

DAVEANDJENN

A Forest Song

The Canadian artist duo DaveandJenn are known for producing pictorial works of stunning depth and density, formed by applying numerous paint layers that build up the work. *A Forest Song* (2019), the main piece at the centre of this exhibition, is their most complex video installation yet, combining video, sound, sculpture, and programmed lighting. It effectively transposes their pictorial universe into a three-dimensional world that reflects, among other themes, the origins of capitalism that led to the exploitation of one part of the globe for the benefit of another.

DaveandJenn were inspired by the still lifes and aviary subjects painted by Dutch artists during the 17th century that featured plants and animals that were literally transplanted from one context to another, and exotic goods that were treated as symbols of wealth and abundance. These revealed the early beginnings of an economy based on large-scale circulation and the inequitable relationship between colonies and metropolises, animals and human beings. *A Forest Song* is like a fable in which animals act as vectors for social critique by personifying vanity and envy—vices that lead to theft and violence. Through references to the myth of Actaeon and various trompe-l'oeil effects that combine both refined and inexpensive materials, the installation also offers a reflection on the deception of appearances. As such, the work is part of a long line of investigation by the artists on allegory and metaphor. The myth of the hunter Actaeon recounts his transformation into a stag by the goddess Artemis, after he encounters her bathing in the forest. Losing his human form but preserving his self-awareness, Actaeon is attacked by his own pack of hunting dogs and suffers the fate usually reserved for his prey. The role reversal and metamorphosis described in this myth encourages us to behave more respectfully towards nature and all forms of life.

The passage from painting to video animation came naturally for DaveandJenn; due to their fabrication process their works on canvas already resembled flipbooks. Each distinct layer of images adds another essential element to the whole, lending a narrative quality to the work. The final painting is thus a synthesis condensed into a single object, a single plane, an action that is broken down into units of superimposed time and space. In their new collage-like video diptych, transparency, depth, and luminosity are experienced differently thanks to the durational element that allows various aspects of the composition to emerge and break free from the whole.

The work of DaveandJenn is based on a material vision of the world. They present metamorphic moments that recall the common material origin of all existing things in order to promote an ethic that is rooted in interconnectedness.

Anne-Marie St-Jean Aubre, Curator of Contemporary Art

DAVEANDJENN

David John Foy, Edmonton, Alberta, 1982

Jennifer Saleik, Velbert, Germany, 1983

1. *The Menagerie of Materials*

2021

Acrylic paint on layered resin

33 x 39.4 cm

Collection of Mick and Devora McAuley

2. *Every window open.*

2021

Diptych, 4K digital paintings

5 min 7 s (loop)

Property of the artists

3. *A Forest Song*

2019

Two-channel video installation, bronze, 23-karat gold leaf, glass, synthetic and natural crystals, gems and minerals, polymer clay, epoxies and steel

Variable dimensions; 18 min 22 s (loop)

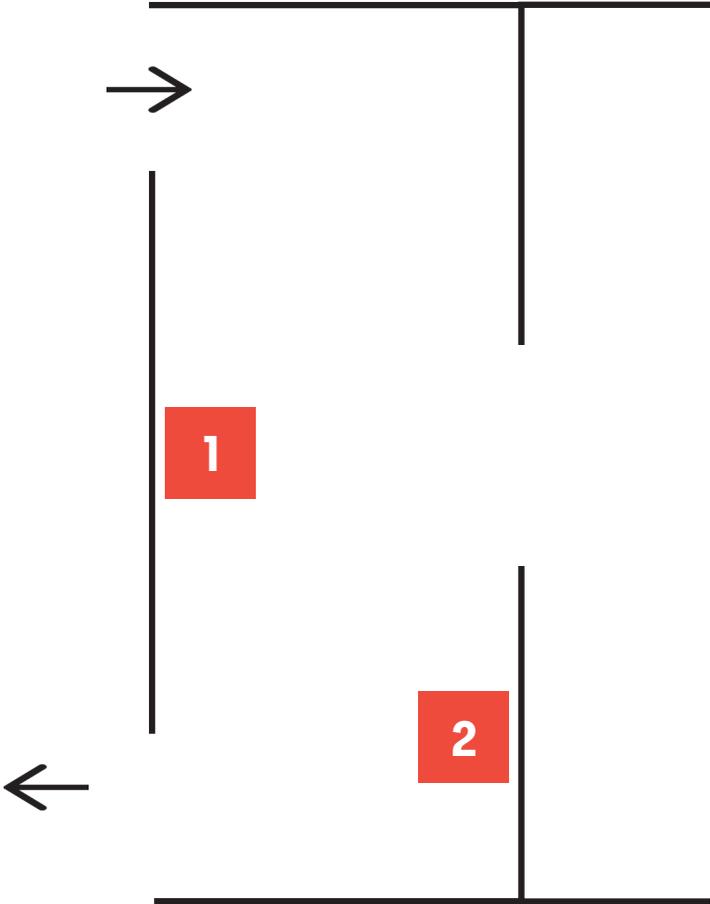
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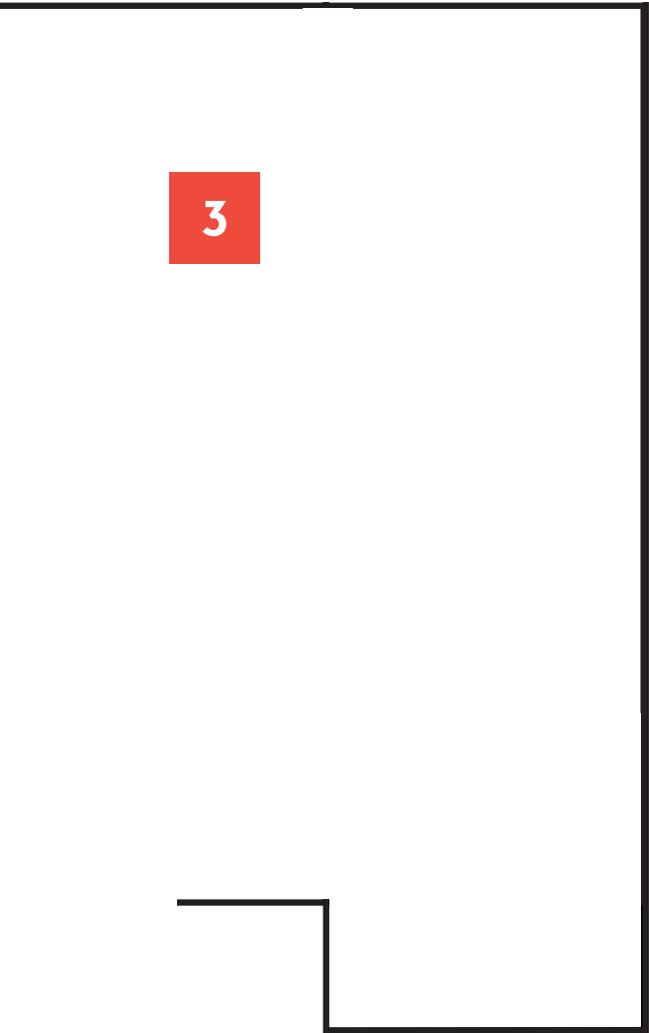
Commissioned by BMO Financial Group

FLOOR PLAN

2nd floor

Salle Harnois





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