



Dominique Pétrin

PIMPING UP

MARCH 12 - APRIL 18, 2015



DOMINIQUE PÉTRIN'S AFFECTIVE SPACES

When one first encounters Pétrin's silkscreen paper installations one reacts—positively or negatively—but one reacts. Such visceral reactions are due to Pétrin's choice of images, ornaments, and patterns that create impenetrable surfaces filled with colours in discourse with one another. It is Pétrin's *modus operandi*, in fact, to construct gift-like wall-wrapping installations that display opaque and impenetrable surfaces. Because the decorative and ornamental patterns only offer a sense of shallow depth, viewers are rarely presented with the comforting illusion of three-dimensional space. Instead of being cajoled into a seamless illusionistic space, what Pétrin's surfaces offer is a sense of immediacy of presence.

A master colourist and lover of colour, Pétrin knows how to play different tints against each other. She articulates potent relationships between colours that result in friction and dissonance. Shades are chosen meticulously, not only for their play off each other, but also for the memories their combinations can potentially evoke in viewers. The contrasting combinations obtained are like collisions: a little aggressive perhaps, confrontational even, they seek to disorient the senses and contribute to this vibrant sense of presence of space.

If some patterns recall Bauhaus geometry or the dynamic diagonal lines and squiggles from an 80's childhood (for some of us!), there are also undertones of Ancient Roman wall painting decoration, Egyptian motifs, or Eastern mandala forms. In fact, Pétrin plays with the traditional Vitruvian segregation of spaces, such as dado, wall and architrave, which are sometimes respected and at other times deconstructed. Ultimately, viewers lose their footing and are thrown off course by this play with the languages of decoration. Symbols and recognizable images such as parrots, sparkling jewels, happy toasts and burgers, 18th-century French pot-pourrit vases, happy mugs, French coffee presses, iPhones, and plants are also sprinkled into Pétrin's abstract patterns and jolting colours. A pell-mell of objects from everyday visual culture (iPhone), wishful desires (jewels), and rare historical references (French pot-pourrit vase) is offered, but viewers will find no meaning or clues to the artist's message in these images. Instead, the images, these signs, are meant to trigger memories, associations, or desires.

First digitalized and computer-manipulated only to be transformed into hand-crafted low resolution images, the material quality of the hand-silkscreened images emphasizes their very material presence in space. Though they do reference the digital world, as in the virtual spaces of the internet, their corporeal presence also demands that the real space viewers inhabit at the moment of their encounter be acknowledged. It is the viewer's presence in the gallery space that triggers a collision between the different spaces of virtual and physical reality. It is at this rendezvous point in space and time - through the viewers' interaction with memories recalled, desires aroused, and senses awakened - that a new space is formed.

The viewer's experience of the here and now in the space that emerges is at the center of Pétrin's work. The space is no longer created by the artist, but by the interaction of viewers and their affectations of the space. Viewers may recognize memories from childhood, small visual tokens that awaken sensibilities of the past here in this new space. The space may affect to the point of hearing music, smelling odours or tasting foods. Such potential synesthetic responses in viewers create a space of relations with affect at its heart. Unlike other types of decoration and ornamentation, Pétrin's machinations do not hierarchize space, bring order, or bestow identity. Instead, the decoration she proposes is radical, because it not only decentralizes subject matters but becomes the subject matter itself. More importantly, her patterns, juxtapositions, and colour combinations are actions meant to affect. Because one can be 'touched,' so to speak, by the vitality of the colours, the gap between viewer and the object is breached and that is radical.

- Julie Boivin, 2015

Julie Boivin is a soon to graduate Ph.D. candidate in art history at the University of Toronto (Defending in May). She holds both an M.A. and B.A. degree in art history from Concordia University, Montreal. Boivin has written on other contemporary Quebec artists and is interested in the ontology of ornament, and relations between space, identity and perception.



ARTIST STATEMENT

For the past five years, my artistic endeavours have involved installations where hand silk-screened works are displayed in a submerged space. I employ the installation to impose a musicality and a rhythm that is invoked by the repetition of motifs and the physicality of colours, creating a strong dialogue between the images, their support and configuration. It enables me to make use of bold lines and colours in order to create worlds that are vibrant and hypnotic. These visual demands put the spectator's body in an unstable position: between pleasure and displeasure, immersed in a feeling of vertigo similar to a light state of intoxication. This is reinforced by the monumental character of the installation. The patterns are dizzying. The overall effect is noisy and thought provoking.

- Dominique Pétrin , 2015

DOMINIQUE PÉTRIN is a multidisciplinary artist living and working in Montreal, Canada. In visual arts as well as performance, her interests converge towards producing altered states of conscience and perception, be it through cognitive or visual illusions, or, for her performances, the use of hypnosis. Since last year, her work has taken monumental proportions in the wrapping of a subway station and several other buildings in Montreal. A former member of the band Les Georges Leningrad, she also collaborated with such renowned artists as Sophie Calle, Pil & Galia Kollektiv, songwriter Pierre Lapointe and choreographer Antonija Livingstone. She was awarded the Antrev Habland Award to attend Art Omi International Artists' Residency program in New York. She participated in the 29th Contemporary Art Symposium in Baie-Saint-Paul, and was selected for the last instalment of the Quebec Triennial at the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art. In 2014, she was nominated for the Sobey award longlist. Her work has been exhibited across Canada, in France and United Kingdom.