

EN

Soif d'illusion / Illusion of the Self

Massimo Guerrera

Kyle Alden Martens

Guillaume Adjutor Provost

Natasha Sacobie

Karen Tam

Keillor House Museum, Dorchester (NB)

July 13 to September 2, 2024

During the summer of 2024, the Keillor House Museum (Dorchester, New Brunswick) is host to an unprecedented artistic exploration. This exhibition project, conceived by the visual artist Guillaume Adjutor Provost, grew out of a conversation with the museum's director, Keegan Hiltz, about the revitalization of historical collections through contemporary art practices. *Soif d'illusion/Illusion of the Self*, presented in the Georgian-style manor built circa 1813, brings together works by five artists: Kyle Alden Martens, Karen Tam, Massimo Guerrera, Natasha Sacobie, and Guillaume Adjutor Provost. In a play on translation, the bilingual title invites reflection on how the perception of self may be shaped by illusions and deep desires. Conceptually, the exhibition draws on the theories of the psychologist Carl Jung (1875–1961), including one about the layers of the human psyche. Jung underscored the distinction between the conscious self – the part of ourselves that we encounter every day – and manifestations of the unconscious, which include suppressed facets, complexes, archetypes, and other psychic elements that creep unbidden into our behaviours and thoughts. In his therapeutic practice, Jung urged his patients to explore their relationship with their domestic space in order to gain insight into their own inner dynamics. In this respect, the heavily decorated spaces of the Keillor House Museum, evidence of its founder's ambition to conceal his modest origins and typical of Victorian attitudes, offer an ideal setting for exploring the complexities of personal and collective identity.

Each artist addresses the theme with a distinct sensibility. Kyle Alden Martens uses garments as a metaphor for adjustment and integration in his exploration of how queer bodies occupy and transform domestic space. Karen Tam re-creates objects that attest to and probe Chinese historical

narratives and diasporic identities. Massimo Guerrera, a pioneer of relational art, proposes a reflection on human interactions through a grouping of sculptures on the dining-room table. Natasha Sacobie, an artist from the Wolastoqey territory, creates works both informed by her ancestors and linked to future generations by combining traditional materials such as porcupine quills, birch bark, and fur with contemporary modes of expression. Guillaume Adjutor Provost, known for his interdisciplinary installations that address class consciousness and vernacular aesthetics, gathers a corpus of utilitarian-looking ceramics in the bedrooms for maids and seasonal workers. Through these multiple voices, the exhibition offers a reflection on domestic space as a site for the projection of fabricated identities.

The choice of the Keillor House Museum as exhibition venue is not fortuitous. Indeed, this setting enables the artists to integrate their works into spaces replete with narratives, creating an immersive experience for visitors. Aside from a few rare artefacts, in fact, most of the objects in the museum's collection come not from its founders but from many different sources. The house is full of spaces into which personal and collective stories can be projected: a staircase made of noble wood leading to a fictional upper floor, a collection of imported Orientalized dishes, annexes extending the original house, a passageway between the ground floor and the top floor that separates workers from their employers – the possessed from the possessors. *Soif d'illusion/Illusion of the Self* thus offers a poetic exploration of how we perceive ourselves and shows how our identities are modulated by both domestic and social structures, revealing our innermost and outermost worlds.

The artists acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and wish to thank the Keillor House Museum team for their unwavering support and dedication towards the realization of this exhibition.



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Natasha Sacobie

Victorian Scissor Holder, 2024

Birch bark, deer hide, bone beads, glass beads, sinew

12 × 8 cm

Ermine Pelt Earrings, 2024

Ermine pelt, 18k gold earring hook, glass beads

31 × 3 cm

Victorian Napkin Ring, 2024

Birch bark, deer hide, porcupine quills

4 × 6 cm

Victorian Quilled Fan, 2024

Birch bark, porcupine quills, glass beads, sweet grass, ostrich feathers

48 × 45 cm

Natasha Sacobie is a Wolastoqiyik visual artist based in Bilijk (Kingsclear First Nation). Her artistic practice blends traditional and contemporary mediums, beginning with oil painting and beading. She now specializes in birch bark and porcupine quillwork, known for its deep connection to nature, exploration of exoticism, and honoring all relatives. A graduate of the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design, Sacobie completed Advanced Studio Practice in 2023. Her work is featured in public and private collections and has been exhibited at venues such as the Lieutenant Governor's House, the George Fry Gallery, Saint John Arts Center, Boston Museum, and Gallery on Queen. Most recently, Art Mur in Montreal and Centre d'exposition Expression in Saint-Hyacinthe, both for The Biennale of Contemporary Indigenous Art (BACA), 7th edition. In 2023, Sacobie received the Heather Stone Emerging Artist Award in 2023 and is the recipient of many grants.

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Natasha Sacobie's exploration of the *Illusion of Self* is grounded within her Wolastoqey heritage. She exposes the illusion of a singular self. We see an individual, relational, and communal self at

play in her narratives. Sacobie builds a collective by acknowledging teachings and traditions from her ancestors, from the land, and with future generations. Her working materials like porcupine quill, birchbark, and fur highlight the interconnection and dependence of the human self to the more-than-human world. Engendered in any artist's output is a part of their own value system. Art is revealing. It unfolds truths both speakable and unspeakable.

Natasha Sacobie's practice is not just about revealing illusions; it is about reclaiming. She sets up a double encounter. Her works call us to re-encounter Indigenous brilliance and encounter cognitive imperialism (a term used by Indigenous scholar Marie Battiste). Working with knowledge of her elders, archives, paintings, and artifacts, she painstakingly re-creates traditional quillwork, beading and fur decoration. When we create artworks, we show not just that we can make, we tell of who we are. Art is an act of revelation. It tells of a self-made practice. Sacobie's conviction of herself and her capacity to speak back is where her critical shapeshifting works emerge.

The Victorian Era was a focus for Sacobie because Indigenous works were purchased as trinkets by foreign travellers as luxury items and exotic mementos at that time. By re-creating Indigenous-crafted luxury items of that period, she challenges us to see how Canada was always dependent on [displacing] Indigenous land, language, culture, and traditions for settler luxury. The Illusion of a benign, all-embracing Canadian collective self is shattered. Sacobie's works are first and foremost a homage to making in her traditional heritage, and that transcends any colonial associations by de-centring settler luxury and un-serving Indigenous craft for European tastes.

If we feel clever in realizing these layers in her work, she has set it all up. The staging in her work is a facade and, at first glance, might appear to celebrate or uphold aspects of Victorian history. But as we contemplate the material, we are led to ask whose history? Sacobie delivers a smackdown wrapped in material mastery. Sacobie's contemporary practice shows an individual woman's story matters as part of the relational and collective self. In an age of wicked problems, global crises, and digital disruptions, we need more engaged artists like Natasha, who can reflect deeply and act boldly through the handmade and embodied processes of ancient making and doing. I am still watching and waiting for what Sacobie is up to next, as this fast-moving shape shifter keeps us on our toes.

Text : Jean Rooney

Jean Rooney is a Dublin-born Irish Canadian living on Welamukotuk territory. Jean is profoundly shaped by the watershed surrounding her home in the boonies of French Lake. Jean has three pillars to her practice: artmaking, education, and research. Her artmaking orbits around representations of nature and colourful landscapes explored through painting. Her education practice serves emerging peer professionals, helping them to forge sustainable creative careers. Lastly, Jean practices playful and curious thinking, making and theorizing through artistic research. Jean is Head of Studio of Advanced Studio Practice, a graduate studies program at the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design. Jean was educated at The National College of Art and Design, Ireland, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Art in Printmaking, a Master of Science in Multimedia from Trinity College Dublin University, and a Master of Education in Critical Studies from the University of New Brunswick. Jean is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in Art Education at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Concordia University.

Kyle Alden Martens

Shelled Blades, 2024

Silk, silk taffeta, wool, thread

385 x 9 x 0.5 cm (each)

Kyle Alden Martens is an interdisciplinary artist based in Montréal. He graduated from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University with a BFA in Intermedia. He is a recent MFA graduate in sculpture at Concordia University and were supported by the Dale and Nick Tedeschi Arts Fellowship, the Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship (SSHRC), and the Fonds de Recherche du Québec — Société et culture (FRQSC). Martens has exhibited with Bradley Ertaskiran, Pangée, Circa Art Actuel, and the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery in Montréal, AXENÉO7 in Gatineau, as well as the Khyber Centre for the Arts in Halifax. His exhibition *PORTABLE CLOSETS*, has been shown nationally at Stride Gallery, Centre CLARK, and Eastern Edge Gallery. He is a current laureate of the Claudine and Stephen Bronfman Fellowship in Contemporary Art and represented by Patel Brown.

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Shell, neck, slip, tail, tip, blade. All of these words point to a dominant symbol in Kyle Alden Martens' installation, the tie, while also alluding to wider thematics within Martens' practice. A shell may be simply fabric wrapped around its armature, or it can be a poetic inclination — a shell as a body; a blade then a feeling; tail or tip nodding gently towards sensuality. This slippage, of both language and symbols, is not accidental and in *Shelled Blades* we should not take these symbols for their instinctive meaning. A tie can simply be a tie, yet through Martens' sculptural language these works hug, layer, move and multiply — building a scene of both intimacy and mirroring.

At the Keillor House Museum, Martens' installation considers the bed as a primary presentation space. Elongated ties rest upon the bed as if being considered or prepared for the body — this frozen gesture of preparation lending itself to a reading towards the uncanny. Do we become ghosts of our garments? Or are our garments ghosts of us? The ties are unusual yet familiar. They are exaggerated in length yet proportional in width to typical ties for dress shirts;

the artist describes each tie's silk shell wrapping over cut wool like a duvet cover. Throughout Martens' practice there is a perpetual balance of unusual familiarity, where garments being presented take their origins from reality, yet the objects and intricacies queer their use.

Within *Shelled Blades* the ties stand in as a gesture of layered intimacy, the length of the ties are equivalent to a doubling of Martens' own body, perhaps alluding to a duality of the self, folding over, layered, wrapped, singular or together. Alone, one might flip through garments laid out on the bed to consider presenting themselves to the outside world — building a narrative of gender, comfort, or fashion. While between lovers the garments upon the bed nod to an aftermath of intimacy — coming off, coming on — a remnant of undressing. In Martens' visual world both of these states are considered, often subtly, leading the viewer from the intimate to the erotic, from expression to sexuality.

Edmund White uses silk as a metaphor in his 1978 novel, *Nocturnes for the King of Naples*, in the opening passage about male cruising: “the darkness of gray silk stretched taut to form the sky, watered by city lights, the darkness of black quartz boiling to make a river, and the penciled figures of men in the distance”. Silk has become materially dominant in Martens' work in recent years, and at the Keillor House Museum it is one of very few materials present. White's use of the material as a poetic suggestion is palpable and alive, and in my recent reading of this novel I began to contemplate Martens' use of silk, and the ties at the Keillor House. It is a sensual and fragile textile, yet materially powerful. During a conversation with Martens about his work he spoke to me about the blade's edge, a sharpness that can be felt through his recent projects. The blade, a feeling. The blade of a silk tie resting upon a bed. The blades of many silk ties woven, rolled, touching. In White's description silk becomes sky, in *Shelled Blades* silk becomes skin, ties mirroring us.

Text : B. Brookbank

B. Brookbank is an artist from Nova Scotia, currently working between the East Coast and Montréal. Their practice considers the language and poetics of photography, through an interdisciplinary approach that includes video, sculpture and writing. They hold a MFA in Photography from Concordia University and a BFA in Photography from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Their work has been exhibited nationally and internationally at Centre Clark, Leonard & Bina Ellen Gallery and Patel Brown in Montréal, Écart Art Actuel in Rouyn-Noranda, Eyelevel Gallery, the Anna in Halifax, the CCA in Glasgow, United Kingdom among others.

Guillaume Adjutor Provost

Petite monnaie, 2024

14 glazed stoneware vessels containing porcelain stone fruit pits, mirror, steel

335 x 221 x 25.4 cm

Guillaume Adjutor Provost is an interdisciplinary artist, researcher, and educator who experiments with forms of exhibition, collections, text, and curating. Since 2022, he has taught sculpture at the Université de Moncton. In his art practice, he is motivated by a desire to bring into the present what has long existed on the periphery of dominant historical discourses: class consciousness, counterculture, vernacular imagery, and experiences of sexual diversity. Provost's projects have been presented in some twenty solo exhibitions and twenty group exhibitions in Canada, the United States, and Europe.

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Like a body, the house lives, breathes, excretes. It contains perspectives of reality (realities), crumbs that hide under the varnished surface of things. Like fossils that might melt into the space until they cover it over, these story fragments infiltrate, suffer effects, and become setting(s).

Impelled by the desire to reflect upon the diverse cohabitations that have shaped — and still shape — the Keillor House, Guillaume Adjutor Provost has produced work at the intersection of sculpture and research, suggesting a contemporary experience of the historical narrative. Inspired by “period rooms” — reconstructed rooms that, in the museum context, give a peek a life in a given period and place — he takes over one of them to display new ceramics that are imbued with the experience of those who once lived there.

Indeed, the sumptuous Keillor residence, built around 1815, harbors old memories and hidden secrets. How many gardeners, cooks, and housekeepers once bustled within its walls? The building's structure hints at many illusions — mysteries that shed light on a play of architectural artifices devised by the house's first occupants, class renegades who, following their social ascent, obscured some of their economic origins.

It took Provost more than one visit to travel back through time and grasp the nuances of the life embraced by the owners and their staff. As he searched for a singular venue for his project, he was finally won over by a space distanced from the main living area, accessible only by crossing the entire manor and skirting the central rooms to finally reach a spiral staircase. Having followed this path as if it were a well-guarded secret, we can scrutinize the environment of this new, cramped level and the plots it might conceal.

The space that Provost decided on testifies to a “life within a life”: it is presented as a place contained within a place, sheltered from the eyes and conveniences of the rest of the property. This room, in which, even today, two or three beds are set out, once housed the residence’s seasonal staff and gives a good glimpse of the “backstage” of which it was a part. Remote, pushed back to the farthest corners of the house, the space wasn’t heated and never had running water. We might guess that spittoons, basins, washboards, and chamber pots accumulated here and there — a collection of intermediary objects circumscribing the precarious daily life of these women and men. Provost’s research on the project is based on this discovery.

In the studio, matter is molded, glazes are found. Provost seeks to rematerialize all these objects frozen in time that offer evidence of class differences — all the specific artefacts that exploited the interstices in this domestic space. The ceramic sculptures he produces are guided by embodied gestures: they reveal lives, divert narratives. Their shapes and substance emerge from the impetus of contact with materials. In a burst of realism, Provost also molds fruit pits — of plums, chokecherries, peaches, and apricots — to punctuate the shaped spittoons, a nod to previous centuries and to the magnificent fruit gardens that inhabit the land.

At the end of his explorations of relief textures and finishes, Provost detects residues of the epoch in certain ferrous oxides. Browns, beiges, and cream colors succeed each other, building a range of earthy tonalities that, once daubed onto the ceramics, give the works a unique surface that evokes both past and present. His own collection of containers slowly takes shape. Drawn to the idea of vessel — the receptacle as ship, which can conduct stories or blood, can contain materials or people — Provost revisits the narratives within them.

In the space, these various handmade receptacles stand on narrow podiums composed of mirror strips. The reflective surfaces project, in reverse, the stories that they bear: their contours are superimposed on the reflections in the rest of the room. The device chosen is a reminder of the narrative content of these reimagined cisterns and the context in which they are rooted. With

his choices and experiments, Provost thus conveys the transitory pathways in the room that he chose to occupy in the house and sketches out the spatial, temporal, social, and political strata that have traveled through it. It's impossible to tear the stories of these lives away from this place: Keillor House becomes the prism for all these guest chronicles.

Text : Galadriel Avon

Translation : Kathe Roth

Galadriel Avon holds a bachelor's degree in political science and philosophy earned at the Université de Montréal (2021), and pursued a minor in art history at UQAM (2021). She is now in a master's program in art practice at UQAR (2021, ongoing). Her practice is one of production of discourses: involved in several artist-run centres and with specialized art magazines, she is a cultural mediator, author, art critic, and publisher — in other words, everything that has to do with words and their perceptible overlap with art practices. Avon is the editorial director of *Vie des arts* and coordinator of the magazine *Ex_situ*; these two platforms enable her to decentralize and distribute her writings about and knowledge of the arts, notably by leading her to encounter regional initiatives and emerging practices. In parallel, she pursues her own practice, at the confluence of words and matter, and is half of the new collective *lieux équivoques*.

Karen Tam

Lakeside Leisure, 2024

Papier-mâché with Chinese newspapers, cardstock, gouache, pigmented India ink

20 x 25 x 13 cm (1)

8 x 9 x 9 cm (6)

Karen Tam 譚嘉文, a Tiohtiá:ke/Montréal-based artist, explores the constructions and imaginations of cultures, communities, and sites of cultural encounters, through her installations. Since 2000, she has exhibited her work and participated in residencies at venues including the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Victoria and Albert Museum, Frankfurter Kunstverein, and He Xiangning Art Museum. Winner of the 2021 Giverny Capital Prize, Tam holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from Goldsmiths (University of London) and a MFA in Sculpture from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is represented by Galerie Hugues Charbonneau.

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Artist Karen Tam's *Lakeside Leisure* is a series of works replicating porcelain pieces from the Keillor House Museum collection, including chinoiserie. Using a rudimentary technique and papier mâché, Tam has created an imitation of a teapot and six cups reminiscent of the English items, but without handles or saucers. The imagery is intended to be a free interpretation of the original design, described by Artefacts Canada as portraying a "red and green pagoda ... with oriental lady, and tree." The original porcelain pieces, like the replicas, are not particularly remarkable in terms of rarity or visual value. They were produced by the English manufacturer Hilditch and Son in the early 1800s and intended for a middle class in search of exoticism and affordable elegance. They were also exported to the colonies and sometimes purchased by illustrious figures. That was the case here: before joining the Keillor House collection, the pieces were in the home of Sir Pierre-Amand Landry, lawyer, judge, legislator, minister, and key figure in the Acadian Renaissance in New Brunswick. Their accessible, middle-class status has changed little since. Equivalent specimens can easily be found today on auction websites such as eBay.

The pieces that Tam created for display at the Keillor House Museum were inspired by a similar project that she produced more than ten years ago for Saltram House in the United Kingdom, as

part of a group exhibition on “contemporary chinoiserie.” For that show she created fake sculptures in everyday materials – such as jade ornaments sculpted out of Irish Spring soap, porcelain dishes in papier mâché, and silverware from aluminium plates – to adapt and replace the “real.” Laid out in different rooms in Saltram House, on shelves or buffets, their strangeness, the sense of “not in its place,” was palpable. At Keillor House, the teapot and six cups are exhibited behind glass in a showcase, imbued with the sacred aura imposed by the room and the original exhibition, with its straight, austere style. Despite the distance, the work is attention-grabbing, encouraging visitors to look twice, or even three times. Depending on their memories and their preconceptions, they will see their own vision of China, of colonialism – of its exoticism and space.

Lakeside Leisure offers intermingled and joyously confused imagery. By using predominantly red and green colours, Tam decontextualizes and recontextualizes Chinese landscapes, as imagined by early-nineteenth-century Staffordshire illustrators and artisans, by integrating them into similarly fanciful recreational scenes set in the Canadian Maritimes. Inspired by cottage culture, Tam mixes pagodas and palm trees, palm trees and lakeshores, creating unimagined scenes in which golf, bodybuilding, sailing, and barbecuing coexist. Realism slips into the background, especially if one can relax and have fun!

This new intervention by Tam fits within a broader sculptural corpus in which she explores “DIY chinoiserie” and mimicry: she probes and plays with the notions of authenticity, copy, luxury, and circulation by producing her own fake artefacts and false antiquities. Inspired by East Asian objects and chinoiserie she has seen in various museums, local collections, and auction websites, she uses everyday materials and techniques in her works. Through subtle “self-exoticizing” interventions that navigate among adaptation, revision, and subversion, she offers historical and visual cues and establishes improbable dialogues between past and present. Her work offers counterpoints to reductive readings and interpretations of race and cultural representation – in particular those that travel between East and West.

When I ask Tam about the unlikeliness of a palm tree in her imagined geography of the Maritimes, she tells me about an article she recently read. The article includes an anecdote about a Nova Scotian town that tried to plant seven palm trees on its land. A local councillor, quoted in the article, explained that the palm trees “spread a bit of joy but couldn’t survive the Maritime winters.” Now we know that palm trees don’t grow in the Maritimes.

Text : Rémy Chhem

Translation : Kathe Roth

Rémy Chhem, co-founder of Collectif Super Boat People, is a community organizer and social science researcher based in Tiohtiá:ke/Montréal. He enjoys creating vibrant projects that promote collaboration and dialogue between Asian communities and across generations, such as those supporting artists, and focusing on community and family history, as well as culinary and horticultural knowledge. He co-curated the community art exhibition *Ce qui nous traverse* at Articule (2024) and is currently preparing the first visual arts exhibition in Montréal bringing together Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese artists, at Galerie Centrale Powerhouse (2024–25).

Massimo Guerrera

La réception, 2024

Porcelain, paper, gesso, porcelain powder, bread dough (wheat flour, salt, sugar, yeast)

300 x 122 x 32 cm

Using various media, including drawing, writing, photography, installation, and performance, **Massimo Guerrera** highlights the fertile space of encounter and its subtle laminar movements. Between being-together and the solitude of the studio. It's an approach that focuses on sensitive oscillations with ourselves and with others. Studying relational porosity and the construction of identity-related forms, whether individual or cultural. Since 1989, Guerrera's performative approach has been built around the relations that rule alterity and the environments in which we live. These questions are rooted in a daily practice connected with and nourished by meditation. His research is embodied in long-term projects in which series of collections take shape articulated around oscillations of consciousness and different modes of writing and expression. It is work that attends to transmission processes and to the different states of mind that develop through them.

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Invited

To Keillor House

I enter the reception area environment

The splendour of the place – foreign and hospitable

I feel conspiratorial, a party to the things that surround me

The celebration, even squeezed into the corset of convention, is in full swing

Dazzled by the goblets, the spittoons, and the various items

(What is that moist thing in the centre of the table?)

Like so many organs

To feed on or to gobble up my attention

I want to sink my teeth all the way into this spectacle of new wealth

Whose head wouldn't it turn?

This wealth laid out for silver-plated gazes
Good fortune, within grasp
I wanted it to be mine, buried, secret, buried
Just for me
Within me, out of reach of the stockbrokers
Were we aware of the projections in the house
And their doubtful sincerity

I owe an overwhelming flame for
The grace to still be standing
Just to the side of this illusory wealth
With you this evening, dear friends
Sitting together at this grand Georgian table

The tiny fire I'm telling you about keeps me alive
It burns at the centre of a bowl made of terra cotta and cartilage
Like the enamelled plates of another era
And their contemporary protuberances
(They taste salty, I swear, when I slide my tongue over them)

Something, somewhere, is being consumed, because of me
Who can describe accurately the rituals or sacrifices perpetrated here
So that we can once again be together, here, present with one another?

I enjoy the words you, my host, speak to me
They pierce me like nourishing needles
As if they were my own soaring veins

What would I be without these seeds of syllables you pour into me?
Whether they're fresh or rotten
I have no fear of your venom this evening
I am open

Ready-made sentences that wait only to whet my appetite
Roaming across the clay mask I wear
And its hollow traces of orality

I drink them, one after another
Watering the layers of porous identity

They're bittersweet
Taste of rock, dust, and rhizome
Are distilled in the bottleneck of my esophagus

When I spit them out
They take the form of edible mushrooms
Brown and virgin white

The subtle balance between empty and full
The meaning (that precarious thread) on which stand, in single file
The torn away, the uprooted,
The sated, the plump, and the gorged
The tacit agreement signed by who knows who, who knows where
Gathering migrants in a new land

Frankly, we're devouring this evening elegantly!
We are gorgeous, mouthwatering, to look at!
Sparkling, strewn around this sharp-edged cutlery
On finely decorated trays and plates
We're advancing openly
By setting the table inside out

Hand in hand, myth and reality are masticated by my molars
On the floor of my palate
Among the subtlest aromas I had ever savoured
We knew that the illusion of self was a perforated palate

The roles will surely be reversed one day
My turn will come, when they will delight in me
And in the words I offer to the gathering
But not this evening
No, this evening, I'm sitting at the table
In the beating heart of the Keillor House

And I'm the one chewing

My tongue will never have better mastered the rules of decorum
And the gestures of good relegated representation
With this multipurpose appendix
Wiggling from the hollow of my throat up to the tips of my incisors
I perceive the tenderness of the flesh
That detaches itself from bones like words

The ambiguity of our orifices
Where chattering and food converge

At the heart of the conventions into which we sink
To sit ourselves down
In an unalterable truth
Or else in an incandescent resistance

The obstinate thirst to be recognized for what we really are (not)

And to finally strip ourselves of this panicked fear:
That of being swallowed whole and forgotten
I face my fear of being eternally dissolved

I simply want to be tasted
For what I'm worth
But not to be devoured
Is that too much to ask?

On the menu, my glazed uvula
Ah! So, that was the moist thing at the centre of the table ... My uvula!
I pray for you, serve yourselves, dear friends!
My odour, my ideals, simmered to perfection
I'm your humble servant
My discursive mind told itself

Yes, I wish to receive you within me, dear companions

With my civilized entrails, do what you will
Everyone, take and eat
This bacterial expression of microbiota

On the verge of being consumed
My reason for being seems enigmatic to me ...
What, in fact, is expected of me?
In this story that ingests me
What place is assigned to me
In the digestive tract of others?
That of alimentary receptions

With a clean gesture
I play with my mandibles
The urgent need to gratify myself and feast on you
Before vanishing into the periphery
So my pride can gnaw on the nails and skin
Of the fear running through me

In truth, I tell you
I eat the living therefore I am
I eat what you are therefore I am

As this last meal ends in my favour
I rest against the opening of this sublime spittoon
It fascinates me
As magnetic as the core of a forming world
Immersing myself in your expectorations
The moist source of your primitive words

An ablution is required
A renewed baptism with this old recycled drool
To purify me, to cleanse me of something once and for all
Right here, in resonance with you, dear friends departed and present
Sitting at the table in Keillor House
Abandoning and losing myself like this in the little black hole of this spittoon

Text : Jonathan Morier

Translation : Kathe Roth

Jonathan Morier has performed in numerous living-art projects. He has spoken the words of Jean-Paul Daoust at the Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui, in the staging of *Cendres bleues* orchestrated by Philippe Cyr. He played Louis in the world of *Appels entrants illimités* – imagined by playwright David Paquet and director/dramaturge Benoît Vermeulen – in Canada, France, and Switzerland. He also performed in Étienne Lepage's *Rouge Gueule* at Espace Go, directed by Claude Poissant. For his PhD/PsyD, Morier wrote the dissertation *Vivre après une expérience de mort imminente*, supervised by Florence Vinit, at UQAM.