

Annie Baillargeon, *Camouflagle*, 2004, inkjet print, 111.7 x 111.7 cm.

# Annie Baillargeon

## Gymnastique Signalétique

This project grows out of an artistic practice that lies at the crossroads of genres and media. It focuses primarily on the body and on gesture, examining human behaviours in a broad way. These photographs, composed of assemblages of silhouettes, all relate to some degree to the idea of motif or choreography. Using myself as model, I create a repetitive digital montage that renders microscopic figures in rhythmic patterns and multiple motifs. Undergoing a metamorphosis, my body, completely depersonalized, takes on the qualities of an object. On a metaphorical level, *Gymnastique Signalétique* calls into question both the social and psychological implications of our physical appearances and the limits of our interpretations. At the same time, the series suggests a more or less pessimistic view of the individual, as seen within various groups or sets in which he or she belongs.

—A. B.

An emerging artist in Quebec, ANNIE BAILLARGEON works in video, photography and performance. She is part of the collective Les Fermière Obsédées. She is developing a body of work at the intersection of genres and mediums, using the body as a vehicle for questioning what constitutes the individual. Her work has been shown in Brazil, Mexico, Ecuador, Cardiff, Ireland, and in Canada.



CHERYL SOURKES, *Paris Locations* (detail), 2002, 32 digital prints in linen covered portfolio case, each print 22.8 x 33 cm.

**Scott Conarroe** received a BFA from the Emily Carr Institute in 2001 and an MFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University in spring 2005. His photographs have been exhibited and collected in Europe, the United States, and across Canada. He has been the recipient of BC Arts Council grants, a Koerner Foundation Award, and the Galen Kuellmer Young Artist Fellowship. His work has appeared in numerous publications including *Prefix Photo*, *Visual Arts News*, *Report On Business Magazine*, and the Magenta Foundation's soon to be released *Carte Blanche*. He currently lives in London, Ontario.

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**Marco Bohr** ([www.macobo.com](http://www.macobo.com)) studied photography at Ryerson University in Toronto and Napier University in Edinburgh, Scotland. In 2003, he received a du Maurier Visual Arts Grant. His *Uniforms* series was exhibited at the Days Photo Gallery in Tokyo (2004) and will show at the Japan Foundation in Canada and Germany in 2006. In 2005, Bohr was part of an exhibition and publication entitled *reGeneration: 50 photographers of tomorrow* at the Musée de l'Elysee in Lausanne. In late 2005, his work appeared at the Pompidou Centre, Paris, in *Enseigner / Produire: une exposition-enquête: Le numérique dans l'art*, curated by Christophe Kihm.

**Cheryl Sourkes** turned to the Internet for source material during the mid-nineties. For the last six years she has worked exclusively with Internet cameras. She has exhibited widely throughout Canada, as well as internationally in the United States, France, Italy, Great Britain, Germany, and Belgium. Recent work can be seen online at [www.cherylsourkes.com](http://www.cherylsourkes.com). She is represented by Peak Gallery. Born in Montreal, Sourkes has lived in Toronto since 1993, where she has also curated extensively. Currently she programs akau inc. on Queen Street West. Documentation from exhibitions at this space is available at [www.akauc.ca](http://www.akauc.ca).

**Katy McCormick's** photography deals with the relationships between landscape architecture, its histories and the way we perceive representations of space and time. In May 2006 her work will be on view at the Womens' Art Resource Centre (WARC), as part of CONTACT Toronto Photography Festival. An artist, independent curator, and writer, she is currently Exhibition Coordinator and Managing Editor at Gallery 44.

**Gallery 44** Centre for Contemporary Photography is a non-profit artist-run centre committed to the advancement of photographic art. The centre is supported by its members and patrons, The Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council. Registered Charity #11924 7310 RR0001

EDITING Katy McCormick | DESIGN Zab Design & Typography

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COVER  
MARCO BOHR, *Mori Tower*, 2003,  
chromogenic print, 50.8 x 60.9 cm.



SCOTT CONARROE, *Accident*, Vancouver, 2003,  
chromogenic print, 60.9 x 76.2 cm.



**Marco Bohr | Scott Conarroe | Cheryl Sourkes**

## Event Cities: Architecture as Performance

Curated by Katy McCormick

GALLERY

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# Event Cities: Architecture as Performance

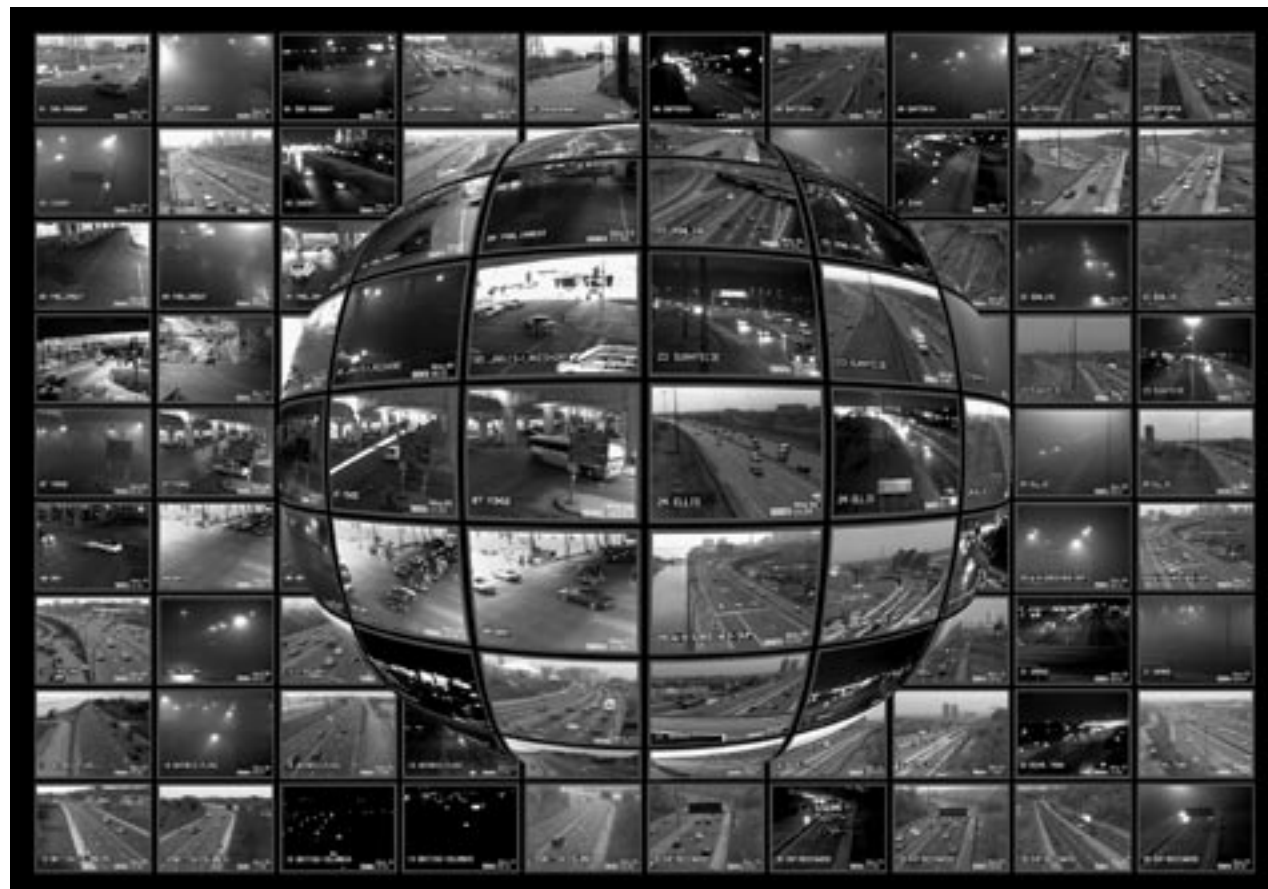
by Katy McCormick

Harkening back to Baudelaire's poetic response to the changing face of Paris in the midst of its modernization, this three-person show examines the response of artists to cities as self-conscious sites of spectacle, performance, and consumption. Momentarily freezing the flow of time on ever-changing stages, these artists offer glimpses of urban networks, now dense, now sweeping, where city inhabitants participate in a dance of viewer and viewed. Unlike the *flanerie* of Baudelaire, with its implications of meandering through streets in search of unexpected interactions, the works of Marco Bohr, Scott Conarroe, and Cheryl Sourkes are made from conceptualized vantage points. Rather than working from the street, these artists assume a distanced view of their subjects — emphasizing the function of the city as a "composed sight," within which we perform our daily roles. They focus on observation itself as a form of consumption. Indeed, the works of Bohr and Sourkes consist in representing the 'super-viewed' worlds of observatories and Web cams, fixed forms in which city dwellers are both the subject and object of structured modes of observation. Conarroe, perched above the streets with his slow acting 4 x 5 in. camera, presents views staged over time. In this sense, the artists present sites that determine the performance of bodies, by means of thoroughly disembodied views. Here, performance, so dependent on architecture and its function in the staging of our public and private dramas, is confined to the imagination of spectators — both ours and the artists' — as we virtually promenade through event-full cities.

Immersive by its very nature, architecture consists of a network of relationships only fully appreciated through mobility. Changing with each step, with each shift as we promenade, architecture both imposes its physical fact and impresses itself upon our perceptions as we move through space. It simultaneously opens up and limits possibilities of movement. In *The City of Collective Memory*, M. Christine Boyer discusses the three formal conventions of city types through history: the traditional city or "The City as a Work of Art," the modern city or "The City as Panorama," and the contemporary city or "The City as Spectacle."<sup>1</sup> Each of these reflects a cultural model, which in turn, speaks of the architectural modalities of cities, as well as the modes of reception of urban dwellers. Medieval centres exemplify "The City as a Work of Art" with streets circulating around specific monumental sites in

<sup>1</sup> M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*. The MIT Press (Cambridge and London, 1994), 31 – 70.

CHERYL SOURKES, *Cam Cites: Virtual Toronto*, 2001, vinyl banner print, 121.9 x 182.8 cm.



organic patterns. In the age of modernity, we move from the single view to the extended view, from a series of up-close encounters to a panoramic experience. This perspective is manifested first with Haussmann's "cannonshot boulevards," piercing straight through the heart of Paris and later accelerates with the development of the skyscraper and the automobile. With the advent of Web cams, streaming video, and 24/7 surveillance, the city becomes an ongoing spectacle accessible at any place or time. Roughly analogous to the architectural conventions discussed above, Conarroe, Bohr, and Sourkes present the city respectively as still life, panorama, and spectacle. In so doing they bring attention to the changing modalities of urban spaces, and the ways in which our perceptions are affected by different representational forms.

The photographs of Scott Conarroe present Halifax and Vancouver, the book-ends of Canadian "manifest destiny." Halifax appears quiet, human size, but not quaint. Vancouver is primarily depicted in terms of its recent growth. Exemplifying the closed frame of "The City as a Work of Art," Conarroe's large format views unfold

like colourful still lives, their apparent inactivity contradicting his time-lapse approach. Representing the accumulation of changing light on a fixed *mise-en-scène* — with exposures times varying from 2 minutes to an hour — his photographs present apparently empty stages ready for players. The abandoned streets and sidewalks, coupled with deep space and such ready indicators of scale as benches, fire hydrants, and street signs, beckon us to enter them. Works such as *Red Squares*, *Blowers Street*, *Promenade*, *Historic Properties*, and *Park* suggest avenues for traversal. *Kinderyard* functions like a meta-city, featuring a garden before a picket fence, beyond which sits a cluster of playhouses before a cottage, which is in turn dwarfed by 19th and 20th century façades. In several distant Vancouver views, this sense of progression is echoed. The city is a complex of dynamic shapes hopping and skipping in a dance toward the sky. In *Accident*, speed itself is the subject, as ghost images of a rescue worker and spectator shimmer in the foreground, we are left to imagine the moments before and after impact. These ghosts demonstrate time unfolding, giving evidence of the elastic nature of light and time on film. Their presence suggests these frames are not void of human activity after all, rather, they are subject to the laws of time, which both obscures and reveals.

Shifting frames from "The City as a Work of Art" to "The City as Panorama," the spectacular spaces photographed by Marco Bohr imply the seemingly limitless breadth of the modern city. Prevalent in Japan's vertically dense post-war cities, the observatory allows residents and visitors a sublime glimpse of the panoramic city as far as the eye can see. In the *Observatories* series, Bohr's deliberate photographic strategy of overexposing the deep space beyond the window frames serves to imply the possibility of an infinite cityscape. These

works also shift the *mise-en-scène* to include stage and spectator, city and observer, making a performance of the very act of viewing. At the same time, they illustrate how insignificant the human subjects appear to be within the monumental settings in which they are pictured. Absorbed by the scenes before them, the individuals photographed by Bohr contemplate the sparkling promise of the modern city. It is a city of action, possibility, wealth, and from these great heights, its day-to-day problems seem insignificant. Appearing in a number of the images are large photographic panoramas indicating landmarks and locating viewers within the bustling urban drama. Here, Bohr is the quintessential voyeur; capturing his subjects in the act of looking, they become stand-ins for both the photographer and for us — the gallery spectators — flirting with mastery over the heads of hundreds of thousands of supporting players.

While the work of Conarroe examines the city from its heights, giving us a sort of "fly-over" view, and Bohr offers us images of viewers perched above those views,

MARCO BOHR, *Marunouchi Building*, 2004, chromogenic print, 50.8 x 60.9 cm.



SCOTT CONARROE, *Kinderyard, Halifax*, 2004, chromogenic print, 60.9 x 72.2 cm.



both use traditional photographic means to render space. Cheryl Sourkes's work, though still a presentation of the "frozen" frame, relies on digital media, one that offers the possibility of continuous observation. Gaining Internet access to a numbing array of cams, she selects only a minute percentage of the images she sees. In *Cams Toronto*, Sourkes assembles a grid of highway views whose centre bursts out with a bulbous sphere reminiscent of both the eye and the globe. Such manipulation consciously references the aspirations of digital media, which allows us to see the four corners of the earth, while creating a parallel virtual universe. In *Paris Locations*, Sourkes presents a portfolio of sixteen Parisian sites, seen night and day, from the cams of France Telecom and ParisPourVous. Indistinct and low resolution, these views reference a space and time we might imagine ourselves in — sunrise at Sacré-Cœur or a market on the Place St-Sulpice. Akin to impressionist paintings, images such as the Luxembourg Palace or the Place Bastille glimmer with speckled colour. Together, these series reference both the dissolute and immediate nature of digital media, where detail and depth are traded for speed and breadth. This is a notion that is clearly illustrated in the "evolution" of photographic technologies, where we have moved from the crystalline clarity of large glass-plate negatives to the pixilated instantaneity of the camera phone. Sourkes sees these images as mirrors, for, like photographs, they are of the world but, contrary to photography, they act as a "thinning mirrors," reducing visual information, while providing something more immediate.<sup>2</sup>

Our attraction to this virtual world has to do with the seismic shifts in our perception of space and time since the development of mass media. Radio, television, and now, the Internet, have forever changed our perceptions of reality — and our sense of the possible. Still tied to our bodies, we welcome the possibility of shapeshifting, moving differently through time, and being everywhere at once. If the works presented in *Event Cities* are any indication, we seek to inhabit the spaces we can only now imagine, awaiting the advent of their possibilities. ■

<sup>2</sup> The author in conversation with Cheryl Sourkes, January 10, 2006.