

Brigadoon curated by Céline Poulin

La Tôlerie art center, Clermont-Ferrand FR

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For me, Brigadoon is a dream that I have trouble convincing myself really existed...

This is what Jeff says to his friend Tommy, just before Brigadoon reappears before their eyes thanks to the latter's belief in love. Tommy then chooses to cross the bridge that separated him from his ideal and to find the woman he loves, whether she exists or is just an illusion, under the eyes of the incredulous Jeff, who remains on the side of the road.

Brigadoon is the name of an enchanted village lost in the Highlands that appears only one day every hundred years. A sort of story-book image of a fantasized Scotland, this village that filmmaker Vincente Minnelli brings to the screen embodies, according to each of the characters who pass through it, a place of realization of their aspirations, an anguished mirage, a protective enclosure or a prison. Our view of Brigadoon is nourished by these antinomies: we would like to believe in the reality to which the hero has access, while being little fooled by the mystification of the shimmering aesthetics, the songs and dances that punctuate the film as well as the daily life of the villagers.

It is these oppositions between doubt and fascination, desire and denial that will allow us to apprehend the exhibition « Brigadoon ».

In order for the meeting to take place between the characters of Minnelli's film and the works presented by curator **Céline Poulin**, she has used the physical space of the Tôlerie art center as a film set. The exhibition is thus composed of both scenographic elements that form the structure of the set and the various scenic spaces, and works that integrate this structure as elements of decor, props or extras. The curator of the exhibition seems to use the same artifices as the filmmaker: a scenography whose fake aspect is assumed, landscapes that are both images and windows, a relative time where day and night, past, present and future are omnipresent.

By taking this form, the exhibition becomes the very place where the show is made, a space where reality is transformed into image. By engaging with the exhibition in the same way that Tommy and Jeff engage with the village of Brigadoon, we become

spectators and actors in another reality that has its own material, spatial and temporal characteristics.

Brigadoon is a kind of utopian enclave forged to protect its inhabitants from the outside world, who then live in a place that is both real and resists the real. This enclave takes the form of a village where customs, attitudes, ways of living or dressing are frozen in a representation worn collectively by all villagers. The exhibition « Brigadoon » is in the same way a space of collective dynamics, where the individuality of the works seems at first sight to disappear behind the global project forged by the curator.

But like the characters in the film whose gazes will show us all the possible truths of Brigadoon, the works will each play their part in the construction of the different truths of the exhibition, and present to our gaze infinite possibilities of realities.

Realities that we can embrace, as Tommy does, by entering **Tony Regazzoni's** *Moonlight Shadow*, a set of papier-mâché ruins under a moonlight imitated by a laser, which represents this simulacrum behind which we are quick to take refuge when it comes to not wanting to see the truth. The works of **Soraya Rhofir** (*Crannog*, 2013) or **Claudia Wieser** (*Treppen*, 2009/2013), on the other hand, return us to the anguish Jeff feels when faced with what he cannot rationally explain. Both works feature familiar elements – whether Rhofir's office furniture and statues or Wieser's grand staircase reminiscent of various film moments – but deconstructed and arranged in the artists' own way. These two images form an environment that is disturbing to our perception and beliefs because of their frontal and impenetrable aspect.

Similarly, **Mélodie Mousset's** performance props (*Rock Nose*, 2010), **Alexej Meschtschanow's** transformed furniture (*Tisch*, 2012 or *Stuhl Nr 26A & 26B*, 2013) or **Derek Sullivan's** opaque works (*I never dreamt that I would get to be the creature that I always meant to be #2*, 2008) appear as deformed objects or objects that no longer seem to be able to fulfill the functions for which they are made, and from being familiar things they will become ambiguous and incomprehensible.

For Jeff, the village is populated by ghosts whose existence he denies. Alexej Meschtschanow's black and white portraits (*Schmuckstück*, 2013), inserted in their metal frames, evoke these ghosts of Brigadoon, caught in their achronistic enclave where time leaps 100 years without themselves evolving. The exhibition too is in suspense, marked by the mechanical and repetitive movement of the light reflector that makes up **Alicia Frankovich's** *Man walk on the Moon* (2012). It is from this disruption of time that the objects of archaeology of the future of **Aude Pariset** (*FX Tridacna*, 2013) or the characters of the scenario of **Rita Sobral Campos** (*The last Faust myth in the history of mankind*, 2009) that meet in the same story crossed by the different eras from which they come.

In Brigadoon, however, there are gaps that offer entrances and exits to reality, whether spatial (the bridge or the old church road), temporal (one day every hundred

years) or symbolic (the death of the one who rejects the miracle). In the enclave formed by the exhibition, these cracks are as many openings towards other possible realities. This is the series of abstract paintings *Large Blue One Perspective* (2012) by **David Malek**, whose vanishing lines pierce the white walls of the exhibition, or **Robert Stadler's** *Coatrack* (2012), placed in the middle of the space like a door to another world.

The loop, the repetition, the endless execution of the same movement, is perhaps here the sign of this tireless search for the artist's knowledge of the mystery of the world that **Céline Poulin** speaks of. By circling around the « hole », the blind spot of reality containing its pure truth, and by perpetually following the same path until she leaves a trace deep enough to cover a little more of this « hole », the artist will reveal a complete image of this mystery. This image can be found in the work of **Derek Sullivan**, where the multiplication of references that compose it and the forms it acquires are attempts to fill the void layer by layer, or in the work of **Marie Bette** (*Openings*, 2011), which returns us to an awareness and knowledge of ourselves by placing us in the center of the stage and the eyes multiplied by the cameras and mirrors.

Sometimes the things we believe in become more real than all the things we can justify or understand.¹ This is Tommy's response to Jeff. The village, whether it exists or is merely an illusion, is nonetheless the scene of the feelings, desires, and dilemmas actually experienced by the film's characters. The exhibition, by standing like the film on the borders of the imaginary and the real, leads us into a search for truth. At the risk perhaps that this truth caught between the simulacra, the images and the dreams is the one that we would have preferred not to know.





