

Thi Hai Loc Vu
Refusal, Protest and Transformation
502-CQ2-AS gr.02012

ZINE

Presented to Valérie Tremblay

LaSalle College
October 27th, 2016

Breakfast Series (2006) - Sonny Assu



<http://www.sonnyassu.com/images/breakfast-series>

2006

Five boxes digitally printed with Fome-cor, 12 x 7 x 3in. (30.5 x 17.8 x 7.6cm) each, of 5

Sonny Assu was born in May 9, 1975 in Richmond, British Columbia and one of the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples. Thus, his works' focal point focus around his heritage background. Assu won the British Columbia Creative Achievement Award in First Nations art in 2011. He was also listed for the Sobey Art Award in 2012, 2013 and 2015. At the present, Sonny Assu is one of the MFA candidates at Concordia University. **Breakfast Series** is in the form of cereal boxes being drawn on the surface about issues of the First Nations people, like land and treaty. The cartoon-like way of presenting the cereal boxes makes its appeal to the audiences as at the same time it presents serious on-going problems in countries like the United States and Canada. The theme which this work strikes is certainly politics, and a little of land and environments.

Breakfast Series is one of Assu's famous artworks, and also a successful exhibition of the Kwakwaka'wakw artist. It is a typical representation of Canada culture, because it addresses many serious issues which have been going on for many years, such as the claims of land with the natives. The contemporary artwork certainly includes a political message that acquires people to notice the issues going on, not taking them lightly as if they are really the contents of what cereal boxes say. As Assu said, "the Breakfast series, Personal Totem series, and Urban Totem series, examines how we allow everyday consumer items and icons of pop culture to define our lineage – how branding, brand loyalty, and technology relate to the idea of totemic representation" (Assu). As an Indigenous artwork, the Breakfast Series is one that holds many similarities with other works from different artists: it tells the story of important cultural tales. In this case, the cereal boxes with the brand of Kwakwaka'wakw tells the stories – more likely the issues – which not only the Kwakwaka'wakws but also the natives and the Canadians are experiencing. However, the Breakfast Series can be considered an artwork with a contemporary way to present Indigenous art.

This artwork makes its appeal by the unique way it is represented as the cereal boxes, which are hardly the objects that usually tell serious society issues on their cover. It might be saying how serious problems going on which need more attention are being taken lightly. Through this artwork, it makes me think more about those issues. I have already noticed them but they have never made me think that they are still holding a great impact on our community. It has crossed my mind that the artist might be mocking people's ignorance, and it makes me rethink about myself and this society.

SENTIER NATIONAL “National Trail” (2004) – Raymonde April



<http://www.raymondeapril.com/index.php/photoographie20002012/projet-2/>

2004

Inkjet prints, 112 x 127 cm (3), 112 x 112 cm (5)

Raymonde April was born in 1953 Moncton, New Brunswick of Canada. She began her photography career in the 1970s and adapted an elegant style in portraying the daily life. She often uses black and white pictures in her photographs and the use of contrast. She also writes evocative and poetic titles to tell the narrative

history of her photographs and to create associations between her images (ARCHIVED - Raymonde April). Her works vary from portraits, landscapes, travelogues, diaries to photographs of still life. Sentier National's theme focuses about land and environment. The image portrays the beauty of the New Brunswick's landscape.

The Sentier National is typical of Canadian culture. It is similar to the paintings of landscapes by the Group of Seven, for the photograph is portraying how beautiful Canada is with its natural habitats and glorious sights. The photograph does not have any political meaning. Sentier National follows the movement that was led by the Group of Seven in portraying landscape. The photograph contributes to many of other artworks that praise the natural treasures that Canada owns, presenting the lush sight which can be seen in New Brunswick – where forests and trees are plentiful. It reminds the audiences of the Canadian culture of being closed to nature and environment. We live near nature and we love the green lushness of the forest. The photograph is similar to the landscape paintings of the Group of Seven as they are to showcase to vast beauty of natural sights in Canada, thus drawing more attention from the world to this country. However, Sentier National seems to be showing a more rural and realistic nature of Canada since there is no colour to beautify the image like Group of Seven's paintings, but it still has a simple sense of the loveliness of the Canada's nature.

The reason I choose this artwork is that the simple light and dark image of the forest from the national trail really makes me realize that Canada's landscapes, and New Brunswick's, are truly magnificent in its simple yet natural state. I personally love to live in a place which has trees and flowers, thus this picture really makes it appeal to me. Moreover, it gives me a feeling that nature is being untouched by human, and what is truly important in life is what nature has created. Moreover, we do not know what is inside the forest. Hence, the photograph successfully gives off a sense of mystery.

“You Are Never Alone” (2007) - So-called



So-called, also known as Josh Dolgin was born in Ottawa, Ontario in 1976. He is a “pianist, accordionist, producer, journalist, photographer, filmmaker, magician, cartoonist and puppet maker based in Montreal, Quebec” (About). Josh graduated from McGill University with a 50-minute film (Socalled - About). He has been active since 2003 and produced 6 solo albums. He played in numerous kinds of band such as salsa, gospel, rock, funk and decided to focus on MIDI and hip-hop. “You Are Never Alone” is

<http://socalledmusic.com>

one of his famous singles beside “(These Are The) Good Old Days” in 2007. The song’s theme addresses identity.

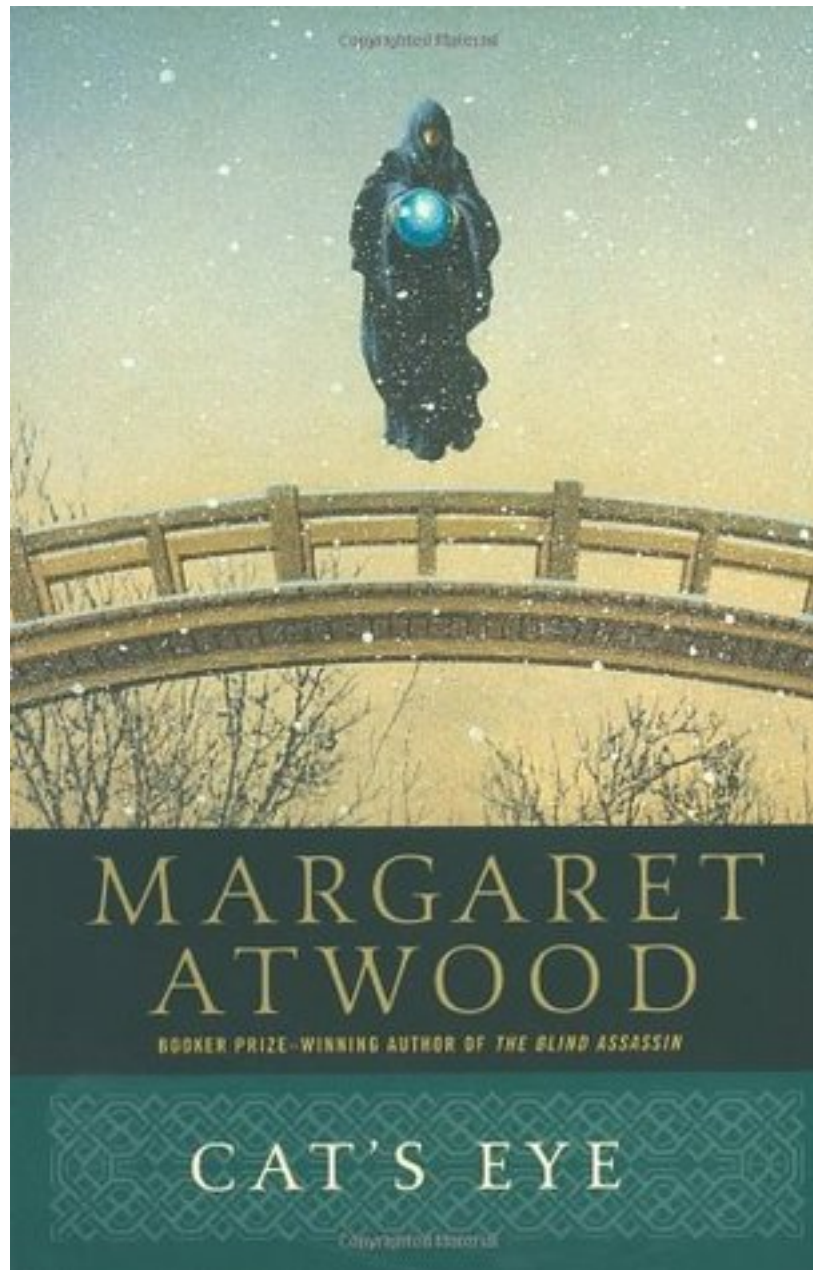


The artwork is not typically of Canada culture, but the culture of the whole Northern America. The song “You Are Never Alone” belongs to the genres of hip-hop and rap. It portrays the idea of freedom but also connected, as well as your own identity in the world. Moreover, the song also mentions the culture of cowboy. The song is not political, but it is talking about the society, and your own journey

as a person. You have to be strong and independent in your life journey, and you cannot let the loneliness creep to you if you have chosen to be independent. Through this, So-called might be trying to send a message to people about identity, as the song depicts a Jewish cowboy. He is strong in his adventure, and he is told that he is not alone although he is by himself. There is a sense of being so small alone in life, yet at same time being so big and great with the journey. However, the song holds little relevance to Canada current culture as it is more about the culture of hip-hop and rap songs.

This song is chosen because it makes me feel not so alone while facing hardship and difficulty. It somehow reminds me of the painting "Wanderer above the Sea of Fog" by Caspar David Friedrich with the feeling of being able to conquer the obstacle, yet we still have more things to overcome in life – a sense of overpower and being overpowered at the same time. Nevertheless, the song still resembles a motivation for courage for me since it seems to say to continue moving on although your journey will never come to an end.

“Cat’s Eye” (1988) by Margaret Atwood



Source: http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/51019.Cat_s_Eye

Margaret Atwood was born in Ottawa, Ontario in 1939. She has stayed and grown up in various places such as Quebec and Toronto. Atwood is an author of poetry, children’s book, fiction, non-fiction and short story. She is famous about writing and portraying the female characters in her novels. Her best-known novels are

The Edible Woman (1970), The Handmaid's Tale (1983), The Robber Bride (1994), and Alias Grace (1996). "Cat's Eye" is published in 1988, and the book is about the recollections of memories about a female painter's childhood and growing up. The book also reflects about art movements in mid-20th century to the 1980s. It has a strong theme about identity.

The novel is typical of the Canadian culture, since it portrays the lifestyle of Canadian from the 1950s to 1980s through the eyes of a female character, whose role is slowly changed in the society by that time. The book also talks about the natures of relationships such as friendship and love, as well as finding yourself. The book can be said that it is part of the feminism movement because it shows how a woman copes with living in a community. "Cat's Eye" holds little role in being subversive or political. The book mentions about bullying, which is a common problem encountered by many youths not only in the 1950s, but also nowadays. Nevertheless, it also talks about the idea of overcoming the hardships and finding who you are. The book is an encouragement for everyone who has to spend the time of growing up and fitting yourself into the community. There are many other works which is similar in the message regarding overcoming being bullied and dealing with relationships such as "Just Kidding" by Trudy Ludwig or "Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon" by Patty Lovell. These books are similar in the message of overcoming your fear in bullying and becoming stronger.

I choose this book because it is a well-written novel about growing up through the experience of a female character. It helps me think about forging long-lasting and true friendship, and it is an encouragement for me to be stronger and deal with people in maintaining a relationship. Moreover, the way it is written – as memories – makes the book have a sense of nostalgia. Furthermore, it presents the lifestyle before the 21st century, which is the time I cannot experience. Through Cat's Eye, I am able to know more about how it is used to be in the society of the time that has passed.

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