



Claire Savoie ◀◀

Claire Savoie
*Quelque chose qu'on croit
 pouvoir tenir dans la main*
*(Something we think we are
 able to hold in the hand) 2000*
 ABOVE: Interior view
 BELOW: Exterior installation view
 Transparent objects and audio
 Photograph Guy L'Heureux
 Courtesy the artist



For the last ten years, Claire Savoie's work has explored the physicality of sound, most specifically of the human voice. Two years ago at Montreal's artist-run centre *articule*, Savoie built a piece entitled *Une date, le nom d'un lieu et l'heure d'un rendez-vous*, which was also shown at YYZ in Toronto. It featured a white rotunda that one could enter. Inside, soap bubbles floated slowly down in the air, dying softly on the white floor, bathed in a strong light coming from a skylight in the ceiling.

In this non-site, created from the viewer's inability to read the space, the voices of a woman and a man were heard counting, the time flying by. The two voices, almost a rustle, were never totally synchronized. The installation unfolded the question of delay and difference, suggesting a utopian rendezvous (a metaphor for the idea of exhibitions themselves?) that was always postponed in time and space.

In her recent exhibition at SKOL, Savoie substituted the round geometry of the previous installation with the rigorous geometry of right angles. Inside a white cube, only large enough to let the visitor enter, lay a network of nylon thread that turned the space into a three-dimensional graph. Though it was almost ethereal, the structure worked as an obstacle. In it, the measurable area of the cube was challenged by mathematical lines of perspective that cut through the space. While this perspective should have helped clarify the space, the floating grid compromised every attempt to tame the mesmerizing interior.

The grid made one think about the metaphors of the virtual, as proposed in science-fiction movies—the intangible walls of the famous "Star Trek" holodeck come to mind. Except, here, the space in which the visitor stood was filled with real objects (the threads). In this installation, the virtual was inverted. We felt in the presence of a virtual space, but the effect was quite physical.

Confusion between the virtual and the material is a crucial aspect of Savoie's work. Moreover, in a gesture that displaced the visual sphere, she added a soundtrack which continued to work on perception. Words were spoken, but rendered only through their smallest particle, the letter. The letters formed full sentences which took patient attention to reconstitute. This fragmentation of the text succeeded in transforming sound into almost solid matter. The texture of the language became accentuated. Most importantly, the spelling out of the letters dismantled the usual meaning we attribute to the words.

Gaze and language were both pushed to the point of discomfort and vertigo. Like the previous installation, the new work disrupted our habitual comprehension of spatial structure by exploring sound as material and confusing the visual. In doing so, it evoked our sense of touch as an inalienable function of human perception. The interpretation is supported by the title of Savoie's installation, *Quelque chose qu'on croit pouvoir tenir dans la main*.

In English it reads: *Something we think we are able to hold in the hand.* ■

by BERNARD LAMARCHE