

Montreal Exhibition

Douglas Coupland

In collaboration with Daniel Faria Gallery

May 9 – July 6, 2019



Douglas Coupland, Electric Harris Lake Superior, 2019, LED Backlit Kodak Duratrans print, 31 1/2 x 40 in. (80 x 101.6 cm), Photo credits: Douglas Coupland

Galerie Division, in partnership with the Daniel Faria Gallery, is proud to present its first solo exhibition by Canadian artist Douglas Coupland. Recognized as much for his literary works as for his visual arts practice, Coupland acts as an observer of our contemporaneity, interpreting popular culture in a variety of mediums and considering, through these various points of entry, our twenty-first century condition.

The exhibition can be thought of as comprising three artistic traditions: that of the readymade, the portrait, and the landscape. The first body of work includes environmentally hazardous materials foraged from the shores of British Columbia in the aftermath of Japan's 2011 tsunami. This thalassic theme recalls Coupland's recent exhibition at the Vancouver Aquarium, where large tanks containing plastic Lego towers evoked rising sea levels and the proliferation of microplastics. Presented here in cabinets of plexiglass, the found objects in his Tsunami series suggest a new reality wherein the products we produce spread insidiously across the globe. Washed up on foreign shores, the waste becomes the responsibility of others.

Coupland's *Lego Self Portraits* question our identity in an era of overinformation and overconsumption. Where does the individual stand in relation to this new and growing accumulation of data? Can we be reduced to mere stores of virtual information, to a series of traits and actions? Coupland's randomly-coloured Lego columns represent portraits of our data in which the self is difficult to discern. In the era of selfies, avatars and hyper-mediated self-image, the portrait evokes instant nostalgia – a longing for the present moment, which becomes an almost fictional place as the contours of our identity dissolve. This uncertainty is further evoked in a series of portraits overlaid with coloured forms, their obfuscation suggesting either non-identity or a privacy-preserving mask.

Coupland's third corpus focuses on the landscape, an ineluctable theme in Canadian art and a lens through which The Group of Seven sought to understand Canada. The artist has reimagined Lawren Harris's paintings as LED light-boxes, highlighting with this recent technology the technological innovations required to unite a vast country's dispersed populace. Coupland considers spaciality a key characteristic of visual art, and here, rendered in a palette of vibrant colour, that space becomes a visual language unto itself.

Douglas Coupland is a graduate of the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver, as well as the Hokkaido College of Art and Design in Sapporo, Japan and the Instituto Europeo di Design in Milan, Italy. Coupland's first major survey exhibition, *everywhere is anywhere is anything is everything* opened at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2014 and travelled to Toronto in winter 2015, showing at both the Royal Ontario Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art. In the fall of 2015, Coupland had a solo show, *Bit Rot*, at the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam. *Bit Rot* travelled to Museum Villa Stuck, Munich in the fall of 2016. *Vortex*, Coupland's new large installation, in collaboration with Ocean Wise, was presented at the Vancouver Aquarium in May 2018. Coupland's work has also been exhibited in numerous international group shows including *Electronic Superhighway* at Whitechapel Gallery, London, curated by Omar Kholeif, which travelled to MAAT in Lisbon in 2017, as well as *Hello, Robot.* curated by Marlies Wirth, which travelled to Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, the MAK in Vienna and the Design Museum Gent, in Gent. Coupland's works were also included in the exhibition *I Was Raised on the Internet* at the MCA Chicago in June 2018. His work can be found in the collections of the University of British Columbia, Glenbow Museum (Calgary), Agnes Etherington Art Centre (Kingston), the Albright Knox (Buffalo), and the Confederation Centre (Charlottetown). Coupland was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2014.