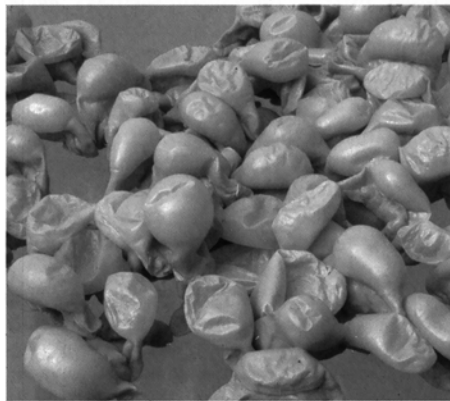


MONTREAL

Best known for her *breathing wall* (*Le mur qui respire*) exhibited at C.I.A.C.'s "Biennale d'art Contemporain" in Montreal back in 1998, literally a "soft" latex air-inflated wall that played on the illusion of hard and soft surfaces, in which a solid, purportedly structural form actually became mutable, **KARILEE FUGLEM** continues her phenomenological exploration of environmental space and bodily sensation with her latest installation, "Evidence" (*Plein Sud, May 30—June 25*). Conceived as a suite of four complementary elements, this show again evidences Fuglem's fascination with things that are physical but that we cannot see, yet that change our perception of things. In reaffirming the physical, tangible reality of these body parts, and by not delineating or defining the body in functional terms, Fuglem presents an entire world we are not aware of, but that is continuously going on under the surface.



Karilee Fuglem, *Bubblicious (detail)*, 2000, bubblegum, glass, steel, 40" x 26" x 20" (photo courtesy of Plein Sud).

In *Luminous* (2000), for instance, a series of five tight little colour photographs, we see close-ups of pinkish organic shapes and forms, fragments of the human body, but are never sure what body parts they represent. These facets of a living being in which light plays a major role, present what lies beneath the skin deep surface of our body, namely the rivers of blood inside us that create the hue.

Bubblicious (2000) consists of an agglomeration of pink, organic looking shapes of inflated bubble gum with the air still trapped

in them. The piece is presented in a museological-styled glass casing. These encapsulated "breath of life" pieces are beautifully complemented by an austere and mysterious video piece titled *Words* in which they take on a life of their own (2000). Presented as it is on a flat screen, the effect is of ever-changing clouds that appear from the left and right of the video screen. The sense of evanescence, of something intangible, is heightened by the fact that we do not know the source(s) of this. We come to realize that the air emanates from within the bodies of two people (who we cannot see) talking on a cold wintry day.

The most noticeable piece in this suite of four elements, *Fresh* (2000), has long thin inflatable tubes of white nylon. They bring air from the exterior of the building in which these works are being exhibited, along the ceiling and into the exhibition space. At the end of the "pipeline"—inside the gallery—the tubes multiply like a series of elegant branches, to become larger-than-life living extensions of some greater unknown body. For all its organic-looking effect, Fuglem's *Fresh* looks like a mutated sci-fi organism. The tube-like forms have tiny mouth-like openings at their extremities that expel fresh air into the gallery space. Here, Fuglem plays with words as much as physical phenomena, for in French the word "air vent" is "bouches d'aération," literally aeration mouths. This play on words alludes to the close etymological liaison that has been drawn between the act of breathing in our bodies and mechanical air displacement devices (air vents).

"Evidence" is interesting for the way it does not seek to circumscribe its subject, physical bodily effects that are largely unseen, without resorting to a discourse on structural meaning. Fuglem leaves it all open, bringing a breath of fresh air into an otherwise staid exhibition space, and this is her intention. Evidence ultimately raises metaphysical questions about the nature of appearance and reality, elements we do not see that are always working within our bodies and around us—light as air—physical actions and reactions that transform things beneath the surface—invisibly.

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