List of Works

Puis-je fumer/ Duchamp
May I Smoke

Christos Dikeakos
MAY I SMOKE?
**Patisserie Duchamp; May I Smoke /Puis–je fumer**

**An overview: Ihor Holubizky**

*Patisserie Duchamp; May I smoke/Puis-je fumer* is an installation by artist Christos Dikeakos. The subject matter is smoking, combining original works of art created by Dikeakos and in collaboration with others – drawing, photography, and sculpture – with cultural artefacts and documents. The objective is neither to celebrate nor demonize, but to examine the broad social implications of a “habit” that has become a topic of foreboding and the forbidden. At the same time it would be myopic to pretend to erase smoking from history. The presentation follows a museological model, a visual text and planned accompanying publication that weaves together a social and cultural history and expressions through art and popular culture. But it is perhaps better described as a ‘theatre of the museum’ in which the topic is also a ‘story of human behaviour and the human condition.’ There must be a scholarly gravitas, yet achieved with humour and wit. Being able to laugh at ourselves is one way of learning. This subject has never been explored in this manner in a gallery or museum exhibition, and to follow, controversy should not be avoided because of timidity.
An Outline: Christos Dikeakos
This exhibition proposal has been formulated from an ongoing work that dates from 1974/1994 – a body of work that was left in a time capsule, in storage, and the ideas and sketches of my unfinished Masters Thesis on the Large Glass by Marcel Duchamp – with another related work, May I Smoke /Puis–je fumer, which is also aligned to Duchamp and my preoccupation of cigar smoking as a working studio pastime/activity and pseudo addiction. Smoking tobacco has played a role in art as both an inspiration and as a psychoactive mood altering substance since it took acceptance in 17th century Europe. In an unconscious way, an entire Western civilization used the devices of tobacco and coffee, which produced mind-altering shifts that registered in the workings and experiences of the brain. Needless to say the brain has for centuries relied on smoking as a craving and pleasure addiction. Cigar smoke especially since the early twentieth century was the air, which “stank” of the noteworthy company of artist’s egos in public cafes and restaurants. Now in the twenty-first century, we are witnessing the end of tobacco as a psychoactive force; it is prohibited in public places, marking a fin de siècle. The title May I Smoke/ Puis–je fumer, therefore, is a grammatically potential optative with a less positive expression of the future or the present, requiring the permission of others, as it is no longer a desirable or imperative action.

I consider all this work, and my interest in Duchamp, as proto-conceptual and an important part of media and intellectual exploration. He unlike Matisse and Picasso became an important artist by abandoning painting. The counter tradition to painting for photography, collage and installation is what occurs for a younger generation of artists in the late 1960s in Vancouver.
Resarching 1960s magazine interviews of Duchamp I came across a testimonial wherein Duchamp stated that he was more influenced by the writer Raymond Roussell (1877-1933) than modern painters. As an Art History student I noticed that his literary and written approach – the ironies and meta ironies of language – was the work of an outsider, independent artist with an autonomous streak. And for most of his life, he had a studied distain for, and avoided the artistic public. Art, for Duchamp appeared to function at the service of the mind. He produced a body of distinct and unique aesthetic, which I have taken the liberty to rework, and indeed, Duchamp provided something of a licence for others to do so. While visiting Lyon I noticed a shop named “Patisserie Duchamp.” As a found sign and having the appearance of an epiphany I was reminded of Duchamp’s miniature boxed editions of his canonic works, his boîte en valise. This edition could be considered as Duchamp’s embellishments for sale at the time, at a reasonable price – delicious, mind provoking and eye catching, like patisserie. With Duchamp’s passing I would then become the pâtissier, the pastry cook. This accidental encounter became the inspiration to complete my work, many years later. The work is an edition of two of 20 photo collages in a clamshell folding box using the illustrations of The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp by Arturo Schwarz as a source.
Quand
la fumée de tabac
sent aussi
de la bouche
qui l’exhale,
les deux odeurs
s’épousent par
Infra-mince

Installation “Infamince”  10’X8’  Vinyl Lettering Stacking Chair and Ashtray  1980 - 2008
My interest and purpose was to continue the play making of his work as an intimate and consecrated site of procedural inventiveness. I consider his work to be proto-conceptual, and by the late 1960s and early 1970s it was becoming evident that Marcel Duchamp could be considered as a precursor of conceptual art. In addition to the photocollages, I have included related works by or about Duchamp; magazines, editions, ephemera, photographic facsimiles/appropriations, books and correspondence.

With Duchamp’s poem “Inframince” (published on the back cover of the 1945 View magazine), tobacco smoke is rough going in but aromatic coming out and perfected when exhaled, a consummation married in the mouth as a mental and physical process. Smoke is also a way of inhaling and exhaling abstract and physical space (of dreams and oblivion) where the addiction/obession of cigar smoke – from Duchamp, Phillip Guston, to Frank Stella, or to the Mayan priests – produced a psycho activeness, a false state of lightness, and well-being. Smoking also participates in the circulation of desire and ideas.

Duchamp's interest in Eros and Thanatos, Love and Death is a theme that connects these two exhibition ideas. With “Patisserie Duchamp” I wish to present an exhibition that has the appearance of a Museum-like enterprise to engage, critique and parody. The idea of making work that accumulates and exceeds the display space of its container as museums do is evident in my “boîte en valise” Athens (1987-1996) and Vancouver (1991-1994) Sites and Place Names projects. Likewise, May I Smoke/ Puis–je fumer is a body of work that includes charcoal and graphite drawings, photographs, wood sculptures, and installation work.
**Postscript:** quotes from Luis Bunuel in our present age of the prohibition of tobacco, cigarettes and cigars in public spaces:
- People smoke to celebrate a happy moment or to hide a bitter regret.
- Whether you are alone or with friends, it's a joy for all the senses.
- He smoked until the dying hours of his life, ever faithful to the pleasure that killed him.

It must be emphasized that these ruminations on tobacco (and by extension and association, alcohol) – the lure of “the delicious – of abiding friendships and fertile reveries – must come with advice and a caveat, don't drink and don't smoke. It's bad for your health.

April 2009
Puis-je fumer  22”X31”  Drawing  2008
Edition 2/2  "Patteasserie" Duchamp après que  16"X20"  Clam Shell Box  1970 - 2009
Edition 2/2  "Patteasserie" Duchamp après que   16"X20"   1/20 Inkjet Photo Collages   1970 - 2009
Edition 2/2  "Patteasserie" Duchamp après que  16"X20"  5/20 Inkjet Photo Collages  1970 - 2009
Edition 2/2  "Patteasserie" Duchamp après que  16"X20"  7/20 Inkjet Photo Collages  1970 - 2009
Edition 2/2  "Patteasserie" Duchamp après que  16"X20"  13/20 Inkjet Photo Collages  1970 - 2009
Edition 2/2 "Patteasserie" Duchamp après que 16"X20" 14/20 Inkjet Photo Collages 1970 - 2009

The Bride Stripped Bare... February 1968
Edition 2/2  “Patteasserie” Duchamp après que 16”X20” 17/20 Inkjet Photo Collages 1970 - 2009
Edition 2/2  “Patteasserie” Duchamp après que  16”X20”  18/20 Inkjet Photo Collages  1970 - 2009
Edition 2/2  "Patteasserie" Duchamp après que  16"X20"  19/20 Inkjet Photo Collages  1970 - 2009
Edition 2/2  "Patteasserie" Duchamp après que  16"X20"  20/20 Inkjet Photo Collages  1970 - 2009
Sketch for Ashtray  9"X12" Drawing  2008
Rauchschwaden (cloud of smoke)   30"X22"   Charcoal Drawing   2008
Sketch for Outdoor/Indoor Mural (Fresh Bankers 10 cents)  8"X10"  Drawing and Found object  2008
Torture Mort  22”X30”  Charcoal Drawing  2008
Nature Mort  32"X32"  Drawing  2008
Endless Column  8"X11.5' high  Stacked Cigar Boxes  2008
Posso Fumare?  9"X12"  Drawing  2008
Cemetrie  9"X12"  Drawing  2008
Haben Sie Etwas Dagegen Wenn Ich Rauche (may I smoke)  50”X42”  Charcoal Drawing  2008
Eros C'est La Vie  36"X38"  Drawing  2008
Studio Installation    8"X24" and 12"X24" Cigar Butt Sculptures     1996
Poster Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Philadelphia art Museum  Newsprint  16"X20"  1970