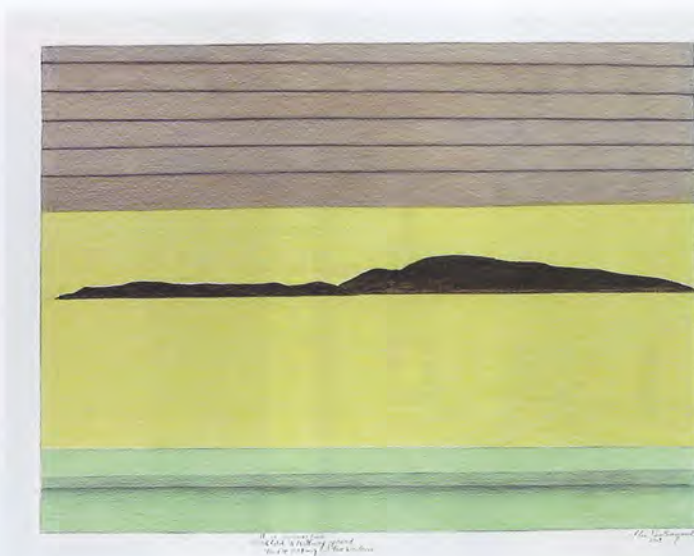


VISUAL ART

Lili Huston-Herterich

by Ben Portis



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a small green structure with a grey roof, combines elements of the naïve and the scientific.

Most clearly derived from Pootoogook's photographic sources are his compositional strategies, including a shallow depth of field and a lens-based approach to catching and framing his images. An example is *Cutting Whale*. *Fresh Fallen Snow on Beach and Sea Water During Fall*, in which two women in the middle ground regard a small, slaughtered whale; in the foreground, we see the only the greyish-black jacket and blue-jeaned legs of a man holding what may be a knife. His head remains outside the frame, amplifying the impact of the work. (Pootoogook's depictions of dead animals, including walruses, seabirds and fish, are both attentive and matter-of-fact, as seems natural to a people who still derive much of their sustenance from hunting and fishing.)

One of the most engaging images in the show is also one of the most unexpected. *Round Table Where People Sit, Chat or Eat. This table Is Located About Half A Mile Away from The Community* depicts a circular picnic table with attached benches

on a metal stand, dusted with snow and deserted at this moment. It's the kind of cast concrete or fibreglass picnic table that those of us living in cities in southern Canada would expect to encounter in a provincial campground or national park during the summer months, but regard with surprise in the context of a Baffin Island winter. Set in a wide white landscape speckled with grey rocks, this object compels our interest, as it did Pootoogook's. There is something about the presence of the solid, pre-fab forms in contrast to the wintry northern landscape, something about the state of readiness, of *there-ness*, made poignant by the absence of the people who would animate the scene, that speaks eloquently to the world this artist so earnestly depicted—and then left. ■

"Itee Pootoogook: Calm Weather" was exhibited at Marion Scott Gallery and Kardosh Projects, Vancouver, from March 18 to April 15, 2017.

Robin Laurence is a Vancouver-based writer, curator and contributing editor to *Border Crossings*.

Shrewd, subtle, altogether singular—Lili Huston-Herterich's introductory exhibition with Zalucky Contemporary (which announced its representation of her work two months afterward) confidently wrenched the roles of techniques and materials so as to reconsolidate their basic properties and open them to a range of new expressive potential. The foremost case for this was made by eight photograms that studded—yes, such was their heft—the gallery's longitudinal walls. These powerfully constructed pieces established a physical mantle and philosophical horizon line from which all the other beguiling components of Huston-Herterich's project drew direction.

An argument can be made that a photogram is an altogether distinctive compound from a photograph. Etymologically, *photograph* means "light writing," whereas a *photogram* signifies "light message." Classically in photography, reflected light inscribes itself through the optical mechanisms of aperture and camera that register its binding physics into a natural image upon a photosensitive plane. The camera operator is external, in fact artistic, according to the decisive moment. By contrast, the production of a photogram situates the artist within a darkroom (analogous to a camera) wherein she manipulates objects on a table that will impede and filtrate the exposure of a photosensitive surface and substance to an artificially controlled pool of light. The process is manual, rather than optical, and intrinsically subjective.

Huston-Herterich's practice has been quite variegated with respect to strategy and production. She has shown a consistent tendency to collaboration, which has generated

teamwork within which she might play creative partner, contributor, correspondent, conversant or curator, any of which, in turn, satisfies her balanced artistic identity. For “We of the Middling Sort,” before she began to firmly conceive, let alone make, any of the works, she sought input from the community in the immediate surrounds of Zalucky Contemporary, located in an historic Toronto district known as The Junction, named for the railway lines converging toward the heart of the city. The Junction is a lapsed manufacturing area, now with a renewed residency in the former homes of labourers and economic renewal by artisans and cottage industries—a mixed, middling, transitional sundry.

The community responded to her solicitations with donations of garments no longer in use, and, from an upholsterer, out-of-date textile samples. Huston-Herterich employed the former for her photograms, seeking their inherent qualities to speak to the nature and condition of dressing. For example, a splayed tie-dyed top (titled *Being There*) expresses the attitude of response and expansion into the moment. Its non-pattern modulated the passage of light through lightweight material. The images are printed on ample sheets of water-colour paper (which add their own substrate of dense, fibrous texture), about 20 x 16 inches; however, the technique works on a 1:1 scale, so even that size is a tight squeeze for articles designed for the body. As a result, the prints simultaneously invert the condition of clothing, being fit within the standardized measurement of the paper. That, combined with the flatbed nature of the photogram, seems to have informed Huston-Herterich’s sensitivity to the treatment of the various



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items, portrayed as open, nude, perhaps fresh from the laundry but not yet folded. Buttonholes are flared from use, seams a bit overstretched. A pair of pants with an out-turned pocket is titled *Being Broke*. Huston-Herterich accentuated its flaccid quality with an overlay of hapless machine stitching (done on a sheet of clear Mylar). A comparable gesture endows an internal gastric loop in the pit of a slender jersey (*Being Hungry*). The photograms, of course, are negative images, enigmatic, spectral, colourless, as if excavated from burial after long banishment from the light of day. They also essentially become drawings, an interpretation that Huston-Herterich encourages by placing them within broad-bordered (five-inch) mats that she has vigorously rubbed nearly black with charcoal.

The handling of the photograms is also sculptural. Their solid construction literally supports several complementary object works, made from the same pool of donated clothing,



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that hang from steel rods resting on their picture frames. These have cooler, more matter-of-fact, caption-like titles than the compassionate ones of the photogram series. *Jean Leg* hangs in the gap between *Being Hungry* and *Being Broke*, a denim leg eviscerated to what is basically a rugged exoskeleton, comprised of waist, inseam and cuff, its back pocket loosely slung in position by jewellers’ chain that runs through a quadrant of brass grommets. The interior front pocket, sewn into the pattern, echoes the empty pocket of *Being Broke*. *Men on Vacation* similarly reduces a pair of summer sports shirts to their extremities of seam-work and collars. By comparison, *Breasts in a T-shirt* has a complex deconstruction. More of its material has been left in place—the front split down its meridian into divided panels, short, gentle arcs of aluminum tubing indicating the absent breasts, a paradoxical integration of modesty and display. All three works also incorporate another bodily surrogate: porcelain

1. Lili Huston-Herterich, *The March of the Middling Sort*, 2017, sleeves, cotton, silk and linen upholstery fabric, grommets, copper patina on steel rod. All photos: Toni Hafkenschied. All images courtesy of the artist and Zalucky Contemporary, Toronto.

2. *The March of the Middling Sort*, detail.

3. Alex Livingston, installation view, “Flowers,” 2017, Studio 21, Halifax. All images courtesy of the artist and Studio 21, Halifax.

4. *Springtime*, 2017, pigment ink print on Dibond, 59 x 43 inches.

VISUAL ART

Alex Livingston

by Mathew Reichertz

clumps formed from the insides of clenched fists. Left and right are tethered like a pair of mittens with a length of chain, draped to the sides of the works, appropriately suggesting invisible bodies donning the barest remnants of apparel.

The phantoms of such determined fists are finally conjured in a large, quilt-like curtain that draped the back of the gallery, titled *The March of the Middling Sort*. The upholstery samples form pageant-like patchwork banners, configured in no-nonsense squares and rectangles, nonetheless bright and positive. Off from the curtain protrude a dozen solid-colour sleeves, long and short, small and large, randomly enough placed to jumble into a microcosmic crowd. Their sizes suggest a mix of adults and children, possibly men with women, although they seem predominantly female. A few of the cuffs have been frayed by nervous fingers. This is the backdrop of street theatre, a gathering of the community, the realization of untapped power—Huston-Herterich's reciprocal acknowledgement to her donors. ■

"We of the Middling Sort" was exhibited at Zalucky Contemporary, Toronto, from February 23 to March 25, 2017.

Ben Portis was a Toronto-based writer and curator. He died in a road accident in Toronto in July of this year. He was a frequent and valued contributor to Border Crossings.



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At the opening of Alex Livingston's "Flowers" at Studio 21 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, I was speaking with a local arts reporter when it became apparent that she thought she was looking at paint on canvas. Days later, while in the gallery taking notes for this review, I heard two women standing in front of the work, talking about it as if it were paint on canvas. In reality Livingston has presented us with six 50 x 43-inch framed pigment ink prints on Dibond. Livingston, who has been making paintings and teaching painting at NSCAD for the last 30 years, has been working digitally for a decade. The ambiguity concerning the nature of this work is the consequence of a convergence of the artist's deep engagement with historical and contemporary painting and decades of digital influence on painterly production in general. These digital images were constructed in a manner that forefronts the codes of painting so clearly that they read like paint on canvas. A closer look at *Flowers in Sunshine* should serve to illustrate the point.

Like many historical Dutch flower paintings, it is a central composition



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of flowers in a vase sitting on a table, round in this case, which occupies the bottom portion of the painting. The flowers are depicted in front of a cloud-filled sky, no middle ground. Upon closer inspection, the viewer can see that the flowers, which have a gestalt of naturalness about them, are playfully made up of deliberate mark making done with various digital "brushes" designed to impart the trompe l'oeil appearance of a three-dimensional textured brush stroke. The strokes that make up the flowers have a freshness to them, as if they are done once and left that way, probably indebted, in part, to the "undo" function available on