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STAGE SET STAGE AT SBC GALLERY

February 04, 2014

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The **SBC Gallery** exhibition *Stage Set Stage: On Identity and Institutionalism*, curated by **Barbara Clausen**, is an engaging collection of performative works that mull over how individuals interact with and are affected by the context they evolve in. Comprised of both an ongoing in-gallery exhibition and a weeklong series of events – workshops, talks, screenings, and performances (which enlivened an otherwise fairly rote Belgo building in mid-January) – *Stage Set Stage* also fits within SBC Gallery Director **Pip Day**'s ongoing focus on the ideas of identity and sovereignty.

Dorit Margreiter, *Broken Sequence*, 2013

Having myself once curated a show at the SBC Gallery, I can attest to the airless limitations of the small space. This exhibition, however, manages to refreshingly activate the gallery thanks to artists **Andrea Geyer** and **Sharon Hayes**' architectural redesign that acts as a framework for the concrete exhibition. Wall works alluding to **Maria Hupfield** performances and the disembodied voice of **Jacob Wren** musing on/as "performance" (available on vinyl) work to activate the space on an imaginary plane, while the research station – filled with relevant published research and documentary material – provides the opportunity for a deeper and broader level of engagement yet again.

Regrettably I was unable to attend some the mid-January events, but I particularly enjoyed the screenings curated by Clausen and exhibiting artist **Dorit Margreiter**. Presented at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, the films by **Katrina Daschner**, **Oliver Husain**, **Josiah McElheny**, **Wu Tsang**, and Margreiter herself were a fascinating extension of the show's theme as they addressed queered heterotopias – real and imagined – and the performativity associated with them. One of the highlights of the evening was the last work screened, Tsang's *Wildness*, which, clocking in at seventy-two minutes, I had been initially slightly wary of. It proved to be a totally engaging look at the complex relationship between cultures, classes, and generations affiliated with a Latino drag bar in Los Angeles.

Stage Set Stage is an interesting exhibition to present at the SBC Gallery given its history. Ever since the dissolution of the Saidye Bronfman Centre and the gallery's move to a tiny independent space in the Belgo, it has struggled to regain a definitive identity. That Pip Day, since her arrival, is confronting the issues and changing permutations of identity, performance, and sovereignty as related to institutionalism, is a clever exercise in shaping a role for the SBC Gallery both curatorially and within Montreal's arts community.

SBC Gallery: <http://www.sbcgallery.ca/>

Stage Set Stage: On Identity and Institutionalism continues until February 22.

Susannah Wesley is an artist and curator living in Montreal. She has been a member of the collaborative duo Leisure since 2004 and from 1997-2000 was part of the notorious British art collective the Leeds13. Formerly Director at Battat Contemporary in Montreal, she holds an MFA from the Glasgow School of Art and an MA in Art History from Concordia University. She is Akimblog's new Montreal correspondent and can be followed [@susannahwesley1](#) on Twitter.

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