

Above is an image from Lynne Marsh's video Stadium from her show at the Musée d'art contemporain. At right is a view of the installation Stadium, and below, at right, is an image from Marsh's Ballroom video.

DAVID BRANDT

Where do we fit in?

The Canadian artist **Lynne Marsh's** installations at the MAC question the individual's position within mass society.

CHRISTINE REDFERN
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

You will never experience a more grandiose entrance as a viewer to an art exhibition than when you enter the first gallery of Lynne Marsh's current show at the Musée d'art contemporain. I don't want to spoil the surprise for you, but when I walked in by myself on a bleak December day, her piece Fanfare instantly transformed my mood and made a large smile spread inadvertently across my face. I had read about the exhibition before coming, but somehow this piece was not even mentioned. It's an added bonus, just waiting to greet you upon arrival.

The videos Camera Opera, Ballroom and Stadium follow the opening piece. All of these works show a lone female figure in an architectural space. Camera Opera presents a news anchor in a TV studio, but the focus is really on the choreographed movements of the cameras that surround and film her. Ballroom shows the artist herself, hanging by her feet from the ceiling of the Rivoli Ballroom in London, as a stand-in for the traditional disco ball. Stadium, the most historically charged of the works, is filmed in Berlin's Olympiastadion, where Leni Riefenstahl shot her cinematic masterpiece and Nazi propaganda film Olympia during the 1936 Olympic games.

Marsh, a Canadian, now divides her time between England and Berlin. I spoke with her by phone from London last week.

Is the architectural space the starting point for each of these pieces?

It varies in each case, but the architectural environment is always key. In the four works at the museum, all of them try to build a relationship between the architectural space, the context, the history and what sort of performative enactment can happen there.

They are all social spaces where you have an idea of an audience or a mass audience. Then there is an individual, a figure that inhabits those spaces. Even the installation Fanfare situates the museum as the architectural space, and the gallery-goer as the individual within that audience. All the pieces are asking: Where is the position now of an individual within a mass dialogue, and how does the individual occupy these spaces and participate in the community?

Ballroom is really quite beautiful and hypnotizing.

Ballroom was one of the first pieces where I made the transition from virtual space to real space. The idea was to see how I could treat a real space, but give it otherworldly or imaginary possibilities. There is the almost macabre figure, trapped in this eternal spinning, completely objectified, and yet she is the conductor and animator of the entire space through the movement of the lights.

In these pieces I am deliberately trying to create confusion between real and virtual. So the opening sequence (of Stadium) is an animation from the architect's model. I create this science-fiction kind of animation that brings you into the stadium and then you are in the real space. I think some people are unsure as to whether they are looking at something real or unreal because the space itself has so much symmetry to it. And I shot (the work) using a crane with a turning remote-control head. So the way in which the piece is filmed is also the way we move through virtual spaces. There is no hand-held or Steadicam. It is all these impossible shots where you are gliding over the surface of these chairs, or moving in 360 degrees.

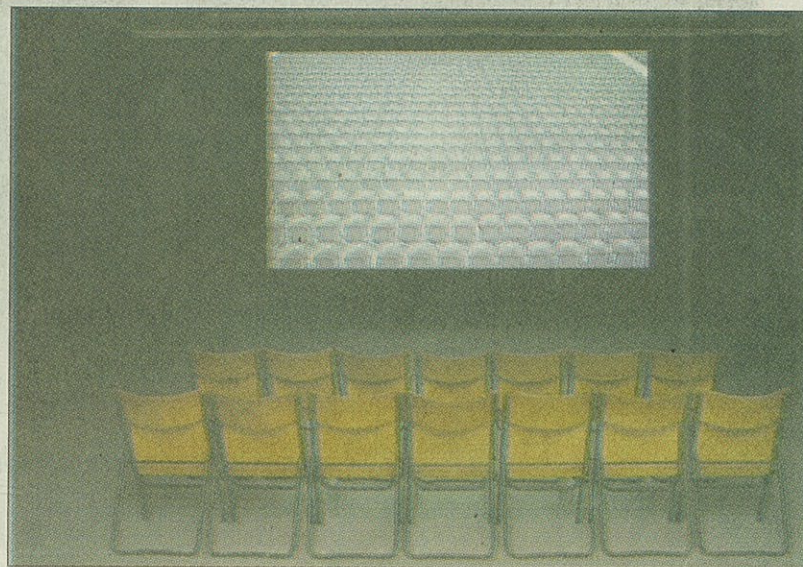
I notice you reference Leni Riefenstahl's film Olympia in Stadium. Is there anything that you want to say about that?

Replication and multiplication have been an ongoing theme in my work, and that is what brought me to Riefenstahl. It is the same stadium that Riefenstahl shot in 1936, but it was renovated for the 2006 world football championships. This is an interesting problematic: You don't erase history but how do you breathe life into history for it to have new possibilities in the present and future?

There is a fascist legacy in contemporary imaging, from Lord of the Rings – this mass of computerized bodies inhabiting landscapes – to the Beijing Olympic opening ceremonies. So I wanted to revisit the idea, but I feel that this piece is an updated version. So it is not an homage to Riefenstahl, nor a critique of Riefenstahl, but a critique of the seduction of the fascist imagery and the horror of that imagery.

Lynne Marsh continues until February 8th at the Musée d'art contemporain, 185 Ste. Catherine St. W. For information call 514-847-6226 or visit www.macm.org and www.lynnemmarsh.net.

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JOHAN



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Lynne Marsh shooting her video Stadium in Berlin's Olympiastadion, site of the 1936 Olympics, renovated for the football World Cup in 2006.

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