

Raphaëlle de Groot & Tony Romano

Just in terms of things lying on the floor, her Montreal show is better than her pieces in the Sobey Award group—the folded prints are a great story where the spilled and tangled yarn and netting feels like a messy attempt to over-literalize the connections and collections of her work. The bundle, a packed collection of objects sealed into tape in a strange shape, ready for air travel as a checked bag, is better, but it's still more alive in her photographs in Montreal. Of course now that she has all those objects I guess she wants to use them up, and move her inventory.

The prints also remind me of those collages from Glasgow. I am afraid to mention it—I removed a phrase from my blog about the Montreal show. An abandoned fragment, it seems important. But the stories on the wall at MOCCA are nice.

We played a game one night that I didn't answer at all: "If you could only have one artwork for the rest of your life...?"

Several of the other Sobey artists had made collections of sad old things too. I had less patience for them. Gareth Moore's were so self-conscious, artificial oldness and artisanal poses. There were some nice posters in coloured pencil that seemed to be reimagined trash, but they were accompanied by the real thing.

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We talked more about Tony Romano's work at Clint Roenisch. Maryse didn't like us to call her the leader of our little residency but she led us here, and pointed out the artist as he came in

the door, after chatting with the gallerist while we looked at the work. The sculptures in the front are modernist references and a bit of craft history that is personal to the artist, Maryse says vaguely—but my main reaction was an incredible desire to discover if the red face disc of the wooden sculpture, a geometric figure in careful panelling, would turn and spin. That kind of gleaming object is not meant to be touched though.

Through Romano's garden gate there was a video closer to our artists' writing residency subject, a poem in yellow rounded sans captions under another collection of discarded objects. What made me most frustrated about "By Any Other Name" is maybe it's most remarkable feature. For such a simple object—the panning video of an assemblage on a bed could almost have been made using a still photograph with "ken burns effect"—it's impossible for me to feel like I've really seen it. I'm watching it again on Romano's website, just as affected by my desire to pause or to watch again and again, or maybe to give up. The poem's fragmentary language amplifies my need to read it up and down the page, but instead it's locked to time even as I try to recognize the pieces in the form of the absent lover on the bed. It's so lonely—that feeling of being unable to make it last long enough to understand or remember. But I know that I was haunted at the beginning of the year. I could always feel the ghost of your touch. Remembered you next to me in bed, my arm under you, or your back close to mine. I remembered holding your waist, your flank, above your hip, one of my favourite places on your body. I remember thinking about these specifically and if I concentrate I think I can see a version of it.

AWB