

■ Catch all the nudes and news at Gallery 101

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From "The Silence of Being"

by Chari Marple

Downstairs the news is imbibed with coffee. Upstairs naked bodies writhe in pleasure and pain.

Gallery 101 hosts two Ottawa photographers: Chantal Gervais and Cheryl Pagurek. Each exhibit is a photographic installation, but they are quite different. The two shows work separately.

The boundaries of each show are clearly delineated. They are on separate floors of the gallery, and Gervais creates an additional threshold to her upstairs show by using a black curtain.

Downstairs, in Pagurek's installation, the implements of everyday living and images from the news collide. This occurs on various scales, from mural to toy-sized proportions.

The largest individual works are several large photos of home spaces (like a living room) with news images projected onto them.

Daily News by Cheryl Pagurek; The Silence of Being by Chantal Gervais

Until Saturday, Oct. 17
Gallery 101, 236 Nepean St.

Life-sized domestic items are constructed using television and newspaper photographs. For example, a coffee-maker has been created from a clenched-fisted Benjamin Netanyahu.

The other end of the spectrum finds tiny dollhouse-sized appliances such as Pagurek's washer and dryer, complete with a wee box of laundry

the aftermath of a bombing.

The artist illuminates images which enter our homes and minds at an almost subliminal level. These public and often nightmarish images contrast, yet become integrated with, the banal and private aspects of our lives.

Although Pagurek uses specific news images, she chooses not to label them. Instead of focusing on particular events, she wants to create a feeling of constant bombardment by journalism's transmissions.

This homogeneity is supported by the fact that images are enlarged to the point where raster lines and pixels are visible. Sometimes, as with her vacuum cleaner, images are so magnified that they become abstracted. Rather than a decipherable likeness, they are evocative of the event represented.

Pagurek's sculptures put no frames on the images, another way in which borders between the transmitted image and the domestic sphere are blurred. Chantal Gervais, whose work is on Gallery 101's upper level, similarly erases frames from her images.

Black backgrounds in Gervais' photographs of fragmented bodies match the black walls on which the photos are displayed. The combination of dark backgrounds, dark walls and low lighting make Gervais' picture frames disappear.

The resulting effect is that photographs resemble virtual reality. Bodies seem to float. Arms, legs or

are prominent.

As Gervais puts it, the inside of the body comes to the outside. Thus, a scientific approach is suggested. These bodies are at once dealt with as both sexual and clinical.

Again, past practices have influenced Gervais' work. The anatomy theatre — a fashion whereby people purchasing a ticket could witness the dissection of a human body — previously proved of interest to

artists like DaVinci concerned with human anatomy.

This clinical aspect is reinforced in Gervais' work through the anonymity of those photographed. There is nothing recognizable, even in images of faces. With some photos, even though subjects are nude, it is difficult to decipher gender. These are pictures of bodies, not of individuals.

The dark upstairs space suggests the privacy of a physician's

operation. (The warm, low-lit room is also a fitting atmosphere for sensual exploration.) Images presented suggest that the privacy and darkness may have to do with the mystery and respect given to death.

The ambiguity of Gervais' installation makes room for all these dissimilar possibilities. The exhibition raises questions, rather than presenting one point of view.

The individual components of Gervais' work are stronger in the context of the installation. Pagurek's separate pieces function independently. Both artists' very different visions can be seen at Gallery 101 until Saturday.

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