curators, and the artist, *CORTICAL:Smoke+Mirrors* centers on a film by Gréaud composed from footage of the Christo and Jeanne-Claude phantom exhibition. This film is presented as a multichannel projection emitted through the exterior windows of Mike Kelley's *Mobile Homestead.*

The project forms part of *CORTICAL,* an ongoing cycle initiated by the artist in collaboration with international partner institutions, including the Petit Palais (Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris), the MAH (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Genève), the Théâtre du Châtelet, and, forthcoming, the Garrison in Timișoara.

The film is projected through both the artwork and its architectural setting, which together act as a projection device, turning people passing through the city into viewers and the archetypal American suburban house into an unlikely space-time capsule. In this transformation, the *Mobile Homestead* becomes a Magic lantern, a device from the dawn of cinema used to reproduce moving images and phantasmagoria, in the same type of domestic space where television once played a central role in mid-century American life. The footage reveals the inaccessible core of the original exhibition, while simultaneously reversing its spatial logic: the interior of the Paris show becomes the exterior of the MOCAD exhibition through projection.

"Detroit has always fascinated me... I see it as a kind of kaleidoscope of potential lives. From its immense successes to its profound crises, it is at its heart that a magic lantern comes to life and illuminates the 'Motor City', the true cradle of our contemporary cultures. The lantern, conveys stories. Whether beautiful, dark, enchanting or frightening, its phantasmagoria is intimately linked to all forms of wonder. The city of Detroit is in itself ***a*** *history of art. And art is* ***a*** *chance."* Loris Gréaud.

In *CORTICAL:Smoke+Mirrors,* Gréaud ultimately proposes the exhibition itself as a thinking structure–an expanded perceptual system in which images, architectures, and technologies operate like interconnected neural pathways. The *Mobile Homestead,* the nocturnal film, and the displaced Paris exhibition function together as a sensitive apparatus that captures latent correspondences between visibility and absence, history and fiction, interiority and projection. This layered configuration mirrors the operations of human cognition, where perception is never singular but assembled through overlapping signals, memories, and associations. It is from this density–at once analytical and intuitive–that the exhibition draws its title, evoking the cortex as a site where knowledge, sensation, and consciousness converge, and where meaning emerges not through clarity alone, but through resonance.

Following this train of thoughts, Loris Gréaud wanted the hard drives, the sole recipients of the images shot during the pandemic, to find refuge in the antisocial underground of Mike Kelley's work, which will now be haunted by the specters of three generations of artists superimposed upon it.

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