

BLINDMAN'S BUFF

SUSAN G. SCOTT

BLINDMAN'S BUFF

circulating to

STRIDE GALLERY
Calgary, Alberta
May, 1989

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Montréal, Québec
January, 1990

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Winnipeg, Manitoba
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MOUNT ST. VINCENT UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY
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May, 1990

Blindman's Buff was first exhibited at
Galerie Nikki Diana Marquardt,
Paris in May, 1988.

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B L I N D M A N ' S B U F F

June 3 - July 15, 1989

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Figure 1 BLINDMAN'S BUFF

OF THE GLANCE AND BLINDMAN'S BUFF

Lorne Falk

Painting of the glance addresses
vision in the durational temporality
of the viewing subject; it does not seek
to bracket out the process of viewing, nor
in its own techniques does it exclude the traces
of the body of labour. . . . To dissolve the
Gaze that returns the body to itself in
medusal form, we must willingly enter
into the partial blindness
of the Glance.¹

WHEN I LOOK at a painted image, which knows the body only as a picture, I search the relations between denotation and connotation and, as often as not, aggravate the daydream of univocal iconography: to treat the body as real. This slippery game of “naturalization” is still all too familiar and suggests that painting’s “assumptions are explored only rarely; its status has become that of a deposed order of image.”² If I take poststructuralism’s critique of sentimental humanism and evolutionary historicism to be valuable, I cannot appreciate painting through this historical discourse which has promoted ideas such as naturalism and the essential copy. Yet, while its discourse may be complacent and shopworn, evidently the practice of painting is not always. What happens to the illusory body if I shift my perspective? Even granting its deposition, how should I recognize painting?

Painting should be problematized in a manner that is pertinent to this moment in the twentieth century. “How should I recognize painting” might therefore be bound to another question that is in the air right now: “What comes after deconstruction?” One reservation about poststructuralist theory is that the “structural allegory . . . cannot adequately conceptualize either communication or community” and lists as evidence its tendency “to bracket away some questions of enduring importance,” its exclusion of “novel practical possibilities,” its entropic

rationalism, and its use of irony as the dominant trope for its deconstruction of romantic organicism.³ This reservation readily applies to painting, where these same features are fashionably evident and, contradictorily, affirmed in the humanist inflection. The discourse of painting has displayed indecision as it warms the structural allegory, as if it is reluctant to accept that painting is susceptible to the same shifting of paradigms that has unsettled theory. Bluntly, if the structural allegory has yet to come to terms with communication or community, neither has painting — a shortcoming where “How should I recognize painting?” and “What comes after deconstruction?” can be seen to intersect.

A theoretical proposition which addresses this deficiency, calls for the rediscovery of the artwork as a place for (a) substantive rationality that can be “articulated with principles of appropriateness that are context-sensitive and decentralized.”⁴ What is seen to be appropriate now is artwork that rearticulates individual autonomy and values it positively and that serves as an agency for consciousness, or the social imaginary, at the same time. (The feminist perception of the personal as political and Michel Foucault’s notion that communication with the self is not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice⁵, both spring to mind.) Such a painting would employ a reconstructive strategy that deciphers at the same time as it assembles the human (not the humanist) adventure. The ambition is to problematize cultural production and to offer a fresh perspective on symbolic life through “a nonlogocentric form that does not betray its aspirations by implying certitude and that can be read as a complex of romantic, comic, tragic and ironic modalities.”⁶

The reconstructive strategy is generous. It involves an interindividual territory with more than one observer: painting’s embodiment is the presence (visualization) of an artist and a viewer. Bodily actions, such as gesture and posture, can be read as points where the image intersects the social imaginary. Or as Norman Bryson has suggested, painting not only “directs (rather than determines) the flow of interpretation across its surface,” it also activates collective forms of discourse, “not as citation, but as mobilization (the painting causes the discourse to *move*). . . . Viewing is mobility both of the eye and of discourse in the disseminations of the glance.”⁷ Instead of returning the Gaze, I recognize painting as a sign, as painting of the glance.

This is how I recognize Susan Scott's work. I puzzle her paintings not as a traditional narrative fantasy, but as a mechanism for visualizing social and individual life. And what is already visible is that Scott and I belong to the generation which experienced the social mobility of the idea of "the death of painting." It is an experience which affected both of our practices. Whereas it seemed almost natural for me to turn away from painting in favour of more "timely" mediums, Scott had to deal with the apathy and possible dismissal of the medium she passionately practises. Consequently, we now both agonize: I look at her paintings and ask, "How should I recognize painting?" She reads this text and asks, "How should I recognize the discourse on painting?"

This social and individual turn of events concerning the status of painting has been visualized in Scott's work: painting is not dead, but a way of perceiving it may be. In one instance, Scott altered the painted image's surround by using the format of a polaroid photograph.⁸ In another, she tried to bend painting's narrative tradition by adding Kafka-inspired text to the canvas.⁹ Attracted to Kafka's mythical descriptions and his multiplication of points of view that emotionally embrace pain, vulnerability and uncertainty, this work reincarnated the idea of *ut pictura poesis*, with all of its attendant uncertainties. Occasionally, Scott employed a point of view that strongly resembles that of a surveillance camera. In each case, a hybrid look emerged that blended the traditional codes of painting with those from another medium. I read this mediation by cross-medium signifiers as an implicit desire to direct the flow of interpretation and discourse away from the serenity of painting towards a more agonistic sociability (i.e., communication and community). The painting of the glance began to emerge:

A woman is freeze-framed in the act of applying lipstick (Figure 2). She holds a compact mirror in one hand, before her, but she does not gaze at the image framed in it. Squeezed into the space of a Van Gogh yellow room, between a white bed and a red carpet that are flanked by twisted grids of shadows, her body is cropped at eye level and the breastline, in the plane of the viewer. Distracted by a door-shaped shadow in the corner of the room, her eyes glance back, over her shoulder, to say: "Why should a pretty girl like myself go with you?"¹⁰ A Poussin fragment of Aurora and Cephalus, which decorates the back of the mirror's case, interrupts the sightline of her statement, as if to



Figure 2 WHY SHOULD A PRETTY GIRL LIKE MYSELF GO WITH YOU?

intercept it. But instead, like a jealous lover, the myth stares out of the picture to snare the viewer's attention. The object of myth, the object of the mirror and a mental incident dissolving in a glance all compete for the viewer's recognition.

But going back to Norman Bryson's conception of painting of the glance, "Why should a pretty girl like myself . . ." goes only part way to making the myth of painting transparent again. By working *à la prima*, Scott tended to hide/exclude/erase the traces of her body of labour. While the durational temporality of the viewing subject was being considered, Scott's was not. As if she sensed the lack of her technique's signification, Scott opted for a glazing process for the "Blindman's Buff" paintings.

The glazing technique gives Scott and the viewer much more than aesthetical luminescence. By applying glazing colours over paint that is layered over a ground on which an initial drawing has been made, Scott releases and amplifies the process of (re)constructing what she wants to say and express. Technique is brought to life in that its traces are made transparent to the viewer. For Scott, it is a procedure of

heightened vulnerability and uncertainty and the Kafka-like text simultaneously disappears from the surface of her paintings — her own visual “text” can speak for itself. With glazing, Scott has begun to dispense with form as arrest and to conceive of it in dynamic terms: as matter in process, as the time-based rhythm of her own body of labour.

The body of labour is represented in two paintings from the *Blindman's Buff* series by the figures of women. In one, the figure is blindfolded and gropes through a muddy, mist-shrouded canvas. Reaching out to the corner of the picture plane, the palm of one hand reflects a light whose source is outside the canvas. The figure's head is bent, as if to better grasp the temporal reality that resonates from the viewer's presence. In the other painting (Plate 1), the figure looms out of a blue and white sky-like ground. The image is monumentalized by a familiar point of view (below) but the testimonial is made in its own ironic terms. Titled *The Blindfold*, the figure's eyes are covered by her own hands.

Both of these figures clearly deny (qualify) their vision and, in so doing, alert the other senses. The painted grounds of earth and sky serve notice on an historical vision that is both physical and spiritual. Whether the figures are willingly blindfolded or choose not to see are readings that radiate towards the senses embodied in the artist's technique and the viewer's response. The two gestures reconstruct respectively those historical ones found in Goya's *Blindman's Buff*, 1788, (Figure 1) and Masaccio's *The Expulsion from Paradise*, circa 1427 (Figure 3). These female figures introduce allegories that are in flight from the biased vision of the phallogentric Gaze.

With these paintings, Scott enters willingly into the partial blindness of the glance. Henceforth, there will be no gaze in viewing or in technique. Representation leaves the space of genre painting, and with rich semantic inference, begins to visualize a symbolic life on which all of the figures in *Blindman's Buff*, are built:

A man casually dressed in a white shirt and brown trousers restrains a woman in a red housecoat (Plate 3). They are set against a feathered, abstract ground that evokes an interior state of mind. The woman's head is tilted back and the man sticks two fingers into her open mouth to examine her throat. His other hand braces her neck so she can't pull away. The man's eyes are lost from view in their examination; out of

the corner of her eye, the woman stares away from this aggressive act. Her hands are not visible in the picture but the slope of her arms tells us they are joined. It is impossible to say whether they are clasped in anxiety or clenched in fear, nor do the neutral faces offer any clue. It is impossible to determine "The Examination" as either caring or threat.

A woman dressed in a hot orange dress is in firm control (Plate 2). She tries to straddle another woman whose lime green dress clashes: this second figure does not like the other's overtures at all, or likes them too much. She resists/swoons with closed eyes, head twisted away from contact, and arms that are entangled and contorted. Her legs end in oddly-pointed stubs that seem to sink into the park-like landscape on which she is pinned. Both figures are oblivious to a third figure sitting on a swing that seems to hang from the cloud-strewn sky. The swinging woman is dressed in shorts and what appears to be a white labcoat. Her head arches back to the sky and her tanned brown legs swoop up, away from the scene and out of picture. Between what is going on above and below, there is the hint of a stone ledge that angles off into a place of surreptitious witness. In *The Swing*, the viewer catches herself or himself glancing back and forth, back and forth at rococo double imagery. Meanwhile, the urban-pale prone figures continue to struggle/embrace.

Scott's work presents allegories of twentieth-century life. The situations we read seem familiar. The figures in them do not appear to be strangers to one another; they have a familial relationship of some kind. In their dress, actions and attitudes, they are clearly figures of this social epoch. Moreover, the idiosyncratic articulation of proportions and details, such as the woman's arms and legs in *The Swing*, serve to remind us that these figures are to be read as vehicles for notation rather than as "real" bodies.

The contemporaneity of these allegories ought to make them more accessible to us than, say, fifteenth-century generalizations about human conduct and religious experience. Michael Baxandall has shown the social language of Renaissance painting to be startling in its directness and intention¹¹, and one would think it could be so now. But this is not the case. The problem has something to do with the momentary evacuation in twentieth-century painting of figurative notation in relation to the body of labour. We are as outsiders to the coded meanings



Figure 3 THE EXPULSION FROM PARADISE

of the gestures that arise from our own bodies. Their implications seem alien, or at least denied. To this extent, Scott's paintings do not seem to enforce the history of painting. If it was the case that the allegory in Jacques-Louis David's *The Oath of the Horatii* (1784-85) caused fist fights amongst its viewers, what will the contemporary allegory evoke if once we fully recognize it?

As a move towards such recognition, Scott's figures are vulnerable and oddly celebratory. They are not involved in psychodramas, so much as they are struggling for/with human compassion. The figures attempt

to represent this compassion, previously laden with humanist principles, differently. As viewers, this difference is a fine line, the only measure of which may be how we react or feel differently about what we see. I think what begins to resonate are twentieth-century emotions and thoughts, qualified by the innocence of the figures about what they are doing.

A family of five figures are in the woods (Plate 14). They form a receding diagonal of bodies through the natural landscape. In the foreground, a man stares resolutely out the side of the picture but the intensity of his eyes betray his awareness of what is going on in it. He lightly holds the shoulder of a small boy, nursing him to look away too. The boy tentatively hugs a tree and complies. Ignoring this pair who are trying to ignore everything, a teenaged girl peers from behind a tree into the deep space of the scene. She is witness to the relationship of two women. One twists her head to see the other, as her torso stoops defensively. The second woman seems to have appeared suddenly, like an angry animist of the trees around her. Arm raised over her head, she holds a stick. She is intent on striking the submissive figure. A family of figures are playing a rather strange game of *Hide and Seek*. They are lost in the woods.

Using double-edged notation as a main organizing principle, Scott's paintings supply me with fictions that enable a satisfactory transition between theory and experience. They embody, for the painter and the viewer, a rising expectation that turns metaphysical fantasies into material realities. In this turning point lies the potential to express that which is romantic, tragic and comic, as well as ironic. Considering the cynicism with which these qualifications have been lately viewed, I find this potential particularly provocative, if yet to be fully declared. Moreover, the argument against resistance to this potential is that, without (a) visual poetics and a narrative embrace of the social imaginary, painting (and the structural allegory) remain disgracefully constipated by "an ethos, an ethnos, and a pathos of disenchantment."¹²

In this regard, Scott has also been making tiny paintings (Plates 9 to 12) that she uses to explore her notational system and it is worth noting that she has begun to include clusters of these studies in her exhibitions. During one of my visits to her studio, we talked about them. She told me they were studies of hand gestures rendered by the



Figure 4 SO YOU DON'T THINK THIS HAPPENS TO OTHER PEOPLE?

old masters. I asked her if she was studying other hands and she replied that, yes, she was considering a series about the hands of her newborn daughter. There is a difference here that strikes me as significant. The comparative study of old masters' renditions is a subject that is by and large accessible only to painters — to privileged insiders — while representations of her daughter's hands may relay evocations without prior justification. Perhaps the latter notation would speak more directly to viewers of what they know from their own immediate experience.

The traces of the body of labour would certainly visualize Scott's experience as a painter and a social being.

The painting of the glance is a process that never stops being an agony. The metaphysics of the glance aspires beyond the narcotic power of naturalization that was mythologized in the obsolete notion of High Art. The artist and viewer's recognition of painting remains a process of denaturalization, a game of perpetual positioning, or a Blindman's Buff.

FOOTNOTES

1. Bryson, Norman, *Vision and Painting - The Logic of the Gaze*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 94 & 131
2. *Ibid.*, p. 87
3. John Fekete refers to the successive waves of French theory, from Levi-Strauss to Michel Foucault and on, as the structural allegory.
Fekete, John, *The Structural Allegory - Reconstructive Encounters with the New French Thought*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. xiv - xv
4. *Ibid.*, p. xviii
5. ". . . L'intensité des rapports à soi, c'est-à-dire des formes dans lesquelles on est appelé à se prendre soi-même pour objet de connaissance et domaine d'action, . . . constitue, non pas un exercice de la solitude, mais une véritable pratique sociale."
Foucault, Michel, *Histoire de la Sexualité 3*, "Le Souci de Soi", NRF, 1984
6. Fekete, John, *Op. Cit.*, p. xxiv
7. Bryson, Norman, *Op. Cit.*, p. 170
8. The polaroid format was used in several series, including "A Kafka Parable" (1986), which was exhibited at Galerie Michel Tétéreault Art Contemporain, Montréal.
9. Text was part of the painting in the series, "Description of a Struggle" (1983-84). (See *biography* for catalogue reference)
10. "Why should a pretty girl like myself go with you?", 1986 (oil on canvas, 146 x 181.6 cm)
11. Baxandall, Michael, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Painting*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972)
12. Fekete, John, *Op. Cit.*, p. xx

Lorne Falk is an independent curator and critic who has lived in Montreal and is now head of the Art Studio at the Banff Centre.

PLATES



Plate 1 THE BLINDFOLD



Plate 2 THE SWING



Plate 3 THE EXAMINATION



Plate 5 STUDY FOR BLINDMAN'S BUFF



Plate 6 STUDY FOR BLINDMAN'S BUFF



Plate 4 THE COUCH



Plate 7 STUDY FOR BLINDMAN'S BUFF



Plate 8 STUDY FOR BLINDMAN'S BUFF

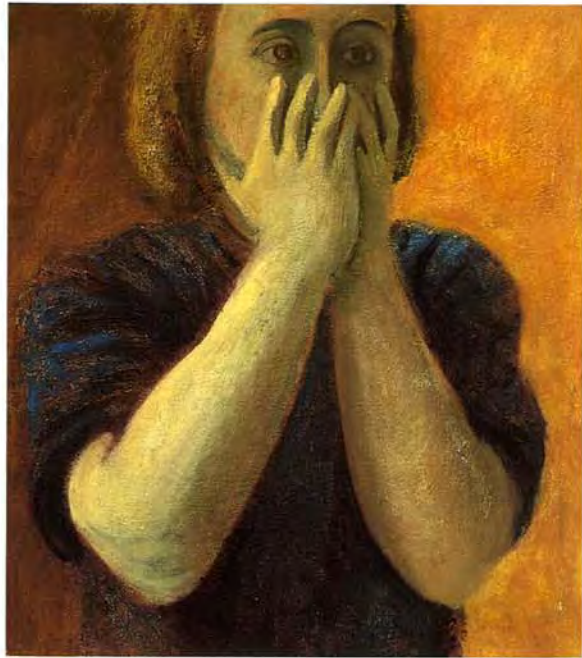


Plate 9 STUDY



Plate 10 STUDY



Plate 11 Study



Plate 12 Study



Plate 13 TWO FIGHTERS



Plate 14 HIDE AND SEEK



Plate 15 BLINDMAN'S BUFF #1

Dans le «Jeu de
 Collin-Maillard», si joliment
 rythmé, nous découvrons la
 transposition ludique d'un supplice,
 et la femme agenouillée, qui s'incline
 en arrière pour n'être pas touchée, paraît
 fuir sa propre identité. Autre supplice
 simulé, celui que subit le «Mannequin» : tandis
 que les jeunes filles rieuses — fraîches sorcières
 — forment de leurs bras l'image d'une
 guirlande, le pantin oblique, projeté
 dans la hauteur, offre l'aspect du désespoir.
 La torsion, la gaucherie, l'inertie
 douloureuse du personnage
 factice nous révèlent la vie étrange
 de la matière - son comique
 et sa puissance d'effroi.

JEAN STAROBINSKI,
 1789 *Les Emblèmes de la raison*

Du 17 mai au 11 juin dernier, Susan Scott exposait une série d'oeuvres récentes sous le titre de *Blindman's Buff* (colin-maillard), à la Galerie Nikki Diana Marquardt à Paris (9, Place des Vosges). Neuf grands formats occupaient les murs accompagnés de vingt-cinq petits formats regroupés en trois ensembles, tous des huiles sur toile, exécutées en 1988.

Supposons que la série prenne prétexte d'une toile de Goya, *Le Colin-Maillard* (1788), ou encore de plusieurs oeuvres de Goya, les plus sombres comme les plus lumineuses, avec leurs accents ténébreux, terreux, ou encore éclatants dans une palette illuminée. Supposons encore que le prétexte se développe selon la thématique du «jeu», jeu d'enfants, d'adultes, jeu de société, jeu théâtral, jeu de scènes intimes, voilées, dévoilées. On y décèle de prime abord une suspension des regards, des gestes, une certaine fixité. Mais le jeu serait aussi fait d'assauts, d'empoignes, de coups, d'étreintes, de combats, de «désastres», jeu de la guerre. Supposons aussi qu'il s'agisse de récit, de narration, d'«histoire» plus que d'«Histoire», mais que tout à coup, on y perde le fil, la séquence, celle-ci comme suspendue en un ralentissement, un étirement du temps, allongée dans cette fixation indéfinie du mouvement des acteurs de chacune de ces petites «histoires». Apparaît alors surtout le fait de leur fragmentation, leur interruption, leur coupure. La série se lit ainsi plus par allusion que par «illusion». Les fragments,

découpés par des cadrages «gros plans» isolant le motif ou la scène, s'en trouvent tout à coup intensifiés, coupés qu'ils sont de tout «accessoire», de toute référentialisation, de tout décor. Dans les quelques tableaux où un lieu/décor est suggéré, il ne l'est que de façon minimale, et s'embrouille par endroits par le traitement de la touche, de facture abstraite, pour laquelle Scott a une prédilection. Enfin, supposons que les récits, drames ou histoires s'oublient..., se déversent littéralement, latéralement dans la peinture, dans le pictural, les clairs-obscur, les jeux de luminosité ou le travail de la touche, du trait, de la tache, et qu'on y lise là aussi, là avant tout, la douceur ou la violence, le cinglant ou le voluptueux, le tranchant, la dureté ou le rire..., le «jouir» ou le «pâtir». La facture picturale prend ainsi une importance susceptible de déterminer des topiques psychologiques et des facteurs d'ambiance : tourmente, calme, idylle ou drame.

C'est d'abord, en effet, dans le matériau, la manière, le coup de pinceau, les couleurs en teintes mordorées (les rosâtres, les verdâtres) ou stridentes (rouge vif) que cette série nous touche. L'opposition des formats (dimensions de murale ou d'ardoise) serait déroutante, s'il n'y avait chez les uns le côté léché, chez les autres le côté étude/esquisse, justifiant leur place les uns par rapport aux autres, sans nécessairement insinuer un rapport hiérarchique.

Nul doute que l'oeuvre de Scott manifeste des qualités plastiques et une maîtrise remarquable derrière lesquelles on devine une discipline éprouvée. Mais ce qui nous séduit et nous retient, au-delà de cet accomplissement formel, c'est la densité et la profondeur du propos. Sans verser dans un néo-historicisme à caractère mythique et mythifiant (pensons à une certaine transavant-garde), l'oeuvre de Scott subtilement et subrepticement cultive, dans cette série, une mémoire picturale. Et au-delà de toute attente, c'est ici que prend sens l'importance des «histoires» a contrario de l'«Histoire», que se constate l'effet cumulatif de la culture et de l'art, préoccupé ici de réactualisation, de remémoration, de la recherche d'une trame signifiante, d'une resémantisation de la peinture à propos de la peinture. C'est ainsi que les petits formats de Scott portent des scènes étranges, autant de variations sur le thème du «jeu» dont l'innocence supposée se renverse bientôt en frayeur, en menace, par le recours à tout un travail d'irréalisation ou de déréalisation, et qui produit surtout des effets dramatiques, altérés (adoucis) ça et là par l'alternance, l'insertion dans la série d'un tableau plus «neutre», plus indécis. Et si le titre de l'exposition «colin-maillard», suggérait un propos idyllique, il n'en demeure pas moins que la majorité des oeuvres présentées versaient dans des scènes de lutte, de combat, de violence. Ainsi, on ne s'étonne plus

de voir apparaître tout à coup dans l'un et l'autre tableau, ce qui semble être l'ange de Tobie, telle scène de flagellation, meurtre, combat physique, corps poignardé, femmes en pleurs, cris ..., guerrière à l'assaut. Un regroupement montre des femmes, en buste, figures isolées en gros plan sur des fonds neutres, où seules importent la gestualité, la mimique déterminant les émotions du personnage. Quoique là encore, la signification du geste se situe dans un «entre-deux», entre rire et pleurs, entre le désir de voir et celui de se cacher les yeux. Une *Ève chassée du Paradis* donne le ton. Ce tableau, sans doute à l'origine de plusieurs autres illustrant le même «motif» et exposés avec lui, constitue un véritable hommage de Scott à Masaccio.

D'autre part, tout un ensemble d'attitudes corporelles, d'inscriptions somatiques, une gestualité théâtrale, nous rappellent comment la scène picturale a toujours entretenu des rapports étroits avec la scène théâtrale. Cette série s'illumine aussi tout-à-coup de son partage avec la Peinture, dans ce qu'elle a été pendant des siècles : mythologie gréco-latine, épisodes religieux et bibliques. Le schématisme des tableaux, le goût de l'esquisse et du spontané accentuent la dimension synthétique des scènes. Au fond, s'y rejoignent, de façon inattendue, l'essence du drame judéo-chrétien, de la tragédie grecque et de la critique des mœurs (pensons surtout au XVIII^e siècle), dans leur représentation historique. Et c'est précisément dans l'espace de cet «entre-deux», entre le jeu (son plaisir) et l'agression (son déplaisir) que se construit la plénitude du sens, et son débordement. Se manifeste ainsi la duplicité de toute passion, de tout sentiment, de toute action. Aussi, la répétition des modèles, la résurgence des archétypes, même si, il va de soi, le contexte, la motivation, sont radicalement «autres».

Mais encore, qu'est-ce à voir ? Une femme masquée (vénitienne ?) tire un rideau sur une scène de duel. Une fillette lancée sur une balançoire dans les airs. Une femme ici, une fillette là, cachant son visage dans les mains. Deux femmes, étalées sur le plancher d'une chambre, s'empoignent. Un jeu de cache-cache dans la forêt se joue à cinq personnages adultes/enfants. Une fillette épie derrière une cloison une grande flagellée par un petit monté sur ses épaules... Un ensemble de situations, de descriptions sont évoquées ici, cependant que l'art de Scott ne se préoccupe ni de décrire, ni de raconter à proprement parler. Plutôt saisir des moments d'intensité émotive, corroborée par l'effet démultiplié des grands formats et du traitement chromatique. Le souci de la forme, de la picturalité, ne pourrait aller en effet, chez Scott, sans cette qualité, cette capacité de la peinture de toucher, d'émouvoir. Nous voilà bien dans un au-delà du modernisme, dans un en-deça. Caché devant, caché derrière..., le peintre élabore une problématique de la cloison. Une

topique des lieux essentiellement régie par l'économie du montrer et du cacher, de se montrer ou se cacher. De là, la mise en évidence de tout obstacle physique, topique, spatial : la cloison, le rideau, le tronc d'arbre, le corps... dans le corps-à-corps. Mais ailleurs, voilà que le lieu devient évanescant, s'estompe, s'annihile dans les fonds délavés, ombrageux, brouillés, indéfinis, ou encore traités en monochromie (rouge, bleu, ...) comme une surface abstraite. C'est alors que la préoccupation du lieu investit, cette fois, l'image même du corps de la figure humaine, ce corps devenu le seul et unique lieu d'une visibilité possible de la jouissance ou de la frayeur.

Par la mise en scène d'une gestualité et d'une actoralité, l'oeuvre se transmet d'une scénographie du «jeu» (du «pas pour vrai») en une scénographie du «meurtre» ou de l'«agression» (du «pour vrai»). Il est d'ailleurs remarquable de constater qu'un même motif, transposé d'un petit format en un grand format, a pour effet de créer un espace d'ambiguïté, de déréalisation (interrompant la trame narrative). Ainsi en est-il de la transposition, par exemple, de la figure de la jeune fille aux yeux bandés dans le tableau qui porte le titre *Blindman's Buff* (70 X 77 po.). Par ses dimensions mêmes, le tableau crée une distorsion, par rapport à la chaîne d'un récit (pré-supposé), celui du jeu de colin-maillard. Il s'ensuit une sorte de distorsion du récit où l'action est suspendue au profit de la perception d'un espacement mental, visible dans la suspension même du geste arrêté, en train de réfléchir sur son propre accomplissement. Cette suspension dans l'espace-temps de la représentation crée un abîme du sens, une sorte de vertige, d'indécidabilité D moment privilégié d'une conscience de soi, d'un certain état duratif de la sensation d'être, où le corps entier est fragilisé, vulnérabilisé, et dont l'amplitude vibre à la moindre menace d'agression. Le sujet éprouve sa propre existence dans cette stase du mouvement, toute sensation corporelle étant amplifiée par l'effet même du bandeau qui rend aveugle. Cette figure, véritable archétype de la condition humaine, rejoint dans son propos des oeuvres telles *Melencolia I* de Dürer, *La parabole des aveugles* de Breughel, ou la gravure de Goya de la série des Caprices, *Le sommeil de la raison engendre des monstres*. Le tableau *The Examination* (l'examen chez le dentiste) relèverait davantage quant à lui de la satire sociale. On pourrait y déceler encore une modélisation du rapport victime-bourreau, qui se joue ici surtout par contrainte somatique. Combien étonnant il est de constater la réversion opérée par les oeuvres de Scott dans cette série Drenversement du jeu et de l'innocence dans la représentation somatique de la mort, de la cruauté. Comme un effet de «double», comme les revers du «jeu-jouir» inévitablement doublé (doublure) de «mort-frayeur».

À supposer maintenant que ce soit l'artiste qui peigne les yeux bandés. Et qu'elle tente de toucher Goya ou encore Masaccio, ou encore Balthus, ou encore... Mais avec quelle distorsion, quel rictus, quels «coup» de pinceau et balafres de couleur. À supposer que ce soit l'artiste qui mette les paumes des mains sur les yeux, pour mieux susciter le regard intérieur, me faire voir de quoi est faite la subjectivité de cet «écran». Et voilà que réapparaît à travers ce prisme, cette vision, cette manière, personnelle, subjective, inédite, les images réactualisées, revivifiées, d'une mémoire culturelle, sociale, historique. Cette mémoire n'est ainsi jamais extérieure aux oeuvres. Elle est faite de leur inscription, elle se consolide dans leur substance même, et se perpétue par leur récurrence.

FRANÇOISE LEGRIS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

F. GOYA

Blindman's Buff, 1791 (Figure 1)

oil on canvas

2.69 x 3.50 m

Collection of the Prado Museum, Madrid

SUSAN G. SCOTT

Why should a pretty girl like myself go with you?, 1986 (Figure 2)

oil on canvas

146 x 181.6 cm

MASACCIO

The Expulsion from Paradise, (Figure 3)

Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence

SUSAN G. SCOTT

So you don't think this happens to other people?, 1985 (Figure 4)

charcoal on paper

117 x 102 cm

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

The Blindfold, 1988 (Plate 1)

egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas

137 x 173 cm

The Swing, 1988 (Plate 2)

egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas

195 x 157 cm

The Examination, 1988 (Plate 3)

egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas

173 x 157 cm

The Couch, 1988 (Plate 4)

egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas

136 x 156 cm

Study for Blindman's Buff, 1988 (Plate 5)

gouache on paper

76.2 x 55.9 cm

Study for Blindman's Buff, 1988 (Plate 6)
gouache on paper
55.9 x 76.2 cm

Study for Blindman's Buff, 1988 (Plate 7)
gouache on paper
55.9 x 76.2 cm

Study for Blindman's Buff, 1988 (Plate 8)
gouache on paper
55.9 x 76.2 cm

Study, 1989 (Plate 9)
egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas
40.5 x 35.6 cm

Study, 1989 (Plate 10)
egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas
40.5 x 35.6 cm

Study, 1989 (Plate 11)
egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas
40.5 x 35.6 cm

Study, 1989 (Plate 12)
egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas
51 x 40.5 cm

Two Fighters, 1988 (Plate 13)
egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas
152 x 178 cm

Hide and Seek, 1988 (Plate 14)
egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas
163 x 213 cm

The Mask, 1988
egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas
147 x 193 cm

The Spear, 1988
egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas
173 x 137 cm

Study, 1989
egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas
40.5 x 35.6 cm

Blindman's Buff #1, 1988 (Plate 15)
egg/oil emulsion and oil paint on canvas
178 x 196 cm

SUSAN G. SCOTT

BIOGRAPHY

- 1949 born, Montreal
1966 attended Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York
1969-71 Boston Museum School, Boston, Massachusetts
1971-72 New York School of Painting and Sculpture
1972 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine (scholarship)
1972-78 lived and worked in New York City
1981 returned to Canada to teach in Vancouver, B.C.
1989 lives and works in Montreal

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1988 Galerie Nikki Marquardt, Paris, France
1987 Krygier-Landau Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California
1985, 87 Michel Tétreault Art Contemporain, Montreal, Quebec
1984-85 *Susan Scott: Works from 1974 to 1983*
Surrey Art Gallery, Vancouver, B.C., travelling to:
- Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, Ontario
- Hart House Gallery, Toronto, Ontario
- Saidye Bronfman Centre, Montreal, Quebec
- Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia
1982 Bernard Jacobson Gallery, Los Angeles, California
1981 Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, Alberta
1979 Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, Ontario
1978-80 Galerie Libre, Montreal, Quebec
1976 Deitcher O'Reilly Gallery, New York, New York

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1989 49th Parallel, Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art, New York, New York
1988 National Arts Centre, Ottawa, Ontario
1986, 87 FIAC International Art Fair, Paris, France
1986, 87 Van Straeten Gallery, Chicago, Illinois
1985 E(X) changes Show, Grünwald Gallery, Toronto, Ontario
1981 Vanderwoude Tanabaum Gallery, New York, New York
1979 Pauline McGibbon Cultural Centre, Toronto, Ontario
1978-79 Salander O'Reilly Gallery, New York, New York
1975-77 Ward Nasse Gallery, New York, New York

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria
The Canada Council Art Bank
Exxon Corporation
Gaz Métropolitain
Lavalin Collection
Loto Québec
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
Provigo Collection
Robert McLaughlin Gallery
Steinberg Collection

Susan G. Scott's work is represented in private collections in Canada, the United States and Europe.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ON BEHALF OF the Southern Alberta Art Gallery I would like to express our appreciation to those who contributed to the realization of this exhibition. In Montreal the artist, Susan Scott, offered assistance and advice throughout the formative stages of the project and was most helpful in assisting with circulation arrangements as well as attending to details concerning publication.

We are grateful to Lorne Falk, whose essay offers an enlightening point of view regarding the artist and her work. He receives our gratitude for investing this essential task with skill and understanding. Michel Tétreault, who represents Susan Scott's work and provided support during all phases of this undertaking, deserves recognition for his collaboration. In Vancouver David Clausen provided his expertise in the design and production of this publication and once again, we thank him.

This exhibition and publication would not have been possible without financial assistance from The Canada Council.

JOAN STEBBINS
Director/Curator

THE ARTIST WISHES to acknowledge the support of The Canada Council and the Ministère des Affaires Culturelles and thanks *ETC Montréal* for permission to reprint the article "Susan Scott: Peindre . . . les yeux bandés" by Françoise LeGris from no. 5, Fall 1988 and Robin Mader for her support and advice with this project.

Reproduction of *Blindman's Buff* by Goya courtesy of the Museo del Prado.

Susan G. Scott is represented by Michel Tétreault Art Contemporain, Montréal and Galerie Nikki Marquardt, Paris.

The Southern Alberta Art Gallery and the artist gratefully acknowledge the following for their contribution towards the publication of the exhibition catalogue:

M. Maurice A. Forget
Mr. and Mrs. Jack and Brenda Lazare
Ms. Nikki D. Marquardt
Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Robertson
M. Jean-Michel Sivry

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Typesetting Dan Kennedy
Photography Pierre Desjardins
Colour Separations Total Graphics
Printing Hemlock Printers