

***Roman Feuilleton*** is a fictitious campaign designed to promote a literary series (actual) based on four seminal works of québécois literature: Anne Hébert's *Kamouraska*, Michel Tremblay's *La grosse femme d'à côté est enceinte*, Réjean Ducharme's *L'avalée des avalés*, and *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*, by Marie-Claire Blais.

The text of *Roman Feuilleton* is composed from sentences culled from all four books, sorted in alphabetical order, then recombined into 24 artists books, one for each letter of the alphabet (xyz being one). Surrealist, but not random, the narratives act as very short stories, or vignettes, wherein the characters from the four authors interact in stories that transcend times, styles, and destinies.

The set of artist books (printed text, machine-stitched onto hand-made paper, lavishly bound in upholstery fabrics) serves as the basis for the whole installation, which features an array of fake but recognisable commercial strategies to promote the sale of the series. Examples include a "Popular Edition", commercially printed text with fewer images and a plain cardboard cover (these are also hand-made one-offs, posing as a cheap trade object), collector pins, a card game, t-shirts, and a photo-novel based on actual images from popular Italian *fotoromanzi* from the 60s and 70s. The installation also features an old fashioned radio play, discretely played in three posts throughout the gallery.

This multi-layered and complex exhibition addresses many issues, chief amongst which is the forming of a French Canadian identity through a budding culture that was striving to affirm itself not only in the face of the English, but mainly that of the mother land; France. There are also evident allusions to the long-heralded disappearance of the printed matter, and the death of books as objects, as well as a reversal of situation in the token place given to the English translation (only the photo-novel is presented in English.)

But, despite its very serious underlying considerations, the installation is first and foremost constructed as a game of cross-references, and a tongue in cheek critique of extreme consumerism as it applies to culture. The viewer is made to feel included in the joke, all the while being tricked into actually taking in some of the text through a series of gimmicks such as fake posters bearing images and quotes from the series, and a series of decorative alphabet prints.

While the writing of the books and the search for illustrations occupied all of the previous year, this past year has been completely devoted to finding strategies that would counter the inevitable objection; "But I don't come to an art gallery to read books!". The photo novel scheme, for instance, was borrowed from doctors' and dentists' waiting rooms, in which the public is offered the distraction of a magazine to keep them occupied. The magazines in the installation (2 series of 24 in French and the equivalent in English) are placed on a magazine rack, and offer the added advantage of permitting the viewer to actually "handle" the art work. While they do contain the full texts, they also present the possibility of skimming through the photos and captions, as well as a rich collection of vintage ads, completely different in the French and English versions. This is definitely the lighter version of *Roman Feuilleton*, and a solid argument in my ongoing study of the relationship between text and image; the texts presented are exactly the same in both cases, the dramatic difference lying only in the choice of image and format. The word-image issue is further explored in a picture book version which contains all the images from the original series, as well as a series of "production stills" from the photo novels, and a display case containing the source material for an academic study on "the pairing of words and illustrations in various versions of *Roman Feuilleton*".

It might be interesting to note that my interest in the subject of this installation transpires in the very writing of this proposal (in English, no less) ,as I will admit that I am now at the point when I start to question its descriptive efficiency, in the absence of images.

By submitting this work outside of a French-specific context, I am deliberately seeking to shake up the tired dialogue on the two solitudes, by exposing unsuspected areas of shared concerns in the general realm of culture.