

In *Polyempath Polyethylene*, Montréal-based Kelly Jazvac presents an installation of new works, continuing to work under the rubric of plastic pollution and the ubiquity of synthetic materials in contemporary life. Polyethylene is the most common and versatile plastic polymer, and is conjured in the artist's practice through a commitment to working with reclaimed or recycled post-consumer materials. Featuring artworks five years in the making, Jazvac has worked at a pace that is more sustainable and responsive to the process of material salvaging involved in her rigorous, environmentally-conscious working method. The resulting sculptures, floor and wall works manipulate the refuse of commercial advertising and draw on the vocabulary of manufactured desirability, with reference to the uncanny meeting of bodies, landscapes and materials. How do we understand the true scale of the climate crisis, and how does it translate to the scale of the body?

Upon entering the gallery, it is immediately evident that Jazvac has sustained her interest in the embodied experience of the scale and materiality of billboards. *Controlled Flouncing* is a large floor work tailored to the Laking Gallery, and visitors are invited to walk across the black backside of a material usually seen at great distances and only understood as an image, rather than a thing. Each body that enters the room leaves marks on the surface of the material, slowly accumulating over the run of the exhibition. Through years of salvaging waste from large scale advertising, Jazvac is no stranger to working with inherited images, yet in this floor work, the presence of the found image is more subtle. In using the reverse side of two billboards, the origins of the material is not immediately recognizable. It is only upon closer inspection that a trace of the source is revealed through the image file name along the edges, 10X30_COLLEGEOFLAKECOUNTY_19024461..., revealing the advertiser. Found along the perimeter of the work's footprint, there is a border between the black expanse of the centre and the trim which runs along three sides, sewn with the titular controlled flouncing technique. Between the flounces, there are glimpses of scenes of development, cranes and scaffolding slicing through cloudy skies.

Knife Pleats looms large over *Controlled Flouncing*, on the feature wall that is central to the Laking Gallery. A polyvinylchloride billboard that has been manipulated and sewn into an arc floats in the space, thanks to the salvaged polypropylene rope tied taut to suspend the work, and the luminescence of the sun falling through the skylight at the rear of the gallery. The alterations of what was originally an advertisement campaign for an outdoor clothing company are subtle enough that traces of the image's intelligibility remain—the textures and feeling of a mountain and dramatic cloud cover—and yet the uncanny reversal of sky and earth encourage the eye to linger, trying to make sense of the familiar made strange. Interestingly, the “high performance outdoor equipment company” who produced this billboard has built its identity around representations of the lone adventurer experiencing nature at its most sublime. The company defines themselves in relation to “unexplored” and “unpopulated” wilderness regions, championing Canada's “pioneering spirit”—language that calls to mind settler-colonial entitlement to land that is presumed to be empty, erasing Indigenous presence on these territories for time immemorial. Despite the good intentions presumably behind the company's detailed commitment to more environmentally-conscious operations, the majority of their products use the high-tech fabric Gore-tex, a toxic, extremely persistent group of chemicals called perfluorochemicals which contaminate our air, water and bloodstreams. The tensions and

contradictions inherent in cycles of production and consumption in a capitalist system are embodied here, a fraught ethical dilemma.

Walking across the surface of *Controlled Flouncing* to view *Knife Pleats* closer, the viewer shares space with three new free standing sculptures, each with its own gravitational pull that invites visitors to circle their distinct forms. Each of the sculptures, originally cardboard and plastic promotional displays for drugstore makeup, have been treated with an off-white, weathered finish, diminishing their familiarity. Up close, the textured surface is reminiscent of salt crystallizing on boats, the soft glittering magic of calcium carbonate, salt, gum arabic and water working together. The coating acts as a barometer for the conditions of display, meaning that in standardized museum conditions the crystallization remains stable but with variance in humidity and temperature, it would transform. They are responsive bodies.

In my conversations with Jazvac, we discussed how anthropomorphic the cosmetic displays felt, the cavities that once held products empty at the time of their disposal. With *Sorbed*, the work visitors first encounter, closest to the edge of *Controlled Flouncing*, these hollows have been filled with cast forms of lipstick, made in Concordia University's foundry with recycled aluminum after saving can tabs, and student test samples. The clusters of aluminum forms are reminiscent of mineral growths, at once both a nod to the metallic element's connection to the earth's crust, and to the lasting and enduring quality of consumer goods. Not to mention that in their current mainstream formulations, lipstick is one of many everyday personal care products that contain heavy metals that have been identified as carcinogens and linked to hormone disruption.

On the far side of the gallery, the cavities of the vertical display which act as the base of *Modelling the Fate* are filled with a series of sixteen custom borosilicate glass test tubes. Each contains a single microfibre plastic sample from the Biocolloids and Surfaces Lab at McGill University. This partnership with the principal investigator of the lab, Dr. Nathalie Tufenkji, builds on Jazvac's sustained engagement with interdisciplinary plastic pollution as a founding member of The Synthetic Collective. A research team which includes scientists, artists, art historians, philosophers and writers, the Collective work together to sample, map, understand and visualize the complexities of plastics and microplastics pollution in the Great Lakes Region. This Fall, they have released "Plastic Heart: A DIY Fieldguide for Reducing the Environmental Impact of Art Exhibitions," which was assembled to accompany their concurrent exhibition at The Art Museum at the University of Toronto.

Bottom Sediments sets itself apart from the other two sculptures both with its seemingly precarious, cantilevered form, and what appears at first glance to be pumice, a fine-grained volcanic rock which has a sponge-like appearance thanks to the gas bubbles throughout. In calling to mind this porous stone, the sculpture maintains the reference point of the body and its maintenance, as pumice is commonly used to remove dry, dead skin, to soften calluses and corns. Jazvac has cleverly emulated this stone in the use of salvaged plaster for the base and cavity-filling forms, which are sealed with skim milk (a non-toxic, pre-modern fixant for drawings). The structure is held in place again with the help of salvaged rope, this time using a safety knot—the Fireman's Chair—which is just a twist away from a Handcuff Knot, a knot of restraint.

On the wall opposite *Knife Pleats*, *Supplementary Fullness (Lumberjack Purse)* and *Reverse Cluster Tuck* are hung low to the ground, the bottom edge of each work barely skimming the floor. Both draw on the material of advertisements from a footwear and handbag company, and even in their altered state reference the meeting of consumer and landscape, in a mash up of wood grain and the leather, rubber, and grommets of the footwear being featured, or the lush coniferous branches and a sliver of white flesh and lumberjack print handbag respectively. The sewing technique that gives *Cluster Tuck* its name is an inverse form of pocket, each of the 48 holding a single knife carved piece of ash, which peers out from the work like eyes. This wood, salvaged from a park in Montreal, forms the hanging mechanism for both of the wall works, the hints of vibrant red a remnant of the spray painting that would have marked the trees for removal. Millions of ash trees in Ontario alone have been killed by the invasive emerald ash borer, an import to the Americas from the 1990s. With the exception of a pair of lips on *Modelling the Fate*, and *Sorbed*, the human body is largely absent from the representational field of the exhibition, yet these eyes peer out, a grouping of wooden witnesses.

These affective works come together to inspire close looking, to encourage curiosity when it comes to our surroundings, our environment—both built and natural. So often, artworks and exhibitions that take up questions around consumerism or human relationships with the environment are at odds with the high cost of their impact or carbon footprint. Kelly Jazvac has a wonderfully imaginative approach to working with alternative materials and methods in the production of artworks and exhibitions, troubling each aspect of these resource heavy processes. Every material element brought together here carries with it a story of how it came to be, and this text offers a mere glimpse into the highly intentional and sensitive approach that Jazvac brings to practicing a form of low-carbon art making. This ethos extends beyond the discrete artworks themselves to all aspects of exhibition-making, from the recycling and altering of a promotional banner from a past exhibition, to the eschewing of dedicated shipment of artworks (Jazvac drove herself and the works for installation), to didactics hand-painted with Beam Paints (a plastic free, non-toxic product supporting sustainable Indigenous operations). There will always be contradictions in working towards better practices that are in alignment with artworks that address pollution, waste, or climate change, but the exhibition can be a site of research in and of itself, a testing ground to ask questions, to challenge standard practices, to investigate material matters.

-Katie Lawson

I could not conclude this text without extending my gratitude to not only the artist, but to the staff members of the MacLaren who not only provided literal and conceptual space to propose alternatives to their existing institutional practices, but to ask these questions right alongside us, and to actively participate in the making of this exhibition. This work takes the collaboration of and commitment from all parties, and this is the work that is so often invisible.

Kelly Jazvac (b. Hamilton, Ontario 1980) has exhibited nationally and internationally, including recent exhibitions at MoMA (New York); Ujazdowski Castle (Warsaw); the Eli and Edyth Broad

Museum (University of Michigan) and the Musée d'Art Contemporain (Montréal). She is represented by FIERMAN Gallery, New York.

Katie Lawson (b. Eugene, Oregon) is a Toronto-based curator and writer. She is currently Curator for the Toronto Biennial of Art.

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