

Memories of the Sun

Audio tour transcript

Welcome to *Memories of the Sun*, a two-person exhibition of artworks by Regina-based artist Anne Brochu Lambert and Winnipeg-based artist Syliva Matas at the Art Gallery of Regina.

This exhibition invites you to consider the relationship between light as integral to creating photographic images and memory. Working with found images - snapshots of tourist destinations purchased from a garage sale in Brochu Lambert's work and online video feeds from security cameras in Matas' work - the artists craft meditative emotional environments and prompt consideration of photography and streaming video as having replaced remembering and experiencing.

I'm Sandee Moore, curator of exhibitions and programming at the Art Gallery of Regina, and I'm delighted to guide you through this extraordinary exhibition in this audio tour.

This exhibition includes many unframed works on paper. These delicate surfaces, both handpainted and printed, are not protected behind glass. Please refrain from touching the artwork, even lightly, and be aware of your jackets and bags. You can use the coat rack in our welcome area or set large bags down inside the gallery doors.

Please also take care not to rub against the gallery walls. Some of our walls are movable; we urge you not to touch or lean against these small, free-standing structures.

Finally, *Memories of the Sun* contains one notable artwork that requires your movement and participation to activate!

We'll start the tour by going to the left through the entrance door and moving counterclockwise through the gallery. You'll see the exhibition didactic panel on the wall in front of the door and some information about the gallery and other art galleries in Saskatchewan.

On the didactic panel, you'll see the exhibition title, the artists' names, exhibition dates and a short introduction to the show written by me.

Photos are allowed. If you post photographs of the exhibition online, credit the artist and tag the Art Gallery of Regina.

We first see a pair of large, foam-core mounted prints by Brochu Lambert on the gallery wall. These prints magnify and compress the artist's layered process of obscuring, revealing and annotating landmarks in discarded amateur photographs of holiday spots with layers of vinyl gouache, markers, graphite, inks, spray paint and gold leaf. We see the jagged vertical lines of a crumbling

castle rampart cutting darkly across a ground painted the misty grey of a fading memory; the background is pierced with regular dark rectangles, mirroring the slit windows in the vestiges of the once imposing stone structure.

Next is a split composition: a low wall and tufts of grass balanced on a pale rondelle of spray paint, replicating a blown-out area of a photograph drenched in too much sunlight. The lower half of the image is pure abstraction that disassembles the slicing shards of yellow sunlight and shadowed crevasses of the photograph underneath these layers of paint and collage materials, scanned, altered and printed by the artist.

Next, we see a grid of six works on paper. Here Brochu Lambert has painted on source photographs, scanned and reprinted these images at a large scale and then layered digital and analogue marks transforming landmarks from the same cache of tourist snapshots: castles, rock walls, churches and storehouses from another place and another time. Swirling scarlet scribbles and delicate periwinkle arches trace an emotional cartography across empty expanses while patterns of dots and dashes pock the landscape and architecture of these unpeopled landscapes.

Following this ordered arrangement is a scattered grouping of smaller works. Like photographic prints scattered across a tabletop before being adhered to an album's pages, these works float in relation to one another, as loosely connected as memories. Cliffs and towering distillery or brewery tanks join the now-familiar silhouettes of churches and castles. From these

sights, Brochu Lambert builds dream landscapes from layers of paint of all sorts, transparent marker strokes, delicate skiffs of gold leaf, scraps of tissue paper, bits of tape, and her unknown collaborators' souvenir travel photos.

Indeed, Brochu Lambert replicates the process of memory in her multilayered works on paper that mix the empirical with the emotional. Quaint villages and roads, bricks, and windows alike emerge as crisp, black-and-white details from wistful pastel planes and aimless lines of pigment. In the remaining trio of works on paper and digital prints, we witness again the artist's alchemy that goes one step beyond the chemical magic of the photographic image.

Brochu Lambert offers gallery visitors a rare insight into her process, strewing a handful of snapshots atop a pair of pedestals. The scale and photomat paper underscore the ordinariness of the artists' thrifted finds. Augmented with slick paint strokes and slipped into plastic sleeves, the earliest stages of the large works pinned to the wall can be located under the vitrine tops. The same distinctive buildings call to each other across the gallery.

On the back of pony wall at the gallery's entrance is an untouched photograph that the artist placed here in tribute to her unknown collaborator.

As we move into the other half of the gallery, we experience the works of Sylvia Matas displayed on a pair of television monitors that bookend the gallery's width and a wall. Matas creates books and videos. While these media may seem to occupy opposite ends of a timeline (we think of books as old and video as new technology), the connection for Matas is temporal: both books and video are time-based experiences. Reading a book must unfold over time; similarly, watching a video on our computer or phone screens or a TV monitor in the gallery cannot be rushed.

The artist is interested in expanding our experiences of time, asking us to look at the sky from thousands of years ago or to experience stuttering, frozen moments in which nothing happens, extending moments of boredom so long that they become a transcendent escape.

Matas assembled both of the video artworks included in *Memories of the Sun* from security camera feeds she discovered online. The artist stumbled across an unsecured live feed from a security camera and became obsessed, seeking out similar banal views of unpeopled properties where little, if anything, happens, downloading and saving these video clips, then arranging them into folders by subject matter.

Emerging from this thematic selection is her three-and-a-half-minute video *Houseplant* in which the surveilled place is obscured by leaves growing in front of the camera lens, the plants seemingly lovingly photographed by security cameras. In night vision video, plants glowing an unearthly white are interspersed

with artist-written text. These intertitles, such as "electrons disguised as plants," poetically mock our belief in images as equivalent to the things they represent. Does the knowledge that what we see and accept as a plant is merely a parade of electrons make it any less delightful and mysterious? Is this unreal and ephemeral thing made of light and shadow and trapped behind the monitor's glass a substitute for real, living matter?

Moving further into the gallery, Matas invites viewers into a different experience of time. The gallery's back wall, with its striking black rectangle and neatly ordered pages of *Reversal of Winds*, is arresting in its geometric simplicity. This deconstructed bookwork, or artist book, by Matas, pages arrayed with slight gaps between them, makes the act of reading a book physical as one must slowly traverse the length of the wall.

Matas doesn't limit her travelling through space and time to the spooky magic of the Internet. Her bookwork *Reversal of Winds* reminds us of the vastness of time and our insignificance as humans. The photographs we see are both taken by the artist and constructed from found photographs which include online maps of the stars overhead from 5000 years ago, images of nebulae from the Hubble space telescope, bricked-up windows, and strange ruins that might equally be in the process of being built or being destroyed. Interleaved with these images that locate the improbable in the crumbling and deserted architecture of the everyday are vast white pages tentatively occupied by the poetic lists.

The artist's columns of text are a calculus of arcane knowledge like "the vocalizations of extinct bird species" (bell-like, dismal shrieks) or "methods of divination" (by the howling of dogs, by dreams). Discredited beliefs haunt the world around us. She related a story about a childhood assumption that still colours her perception of a common feature of the urban landscape. Whenever she saw a bricked-up window, she assumed this feature had been remediated because someone had fallen from the window. Although she knows this is not the case, these common architectural sights are coloured by tragedy for Matas.

Sylvia Matas' photographs, videos and bookworks describe a sentimental longing to be a wanderer elsewhere. Just as the holiday exists outside our daily lives and thus outside of time, Matas stretches time by creating an expectation that is never satisfied in her appropriated security camera footage. The artist obsessively combs the Internet for live-streamed footage from surveillance cams, capturing and reframing the most absurdly inane as absurdly beautiful.

Just as Brochu Lambert travelled to far-off places through the discarded photographs taken by a tourist many decades before, Matas became an armchair tourist during the COVID-19 lockdown. Deliberately compiling a travelogue of anonymous places, those not identifiable as anywhere in particular and could, in fact, be anywhere, Matas assembled *Looming*.

This 35-minute montage of security camera snippets of unpeopled places - deserted parking lots, a lonely stretch of road,

and an untamed remnant of property - is infinitely watchable. Each scene is animated by the faintest of movements: slashing, rain, flares of light, a passing car, leaves fluttering in the breeze, or water lapping against dock piles. Boredom becomes meditation.

We tend to think of the Internet as an onslaught of rapid, attention-demanding images. While the artist's title suggests impending doom or a threatening presence, her video *Looming* offers a meditative and transcendent escape from the banal into the banal. As Matas writes, "*Looming* moves slowly, it takes shape in waiting for something to come into view."

Rounding the corner, you will come to a darkened, walled-off space dedicated to Brochu Lambert's interactive projection. Recalling the vacation snap slideshow that was a mid-century rumpus room entertainment staple, Brochu Lambert has bracketed the projector with folding chairs and placed it atop a bright tablecloth rather than an institutional pedestal.

The artist's interactive projection reveals her interventions on her source material (discarded amateur photographs of holiday spots). Triggered by the motion of people in the space, the slide carousel clicks noisily through slides replicating the source photographs, hand-altered by Brochu Lambert on the tiny, transparent canvas of the diapositive slide.

The artist simultaneously acknowledges the context her unknown collaborator intended for their amateur vacation snapshots and extends an offer to become a co-creator to gallery viewers.

With a compelling call to transform themselves as well as her images "become the landscape," she invites viewers to don a white coat and insert their bodies into projected landscapes. Viewers become part of the projection, further transforming these landscapes, writing new arcs of longing with the curves of their bodies.

Thank you for visiting the Art Gallery of Regina to experience *Memories of the Sun*.

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The Art Gallery of Regina is a nonprofit public art gallery that programs contemporary art that tells the stories of Saskatchewan artists and those from adjoining treaty territories.

We are grateful to our core funders, Sk-arts and the city of Regina, who enable us to make our exhibitions free to the public while compensating artists for their work.

I especially thank *you* for taking the time to listen to this audio tour and attend this exhibition. You can support the Art Gallery of Regina by becoming a member, donating, or both. Visit our website, www.artgalleryofregina.ca, for details on becoming part of our gallery's community and more information about *Memories of the Sun*, including an artist-led tour in French by Anne Brochu Lambert.