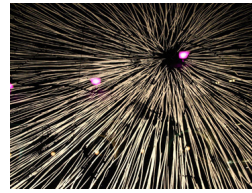


An interview with Nadine Faraj by Andrew Frosst



Starburst, 2009



Wave, 2009

A: Let's start with your background.

N: I was born and raised in Montreal. I went to Dawson College to learn how to draw. While there, I had this military type drawing teacher; she was the type where if you couldn't draw what you saw, you just had to leave the class. She taught excellent techniques in order to help us succeed and consequently this was really good for me because this was a skill I wanted to acquire. When I went to Concordia University, where there wasn't any of that, you could do anything. I felt like I could stick a piece of gum to a sheet of paper and if I could defend it I would pass. My best work from that period was an installation of melting ice triggering a cymbal along with some performance elements. Even though I considered this my best work, only my portraits paid the bills. For the next ten years I painted realistic portraits. I even went to study at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris for a month in 2008. We'd get nude models six hours a day, five days a week. The result of that was that I couldn't look at people anymore: I was saturated. That's when I decided to leave portraiture behind: it was sucking energy out of me and it didn't feel relevant.

A: How have you arrived at this work from your previous work?

N: In a way it's a break from my previous work because I was involved in portraiture for so long. At the same time it's a return to what I was doing before Dawson. I was making abstract drawings in much the same way you would approach stream of consciousness writing. At that point, it was all about feeling and visualization and I guess I just wanted to come back to that. So leading up to this, I had started making a drawing a day, with my left hand or my right hand, where I would just take a pencil and draw something. I found that my hand would naturally want to repeat a movement over and over, and it wound up being quite gestural. The resulting effect would be a cluster of lines in one place where the drawing would be stronger. Consequentially, it felt like it was vibrating and moving because the lines were overlapping while flowing the same way. Often I would make a burst, a circle, a semi-circle, an egg or an oval: shapes natural for the body to make. I ended up applying that approach to these current works.

A: How do you intend these current window etchings to function within their window space?

N: I want them give out energy. I want them to blast out and I feel that light can do that. Because it's illuminated from within, it radiates. Even those terrible advertisement light boxes have a magical quality to them and this works in much the same way. The mind understands electricity and light bulbs but regardless, light will always be fascinating to us. Here I'm not selling anything. I'm looking at nature, looking at the ways things move and how there are analogies between things. For example, in nature we find this kind of outward movement emanating from a center point, like in the piece Starburst. I want to reference this memory of growth in the natural world in a very modern and structured way.

A: Although you aren't selling anything with your previous window etchings, which were installed in vacant store windows, do you feel you are in a way advertising for the vacant space?

N: Well that's interesting because that's why that project was conceived in the first place. Someone approached me regarding a vacant space and asked if I could paint something in the window that just said 'for rent' with their phone number. I thought about it for a while and I said 'look, I want to do something else. Let me create an art installation'. I almost got crudely turned down but my sketches convinced them. You're certainly collaborating with the owner of the property so part of it is advertisement for the building but I don't think about it, I try to make the best artwork possible.

A: It's more about using the opportunity of the window space to display your artwork.

N: Yeah, it's more that. The street becomes a gallery and it's something there for the public. I don't have to convince people to visit a gallery; I'm bringing the art to them.

A: How does your piece at articule differ from your previous window etchings?

N: Well, now that I have this language, I feel like I need to develop it further. I know you can see the articule window from St-Viateur, which is a block away, so I want the design bold enough to be interesting at a distance. The idea I proposed just sort of flashed in my mind. I tried it out, and then I tried to do it a million other ways but ended up coming back to my initial idea. I guess I am learning to respect to the ideas as they come to me and to stop overworking things.

Andrew Frosst is a protean artist with an eclectic amass of skills who generates literature and visual art both independently and with the Arbour Lake School Collective.

This text is part of a writing series by members of articule, reflecting on the works presented during the gallery's 2009-2010 programming season. Nadia Kurd's text has been produced for Matt Shane and Jim Holyoak's exhibition *Greyscale Rainbow*, presented from September 4 to October 4, 2009, and is also available as a pdf on the gallery's web site.

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