

EXHIBITION REVIEWS

Anne-Renée Hotte

by James D. Campbell



Anne-Renée Hotte
Galerie de l'UQAM
Montréal
On view until October 9, 2015

A couple of years ago, Anne-Renée Hotte mounted an exhibition remarkable for the poetry and sophistication of its meditation on the meaning of family. It was one of the highlights of the 2013 Montreal gallery season (held at her dealer, Trois Points) and reviewed in these pages. Now, she has expanded her purview (with equally compelling result) to encompass the sense, signification, and enduring promise of a global community with *Solistes* (2015).

In this video installation, Hotte uses three massive screens as a hasped structure that holds our attention rapt as she essays her subject through images and sound, somewhere between symphony and cacophony. From screen to screen, she constructs eidetic, aural, and auratic scaffolding for an uncompromising dilation on the vision of a wider human family. Her ambition is admirably met with an hypnotic dovetailing of sounds and images: opera singers alone and in concert and the hegemony of voice are counterposed with the aggressive violence of competing engines and tire screeches on hot asphalt in a street race, and so forth. The chosen images

are striking, and the soundtrack seems almost contrapuntal, serving to ensure close narrative attention from screen to screen, progression to progression. Structurally speaking, this work shares with its predecessor a penchant for an evolving dialectic of emplacement/displacement and centering/decentering.

It seems clear that Hotte uses sound and image in order to embellish the sense of a “global community of citizens” in a way that has much in common with the work of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas and his idea of a “fictive world society.”[1] The interweaving of sounds and images builds slowly but inexorably towards a crescendo in which the hegemony of voice achieves its own logic and syncopation in a deeply communal context.

In keeping with its diachronic structure, however, *Solistes* also shows the relevance of French philosopher Jacques Rancière’s *Disagreement*, in which he developed a counter-model to Habermas’s notion of the unified public sphere and the global community. As Rancière argued: “We should take disagreement to mean a determined kind of speech situation: one in which one of the interlocutors at once understands and does not understand what the other is saying”. [2] This ‘disagreement’ is mirrored in images that entertain counterpoint, and even outright contrariety in this video work. Hotte does not dismiss the cacophony that is integral to the human equation of community, but integrates it into her palimpsest as a necessary and unavoidable fact.

Hotte’s moving tripartite videography segues with the ideal of an emerging global community and is especially timely at the present moment of the immigration crisis in Europe. Her work has interesting teleological tendencies that make us appreciate how deeply thoughtful an ongoing endeavour it is, as she has grown far beyond cornbread idealism in order to understand something more texturally rich and true about the human condition.

[1] Habermas, Jürgen (2005): “Concluding Comments on Empirical Approaches to Deliberative Politics.” In *Acta Politica*, no. 40, pp. 384–392.

[2] Rancière, Jacques (1999): *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Trans. Rose, Julie. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. X.

James D. Campbell is a writer and curator based in Montreal who contributes regularly to *Magenta Magazine* among other publications.