

TITLE :

## Raymonde April : Équivalences 1–4

### Équivalences 1

Galerie Donald Browne, January 9th – February 13th 2010

### Équivalences 2

Les Territoires, January 9th – February 13th 2010

### Équivalences 3+4

Occurrence, espace d'art et d'essais contemporains  
January 30th – March 6th 2010

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE EXHIBITION PROJECT (ENGLISH)

*Equivalences 1–4* is a project by Raymonde April developed in collaboration with curator Eduardo Ralickas. It consists of three distinct series of photographs and one video work shown in three Montréal spaces: (1) Occurrence, espace d'art et d'essai contemporains; (2) Les Territoires; and (3) Galerie Donald Browne. Most of the photographs, which contain a significant number of landscapes, are unpublished and were taken between 2005 and 2009. The project also includes some past and found images. Each of the three exhibitions is comprised of ten to fifteen images: landscapes, portraits and scenes of everyday life captured with large-format, 35mm and digital cameras in such different urban or rural settings as Montréal, Beijing, Buenos Aires, Eastern Quebec and Southern Alberta. While foregrounding landscape (and, occasionally, the insertion of figures within space), these series also contain prosaic elements that are given a poetic meaning by means of the transformative power of photography.

This project grew out of a desire to understand April's creative process and to translate it into *spatial* terms. It is a topography of sorts which brings to the fore the way in which April's photographic work functions by *spatializing* meaning—a process that is unique in the contemporary photographic landscape.

The idea of a four-part exhibition is the outcome of a dialogue between the artist and the curator that focussed on April's exceptional creative method, developed since the late 1970s, whereby disparate photographs stemming from a vast and ever growing archive are transformed into a visual language, as photographic configurations on the wall. April's way of spatializing photographs is regarded as a "system" which, like language, is without a centre. This system allows the artist to generate endless propositions or "series" that can be likened to photographic "sentences" formulated by means of an image-based "grammar" sensitive to such aesthetic factors as form, colour, shape, size, placement, and sequencing.

For instance, an image of a landscape can signify a site or give rise to an aesthetic feeling; however, both experiences stem from a given image's *value* with respect to all other images that surround it. Thus, each image inflects the meaning of other images, and together they comprise a "system" that *spatializes* the differential nature of language. But unlike language, which is shared by a community of speakers in an interchangeable and open way, April's series are highly personal and can only be "spoken" by the artist herself. Moreover, such speech acts are inextricably bound up with the notion of space.

In its initial stages, the project was—perhaps naively—designed according to this linguistic model: the curator invited the artist to produce several photographic series that would possess the "same" overall meaning even if they were comprised of different images. Each gallery was to house one of these photographic series that would function as "equivalents" dispersed throughout the city. (A video work was later added in keeping with this spirit of artistic translation.) As viewers travelled—in time and space—from one gallery to another, their experience of each series would have been inflected by their visual

memory of the work installed in the other two galleries. Even though each series may be regarded as a self-sufficient entity, their distanced juxtaposition was designed to generate similarities in structure. The four units echo each other and instead of being related in narrative or chronological terms, they were conceived as “equivalents”: transitional, ephemeral forms in time and space. Guided by the images themselves and by their spatial configurations in each gallery (whose layouts also inflect the process of “reading”), viewers would thereby make a mnemonic map of April’s work. Ultimately, they were to experience a sense of resonance and, perhaps, of déjà vu.

But as work on the project progressed, this easily adaptable “method,” which was developed spontaneously between artist and curator, ultimately engendered some surprising results. In fact *it failed to produce that which it was intended for*. However, such a “failure” was nonetheless *productive*. As the work resisted the method designed to encompass it, it produced is a generative, visual analysis of April’s visual language.

Although an attempt was made to create disparate artistic entities that would nonetheless afford viewers the “same” aesthetic experience four times over, the logic of April’s selection process tended to emphasize the autonomous nature of each series. To balance each body of work in terms of such considerations as form and content, each series was regarded as a self-subsisting entity that needed to be resolved in its own terms—that needed its own phrasing. It quickly became apparent that the curator and the artist had in fact engendered a “system” of a higher order. As the artist worked in producing four bodies of new work according to a self-imposed conceptual framework, the work itself developed its own, hybrid status. The resulting photographic series and the video piece are to be regarded, simultaneously, both as work bearing April’s signature style *and as a reflection on how such a signature style emerges in the first place*. At once work and work addressing its own process of construction—or what one usually calls “method”—*Équivalences 1–4* is the aftermath of a reflection on photography, space, repetition, and memory.

#### BIOGRAPHY:

Raymonde April was born in Moncton and raised in Rivière-du-Loup. She lives in Montréal where she teaches photography at Concordia University since 1985. Her work has been exhibited in Canada and internationally in various solo shows. Some noteworthy exhibitions are: *Tout embrasser* (2007), Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University (curator: Régis Durand), *Les Fleuves invisibles* (1997), Musée d'art de Joliette (curator: Nicole Gingras), *Jour de verre et autres fictions* (1992), Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa et *Voyage dans le monde des choses* (1986), Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (curator: Josée Bélisle). Her works are part of several important public and private collections in Québec, Canada and abroad.

En 2003, she was awarded the prestigious Prix Paul-Émile Borduas (Ministère de la culture et des communications du Québec). In 2005, she received the Paul de Hueck and Norman Walford Career Achievement Award for Art Photography from the Ontario Arts Foundation in recognition for her lasting contribution to contemporary photography in Canada.

Raymonde April is represented by Galerie Donald Browne, Montréal.