



detail of install of the Creation of the Universe

Emmanuelle Jacques
The Creation of the Universe

Exhibition: February 27 - April 11, 2015

Artist Talk : February 27, 2015 7:00pm

Opening Reception: To Follow

Alberta Printmakers
4025 4 Street SE, Calgary AB

Essay by Nathan Flaig

The work of Montreal-based artist Emmanuelle Jacques explores the reflexive nature of urban space, the expansive potential of territory, and human reflection upon these structures. Presented through ever-evolving projects, the content of her work reflects the process from which it is birthed; excitingly transformative and speculative, projects like *The Creation of the Universe* mediate the boundlessness of possibility, randomness, and the limitations of the mind. Jacques' projects have been exhibited across Canada and she has hosted an abundance of creative workshops that continue the explorative nature of her practice. Her art book *Lieux communs: Commonplaces* is an emotive rendering of cartography, which recalls psychogeographic explorations of space. This work highlights the wonder in the mundane, echoing the sentiments of the Situationists in its emotive re-orientation of utilitarian space. Similarly, *The Creation of the Universe* recasts this wonder in a spectacular fashion, positioned outward to the cosmos.

With beginnings in 2010 during a residency at Open Studio in Toronto, *The Creation of the Universe* draws inspiration from Jorge Luis Borges' *The Library of Babel*. Jacques' process mimics the method described in the story, which describes a vast library that resulted from an alphabet of only 25 characters. Jacques created her own characters by engraving 25 blocks, each with "the motif of the stars standing for the infinite possibilities," thereby assembling a cosmic alphabet from which 15 625 possible permutations could be derived (Jacques, 2012). Using a typographic press and maintaining a limit of three matrices per image, Jacques printed 1250 of these permutations with process colour inks of yellow, magenta, and cyan. By employing the primary triad of colour, Jacques evokes the elemental construction of matter, suggesting that simple beginnings can result in a multitude of diverse creations. Such a process lends itself to the print medium, which allows for the mechanical reproduc-

tion of works with subtle variation, commenting on both the innovation of the work while hinting towards the infinite. The project is exhibited in a dual fashion, utilizing both time and space as indicators of vastness and the limits of human comprehension. By displaying the printed pieces in a repetitive manner, the subtlety of the process is highlighted, while also confronting the viewer with a near overwhelming volume of permutations. The contradictory feeling produced on one hand signals comprehension, while alluding to that which cannot be conceived. The physicality of the printed works forms a spatial relationship between the viewer and boundlessness, while the adjoining video piece situates the mutations in time, with variations moving in succession before the viewer's eyes.

The Creation of the Universe is a uniquely compelling project because of its ability to inspire a sense of the beyond, while confronting viewers with their fundamental humanness. We are asked to consider systems that operate beyond the capacity of our minds, and in doing so, are placed into a wildly exciting place of humble appreciation. The Creation of the Universe presents limitlessness in an intimate manner, allowing viewers to traverse the ground between elemental familiarity and the unknowability of systems beyond human cognition.

Nathan Flaig is a researcher, musician, and writer based in Calgary, Alberta. He is a recent graduate from the Department of Communication and Culture at the University of Calgary, receiving BA (Honours) in Communications Studies with a minor in Religious Studies. His undergraduate research analyzed the intersection between discourse, subjectivity, and popular culture, through the lens of genderperformativity. Flaig has worked as a curator and assistant to various artists in Calgary and has presented his research on multiple occasions at the University of Calgary.

Emmanuelle Jacques's practice is rooted in drawing and the print media. Her work is presented in various forms such as installations, artist books, videos, relational art or other manoeuvres. She develops her work by way of projects, some of which have been unfolding in parallel for several years. In pursuing repetitive, even endless tasks, she creates contexts that are conducive to lengthy reflection, which allows her to articulate ideas and make her work meaningful. Having been influenced by the philosophy of the absurd, she views the world with both a sense of wonder and, due to the impossibility of finding meaning in it, one of revolt. Her recent projects explore notions of space and territory, whether it be through their appropriation by individuals or communities (Une cartographie subjective, Les chemins de traverse), their poetic and political resonance (Lieux communs: Commonplaces) or their imaginary dimension (La création de l'univers, Cartographies spontanées).

Emmanuelle Jacques lives in Montreal where she earned a BFA at UQAM in 2004. She has presented her work, given workshops and carried out residency projects in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Moncton, Saint John's, Baie-Comeau, Natashquan and the Îles-de-la-Madeleine. Her artist book *Lieux communs: Commonplaces* was a finalist in the Artist Book of the Moment competition at the Art Gallery of York University (Toronto, 2012). An active member of her milieu, she was the president of Arprim's board of directors and for 5 years she took part in the organization's transformation into an artist-run centre dedicated to the dissemination of contemporary print-related art practices.

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