



PAUL SERGEANT *Untitled*, 2006, black and white print, 101 x 101 cm.

## Paul Sergeant Gallivant Memories

PAUL SERGEANT recently completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photography from the Ontario College of Art & Design where he was awarded the Verant Richards scholarship from Gallery 44. He hopes to begin his Masters Degree at the Glasgow School of Art. Recent exhibitions include *Developers* at 1080 Bus Gallery, *Semblance* at the OCAD Student Gallery, The International Digital Miniprint Exhibition and book works in the permanent collection of the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa. Paul currently lives, works and plays in Toronto.

Paul Sergeant's recent works of three mural sized black and white photographs were taken in Scotland. Exploring how experiences become associated with a specific place, these images have been printed large to best capture the immensity of memory. Two of the prints depict settings that have personal significance to the artist. The third is made up of numerous smaller images to create a kind of 'memory-grid'. Using an almost painterly skill of brushing on developer, the images have a fuliginous aesthetic, which are hauntingly lush and address the inconsistency and elusiveness of memory, especially when associated with travel.

COVER  
JOSÉE PEDNEAULT  
*Untitled* from the series *Andante*,  
2006, projected photographs,  
dimensions variable.

**Chanelle Gallant** is an independent writer, a commentator on sexuality, gender and feminism, a community radio host and the manager of sex shop Good For Her. She has a fetish for aprons and cultural criticism.

**Patricio Davila** is a Toronto-based artist and designer. He has received a Bachelor of Design (Honours) from the Ontario College of Art and Design and is currently completing his MA at the Communications & Culture Joint Program at York and Ryerson University. Patricio has been recipient of Toronto Arts Council and Ontario Arts Council grants. He has recently exhibited at Gallery 1313, Lennox Contemporary, and Deleon White Gallery. His practice involves photography, new media, and video with a focus on memory, identity and material culture.

**Josée Pedneault** lives and works in Montréal. In 2005, she graduated with honors of the MFA in Studio Arts, photography department. She has studied in the United States, France and Greece, and was a resident artist at the CSW Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw, Poland, which included on a solo exhibition, *The Conspiracy of the Birds & other Unexpected Events*. Josée Pedneault is represented by Galerie Thérèse Dion in Montréal.

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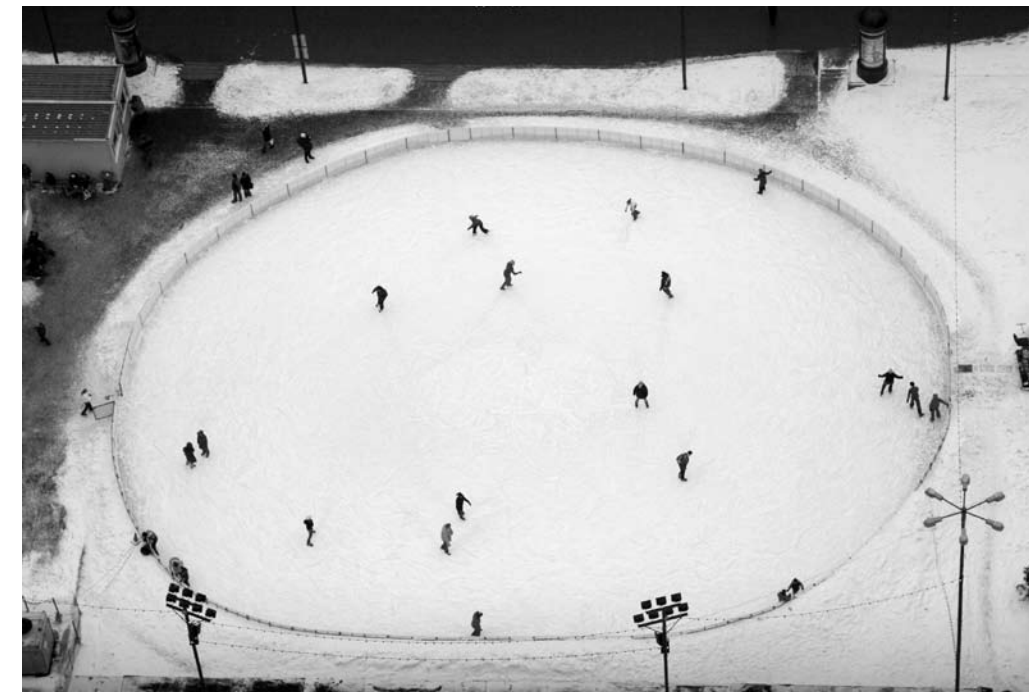
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PATRICIO DAVILA  
*Untitled* from the series *Suitcases*, 2004,  
digital Chromogenic print, 45 x 58 cm.



## Patricio Davila Josée Pedneault *Secret Splendor*



**February 8 to March 10 2007**

OPENING RECEPTION  
Thursday February 8 | 6 to 8 pm



# Secret Splendor

by Channele Gallant

Patricio Davila and Josée Pedneault present large-scale travelogues that find meaning in the neglected and the overlooked. Pedneault's images take us on an elliptical and surprising choose-your-own-adventure ride, while Davila invites us to imagine the journey (and the traveler) in the intimate folds in abandoned vintage suitcases.

The delicious surprise in *Secret Splendor* is how Davila's suitcase portraits, though they are abstracted from their context, still feel intimate and luscious, like a private record of a cherished fetish. Davila's work focuses on our relationship to objects as "physical traces left behind by a person's act of consumption or creation." In *Suitcases*, the objects reveal a kind of femininity that's born out of grit, desire, artifice and plenty of gloss. Like the glamorous transwomen in Pedro Almodóvar's film *Bad Education*, Davila's suitcases are burlesque beauties with bawdy stories to tell. Like the best kind of bad girls, these are suitcases that suggest they've "been around."

On the other hand, Pedneault's *Andante* are flashes of intimate scenes (an apartment bedroom, a pet bird, hands) that feel objective, documentary-like, and almost masculine in their detachment. *Andante* is an invitation into the disorder of a single day with personal subject matter that feels quiet, elusive and suggestive. Pedneault's *Andante* is magical with a cool stillness that invites but never shows off, eschewing obvious ornament in favour of the ordinary and found.

PATRICIO DAVILA  
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Davila's *Suitcases* preen and bewitch while Pedneault's camera serenely observes the show. Davila and Pedneault are not cynical in their reverence for beauty, and both seek to recuperate it where it has been overlooked — in the used and the ordinary. Davila turns vintage suitcases, whose style has long been discarded as outmoded, into symbols of glamour and perfection. Rejecting the notion that old things must die, they call up a forgotten era of glamorous air travel and its accoutrements (We never *needed* satin-lined suitcases. We just *wanted* them). With satin drenched in gem-like hues, glossy plastic folds, supple elastics and taut snaps like garters pulled tightly over a thigh, Davila's style has the markers of a fetishist's dream — disciplined and sumptuous, sparse and devotional.

Davila's eight large-scale suitcase portraits present poreless beauties like vintage Hollywood stills that call up a dream of something better than our messy, daily selves — a dream of perfection, order and glamour. The images pair four distinctive suitcase styles where the interiors compositionally match like a "suitcase soulmate." One could read this as a sign of mass production highlighting the fact that they are not one-of-a-kind designs.

This visual coupling suggests not only a romantic connection between these objects but also a fatalistic pairing, an elegance of death. The satiny folds bear a striking resemblance to the inside of coffins, evoking myths and stories of tragic love where the lovers remain linked even in their "afterlife." Yet the mythologies elicited by these suitcases are tied to death and commitment only by virtue of metaphor.

Davila's work suggests that collective cultural fantasies of perfection and glamour are certainly not intrinsically female. These sumptuous objects seem incompatible with current normative North American masculinity, but perhaps they reveal another side of masculinity, one with a repressed desire for the rapturously feminine aesthetic.

The other half of this inverted gender equation is Pedneault, whose work immerses us in "banal scenes from daily life" as she puts it. Her work uncrates the power of the everyday, gently observing small moments, but from a certain distance. Her view of humanity is distinctly organic. In this world, we are flawed, frail, idiosyncratic and ordinary. Rather than reflecting our longing for perfection, Pedneault exposes us to the elegance of real life in all its ineluctable disorder.

*Andante* is a multimedia installation using more than 400 short videos, stills and sound. The sequencing of each image is programmed to be random, a rueful contradiction that suggests our state of quasi-freedom — the tension between our many determinants (culture, DNA, childhood) and the contingencies (agency, consciousness, accident) that shape our lives. Pedneault captures the raw material of life through her images and sound and then allows a computer to order them. Even though a computer program has created the order (or disorder) of this universe, Pedneault's work still shows us a version of ourselves that is achingly human. Moments are fleeting and fragile, and the organic world (including humans) is imperfect and at times inaccessible. We see a bird menacingly opening its beak, a fragile snail slugging along, an infinity of snow and fog, water that threatens to overwhelm. This is not a Hollywood version of ourselves or the natural world.

The random element of her installation suggests that with creative work, like

JOSÉE PEDNEAULT  
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our lives, we might never know who the designer is with any finality. Without definite authorship or the ability to predict, the work challenges our culture's foundational notions about personal agency and authorship.

Compositionally, Pedneault's images often cut against the grain with lines that suddenly interrupt or abut. Instead of symmetry, rhythmic predictability or even a beginning and an end, we experience the poetry of a dreamlike wandering through life. While these fragments of memory represent the random details of a life, they are observed with a detached calm, as though she herself is a spectator, unrooted from work or urbanity and untouched by the crassness of consumer culture.

These large-scale works envelop and compel us to enter their world and behold its secrets. Both Pedneault and Davila achieve a kind of elegance but via very different means. Davila's work displays a meticulous flamboyance while Pedneault's photos reveal our failure to see moments of still splendor hidden in plain view. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century seems to demand an insatiable visual appetite where the everyday is sponsored by TV network executives. *Secret Splendor* opens us to see the everyday as something introspective rather than garish. Josée Pedneault and Patricio Davila fearlessly reflect not only on the lusciousness of the ordinary but flirt with what Barbara Kruger calls "being seduced by the sex appeal of the inorganic." ■