

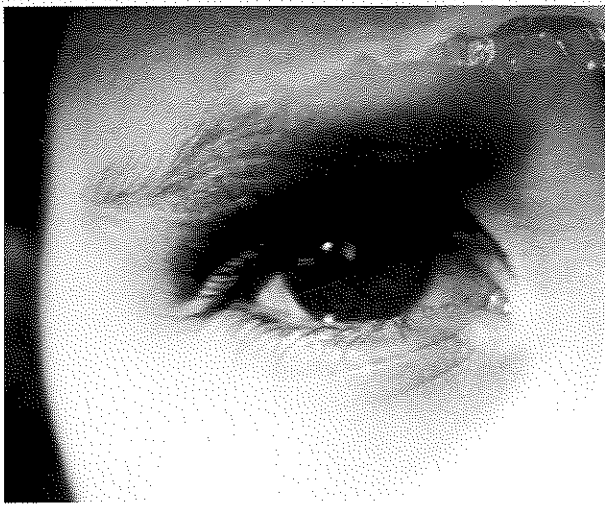
Sociality, or a determined set of laws, appears to dominate human understanding of the *self*, as it locates the individual within the larger fabric of society. A simultaneous and ongoing relationship to the physical world ultimately determines our *place*. The fixing of an identity relies on these methods of investigation and reflection, drawing information from both behavioural and physical realities in an attempt to form a comprehensive notion of being. Pertinent to these identifying methods are the elements of space and time (the landscape erodes, events become history and record change). The individual identity is thus forever in flux, as shifts in nature and society occur and re-occur constantly. The impossibility of concretizing an identity gives way to a perpetual quest, one which ponders our relation to nature and searches for meaning in the phenomena beyond our grasp.

Susan Shantz' *hibernaculum* combines the social and the natural to foreground archaic ritual within a constructed social order. Four pedestal cabinets are arranged in a square formation, each glass case filled with varying portions of wood ash. The configuration suggests a cycle of life and death, alluded to through the progressive accumulation of ash from one cabinet to the next. The metaphor of the hibernaculum — a protective habitat for plant and animal life — implies conservation, and a kind of elevated *memento mori* is represented here by both container and contained. Preserved is the cabinet with its refined wood. Sacrificed is the burnt wood ash. Recorded is human intervention, and an equation of dependency qualifies our relationship to nature, signifying both civilization and survival.

In *Turbulence*, Nicole Doucet alludes to the passage of time, marking human existence with its inevitable closure. The work uses photography and video as mnemonic devices: raising questions of what lies beyond, and within, the body, through the contemplation and staging of a decaying essence. The central element is a small video monitor which displays random images in repetition, flanked by two photographs of areas in Père Lachaise Cemetery. These photographs are then bracketed by images of a young woman, in one, covering her mouth, in the other, her ears. The flickering video images imply a livelihood, a temporality, though as a recording of sequences, the images are already 'dead', the moment of their enactment long since past. The photographs of the cemetery are doubly still,



SUSAN SHANTZ
hibernaculum



SYLVIE READMAN *Percée*

as the process of documenting has arrested the representation of death itself. The outer images relate a final detachment — the moment at which the body is robbed of all senses and sensations — as mind and body are remote and evacuated from knowledge of being in the world.

The photographic process resonates with the mechanics of vision and perception. The images in Sylvie Readman's *Percée*, record both the viewer and the view. It is an investigation of the collapsed realm of the body and nature, observer and observed, as the image of a child's eye is juxtaposed against one landscape image and invaded by another. The composition encourages a comparative reading as the horizon of the eye begins to mimic the natural horizon, while it seemingly depicts a reciprocity whereby the landscape image superimposed on the eye appears to penetrate the gaze which consumes it.

The notion of perception carries with it a degree of expectation, given how one perceives is largely based on catalogued experience. Alexander Pilis frustrates this level of expectation in *Parallax Scopic Frame*. Using binoculars as both mediating device *and* site, Pilis dislocates physical reality by imposing parallax effect: the sight of binoculars affixed to a window presumes a view to a familiar environment — perhaps in microcosmic proportion, as we can see a second pair facing them from the opposite side of the glass. Upon engagement, the viewer is extracted from that world to be propelled into blackness, remote from the light of vision. Another pair of binoculars photographically traces the act of entering the gallery space while displacing our bodies in relation to it. A third site (a pair of binoculars set through the wall and aligned to the same position) posits architectonic theorem peered through the optical device — the sharpening of our vision to perceive the *potential* of a space. The work evokes experience and intangibility, expectation and impossibility, memory and projection.

Richard Deschênes' painting, entitled *Map 2*, provokes consideration of an associative measure for determining identity. Sweeping across the upper edge of the canvas are images of monkeys in a procession through a stylized underbrush. They appear ordered and reasoning, but are resolutely of the animal world. Below, words arranged in columns which touch upon features common to creature and humankind — lung, blood, bone — trace a Darwinian thread. The boundary between nature and the human body is all but erased. Evolutionary theory places us squarely within, and part of, the field of that which we attempt to analyze. Deschênes' method of mapping this trajectory returns to the division; language and reason emerge as the distinguishing factors between what we regard as nature and ourselves.

Claire Christie