A line of light
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The light of speculative designs. So many mirrors of montreality converging in Milan. Expressions of a meridian city that is neither here nor there. Where invention requires it, and feeling follows, it manifests at the meeting point of elsewhere and elsewhen.

An aloof and haughty throne of wood and silk, regally refusing all haunches... Diaphanous glass utensils shimmering off the loose plates of an unknown encyclopaedia... The handmade, enamelled prayer of the black totems, their blind man's gazes levelled past us... A slab of marble levitating in a glass enclosure, it is a fold of light, a mute hollow... A chair like a threaded world-line, its perfectly knotted umbilicus revealing the local equilibrium of mind and matter, beckoning us into the ur-space of perception... Diminutive cabinets carved in white maple and limestone, their surfaces smooth, their hearts void, offering themselves to all secret tchotchkes, misplaced mementos... Ritual objects, miniature monuments of an untraceable civilization, marooned from a concrete- sunk era, drained from the suppleness of time... Plastic turned back to dust, cast into a black monolith, a matrix for the metamorphosis of common objects... A partition in aluminium and negative space, a manifold where light folds and ripples, exposing the shifting contours of a fixed idea...

Tricks of the light, reminders of the pulsing and shifting nature of time. These mirrors of montreality, gathered in Milan, are expressions of a meridian city that is neither here nor there. Where invention requires it, and feeling follows, it manifests at the meeting point of elsewhere and elsewhen.

Faced with the evident disparity of the objects gathered here, the question arises whether they are really alike, and if so, how. Beyond any notion of use — a chair is a chair, a wall a wall, a spoon a spoon, and yet et *pur*... — they glow with a curious family resemblance that has everything to do with their *montreality*.

Those familiar with Montréal can intuit the accuracy of this neologism. Walking through its patchwork streets, one is witness to a general stylistic disorder: grafted to the multiplexes inherited from a working- class century are box-like condos, while, here and there, an "architect's house" and the occasional subsidized housing further unravel the weft. The program is a blur, forever jittery, always approximate. An aesthetics of who-knows-best rules, showing off its collection of near misses, of incompatibilities. And yet — *et pur* — a palpable energy radiates through the whole.

I suggest venturing underground, through the masterpiece of architectural syncretism that is the metro, to tap into the living core of montreality. Down there, each station suggests egress into a possible world, as the vanished pavilions of Expo 67 once did. In the right frame of mind, the metro can feel like a cathedral dedicated to our misplaced futures. It awakens us to a perception of Montréal as a city of lived science fiction. To hell with the bland logic of engineers and administrators! When I think of the underground city, I start imagining an opalescent line whose electric, luminous trajectory shines and throbs underneath the surface tissue. A meandering, dithering meridian, igniting the nodes of a fugitive constellation. Let's admit it, we specialize, in this uncertain province, in the amplification of unfinished dreams. *Beautiful losers*, aren't we? Our defeats, as the words of our recently departed balladeer touchingly remind us, are *magnifiques*. We live by their lights: in the radiance of montreality, a loss of coherence is a gain in invention, and, while it's hard to pinpoint how the spirit of the city keeps its spark alive, its frequency is everywhere. Despite the slapdash overall impression, a cohesive character shines through. It expresses itself through admixtures, a welcoming of styles and shapes.

What is true at the scale of the city also applies at the individual level. What this exhibition shows are the figments of a troupe of inventors, who, for the most part, have launched a new chapter of their career in the city. Either because they set up shop here, or because they found a venue for the work that made them known. Their work is profoundly speculative in nature. Each of them is attached, in some way, to furthering the fiction of montreality. The use of the term "fiction" (I cannot avoid my writerly leanings) is far from innocent: it is rife with a rich material etymology. Its Latin root, *fingere*, underlines the dextrousness of the pretence. Fiction is an act of making unlike any other, an ontological double entendre. To create fiction is to *make something up*. And though that made-up thing cannot be reduced to the simple realm of facts, it is. Fiction, in other words, is an artifice that makes up facts. It makes *artefacts*.

In my view, each of the exhibits gathered here testifies to this paradoxical knotting. Each stems from an exploration of materials. Their *factuality* owes as much to the paradigms of style as to the proprieties of a specific substrate. The local material unconscious has, evidently, exerted a strong pressure on the makers's gestures and has filtered through the final works. Patio furniture plastics, that North American exotic variety of wood, white maple, limestone, sandstone, and marble dug up from the Laurentian subsoil, moonlight with their modern counterparts, Alcan aluminium, Olympic Park concrete, glass from the allowed heights of Place Ville-Marie... Better take matter — as well as fiction — at its word, and remember that it also embodies a fundamental double meaning, designating in one go what offers itself to the knowledge of the senses, and what nourishes thought: the feeling subject and his or her subjects of study. In addition to being loyal to local materiality, all of these works express momentum towards other places, other times. In the run-up to this text, as I was visiting the makers' in their studios, they mentioned inspirations as varied as the plates of Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, the fluid cast-in-concrete architecture of the Brion cemetery, a doctrine of thresholds inspired by *Stalker's* ("Сталкер") zone, or the resemblance between Montréal's Olympic Park and De Chirico's piazzas... These references in no way reduce the question: I had the feeling, as I considered the diversity at work here, that the worlds these artefacts suggest in fact existed in Montréal *and* elsewhere all at once. And that this superposition of states did not necessarily correspond with the points of origin of their wide-ranging borrowings, but rather opened up vistas to a parallel realm, where the wolrdlines of montreality find their various vanishing points.

I would like my words to convince you that Montréal is a natural point of departure to contemplate the matters of the world. We, the moderns, indeed make our way through a reality of lived technological fictions. The manufacturing of everyday objects proceeds from enigmatic industrial processes, wholly foreign to most of us; a world remade far from our image, where on a daily basis we are confronted with the creative inertia of mass manufacturers... I have faith in the singular maneuvers of this assembly of makers and their intuitive fidelity to the mixed emotions triggered by montreality. They are as disconcerted as they are stimulated by the matters of History and the international edicts of Style. Their fabrications are acts of imaginative sovereignty. Beyond any apparent kinship, there is a perceptible energy animating these objects' diversity. A chair is a chair, a wall a wall, a spoon a spoon, and yet *et pur*... In the uncertain light of montreality, a quanta of emotion gleams. It expresses the essence that generates the object, and in turn it radiates from the object. Fiction is a fabrication of light that words will not exhaust.