



Detail of *xxx*, 2017

Absurd Walls

Jacqueline Leigh Huskisson

EXHIBITION: FEBRUARY 23 - APRIL 07, 2018
OPENING RECEPTION : FEBRUARY 23, 2018, 7:00PM - 9:00PM



Alberta Printmakers Gallery
4025 4 Street SE, Calgary AB

a room without pictures

Essay by Dan Shipsides

A room without pictures.
I don't like the pictures.
Why?
They are all scary, so scary.
How do you mean?
Dying people and lots of dead bodies and monsters.
I don't want to see anymore pictures, why are they so scary?
Well, I guess it's a complex set of reasons...
They scare me.
I know. I'm sorry, I suppose they are meant to be scary.
But why?
Hmm. Well, remember these paintings were made before TV and the internet when there were not so many pictures in the world as there are now.
I want a room that's empty. Can we go to a room without pictures?
They are so freaky.
Yes, I know. Spooky and monstrous too.
And lots of naked people, some of them being chopped up or stabbed.
I know. I guess they try to make you imagine the bad things that might happen, or show the horror of the world then or to fear the spirit world.
But why are there pictures of that?
Well, they are stories which were made to be very vivid and dramatic so people would remember them and probably then be worried about themselves.
I think they also show that some people are the winners and that the losers are punished either by god or by the laws made by the winners.
So the dead people are bad people?
That's often the idea but sometimes it flips around so the dead people are meant to be the good people but the pictures show that they suffered for their goodness.
But it's so real and those people look poor and weak, not like baddies.
Ah well, yes that's true...

The architectural face of the city is designed to mask the horrors of exploitation, the core business of capital, often in a morally encoded form of awe, a surface veneer of sheen, civility and moral power. 'Everything here is Normal, Proper and Right...', but behind that countenance there's a sniggering, lusting, reveling, wild heart of darkness that no architectural façade can truly keep at bay.

Yet this masking acts as deception that quick turns to absurdity. Sisyphus is not pushing his rock up the mountain for fun, it's because it is the only action allowed to him as a punishment for daring to enact his own will. There's nothing now he can do to escape his task but acknowledge its absurdity and push on. This absurdity of meaningless agency is an agency that nonetheless shifts responsibility to the individual to deal with the consequences (thank Sigmund and his nephew for that...).

Absurdity and its proximity to the grotesque darkness of selfish power is well revealed, in what is the prototype of the Theatre of the Absurd, in Alfred Jarry's Ubu plays. Ubu is the absurd central character who gains power and acts in such a clearly nakedly unveiled manner that it's impossible not to recognize that any façade is absent. He kills, steals, brings upon his subjects a magnificent benevolence and then with equal measure capricious terror. All the acts of a man in power who cares for nothing but the immediate desires and cravenness of the self. He is unmasked and unchecked in equal proportion to the city which is fully masked and apparently 'in check'.

In Huskisson's compelling images, gallery installations and urban interventions the darkly absurd is unmasked, paradoxically often through the wearing of masks (or as human-animal hybrids), but it is not unchecked. Rather the work becomes the screening, surfacing and texturing of our experience. The inner and concealed is openly revealed or acted out on the surface, above ground, in the open. But its revealing isn't unchecked because there lies a level of filtering which synthesizes with humor and craft which is turned to critique, self-exploration and honesty. A judgement is at play which is finely tuned to the affective so that the viewer is faced with their own subject-hood and implicated as the source or absence of meaning as much as the artist. In Huskisson's work a sense of the overwhelming or excess is active but here it is not an exercise of power like the city's architecture or the megalomaniacal behavior of leader, the aesthetic power here pitches towards states of unbecoming and draws from a combustible mixture of nineteenth century transcendentalism and from Beckettian animalistic rituals of repetitive failure.

Of course there's no room without stories because every wall embeds our desires, dreams and delusions and even the wide-open wilds populate with our myths, monsters and morality-traps.



WRITER BIOGRAPHY

Dan Shipsides is an artist based at Orchid Studios, Belfast and teaches on the MFA Fine Art at the Belfast School of Art, Ulster University. He is a co-author with Shipsides and Beggs Projects / SBP, with Neal Beggs.

Shipsides was recently commissioned by Artist Experimental Moving Image to produce new work for the Port / River / City project 2017. His work is in several public and private collections including; The Ulster Museum and The Art Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of Mississauga. He was awarded an AHRC award in 2001 (Lateral Practice and Climbing) and 2006 (Touchstone), the ACNI Major Artist Award in 2004.

www.danshipsides.com

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Jacqueline Leigh Huskisson considers herself primarily an artist who draws. Everything she does starts with the lines that lift off the page and evolve into video, installation, printmaking, comics, and illustration. Her art can be a question, a reflection or a joke of the human condition and how one perceives our place in the universe.

She was born and raised in Calgary and started her artistic career with a B.F.A in 2011 from the Alberta College of art and Design. Looking for a challenge she migrated to the emerald isles, and in 2017, earning a M.F.A from the Belfast School of Art. Currently Huskisson pursues a studio practice in Calgary and is awaiting her next adventure.

www.jacquelinehuskisson.com/

Alberta Printmakers (A/P) is a non-profit, artist-run centre founded in 1989 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The organization's goals are to increase public awareness of print media, to engage a diverse audience, to provide resources for the artistic community and production facilities for printmaking.

A/P has an open membership, and is governed by a board of directors. Management and administration of A/P's activities are the responsibilities of its Directors, who reach out to volunteers in accomplishing A/P's goals. A/P also hosts residency and summer student programs.



albertaprintmakers.com | 403.287.1056

A/P thanks its funders:

