

PATRICK MIKHAIL GALLERY

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FRANK RODICK

ARTIST STATEMENT

Currently based in Toronto, Frank Rodick grew up in Montreal where his parents' independent bookstore regularly attracted the city's literati. His first body of photographic work was a set of 40 images entitled *Liquid City*, completed during the years 1991 to 1999. In these photographs, Rodick reimagined the contemporary city as a personal vision and state of mind, as opposed to a specific location. During the 1995-97 period, Rodick completed another series, entitled *sub rosa* in which he explored a traditional subject—the nude figure—using nontraditional processes to aesthetically fuse elements of ambiguity, tension, and mystery. In 2002, Rodick completed the first set of works from *Arena*, a project that attracted critical praise from a number of quarters. In 2006, Katherine Ware, curator of photographs at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, stated that the *Arena* images “bring us into direct confrontation with that physiological self which is, for many, frightening and forbidden -- yet so fascinating it compels our gaze” and that “Rodick has boldly tackled with his camera a subject both fleeting and inchoate, with haunting results.”

Frank Rodick's latest work represents both an evolution and a radical departure from the *Arena* series. He has transformed his scale and palette, extending the spirit of *Arena* into larger works that incorporate a selective range of forceful colour. These new works reflect Rodick's ongoing exploration of sensation, emotion, and what can be called pre-rationality, producing images in which both viewer and artist can engage in a kind of amphitheatre that titrates primal and eternal human conditions such as love and hate, fear and violence, solitude, desire, and mortality. Reflecting on the work, Rodick has stated that “as hallucinatory as they may seem, what I'm striving for are images that feel more intimately real than our cursory experience of everyday life, and that give voice to the inner worlds that live within each of us.”

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■ ARENA / FAITHLESS GROTTOS

Frank Rodick is primarily interested in making art that exists as an experiential expression of sensation, emotion, and what could be called pre-rationality, art that can communicate in a language that is largely impossible to define. What really moves Rodick is a visceral and mysterious journey, one in which both artist and viewer can engage in a kind of amphitheatre that titrates primal and eternal human conditions such as love and hate, fear and violence, solitude, eros, and mortality. He considers his work from the last few years—the earlier series entitled *Arena* along with *Faithless Grottoes*—as products of this experience and sensibility. As hallucinatory as the imagery may seem, what Rodick is striving for are works that feel more intimately real than our desultory experience of everyday life, and that give voice to the inner worlds that exist in each of us. Professor Don Snyder, Chair of Ryerson University’s School of Image Arts, recently curated an exhibition of work from *Faithless Grottoes*, about which he wrote: “The images are frenetic, even psychedelic. The photographs appear almost as stills of moving images, due to the repetition, shifts of colour, and video quality of Rodick’s technique. Electric blue and glowing orange dominate the palette. Bodies and faces take over the frame, emerging from black voids.”

It is possible to interpret both *Arena* and *Faithless Grottoes* in Neo-Expressionist terms, as the imagery Rodick works with derives from, and speaks to, the primal, non-rational elements of human life. They are meant first and foremost to engage the emotions of both artist and viewer. What he is attempting is to create images of the subjective landscape of his own internal life in such a way that they can speak to the deep-rooted experiences of his audience.

The images in *Faithless Grottoes* are heavily processed artistically and *Two figures, triptych no. 1* is no exception. Because these images are meant to reflect not a surface reality but rather a reality based on sensual subjectivity, they are, through a process of intensive manipulation, stripped of their naturalistic appearance and rebuilt with tools through which a more subjective vision can be introduced. In many ways, the “layers” through which the images are processed—such as video, film, and digital manipulation, some of which are described below—are analogous to the prisms of human consciousness by which our experiences are filtered. These manipulations notwithstanding, the human figure remains the uncontested reference point of all these images. Rodick employs other visual elements—context, foreground, background, and surface detail—to create a sensually direct mode of communicating, one

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designed to engage the viewer on a more subconscious level of feeling as opposed to, say, the rational mode of compiling and sorting information. Nonetheless, the artist's paramount concern here is always the human figure at the heart of the image.

The images in *Faithless Grottoes* derive from video footage, both original and appropriated. The video footage exists strictly as raw material that Rodick uses in the first stage of the process. He then makes traditional photographic negatives from this video material. He then scans the negatives and works intensively with the resultant digital files.

In *Arena*, Rodick became increasingly interested in the idea of multiple images and continued with that motif in *Faithless Grottoes*. These multiple images—diptychs, triptychs, and polyptychs (a piece from *Arena*, entitled *Fragments of a celestial abattoir*, is composed of 25 individual images)—add a level of complexity to the works that both severs the imagery from conventional interpretation and pushes the viewer to engage the work in more complex terms. For instance, the multiplicity of images can simultaneously suggest a temporal aspect to the work (one that might not exist in a single image) and confound just such an interpretation with the use of disjunctive sequencing. While such a position can obviously appear contradictory from a strictly rational or theoretical stance, it is precisely this sort of counterpoint that is, for Rodick, central to the portrayal of a realism founded in subjectivity. Considered in terms of actual experience—in which memories, sensations, and emotions may be fractured and layered upon each other in transient and variable configurations—these images become renditions more accurately representing what is, at its most fundamental, always an internal state, that is, one that is filtered through an individual consciousness.