

# Citadelle

Jacob Stewart-Halevy

---

Marie Angeletti, "Citadelle"  
Galerie Édouard Montassut, Paris  
June 10 – June 23, 2016

---

Citadelle draws on the poetics of Symbolism in order to diagnose the return of its constitutive conditions in the *décadentisme* (decadentism) of our current "Euro-Crisis," where threats to negative freedoms are resolved 1. Governmentally through martial law, incursions into civil liberties, increased surveillance, and the emergence of the populist right, and 2. Personally, through care of the self: turns to mysticism, retreats into homeopathic therapy and self-medication, participates in leisure practices in the ghost towns of bourgeois life, and a bad-faith reliance on attenuated lifestyle leftism.

The show's lone looping video, *Air De Paris* (2016), embodies these brave new conditions through a montage of Paris in the summer with footage seemingly assembled only hours before the exhibition opened. In the background of the initial frame, we notice signs for two retail stores, *Chromatique* on the right and *Sanz by Bizz-Art* on the left, clever down-market references to the synesthesia effects and Mallarméan formalism that run through the show, conveyed in orange tints, blue screens that bathe the gallery audience in wan projector light, the whispering aloud of colors as if merely saying "yellow" would invoke its image, reflections, shadows, transparencies, and glinting rays of sun and neon through trees and across water providing the effect of 21st century cloisonnism. We are reminded of how the symbolists who sought to "escape the cages" of bourgeois life, found a bridge into alternative universes via radical polychromy, in "the soft engravings, the tallowish paintings, the purse snatching display of inconsiderate babblers and audiences... a multiplication of exhibitions of painted cloth," as Gustave Kahn once put it;<sup>1</sup> his proposal to paint on glass at certain times of the day perhaps a premonition of Angeletti's phone-camera *flânerie*.

A rendition of the boiling city genre, *Air de Paris* opens with an altercation between young men police might profile as "*de type Nord-Africain*" fighting around an S.U.V. stopped by the side of a boulevard at midday, while a middle-aged couple—a nominal audience with whom we maybe meant to identify as bystanders—watch the dispute from the safety of an Irish Bar; their leisurely lunch interrupted as the disputed vehicle swerves off screen. Soon after, patrons at a Portzampac-designed brasserie next to Pompidou, members of the Paris art world retreat into their laptops and noise cancelling headphones sitting alone on heart-shaped chairs, perhaps updating their Tinder profiles as Paris burns. To reinforce the myopia of

1. Gustave Kahn, *De l'esthétique du verre polychrome*, *La Vogue*, Paris (May 1886), 55.

Marie Angeletti,  
*Citadelle (8)*, 2016,  
acrylic on acetate,  
47 x 33 in.

artist intelligentsia, the background wall text of the café spells out Philippe Sollers' poem "Paradis 2" (1986), which marked the depoliticization of *Tel Quel* radicalism into a lyrical return to order, a reminder of the embourgeoisement of the *enragés*.

Just as we become absorbed in the motion and conduct of servers and clients here at the café, the video suddenly rewinds at double speed, and then scrolls back and forth. We are abruptly brought into the software editing process itself where the artist makes available the retrieval and selection of footage, a forensics not unlike the retrospective accounting involved in going over surveillance video after terrorist violence. This reading is reaffirmed through later shots of the Louvre in flames to the soundtrack of Italo disco and a tourist boat along the Seine whose bright neon light pierces through the leaves of trees, reminiscent of images of the Frontex coastguard boats that patrol the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, the video seems to deflate sensationalized accounts of crisis promoted by journalists and pundits by interposing interminable blocks of blue screen among the action sequences. In these moments, the gallery audience can make their way through the photographs, objects, furniture, and drawings that populate the rest of the show, whereby contemplative gallery viewing is perpetually interrupted by the video news-flash.

The drawings and photo-collages of *Citadelle*—with their heavy outlines—have the look of mock-ups for role-playing video-game quests. An androgynous figure sits head-in-hands (meditating?) in a windowless ancient stone room next to a giant sculpture of a smiling Buddha; in another tripartite schema, the Buddha draws languishing wretches into his orbit who clutch onto a thorny stem-like rope, while on the right, sexless children in sunglasses make their way through a circular portal. In other works, the hands of the Buddha come together to double as eyes, proliferating outward like endless open windows on a computer screen. Some of these have an added flourish of tween-style butterflies, birds, hearts, and masks sometimes accompanied by an ecstatic witch-like figure who emits a magical force from her eyes and appears as a frightening three-quarter-sized puppet basking in the light of an art nouveau lamp for those who venture up the gallery's helicoid staircase.

If the drawings partake in the current vogue for erstwhile emo art-student aesthetics, the photographic images come from what seem like commercial commissions: An image for what could be an *Elle* profile on Édouard Louis, a boy-leftist whose ideas have been widely discredited as naïve opportunism by establishment Marxists, is pictured with a sulking come-hither expression, wearing Adidas track pants next to his bookshelf; a group of sun-kissed surfboards rest on a sandy beach in an image seemingly ripped from *Condé Nast Traveler*; a shot for a fashion campaign for a recent line of Nhu Duong's intersectional-style opium den concubine-attire is covered by the Eagle logo of the Kunsthalle Wien, as if Broodthaers finally made the leap into the Euro-Trash that always lurked behind his own symbolist references.

Are we to take these combined elements as a debilitating psychological reaction formation reminiscent of Debora Silverman's claim that the symbolist moment



was an “organic retreat” into the domestic interior, private life and fantasy?<sup>2</sup> Does the parallel hold between their decadence and our own? Following Flaubert and after the Parnassians in the 1880s, the symbolists responded to the upheavals of revolutionary terrorism and the mindless chatter of the crowds by closing themselves off in a hermetic language, seeking refuge in the exoticism of the East, and in the recombination of clichéd phrases that could reverberate in their collective echo chamber. Hidden away in their “forest of symbols,” they too sought out “correspondences” across the senses witnessed in Baudelaire’s eponymous poem among numerous other interdisciplinary poetic and scientific discussions around synesthesia.<sup>3</sup> *Citadelle* revives the interests and looks of the movement in order to trace its double valence, which risks the reactionary politics of Max Nordau, who once saw synesthesia as part and parcel of the degeneration of European man,<sup>4</sup> just as Victor Segalen, Gustave Kahn and others longed for “a joy of colors as a way to decorate [them]selves with exoticisms, at times bizarre,” a crucial means for establishing a new cosmopolitan order.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, where

2. Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

3. Other instances include Rimbaud’s “Sonnet des Voyelles,” Charles Cros treatise on color photography, and Victor Segalen’s “Les Synesthésies et l’école symboliste”

4. Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), originally published 1892.

5. Gustave Kahn, *De l’esthétique du verre polychrome*, 65.

the more anarchic affiliates of symbolism, Félix Fénéon for instance, sought to bring about this new order through physical violence, bombing the cafes and administrative buildings of Paris, in *Citadelle*, any exit from the current crisis is left in the cute, frenetic hands of teenagers—interracial couples who sit smiling on park benches or go shopping for parody Kim Jong Un basketball jerseys—adolescents whose own self-absorption make them momentarily immune to the entrenched conservatism of their class. Their Snapchat ability to move fluidly between online and offline life, between symbolic and imagistic slang, between fantasy and feeling—gives them a carefree edge, where even the most dire and spectacular politics can be defanged and rendered absurd, if not chimeric.

## Collecte coloniale et Affect Ramper, Dédoubler<sup>1</sup>

*Emanuelle Chérel*

---

Mathieu K. Abonnenc, Lotte Arndt, Catalina Lozano (éd.)  
*Collecte coloniale et affect, Dédoubler*  
Paris, Éditions B42, 2016

---

À l'échelle internationale, depuis plusieurs années, le musée historique et ethnographique est pris comme terrain d'études<sup>2</sup>, cela tient notamment au fait qu'il traduit le déséquilibre de pouvoir installé par la colonisation européenne et la façon dont ces sociétés sont organisées. Des colloques, des ouvrages, des expositions sont revenus sur son histoire, ses modèles, ses dispositifs de monstration, les politiques de conservation, l'historiographie des discours scientifiques<sup>3</sup>. Ils observent la manière dont le récit muséographié est un artefact culturel relevant donc d'une construction, de (ré)interprétations situées et historiques, liées aux conditions du présent et à ses enjeux scientifiques, culturels et politiques. Ainsi, le monde des musées se restructure peu à peu à travers une redéfinition de ses fonctions, de nouvelles présentations des collections, l'apparition d'institutions témoignant de la multipolarité du monde, une forte attention à la représentation, à ses limites et ses possibilités, à la mise en contexte, à la réception des expositions, aux publics. Plus précisément, les relectures de l'histoire de la modernité engagées dans différentes régions géopolitiques, la reconsidération de ses narrations, de ses savoirs, de ses régimes de visualité, et de leurs implications dans

1. Mathieu K. Abonnenc, Lotte Arndt, Catalina Lozano (eds.), *Crawling Doubles, Colonial Collecting and Affect*, Paris, Editions B42, 2016.

2. Voir les *Museum Studies*.

3. Anna Seiderer, *Une critique postcoloniale en acte. Les musées d'ethnographie contemporains sous le prisme des études postcoloniales*, Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale, Tervuren, 2014. Et le projet Modernité fétiche.